Differential Impact of Racial Microaggressions on Asian Americans:

Relationship to Perpetrator & Power Status

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ABSTRACT

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The unremitting image of Asian Americans as being “Model Minority” has created a veil that conceals their incessant struggles with discrimination, prejudice and microaggressions on individual, institutional and cultural levels. Previous studies have highlighted the personal and collective struggles of this group and emphasized the harmful consequences to physical, emotional and mental well-being of Asian Americans.

The current study explored potential factors that may influence the impact of experiencing racial microaggressions for Asian Americans. More specifically, a 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial design was utilized to examine whether level of familiarity and role of power in the target’s relationship with the perpetrator differentially impacts the experience of a racial microaggression. A vignette illustrated a microaggressive encounter with a perpetrator who differed on these conditions with a sample of 263 Asian Americans. The findings indicate support for the damaging psychological consequences of receiving racial microaggressions with participants reporting significantly negative experience when the perpetrator was someone familiar in a position of authority. The results of the present study contribute to the literature on racial microaggressions by providing support for the injurious impact it has for Asian Americans and continues to challenge the model minority myth that persists to silence their voices and invalidate their racial reality.

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My harabuhjee, Dr. Choon Taek Kim

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The United States has often been described as a land of opportunity, a place of hope for immigrants to build a new life and to achieve social, economic and personal success. It is this prospect of a better future that drives individuals to overcome barriers and hardships, to fight against disparity and to define what it means to be "American." Countless stories of persecution and injustice fill the pages of history for early immigrants as they began their new life in America (Chan, 1991; Marger, 2005; Nagata, 1998; Tataki, 1989). It is their unrelenting struggle for equality that led to many socio-political changes that has paved the way for culturally-diverse individuals. Yet, an unremitting link connecting the past to the present remains, as parallel experiences of racism, discrimination, and prejudice continue to plague the lives of individuals belonging to marginalized racial groups in the United States (Clark, Anderson, Clark & Williams, 1999; Gee, 2002; Harrell, 2000; Kessler, Mickelson & Williams, 1999; Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou & Rummens, 1999; Ocampo, 2000).

The United States Census Bureau (2010) followed the guidance of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget in classifying race, which is separate and distinct from ethnicity. Excluding the classification "White," there are five racial categories used in the 2010 census: Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander and Some Other Race, which include entries such as multiracial, mixed, or Hispanic or Latino group. Each group is characterized by its unique culture, customs and traditions, their history filled with times of struggle, intolerance and inequity. Even in the present time, individuals and groups of color continue to fight to have their voices heard, their ideas acknowledged and their needs met.

One group that often goes unacknowledged and left out of the dialogue is Asian Americans (Liang, Li & Kim, 2004). A historically oppressed group like other marginalized ones, Asian Americans have been subjected to historical and continuing discrimination and racism on individual, institutional and cultural levels (Alvarez & Helms, 2001; Alvarez, Juang & Liang, 2006; Chou & Feagin, 2010; Liang, Alvarez, Juang & Liang, 2007; Uba 2003; Yoo, 2005). However, in spite of this reality, Asian Americans are often portrayed as having made it in America with minimal struggle and effort; they are frequently seen as a "Model Minority." (Ho & Jackson, 2001; Lin, Kwan, Cheung & Fiske, 2005; Ng, Lee & Pak, 2007; Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997; Yee, 1992). This false conception serves as a veil to conceal their experiences of discrimination, and the hardships that they have endured. Thus, the struggles of Asians in America remain invisible and their voices have been silenced (Lee & Kumashiro, 2005; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Suzuki, 2002). Ironically, despite the positive stereotypes and images of achievement associated with Asian Americans, they are still perceived as perpetual foreigners, and not "true Americans." (Ng, Lee & Pak, 2007; Pyke & Dang, 2003; Sue et al., 2007)

Ethnocentric Monoculturalism

To truly understand the dynamic forces that have shaped the Asian American experience in America, one has to understand how ethnocentric monoculturalism operates in this society. Ethnocentric monoculturalism is defined as the belief in one's own group as being superior and imposing that belief to judge other groups as inferior (Sue & Sue, 2008). It is the unequal power distribution that exists between different groups, with White individuals holding power to define the reality and the norm to which all other cultural values are judged (Hammond & Axelrod, 2006). This notion is pervasive in the lives of people of color because the White culture and its values are believed to be superior, while perceiving racial and ethnic minorities as substandard

and uncultured, resulting in denigration of their practices, traditions, religions, beliefs and values (Carignan, Snaders & Pourdavood, 2005).

Because White Americans are the majority group in the United States, they hold the power to impose standards that are woven into the fabric of everyday lives of marginalized individuals through the process of assimilation and acculturation. Rooted in the ideology of ethnocentric monoculturalism, culturally-diverse individuals are encouraged to discard their traditions and customs in order to adopt American norms and practices. Even visible characteristics such as distinct physical appearance or discernible accent when speaking English can be considered as a sign of inferior status (Rivera, Forquer & Rangel, 2010). Rather than embracing differences and increasing tolerance for diversity, distinctions are used to divide "them" from "us", as long-established western ways of thinking, acting and behaving are deemed as superior and desirable.

Ethnocentric monoculturalism not only occurs on an individual level through experiences of personal prejudice, but is also embedded in the biased policies, practices, and standards of various organizations. These practices serve to exclude and negate the experiential reality of minority groups and create disparities in employment, education and health care (Allport, 1954; Harrell, 2000; Nelson, 2002; Sue & Dhindsa, 2006; Williams & Rucker, 2000). The individual, institutional and cultural forms of discrimination and racism are entrenched in American society, as minority individuals continue to be subjected to differential treatment, biased assumptions and prejudiced encounters. Asian Americans, often invisible and kept hidden under the façade as model minorities are not an exception.

Asian Americans and the Model Minority Myth

The model minority myth of Asian Americans image emerged in the 1960s when William Peterson, a sociologist coined the term “model minority” in an article he wrote for *The New York Times Magazine* entitled “Success Story: Japanese American style.” (Petersen, 1966). The article highlighted family and cultural adherence to value of hard work allowed Japanese Americans to overcome prejudice to achieve success. Subsequent articles such as *Newsweek* “Outwhiting the White” and *U.S. News & World Report’s* “Success Story of One Minority Group in the U.S” continued to draw attention to the success of Asian Americans despite their minority status (Chang, 2000). Asians as a group reported high levels of education, high median income and low high school dropout rate (U.S. Census, 2010). Although these statistics appear to validate the illusion, a closer look at the considerable differences that exist within the group will reveal findings that provide contradicting evidence. For example, in education, although Asian Indians had the highest percentage (64%) of having completed a bachelor’s degree, about 60% of Hmong and 50% of Cambodians and Laotians had less than high school education. This is in comparison to 19.6% of the total population (U.S. Census, 2000). In the workplace, Asians constituted 45% of positions in management and professional fields when compared to 34% of the total population and reported higher median family income ($59,324) than the total population ($50,046). However, for Cambodian, Hmong, Korean, Laotian, Pakistani, Thai and Vietnamese families, their incomes were substantially lower, with Hmong ($32,384) and Cambodian ($35,621) being the lowest. Additionally, the poverty rates for the Asian population (12.5%) were higher than for non-Hispanic Whites (10.6%), although median earnings for Asians were higher. Among the different ethnic groups, Hmong had the highest poverty rates (37.8%) followed by the Cambodians (29.3%). This is almost 25% higher than the total

population (U.S. Census, 2010). Additionally, Asian Americans had higher rates of being uninsured (18%) and on public assistance (2.4%) in comparison to non-Hispanic Whites, 11.7% and 2.0% respectively. These statistics provide a truthful depiction of the lives of Asian Americans. By continuing to focus on Asians as a homogeneous group, it can lead to misinterpretation of facts and findings that maintain the fabrication of having achieved prosperity and upward mobility.

Asian Americans and Racism

The endorsement of positive stereotypes associated with the ability to attain success led to the conclusion that Asians are somehow immune to racism, even though they continue to encounter both blatant and covert forms of prejudice and discrimination that take a toll on their standard of living, self-esteem, and psychological well-being (Wong & Halgin, 2006). Asians continue to report encounters with discrimination (Tsai, Ying & Lee, 2000), being called derogatory names like "chink" (Yoo & Lee, 2005) and are victims of verbal harassment, vandalism, theft, physical assault, hate crimes and homicide (Tuason, Taylor, Rollings, Harris & Martin, 2007; Wing 2007). Yet, many of the existing studies that examined the relationship between racist events and mental health outcomes did not include the experiences of Asian Americans (Liang, Li & Kim, 2004). The majority of studies on racism generally focused on African Americans with minimal attention being focused on experiences of other communities of color (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). As a result, these findings have omitted the racial experiences of Asian Americans and have not accurately captured their distinct encounters with discrimination and racism. These incidents continue to take a toll on the physical, emotional and mental health of Asian Americans, as needs are not being assessed and care is not being provided to the wounded.

Old-Fashioned to Contemporary Forms of Racism

The Civil Rights movement that began in the mid-1900s contributed to the submergence of explicit bias and discriminatory behavior through various legal and social changes. Yet, far from extinction, a more subtle, covert ways of expressing prejudicial attitudes began to surface (Dovidio, Evans & Tyler, 1986). One such example of this modern form of discrimination is racial microaggressions, defined as brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal & Esquilin, 2007). The term was first coined by Pierce and colleagues (1978) to describe common, seemingly innocuous, conscious or automatic slights that serve to denigrate and cause psychological harm towards Black Americans. The study found high prevalence of racial microaggressions in U.S. society through the negative stereotypes that were embedded within "harmless" communication such as TV commercials. As a result of the work done by Pierce and his colleagues, a more comprehensive framework was developed stressing the everyday implications of racial microaggressions for people of color (Sue et al., 2007).

Racial microaggressions can occur across various settings including academia, workplace, healthcare and other institutions. The perpetrators of racial microaggressions are often well-intentioned White individuals who enact racial discrimination without harmful intent. Therefore, they are often more threatening than old-fashioned forms of racism because of the innocuous presentation and the difficulty for the recipients to identify and act in response to them. Furthermore, microaggressive encounters may cause the most damage and suffering

because of the cumulated impact of having their racial reality invalidated and disempowered on a daily basis (Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007; Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2009; Sue et al., 2008).

There are three types of microaggressions: Microassaults, Microinsults, and Microinvalidations. *Microassaults* are similar to old-fashioned racism and defined as racially charged attacks or behaviors with a clear intention to harm and insult the victims. Examples include using the term “colored” or “oriental” and other racial epithets. *Microinsults* convey hidden, offensive messages that demean a person’s racial heritage or identity. The perpetrator is often unaware of the negative connotation or the insensitive nature of the statement. Microinsults can be conveyed verbally and nonverbally, as when a White teacher fails to acknowledge students of color in the classroom. *Microinvalidations* are communications that exclude or negate the psychological thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of people of color. Asian Americans being complimented for speaking “good English” or when asked where they were born are examples that illustrate the negating of their American heritage. Perpetrators often do not recognize concealed messages in their behaviors or words. Sue and his colleagues (2007) identified nine themes that illustrate each of the three types: 1) *Alien in one’s land*, assumption that people of color are outsiders, perpetual foreigners; 2) *Ascription of intelligence*, assumptions about cognitive abilities based on race; 3) *Color blindness*, avoidance of discussions on race; 4) *Criminality & Assumption of criminal status*, assumption that someone is criminal or dangerous due to their race; 5) *Denial of individual racism*, rejecting the existence of racism; 6) *Myth of meritocracy*, belief that race does not influence one’s success or failure; 7) *Pathologizing cultural values & Communication styles*, belief that people of color’s values and communication styles are abnormal or undesirable; 8) *Second-class status* or treating people of color as less than

white individuals and 9) *Environmental microaggressions*, which are manifested on systemic and environmental levels.

The subtle nature of racial microaggressions is especially relevant when discussing its applicability to Asians. Because the model minority image is deeply ingrained in how people perceive and understand Asians, it may be difficult to examine the detrimental impact of encountering racial discrimination that may at first appear harmless and complimentary. It is only after uncovering the veil that surrounds Asian Americans that we can begin to identity their struggles against invisibility and silence. By exposing what is underneath the illusion, two principal truths will emerge to the surface: (a) Asian Americans continue to be targets of both overt and covert forms of racial microaggressions, and (b) the negative impact of being victims have significantly contributed to the invalidation of their identity with serious psychological, physical and mental health consequences. Although studies have examined racial microaggressions encountered by different groups of color (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Nadal, 2008; Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000; Torres, Driscoll & Burrow, 2010), Asian Americans' experience of racial microaggressions merits further attention in research (Ong et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2007).

Harmful Impact

Perceiving discrimination and encountering microaggressive incidents can have damaging effects on the psychological and physical health of Asian Americans. Studies have found that discrimination was associated with negative psychological well-being and distress (Hwang & Goto, 2008; Lee, 2003; Lee & Ahn, 2011; Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou, & Rummens, 1999; Yoo & Lee, 2005). Another study reported on the physical health concerns and found that experiencing discrimination on a daily basis was associated with a growing number of chronic

health conditions such as cardiovascular conditions, respiratory conditions, indicators of pain (chronic back or neck problems), frequent or severe headaches, chronic pain and ulcers (Gee, 2002). Furthermore, Asian Americans have the tendency to exhibit psychological distress resulting from discrimination through physical symptoms, internalizing stress and expressing the pain through somatization (Lee, Lei & Sue, 2001; Weiss, Tram, Weisz, Rescoria & Achenbach, 2009). It appears that although the stereotypes from which the model minority image is built on are positive in nature, it can still cause damage to the recipient, evidenced by a study which found high levels of endorsement of positive Asian stereotypes were related to more somatic complaints and higher levels of psychological distress, resulting in similar effects to the endorsement of negative stereotypes (Gupta, Szymanski & Leong, 2011). These findings indicate that even modern forms of discrimination that often appear to be affirmative and enveloped under what at first appears to be a compliment, nonetheless can have a negative impact to the recipient.

Overview of Study

The proposed study will investigate the differential impact of experiencing racial microaggressions for Asian Americans. It will focus specifically on two dimensions that may influence how a target experiences a racial microaggression from a perpetrator: (a) the presence or absence of a pre-existing relationship between a victim and the perpetrator and (b) the presence of equal or higher power relationship between a victim and the perpetrator. This study will address gaps in the existing literature by focusing on Asian Americans' experience of racial microaggressions and possible factors that may weaken or strengthen its impact. The first chapter introduces an overview of the central concepts and ideas that are pertinent to the study. The second chapter will include an in-depth review of the existing literature, with a critical

analysis of relevant studies that will provide a rationale and serve as the foundation for the proposed study's research questions. The third chapter will present the methodology of the study, including appropriate measures that will be used to evaluate the impact these variables have upon participants.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

People of color encounter individual, institutional and cultural forms of racism that impact their daily lives by negating their reality and invalidating their experiences as racial beings (Dovidio, 2001; Jones, 1997; Sue et al., 2007). This chapter provides an overview of the history of Asians in America with a discussion on the emergence and maintenance of the model minority myth. Second, it will provide information documenting the Asian Americans' experience of prejudice, intolerance and racism. The evolving nature of discrimination will be discussed using racial microaggressions as a framework to understand contemporary forms of expressing bias towards this group. Third, previous studies that have focused on Asian Americans' experience of racial microaggressions will be presented and discussed, addressing the gaps in the existing literature. Lastly, the chapter will conclude with an overview of the proposed study and the related variables that will investigate the research questions.

Who are Asian Americans?

According to the United States Census (2010), "Asian" refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand and Vietnam. Between the year 2000 and 2010, approximately 14.7 million people identified their race as Asian alone and this population grew faster than any other race group with an increase of 43% during that time (U.S. Census, 2010). The projected percentage increase of Asians between 2008 and 2050 is reported to be 161% to 40.6 million, comprising 9% of the total population. By comparison, it is projected that Whites will constitute 47% of the population and become a minority by year 2050 (Pew Research Center, 2008).

Table 1

Largest Ethnic Group Populations in the United States

5 Largest Ethnic Groups	Percentage of Asian Population
1) Chinese	23.8%
2) Filipino	18.3%
3) Asian Indian	16.2%
4) Vietnamese	10.9%
5) Korean	10.5%

The median age of Asians is 33.0 years, with 68.4% in the 18 to 64 age range. Approximately 51% of Asians live in three states: California (4.2 million), New York (1.2 million) and Hawaii (0.7 million) with high Asian populations congregated in cities of Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Honolulu, Washington DC and Chicago. The majority of the household is composed of a married couple (61.8%), many speaking non-English at home (78.9%). Only 31.1% of Asians are considered Native, with the majority being foreign born and either naturalized citizens (34.4%) or not having obtained citizenship (34.5%).

Asians as a group reported low high school drop-out rate, high levels of education and the highest median income (U.S. Census, 2010). Although these facts may provide evidence that Asian Americans are somewhat successful than other minority groups, they are also more than one and a half times more likely than Whites to live in poverty (Surgeon General Report on Mental Health, 1999). Although the income of Asian American families is higher than that of non-Hispanic Whites, it does not necessarily indicate they are better off financially. Asian families tend to be larger and oftentimes have more than one wage earner in the family. They

are also more likely to live in cities where the cost of living is more expensive than in other areas.

It is important to put emphasis on the diversity that exists among Asian ethnic groups. For example, there is great variability in income level, with Asian Indians reporting a median income of $90,429 in comparison to Bangladeshi with $46,657 (U.S. Census, 2010). Asian Indians also have the highest educational attainment in comparison to Cambodians, Hmong and Laotians, groups that reported the highest rates of having less than a high school education and the lowest rates of college or advanced degrees. These numbers and facts draw attention to two important points. First, the breakdown of the homogeneous nature of Asians, as more differences than similarities are reported among various ethnic groups and secondly, the incorrect application of the model minority image as being universally shared and experienced by all Asians.

Although some of these statistics may contain some truth to the 'myth' of Asians as model minorities, there are also detrimental consequences that result from attributing the stereotypes and applying this label to all who appear to fall under the category. Due to widespread images of Asian American students as being high achievers, many institutions of higher education oftentimes neglect and ignore problems that Asian students encounter at school (Suzuki, 2002). For example, Asian students were more likely than White students to report pressure to conform to racial stereotypes regarding academic performance (e.g., being good student) and social behavior (e.g., being shy and quiet) in order to be accepted by others (Ancis, Sedlacek & Mohr, 2000). In a study of Asian American high school students, the researchers found that although Asian Americans had higher grade point averages, fewer expulsions and suspensions, the students also reported higher levels of depression, social isolation and

interpersonal problem, such as being teased by peers (Lorenzo, Frost & Reinherz, 2000). The authors also found that Asian adolescents reported more dissatisfaction with social support than their White peers. This lack of social connectedness may add to the difficulties that Asian adolescents face in school, raising the possibility that despite their academic success, Asians may encounter problems and hardships at school that are not being addressed.

Although Asians Americans have higher rates of educational achievement, it often does not translate into occupational success. Most large businesses will not promote Asians above a certain level (Uba, 2003) and only 45% are employed in management, professional and related occupations, a relatively low percentage given their academic attainment. There are also negative and conflicting stereotypes that American society attributes to Asian Americans, such as being passive and subservient that may further limit opportunities for advancement to managerial and executive positions (Chew, 1994). As a result, Asians earn significantly less income than Whites, even with the same educational levels (Kim & Park, 2008). These findings suggest that the reinforcement of both positive and negative stereotypes may construct a racial reality that is distinctive to Asian Americans in comparison to other groups of color. In order to understand their place in today's society, it will be beneficial to examine the past and the factors that caused them to immigrate to America, with an understanding of key events in history that played a role in forging their new identity.

History of Asian Americans in the US

Chinese

The first Asian immigrants to the U.S. were the arrival of the Chinese in 1848 to work in gold mines in San Francisco. This was followed by the Japanese in 1868, Koreans in 1903, Filipinos in 1906 and Asian Indians in 1907. For these first immigrants, the decision to leave

China in order to start a new life in America was a combination of two forces. First, the "push" factor propelled people out of China in order to escape from the economic hardship of famine and poverty. They were attracted to the "pull" of a new place, with prospects of high wages that led many to come to the U.S. to find their fortune, especially in light of the Gold Rush in California (Yang, 2010).

The Chinese immigrants first experienced discrimination working as miners in California. The Foreign Miner Tax was collected solely from the Chinese and exempted other foreign miners from Europe. A clear example of injustice, the Chinese were physically attacked and even murdered when objecting or refusing to pay the tax. Although the Chinese workers tried to go to court to demand equal treatment, the California laws prevented Chinese immigrants from testifying against Whites in court. The unfair treatment towards the Chinese continued as they began working as railroad workers on the Transcontinental Railroad project in 1865. They were paid 60% of the amount given to European immigrant workers and did not receive any recognition when the project was completed, despite the sacrifices and the many lives lost due to avalanches and explosive accidents.

The Chinese immigrants returned to California upon completion of the job and encountered racial attacks and riots, lynching and murders that began to culminate as the Whites began to see the growing number of Chinese as an economic threat. This anti-Chinese movement eventually led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This act virtually barred all immigration from China and prevented Chinese immigrants already in the U.S. from becoming citizens, including their American-born children. This is the first time in U.S. history that prevented immigration and naturalization on the basis of race. This discriminatory law was extended every ten years until World War II and restricted Chinese immigration for the next 60

years. Furthermore, the anti-miscegenation laws, special taxes directed against the Chinese and inequity in housing and employment limited the Chinese population and created additional adversities for the newly immigrant families (Uba, 1993). Eventually, the Immigration Act of 1924 effectively ended all Asian immigration to the U.S. (Chan, 1991). All Asian immigrants, including the Chinese, Japanese, Koreans and Indians were fully excluded by law, denied citizenship and naturalization and prevented them from marrying Whites or owning land.

Japanese

At the end of the 19th century, Japanese immigrants began arriving in California, primarily to work in agriculture. They also suffered discrimination similar to the Chinese because White Americans wanted to end immigration from Japan. However, this was more difficult because Japan had greater economic and political stature than China at the time and the U.S. did not want to jeopardize the relations with an outright ban like the Exclusion Act. Nevertheless, Japanese immigrants continued to experience discrimination, with extreme measures taken after the Japanese warplanes bombed the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor. Japanese Americans were considered a threat and many were incarcerated in internment camps with many families losing businesses, property and being subjected to violence and overt forms of racism.

Filipinos

The U.S. began to look to the Philippines for inexpensive labor after gaining control of the country from the Spanish-American War of 1898. Filipinos were not citizens but considered as U.S. nationals, and this unique legal status exempted them from many of the restrictions that kept out Chinese and Japanese workers. The first big wave of Filipino immigrants arrived between 1909 and 1934 to work on sugar plantations in Hawaii. However, the growing

immigrant population began generating anti-Filipino attitudes and once again, pressure was put on from the public to halt immigrant from the Philippines. As a result, the U.S. congress passed the Tydings-McDuffie Act in 1934, which immediately restricted Filipino immigrations to 50 immigrants annually.

Immigration from Asia resumed after World War II with a relatively small number of Asian women from China, Japan and Korea who married American soldiers (Chan, 1991). It was not until the mid-1960s that Asian immigrants began entering the U.S. after the Immigration Act of 1965 was passed in response to the civil rights movement. This Immigration Act also marked a radical change in immigration policy by eliminating national origin, race, or ancestry as a basis for admitting immigrants to the United States. It opened important new avenue for immigration by emphasizing family reunification, as relatives of U.S. citizens and legal immigrants were granted preference in obtaining immigrant visas. As a result, a new wave of immigration from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Philippines, as well as from new countries such as South Korea and India emerged after 1965. This act also gave priority to immigrants who had special skills and many highly educated professionals from India came to the U.S. in search of jobs.

Between 1978 and 1995, Asian countries became the leading source of new immigrants to the U.S., as the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 further increased immigrants from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia who were seeking refuge in the U.S. On average, more than 220,000 Asian immigrants have been admitted annually since 1965, accounting for about 35% of total immigrants in the country (Min, 2006). Although the civil rights movement in the 1960s helped eliminate some of the legal discrimination that was put into place to restrict the number of immigrants from Asia, many individuals experienced individual discriminatory actions and racist

incidents that made it even more difficult to adjust to the new country. They have fought and struggled against making their voices heard for fair treatment and equal rights.

Despite the growing number of Asians as well as other racial and ethnic minorities, discriminatory practices, prejudicial attitudes and racist ideology continue to shape the experiential reality for people of color (Allport, 1976; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005; Harrell, 2000). For Asian Americans, their suffering remains unseen behind the misleading image of being model minorities and an example for other minorities to follow. This false perception and imposition of seemingly positive stereotypes have harmful effects as their experiences as racial beings continue to be invalidated, overlooking critical issues that need to be addressed. As the number of people who identify as Asian continues to grow and become more evident in the racial framework of U.S. society, it becomes critical to not only focus on their experiences and welfare, but to actively work towards promoting change on an individual and group level. In order to strive towards these goals, it is essential to uncover the public image and assumptions to reveal the factual truth behind what it means to be Asian.

Unveiling the Model Minority Myth

Asian Americans first began to be portrayed as model minorities or the "new Whites" in the 1960s, when various magazine and newspaper articles began to draw attention to stories of their academic success and achievement. The term model minority was first coined by sociologist William Petersen in an article written for *New York Times Magazine* entitled "Success Story: Japanese American Style" on January 6, 1966. Another article appeared in the *U.S. News and World Report* on December 26, 1966, suggesting that the value of hard work and strong family ties in Asian cultures enabled Chinese and Japanese Americans to overcome barriers in order to thrive in academia and achieve economic prosperity. These articles were

published during the civil rights era, tactically using Asian Americans as an example to fight against the civil rights activists, proving that marginalized groups can achieve "success" regardless of one's race (Uba, 1994). Then, in the 1980s, articles began to specifically focus on Asian Americans' academic success in school. Articles such as *Newsweek*'s "Asian Americans: A Model Minority", The *New Republic's* "America's Greatest Success Story: The Triumph of Asian Americans", *Time's* "The New Whiz Kids" and *Fortune's* "America's Super Minority" depicted Asian Americans' accomplishments despite their minority status through hard work and perseverance.

These portrayals of Asian Americans' achievements led to the false belief that they are immune from experiencing acts of discrimination and racism. According to a 1991 Wall Street Journal/NBC News national poll, most American voters did not believe Asian Americans encounter discrimination in the U.S. (McQueen, 1991). The perception of Asian Americans as model minorities obscures their racial reality, and creates further impediments from gaining awareness on their struggles with prejudice and inequality, especially since they are often left out of discussions on race that mostly focuses on a black and white dialogue. The model minority image serves to reinforce the myth of meritocracy, the idea that other racial minorities have only themselves to blame for persistent poverty and lags in educational and professional attainment (McGowan & Lindgren, 2006). It serves as a "wedge" between Asian Americans and other racial and ethnic minority groups, with their 'success' stories set against other marginalized individuals' struggles for equality, and discrediting their struggle for equality and social justice (Wing, 2007). As a result, Asian Americans are ostracized from both the White majority and other groups of color. Due to the confines of the Black-White discourse, Asian Americans have been situated in comparison to Whites and Blacks rather than understood as racialized in distinct

ways (Ng, Lee & Pak, 2007). Thus, we can see that the model minority myth is used to foster discord among people of color rather than unite them in their common struggle for greater equality and continual fight against racism.

Diversity Represented

Common with many other marginalized groups, the model minority image lumps all Asians into one "monolithic, homogenous, yellow skinned mass" (Chang, 1987, p. 367) without taking into consideration the diversity in language, culture, history, religion and demographic characteristics that greatly affect their experience of life in the U.S. (Lin-Fu, 1988). There exist many ethnic-group differences that can significantly impact how they adapt and acculturate to life in America. By assuming the group is homogeneous and overlooking the differences that exist, the needs of many individuals and communities remain ignored under the assumption that all Asians are the same. Depending on one's country of origin and its history and relationship with the U.S., individuals may encounter different forms of treatment. For example, Filipino Americans have emigrated from a country that had been colonized for over 300 years by both Spain and the United States (Chan, 1991; Nadal, 2009) and this group may experience racism in a manner that is different from other ethnic groups. Due to their experience of colonization, Filipino Americans may be more sensitized to and aware of racism in the United States (Alvarez & Juang, 2010) and studies have found that Filipino Americans reported higher rates of perceived discrimination than other Asian ethnic groups (Alvarez, Juang & Liang, 2006; Kuo, 1995). Additionally, Vietnamese refugees may experience immigration distress differently in comparison to Chinese immigrants because of their different pre-migratory status, departure experience and post-arrival problems (Chiu & Ring, 1998). These groups are just two that fall

under the category of being “Asian”, yet their encounters are vastly different from each other and to other Asian ethnic groups.

These findings reveal not only variance within the Asian population, but also that the myth distorts the reality for some Asian Americans who do not fit the model minority profile of having achieved social and economic success. By continuing to maintain and believe in this illusion, crucial needs are misunderstood and ignored. Furthermore, the internalization of the myth can be harmful for Asians as it can prevent individuals from validating and acknowledging their own experiences of discrimination and racism and can also negatively impact ethnic identity development (Chan & Mendoza-Denton, 2008)

Although it is generally accepted that African Americans and other groups of color experience both overt and covert forms of prejudice and discrimination, speaking against injustice and unfair treatment can be especially difficult for Asians because they are frequently viewed as being protected from racist incidents (Wong & Halgin, 2006). The myth continues to not only reinforce this false belief by the majority culture, but also serves as a way to keep Asians hidden and voiceless in their struggle against discrimination. Many services and programs do not have adequate knowledge of their needs and concerns because they lack the understanding of how Asians experience life in the U.S. as racial cultural beings. Institutions continue to justify their disregard of implementing change by believing in the assumption that all Asians are thriving and not in need of assistance. Yet, there is vast disparity that exists within the multifarious Asian community. An important area of divergence in Asians is the degree of retaining or abandoning their cultural values and how it impacts the way they are perceived and treated in the U.S.

Asian Cultural Values

Every racial and ethnic group brings its own unique set of cultural values, customs and traditions that may influence the preservation of their culture and the adaptation of American values. Asians are no exceptions and the 150-year history of Asian immigration to the U.S. and the current number of overseas-born Asian Americans has created a population that varies greatly in terms of their American and Asian values and behaviors (Kim, Atkinson & Yang, 1999). They are not homogeneous in their values, perceptions of minority status or reactions to racial discrimination (Kuo, 1995). There are immeasurable differences within the Asian population as to how much an individual adheres and follows traditional Asian values in comparison to learning and adjusting to American values. Asians place emphasis on having a strong sense of attachment to the group to which they belong, taking into consideration the welfare of the group over personal interests and goals. A central group to take into consideration is that of the family, as one works to conform to norms and meet the family's expectations. There is a strong sense of obligation to the family and a commitment to maintain family well-being. The idea of interdependence and mutual trust are important family values, as well as honor, duty and a willingness to make sacrifices for the family. Therefore, due to this collectivistic way of viewing the self in relation to the family, failure for an individual may reflect negatively on the family as a whole (Kim, Atkinson & Yang, 1999). Furthermore, Asian Americans' sense of self-worth and self-identity may be strongly tied to his or her family achievements, as dictated by traditional Asian cultural values (Kitano & Matsushima, 1981; Tomita, 1994).

The cultural value of communication style and verbal expression warrant further discussion because of its application to the current study. In the U.S., the notion of verbal

expression is valued as individuals are encouraged to clearly articulate one's thoughts in English, taking an active role in expressing thoughts, ideas and reactions. In contrast, for Asians, the Confucian value of interpersonal harmony may play a significant role in communication style and interpersonal behavior (Kim, Atkinson & Umemoto, 2001). The value of personal restraint and reservation is emphasized in Asian cultures and may underlie Asian Americans expressive behavior, especially when experiencing strong emotions. This is important to emphasize because refraining from expressing one's emotions may impede from understanding the true impact of experiencing a distressing event such as being targets of racial discrimination. The harmful effects may be minimized and indiscernible because Asians may adhere to the value of verbal self-control. Even when Asians express emotions, their communication style tends to be accommodating, conciliatory and receptive rather than confrontational (Tamura & Lau, 1992; Uba, 1994). Therefore, a perpetrator of a microaggressive act may be unaware of the impact and the extent of the damage caused to the Asian victim. This is an important consideration to keep in mind when examining and discussing how Asian Americans reveal and manage their reactions.

The value of verbal restraint is also followed when it comes to relationship with others. Asians tend to refrain from openly challenging the perspective of others in order to maintain harmony, attempting to suppress verbal conflicts (Uba, 1994). Due to the importance in first considering the needs of others, asserting one's own needs may be seen as a sign of immaturity and disrespect. This becomes particularly essential in front of authority figures or people of a higher position, status or power. As a way of showing deference, Asians may become less verbal, adhering to the belief that one should learn and not question authority figures (Kim, Atkinson & Yang, 1999). This notion centers on the belief that Asians believe authority figures

are in a position to evaluate the individual and therefore, should not question their position of power. Therefore, when Asians encounter a racist remark or discriminatory action from someone in power, it may be more difficult to speak out or express emotions. Instead, the victims may remain silent in order to preserve harmony (McLaughlin & Braun, 1998) and question or blame themselves for what had occurred and thereby invalidate their reaction to the experience. Choosing to respond, if at all, to someone of authority may be distinct than responding to a peer or someone they are familiar with because of the difference in power and a belief that the person in higher power should not be questioned or challenged. Hence, the silence from the recipient of a discriminatory action or a racial slur may be misinterpreted as being innocuous. The lack of clear, obvious reaction should not be prematurely judged and concluded as leaving minimal impact to the victim. By taking into consideration the cultural value of verbal restraint in the Asian culture, the resulting behavior should be interpreted after taking into account possible internal processes that may be influencing the victim. For example, how does the relationship to the perpetrator impact how one experiences and reacts to racial discrimination? How does one process and make sense of the strong feelings such as anger and confusion that are elicited from an incident? These are some of the questions that remain unexplored in past studies that merit attention and inquiry in order to better understand the subtle nuance in the way Asian Americans construe meaning and manage racial microaggressions. The emergence of this new form of discrimination is the result of the unremitting changes to the racial climate in the U.S., with its deeply rooted history of intolerance, bigotry and prejudice.

Racism in the United States

In order to examine how Asian Americans experience racism and racial discrimination in the U.S., it is important to provide a context and an overview of the history, its manifestation and

its progression. The history of discrimination and racism in America has oftentimes focused on overt forms of expressing hatred and bias towards the racially and ethnically diverse individuals. However, with the legal, social and political shifts during the mid-1900s that prohibited major forms of discrimination, a more subtle, covert form of expressing prejudicial attitudes began to surface. Contemporary forms of prejudice incorporate mixture of both negative and positive elements and therefore, are more ambiguous and harder to categorize than direct "old-fashioned" forms of prejudice (Salvatore & Shelton, 2007). Furthermore, organized forms of discrimination such as the segregation and inequities in housing and employment continue to exist through institutional policies, laws and other group practices (Franklin, Boyd-Franklin & Kelly, 2006).

Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other legal, social and political changes outlawed major forms of discrimination, other ways of communicating racial prejudice began to surface, expressed in a subtler, covert way to express bias from White Americans (Dovidio, Evans & Tyler, 1986). Aversive racism, or the unintentional form of racial prejudice incorporating both negative and positive elements, made it more difficult to detect "old-fashioned" displays of prejudice and racism (Salvatore & Shelton, 2007). Many scholars have explained the emergence of this new type including *Symbolic Racism* (McConahay & Hough, 1976), *Everyday Racism* (Essed, 1990) and *Daily Hassles* (Harrell, 2000). Although these scholars defined and conceptualized the evolving nature of discrimination and prejudice in different ways, there are common threads that are evident in their theories. First, the existence of privilege and the power that Whites have to define the reality for racial and ethnic minorities. Secondly, the subtle and oftentimes ambiguous form makes it difficult for recipients to discern because experiences of discrimination are subjective perceptions of unfair treatment based on

racial prejudice and ethnocentrism, manifested at individual, cultural, or institutional levels (Jackson, Brown & Kirby, 1998).

Research with racial stereotypes suggests that when compared to older forms of prejudice, contemporary racial attitudes are more subtle and less overtly negative, often expressed in ways that prevent the aggressors from appearing bigoted (Dovidio, Evans & Tyler, 1986). Because Whites mainly define racism as direct expressions of 'old-fashioned' racist beliefs, many tend to think racism is a thing of the past and that any opinions, beliefs or actions that work to the detriment of Blacks in society are not seen as prejudice, a notion defined as *Symbolic Racism* (McConahay & Hough, 1976). Although the Civil Rights Act and other legislative movements helped to decrease overt expressions of prejudice by making discrimination not only immoral but also illegal, it allowed the emergence of *Aversive Racism*, a more subtle, unintentional form of racial prejudice that indirectly expresses bias from White Americans who possess strong egalitarian values and who truly believe they are not prejudiced (Dovidio, 2001). Whites may maintain their non-prejudiced self-image while engaging in discriminatory acts, especially in socially ambiguous situations in which the guidelines for appropriate behavior are vague, allowing them to attribute their prejudicial behavior on the basis of some factor other than race (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005).

Essed (1990) first coined "*Everyday Racism*" in a qualitative study examining Black people's experiences with racism. She defined Everyday Racism as a process in which (a) racist notions are integrated into meanings and socialized into practices, (b) these practices with racist implications become familiar and repetitive, and (c) racial and ethnic relations are reinforced through these common practices in everyday situations. In other words, Everyday Racism is infused into familiar practices, involving socialized attitudes and behavior with individuals

encountering racism on a daily basis in workplaces, public spaces and media outlets. Essed (1991) concluded that Everyday Racism is a process of problematization, marginalization, and containment. For example, racism puts mechanisms in place that declares an individual or a group to be a problem, marginalizes them through ethnocentrism and barriers, and contains them through forms of control and restraint by the majority group. It goes beyond individual and institutional levels of racism, it is the ordinary or habitual occurrences that people of color encounter in their daily lives, such as name-calling or mistreatment by strangers.

Harrell (2000) put forth another viewpoint that contend that people of color may experience six different forms of racism-related stress: (a) *Racism-related life stress*, which includes major incidents of racism in areas such as housing, education, occupation, and so forth; (b) *Vicarious racism stress* or observing a racist incident; (c) *Daily racism and microstress*, or the chronic racial slights and degradations such as being overlooked or ignored; (d) *Chronic contextual racism and stress*, or the chronically inadequate living conditions resulting from the unequal distribution of and access to resources; (e) *Collective racism and stress*, an understanding of the impact of racism on one's racial group; and (f) *Transgenerational racism and stress*, or an understanding of historical trauma directed at one's group. Although these scholars approached the notion of modern forms of racism and its manifestation in our society using different perspectives and definitions, they all agree on three things: 1) the hierarchy of power, dominance and privilege, 2) the subtle, ambiguous form that makes it difficult to discern, and 3) the harmful impact it leaves to the recipients.

Whites automatically categorize people on the basis of race, eliciting racial biases and stereotypes (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005). The pervasive stereotypes and assumptions that exist continue to advance and perpetuate racism. For example, false beliefs about the inferiority of

Blacks have been translated into policies that restrict access to African Americans in the areas of educational, employment, and residential opportunities (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). Therefore, racism provides a context for the development and maintenance of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination (Loft & Maluso, 1995). Although many scholars and researchers have proposed their own definitions and understandings of the concepts, the common feature is the centrality of power, which is a defining quality of racism (Harrell, 2000) and a quintessential element that differentiates those who hold the power to use their customs, values and practices as the norm in which to judge those who are treated as substandard (Dobbins & Skillings, 2000). Racism is based on erroneous principles of racial superiority as it bestows power and privilege on those who define, enforce, and establish the institutional mechanisms that maintain it (Franklin, Boyd-Franklin & Kelly, 2006). A more comprehensive definition of racism encompasses beliefs, attitudes, institutional arrangements and acts either held by or perpetuated by members of a different ethnic group (intergroup racism) and by members of the same ethnic group (intragroup racism) that tend to denigrate individuals or groups because of phenotypic characteristics or ethnic group affiliation (Clark, Anderson, Clark & Williams, 1999). What is important to highlight is that this definition include three important features: 1) A group believes itself to be superior, 2) The 'superior' group holds the power to carry out racist behavior, 3) Racism affects multiple racial and ethnic groups.

To illustrate the relationship of prejudice and discrimination to racism, it may be helpful to examine Jones (1997) conceptualization of racism as being three types: Individual, Institutional and Cultural racism. *Individual* racism is an overt, conscious belief that one's racial group is superior to others, thereby provoking racial prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. *Institutional* racism is the intentional or unintentional perpetuation of policies, standards and

procedures that restrict and minimize people of color. *Cultural* racism takes into account both individual and institutional racism, defined as the overarching, imposed assumption that one's cultural values are ideal, superior and the norm. The presence of racism in multiple areas re-affirms the insidious and pervasive role it has in the lives of people of color.

Impact of Racism

Clark and his colleagues developed a bio-psychosocial model demonstrating that when a person of color perceives an environmental stimulus as being racist, it results in a series of psychological and physiological stress responses that can seriously compromise both mental and physical health and well-being (Clark, Anderson, Clark & Williams, 1999). These responses can include anger, paranoia, anxiety, helplessness-hopelessness, frustration, resentment, and fear. A study with self-reported racism found mental health impairments specifically related to negative mood and depressive symptoms (Brondolo et al., 2009; Kessler, Mickelson & Williams 1999; Paradise 2006; Simons et al., 2002) and racism-related stress and discrimination have been associated with diminished self-efficacy, poor physical health, low self-esteem, negative emotional and cognitive reactions and increased vulnerability to psychological risk factors (Fernando, 1984; Fisher, Wallace & Fenton, 2000; Gee, 2002; Ong, Fuller-Rowell & Burrow, 2009; Paradies, 2006; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). Experiencing racial discrimination have also been found to adversely impact physical health resulting in high blood pressure (Krieger, 1990) and stress from these incidents have been associated with cancer, cardiovascular disease, substance abuse, homicide and suicide (Outlaw, 1993). Unfortunately, the impact of living with this reality is often overlooked due to inaccurate assumptions, false stereotypes and misleading beliefs that serve to reject and suppress voices. Such is the case for Asian Americans.

Asian American & Racism

There is an extensive history of racism encountered by Asian Americans in the U.S. (Young & Takeuchi, 1998), with research pointing out the harmful consequences of experiencing discrimination to psychological functioning and overall mental health (Goto et al., 2002). Despite these findings, many White Americans continue to focus on racism and racial issues in Black and White terms (Liang et al., 2004). The psychological needs of Asian Americans arising from racism are often overshadowed by the experiences of other racial and ethnic groups, and research findings for these individuals are often assumed to speak to the experiences of Asian Americans. Yet, Asian Americans continue to be victims of racially-motivated hate crimes, the most commonly reported crime being assault and/or battery followed by vandalism, harassment and threats (National Asian American Pacific Legal Consortium, 2002). Asian Americans are perpetually treated as outsiders, evident by America's long history of limiting and restricting Asian immigrants to become citizens and to obtain full benefits of citizenship, with the internment of Japanese Americans being the most extreme form of discriminatory laws against Asians. Even today, immigrants report more encounters with racial discrimination than American-born (Tsai et al., 2000) and new immigrants, many from southern regions of Asia, such as Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia continue to feel the legacy of discriminatory laws because they continue to be perceived and treated as foreigners (President’s Initiative on Race, 1998).

Asian Americans encounter with racism and discrimination in everyday life is manifested through English-only initiatives, accent discrimination, disparities in access to health care, implicit admissions quotas in higher education, income disparities based on educational attainment and glass ceiling limitations in career advancement (Alvarez, 2009). The stress in

experiencing racial discrimination for a sample of Asians predicted depressive symptoms over and beyond perceived general stress (Wei, Heppner, Ku & Liao, 2010). Another study found that 30% of Asian Americans reported being treated differently because of their race, with participants reporting being called “chink” and “gook” (Yoo & Lee, 2005). Studies that examined Filipino Americans found that racial discrimination was a persistent experience characterized by incidents such as being laughed at, verbally harassed and being targets of aggression (Tuason et al., 2007), leading to psychological distress and lower self-esteem when encountering racism (Alvarez & Juang, 2010). These studies indicate that daily occurrences of experiencing these covert and overt forms of racial discrimination result in a negative impact on well-being.

These everyday incidents occur in various settings and studies have looked at Asian Americans' experience of discrimination in educational institutions. A case study looked at a University of California campus as an example to illustrate the school's indifference to Asian Americans as victims of racial intolerance (Delucci & Do, 1996). The harassment encountered by Asian students was not characterized or acknowledged. This was compared to racist incidents against African American students, which were immediately recognized and validated. Another study found Asian students who experienced racism on campus had lower social adjustment, and negative perceptions of campus climate were correlated with self-reported levels of depression (Cress & Ikeda, 2003). Asian American students also reported encountering both overt racial slurs and subtle comments that were intended to ignore or single them out (Woo, 1997).

Studies have looked at Asian Americans in comparison to different racial groups. A study that examined the impact of perceived racial discrimination on various mental health outcomes for Asian American and Latino college students found that regardless of ethnicity,

perceived racial discrimination was associated with several negative mental health outcomes including higher psychological distress, suicidal ideation, anxiety and depression (Hwang & Goto, 2008). Asian Americans in particular reported higher risk for trait anxiety, the individual differences in enduring anxiety and a predisposition to respond anxiously to stressful situations. One study found that Black, Latino and Asian American adolescents perceive ethnic and racial discrimination both in and out of their school environment, with Asian American students reporting higher levels of peer discrimination when compared to other adolescents (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004), while another study reported findings that Asian Americans experience discrimination from adults at school (Greene, Way & Pahl, 2006). This may be a result of students feeling the pressure to live up to the expectations of "model minority." The stereotype of being academically competent may cause teachers to give preferential treatment to Asian students, which in turn may build resentment from other students and provoke harassment and discrimination to their Asian peers.

In a workplace setting, Asian Americans reported being denied jobs or fired from positions due to their accents and forbidden from speaking in their native language (Ancheta, 1998). The existence of a glass ceiling for Asian Americans results in underrepresentation in executive positions, grounded in the belief that Asian Americans lack the communication skills needed for leadership positions (Marger, 2006). Therefore, despite the statistics, income levels often do not correspond with the levels of education for Asian Americans (Inman & Yeh, 2006; Tran & Birman, 2010).

Racial Microaggressions

The contemporary conceptualizations of racism proposed by these scholars can be traced to the notion of racial microaggressions proposed by Pierce and his colleagues in the 1970s.

Microaggressions is a term to describe common, subtle, seemingly innocuous, conscious or automatic slights that serve to disparage and cause psychological harm towards Black Americans (Pierce et al., 1978). To illustrate the existence of microaggressions, the authors analyzed the content of television commercials. They found that not only are Blacks highly underrepresented in television commercials, but even if they are included, they are generally portrayed in a negative manner (e.g., being subservient to White people, engaged in non-intellectual activities). The findings of the study exemplified the high prevalence of racial microaggressions and the ways in which subtle negative stereotypes and representations (or lack of representation) of Blacks in the media could be hidden within "harmless communication" such as commercials that can potentially impact the television viewers. Since then, the definition has been expanded to include subtle acts or attitudes that are experienced as hostile, and that fit a history and pattern of personal racial slights and disregard (Franklin & Franklin-Boyd, 2000). A more comprehensive framework was developed stressing the everyday implications of racial microaggressions for people of color (Sue et al., 2007).

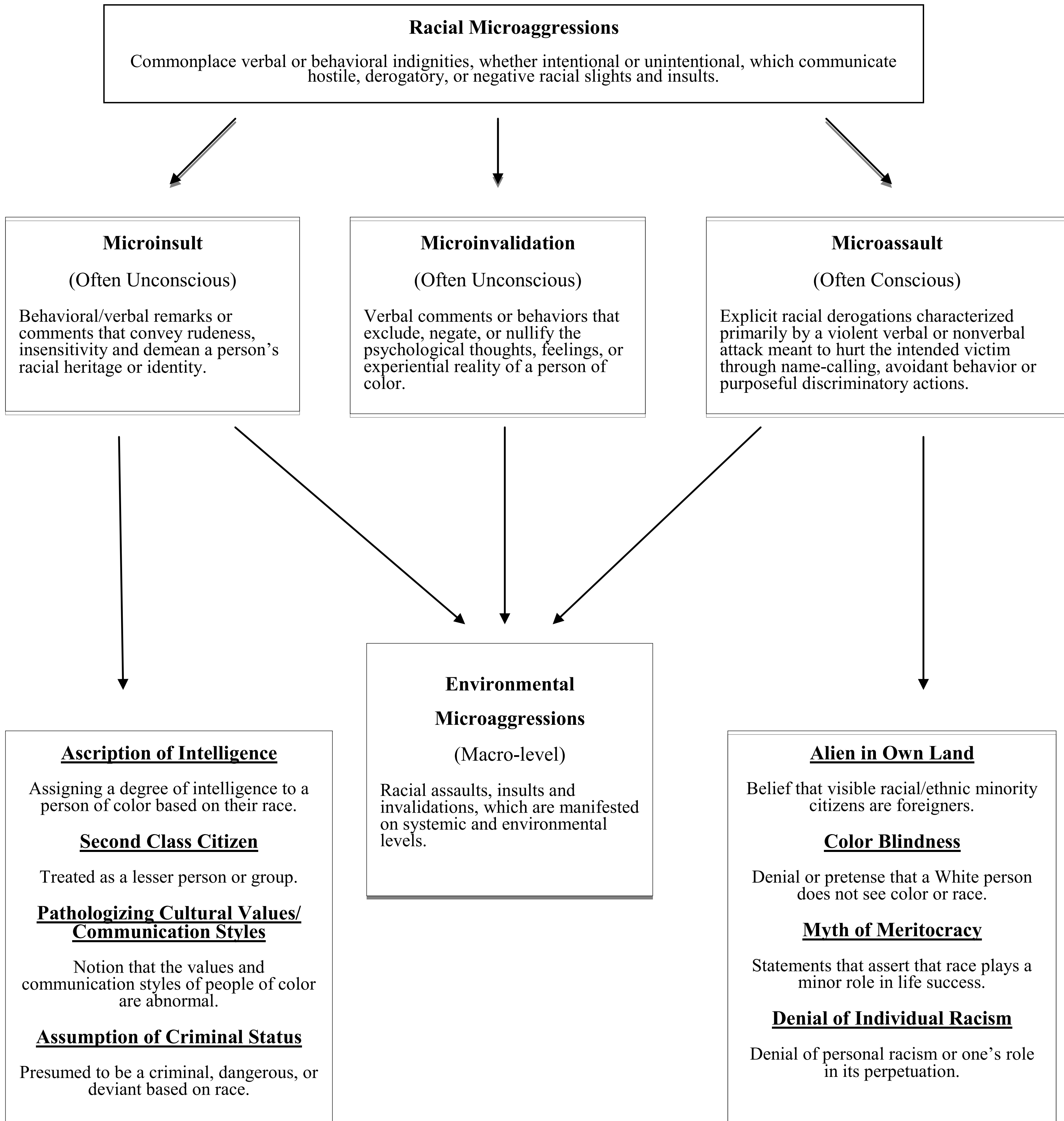
Expanding on the work of Pierce (1978), a conceptualization of how racial microaggressions manifest in everyday life was proposed by Sue and his colleagues (2007). Racial microaggressions are defined as brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group (Sue et al, 2007). They are more threatening than old-fashioned forms of racism because of the innocuous presentation and the difficulty for recipients to detect it. It can occur across various life domains including work, school, media and community. The perpetrators of racial microaggressions are usually well-intentioned White individuals who enact racial discrimination without conscious

intention. However, microaggressive encounters cause the most harm and damage because ultimately, Whites hold the power to invalidate and disempower people of color.

Microaggressions can further be divided into three categories: Microassaults, Microinsults, Microinvalidations. *Microassaults* are similar to old-fashioned concept of racism with overt, racially charged attacks or behaviors, with a clear intention to harm and insult victims by expressing superiority of White cultural values (e.g. using racial slurs, hate crimes). *Microinsults* are communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity. They convey hidden offensive messages to people of color with the perpetrator being unaware of the negative connotation. *Microinvalidations* are communications that exclude, negate or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of people of color. Perpetrators often do not recognize concealed messages in their behaviors (e.g. "all you people look the same", message being the denial of racial reality). The researchers identified nine themes that illustrate each of the three subcategories: 1) *Alien in one's land*, assumption that people of color are outsiders, perpetual foreigners; 2) *Ascription of intelligence*, assumptions about cognitive abilities based on race; 3) *Color blindness*, avoid discussions of race; 4) *Criminality & Assumption of criminal status*, assumption that someone is criminal or dangerous due to their race; 5) *Denial of individual racism*, rejecting the existence of racism; 6) *Myth of meritocracy*, belief that race does not influence one's success or failure; 7) *Pathologizing cultural values & Communication styles*, belief that people of color's values and communication styles are abnormal or undesirable; 8) *Second-class status* or treating people of color as less than Whites and 9) *Environmental microaggressions*, which are manifested on systemic and environmental levels. Please refer to the Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Categories and Themes of Racial Microaggression



Manifestation & Impact of Racial Microaggressions

Studies have shown that racial microaggressions impact different groups of color in a variety of settings. Sue and his colleagues (2008) have looked at racial microaggressions against Black Americans and found six themes that represent meanings that participants made of specific microaggressive incidents. Themes include *Assumption of intellectual inferiority, Assumption of criminality, Second-class citizenship* and *Assumed superiority of white cultural values/communication styles*. The authors found that the themes directed at a person seemed to be influenced by two dimensions: (a) whether the person was a casual or close acquaintance and (b) the social situation or the environment in which the microaggression occurred. For example, the microaggression theme of intellectual inferiority tended to be from a coworker, classmate or an authority figure at a workplace or educational setting, whereas assumption of criminality came from strangers in public settings. The participants in the study reported that microaggressive incidents were perpetrated by all types of people including strangers, casual acquaintances and even personal friends. Although this study did not specifically focus on the differential impact of a microaggressive incident based on the nature of the relationship, it remains an important area for further research.

Another study examined incidents of racial microaggressions using a sample of Latino/a students at three different universities and found three types: Interpersonal microaggressions, racial jokes, and institutional microaggressions (Solórzano et al., 2009). *Interpersonal microaggressions* included verbal and nonverbal racial affronts directed at Latino/as from students and faculty calling into question the intelligence level of students and expressing low expectations regarding abilities. *Racial jokes* included offensive verbal remarks expressed in the company of or directly to Latino/a students with questionable intensions. Oftentimes, the racial

joke-teller was someone the Latino/a students had regular contact with and the perpetrator assumed that it was appropriate to "joke" and make offensive comments. As a result, the microaggressive incident not only left a greater personal impact, but continued to cause distress long after the incident because the student would often continue to spend time with the aggressor "while considering whether the assailant intended harm, and whether or how they must launch a sufficient response" (p. 670). These findings illustrate the assertion that the impact of a racial microaggression can carry on long after the incident and remains to cause damage, especially if the perpetrator has a pre-existing relationship with the victim of the microaggression. Lastly, students reported on *institutional microaggressions*, which include racially marginalizing actions of the university evidenced in the practices and structures that endorse a hostile racial climate to students of color. For example, even when students of color initiated culturally relevant programming around campus, they felt ignored and irrelevant, as university resources were not given to cultural events. Both of these studies not only highlight the presence of racial microaggressions, but also allude to the notion that the nature of the relationship between the perpetrator and the target may influence the impact for the victims.

Racial Microaggressions – Educational Institutions

Many studies have reported the presence of racial microaggressions in educational institutions that cause harmful impact to students of color. In addition to the findings presented above, another study examined experiences of Black male students using focus group interviews (Smith et al., 2007). The participants reported experiencing racial microaggressions across three domains: academic, social and public spaces. They reported psychological stress responses such as feeling frustrated, shock, anger and resentment. Microaggressions that occurred in academic spaces happened frequently and were the most pervasive and caustic. Even within the academic

space, students noticed the increase in surveillance, with the campus and local police deployed to control black male students as they were viewed with suspicion. This hyper-surveillance also existed in social and public spaces as black male students were viewed as potential threat, with black fraternity being stereotyped as "gang-like." A similar study also examined the experiences of African American students at three universities and found that racial microaggressions existed in both academic and social spaces, which contributed negatively to the campus racial climate (Solórzano et al., 2000). Students reported feeling invisible and having to struggle with low expectations and stereotype threat within academic settings, whereas in social spaces, students faced more overt discrimination, especially by the campus police. These incidents of experiencing microaggressions left students feeling frustrated, isolated and impeded academic performance. Another study used a mixed-methods approach to examine African American doctoral students in their experience of racial microaggressions (Torres et al., 2010). The authors first identified the types of microaggressions using a qualitative approach, and then used quantitative analyses to provide evidence for the negative effects of racial microaggressions on mental health. The three themes found in the study were: *Assumption of criminality, Underestimation of personal ability* and *Cultural/racial isolation* of being singled out. The quantitative results showed that the added burden of managing racial microaggressions put them at a greater risk for experiencing depressive symptoms. For students of color, not only do they have to deal with the usual stressors of being in a graduate program, but they also have to encounter racial microaggressions from peers and faculty that may hinder academic performance, decrease self-esteem and contribute negatively to their psychological and emotional well-being.

Racial microaggressions have also been examined in relation to having difficult dialogues about race in the classroom. A series of studies done by Sue and his colleagues (2009) examined the role of racial microaggressions as being triggers to difficult dialogues. The findings indicate that racial microaggressions are delivered verbally and nonverbally by white students and faculty members that are experienced by both students and faculty of color. Another study focused specifically on Black faculty members' experience with racial microaggressions using semi-structured interviews (Constantine, Smith, Redington & Owens, 2008). The authors found seven themes that emerged including *feelings of invisibility, qualifications being questioned by colleagues, staff or students* and *difficulty determining whether the subtle discrimination was race or gender based.* The participants expressed being overlooked and dismissed by their white colleagues. This is an example of how racial microaggressions can contribute to the glass ceiling effect for African American employees by keeping them invisible and excluded in the workplace (Miller & Travers, 2005). These studies also point to the fact that racial microaggressions not only impact students, but faculty of color in ways that are difficult to isolate due to its subtle nature.

Racial Microaggressions – Mental Health Practice

Studies have shown the presence of racial microaggressions in the process of counseling and therapy. One study examined racial microaggressions against African American clients in a cross-racial counseling relationship and found that greater perceived racial microaggressions by African American clients were predictive of weaker therapeutic alliance with the White therapist, resulting in lower ratings of general and multicultural counseling competence (Constantine, 2007). The occurrence of racial microaggressions in a counseling relationship can be especially harmful to the victim, as therapeutic relationships are designed to facilitate human growth and

development. Therefore, the impact can be damaging to the client and lead to premature termination of counseling. Racial microaggressions can also occur in a supervisory relationship. A qualitative study looked at the perceptions of racial microaggressions in Black supervisees in their interaction with their White supervisors (Constantine & Sue, 2007). The authors found seven themes *including invalidation of racial-cultural issues, supervisors making stereotypic assumptions about black supervisees or their clients* and *blaming clients of color for problems stemming from oppression.* The participants discussed feelings of frustration and invalidation due to White supervisors' tendency to minimize, dismiss or avoid a discussion of racial-cultural issues in supervision. This can not only harm the supervisory relationship, but also results in not being able to provide culturally sensitive and appropriate services to clients of color. What is important to highlight is that this study looked at a situation when the victim knew the perpetrator of the racial microaggression in a context with a different power dynamic. Even though the Black supervisees in the study believed that the racial microaggressive acts of the White supervisors were grounded in unconscious biases or ignorance, the impact nonetheless evoked feelings of shock, disbelief, anger and disappointment. Furthermore, the participants also made excuses for the supervisors, rationalizing their behaviors and believing that it was unintentional. The difficulty in being able to process and work through these reactions may lead to stronger and longer-lasting negative emotional impact to both the racial microaggressive incident and to the perpetrator. These studies further point to the idea of how the impact of microaggressions may vary depending on the relationship and the power difference between the victim and the perpetrator.

Asian Americans and Racial Microaggressions

Despite the belief that Asian Americans are model minorities and unaffected by racial intolerance, widespread prejudice and discrimination continue to take a toll on their standard of living, self-esteem, and psychological well-being (Wong & Halgin, 2006). Unfortunately, many of the existing studies that examined the relationship between racist events and mental health typically have not included the experiences of Asian Americans (Liang et al., 2004), especially since Asians are less likely than other racial minorities to report such incidents. As a result, these findings may not accurately describe and apply to this population. In a study that examined Asian Americans' experience with racial microaggressions, 98% of participants reported at least one microaggressive encounter in the past year and 99% of participants reported vicarious experience of some form of racism directed at another individual (Alvarez et al., 2006; Ong et al., 2013). Studies have found that racial microaggressions against Asians have been significantly related to higher levels of substance abuse (Gee, Delva & Takeuchi, 2007) and depression (Noh & Kaspar, 2003).

Some researchers have hypothesized that there may be qualitative differences in the way discrimination and racism is expressed against Asian Americans in comparison to African Americans or Latino/Hispanic Americans (Liang et al., 2004; Yoo & Lee, 2005). Understanding these differences is critical in order to counter against the impact on Asian Americans and learn adaptive ways to cope (Noh et al., 1999). The only study to date that examined Asian Americans' experience of racial microaggressions is a qualitative study that identified microaggressive themes specific to this population (Ong et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2007). The findings of this study indicated eight themes, four of which were similar to the original taxonomy (Sue et al., 2007): *Alien in own land, Ascription of Intelligence, Pathologizing Cultural*

Values/Communication Styles and *Second-Class citizen*. However, the underlying meaning of the microaggression may be quite different between the racial groups. For example, the theme "*Ascription of Intelligence*" for Asian Americans (good in math and science) is contrasted to that of African Americans (intellectually inferior).

Another study examined the impact of seemingly innocuous situations that can be experienced as racial microaggressions for Asian Americans and found similar themes of *feeling invisible, being perceived as a foreigner in one's own land* and *being treated like a second-class citizen* (Wang, Leu & Shoda, 2011). The authors developed potential racial microaggressive incidents based around these themes and found that thinking that one is treated differently due to one' s own race was strongly associated with greater negative emotional consequences. The findings illustrate that simply perceiving racial microaggressions that do not necessarily involve differential treatment may influence the emotional well-being of Asian Americans.

Sue and colleagues (2007) found four themes that were distinct to Asian Americans: *Denial of racial reality, Exoticization of Asian American women, Invalidation of interethnic differences, and Invisibility.* The theme of *Denial of Racial Reality* refers to the notion that Asians' experiences of discrimination and microaggressions are invalidated. This may be a result of the persistent adherence to the model minority myth, as one participant was told that, "Asians are the new Whites." Although the perpetrator expressed these comments as an intention to compliment the Asian participant, the underlying message that is being communicated is that Asians do not experience racism and that inequities do not exist for Asians. The other three themes further highlight the specific forms of microaggressions that are unique to this group. These studies indicate both the similarity in the way Asian Americans' experience racial

microaggressions, as well as highlight key differences that exist in comparison to other racial groups.

Table 2
Asian American Microaggressive Themes

MICROAGGRESSIVE THEMES	**DEFINITION**	**EXAMPLE**
Theme 1: *Alien in Own Land*	Assumption that all Asian Americans are foreigners or foreign-born	"Where are you from?" "You speak good English" "Where were you born?"
Theme 2*: Ascription of Intelligence*	Degree of intelligence is assigned to an Asian American based on his/her race	"You are really good at math." "You people always do well in school"
Theme 3: *Denial of Racial Reality*	Invalidation or dismissal of experiences of racism and discrimination, inequities do not exist for Asians	"Asians are the new Whites"
Theme 4: *Exoticization of Asian American Women*	Asian American women are relegated to an exotic category, only needed for the physical needs of White men.	"Asian women are great girlfriends, wait hand and foot on men, and don't back-talk" "Asian fetishes"
Theme 5: *Invalidation of Interethnic Differences*	Minimize or deny differences that exist between interethnic groups or the existence of other Asian American groups	"All Asians look alike" "Aren't you all Chinese?"
Theme 6: *Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication Styles*	Asian cultural values and communication styles are less desirable and indicators of deficits	"Asians who are silent are disengaged or inattentive" "You must adapt the American way"
Theme 7: *Second Class Citizenship*	Being treated as a lesser being or second class citizen	"Asians are not deserving of good service in restaurants and are lesser than Whites"
Theme 8: *Invisibility*	Being overlooked and left out of issues and discussions on race.	"Race dialogues are only for Black and Whites"

After encountering a racial microaggression, Asian participants reported feelings of belittlement, anger, rage, frustration, alienation, and of constantly being invalidated. Many described strong and lasting negative reactions to the constant racial microaggressions they experienced from their well-intentioned friends, neighbors, teachers, co-workers and colleagues. The authors point out that microaggressions often play a role in denying the racial reality of Asian Americans and strongly perpetuate the "model minority" myth (Sue et al., 2007). However, it is important to point out that the study consisted of only ten participants and did not include all Asian ethnicities. Therefore, more research need to be conducted to explore within-group differences, the types of microaggressions that are more pervasive in certain ethnic groups, the harmful messages that are being conveyed and how individuals cope with the harmful impact.

The power of racial microaggressions lies in their invisibility to the perpetrator and oftentimes, the recipient (Sue, 2005). Because many White individuals experience themselves as good, decent human beings who believe in equality and democracy, they find it difficult to believe they possess biased racial attitudes and engage in discriminatory behaviors. Due to this inherent belief of perceiving themselves as being moral, microaggressive acts are often explained or justified by 'valid' reasons. However, for the recipient of a microaggression, there remain questions regarding whether it really happened and the unexplainable feeling of being attacked, disrespected or invalidated. Although overt racist acts are easier to detect, the very nature of microaggressions is surrounded by ambiguous situations and indefinable reactions. As a result, there are four psychological dilemmas that are created for both the perpetrator and the recipient. First, there is a *clash of racial realities*. Many Whites believe that racism is no longer a significant factor in the lives of people of color. They believe that discrimination is declining

and that equality has been achieved with minorities having a better quality of life. They also do not view themselves as racist or capable of displaying racist behaviors. This is in contrast to the way minorities view Whites as being racially insensitive and continually adhering to the belief that the White race is superior and treating racial and ethnic minorities poorly due to their 'inferior' status.

The *invisibility of unintentional expressions of bias* is the second dilemma, which refers to how recipients 'prove' that microaggressions occurred. Compounding this issue is that in most cases, assessments about whether racist acts have occurred are most likely made by those who are disempowered rather than those who enjoy the privileges of power (Jones, 1997). However, perpetrators challenge the very existence of racial microaggressions without conscious recognition of the underlying racial bias of what had occurred. Because microaggressions are subtle and unintentional, they are most likely to occur in situations when other rationales can be offered to explain the prejudicial behavior. After encountering microaggressive acts, recipients are made to feel that they are being too sensitive or have a tendency to overreact, which highlights the third dilemma, or the *perceived minimal harm of racial microaggressions*. Despite this perception, the subtle nature of racial microaggressions can be more damaging and injurious to people of color than overt racist acts (Sue, 2003). The *Catch-22 of responding to microaggressions* is the last dilemma, which draws attention to the internal process of the recipients. After determining whether a microaggression has occurred, the recipients must decide how to react, which may result in different consequences depending on the decision.

Having to navigate through these dilemmas requires a lot of effort and energy that will inevitably take its physical, psychological and emotional toll on the recipients. What adds to the difficulty in truly understanding the experience of encountering microaggressions is the

inadequacy of measures to accurately capture the constructs and the different ways that researchers conceptualize and understand impact. Because microaggressive incidents are pervasive and affect many different aspects of daily life, it is easy to underestimate the burden of stress resulting from prejudice and discrimination (Meyer, 2003). One model that we can use to examine the impact of microaggressions is using the stress process model.

Stress

The stress process has been identified as a particularly relevant framework for conceptualizing and understanding the impact of discrimination and microaggressions on mental health issues among people of color. The concept of stressors includes a broad array of problematic conditions and experiences that can challenge the adaptive capacities of people (Pearlin, 2010). Stressors appear either in the form of disruptive events (e.g. single microaggressive incident) or more persistent hardships and problems built into the fabric of social life (e.g. institutional racism). The chronic hardships and stressors arising from these institutional domains are experienced as particularly stressful by the person confronting them (Pearlin, 2010). Furthermore, using the stress process framework provides insight into the variety of dimensions of physical and mental health resulting from exposure to stressors. For example, a person may feel anxious immediately following a stressful event with a decrease in the symptoms when the stressor is reduced. In contrast, other physical health concerns may take several years to develop, even after the impact of the stressful incident has diminished. Therefore, in order to better understand what happens for individuals when they encounter stress, a stress model will be examined.

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) model of stress is a process through which the person evaluates whether a particular encounter with the environment is relevant to his or her well-being

and if so, in what ways. This can especially be an informative model to use when looking at a person's experience with microaggressions. Due to the indistinct form of microaggressions, the meaning can vary depending on the perspective of the recipient. Because racial microaggressions are often obscured by perception and not always made explicit, the appraiser also needs to infer meta-communication from the perpetrator. The model defines person-environment interaction as the process when information is transmitted to the person from the environment (e.g. racist incident). Stress results when the characteristics of the person and the nature of the environment are incongruent and the person evaluates the event as straining his or her psychological resources. Then, the individual makes a *primary appraisal* assessment, evaluating whether he or she has anything at stake in this encounter. For example, was that a microaggressive act? Will it harm or threaten my self-esteem? It can be assessed as irrelevant, benign-positive or stressful. If the event is interpreted as meaningful and stressful, then coping and self-regulatory responses are triggered. The *secondary appraisal* occurs during the evaluative phase of the process when a person evaluates if anything can be done to overcome or prevent harm. Various coping options are considered, such as altering the situation, accepting it, seeking more information or holding back from acting impulsively (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis & Gruen, 1986). For example, after encountering a microaggressive incident, individuals can choose to remain silent, confront and question the perpetrator's intentions or react with emotional or physical response.

Impact on Health

Perceiving racial microaggressions can have detrimental effects on the emotional, psychological and physical health. Studies have found that chronic exposure to racial microaggressions was related to increased heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure (Ryan,

Gee & Laflamme, 2006) as well as illegal drug use, prescription drug use and alcohol dependence (Gee et al., 2007). Discrimination was found to be associated with distress and negative psychological well-being with a sample of Asian Americans (Lee, 2003; Noh et al., 1999; Yoo & Lee, 2005). One study found self-reported everyday discrimination correlated with increased numbers of chronic health conditions such as cardiovascular conditions, respiratory conditions, indicators of pain (chronic back or neck problems), frequent or severe headaches, chronic pain and ulcers (Gee, 2002). The stress associated with a perceived discrimination or racist act may become internalized and manifested through physical symptoms (Sue & Morishima, 1992), especially since Asian Americans are less likely than other racial minorities to report such racial encounters (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1992). Therefore, a more accurate understanding of Asian Americans' experience with perceived discrimination merits further attention.

Although more research is needed to better understand how certain life events can trigger stress that leads to certain outcomes, many studies indicate the adverse consequences of perceiving microaggressions on the emotional, psychological and physical well-being of racial and ethnic minorities. The measure of everyday discrimination was a consistent and robust predictor of health status (Williams, Yu, Jackson & Anderson, 1997) and one-third of respondents in the 25-74 age range reported being exposed to at least one major discriminatory event, with over 60% of participants experiencing day-to-day perceived discrimination (Kessler et al., 1999). Incidents of perceived discrimination, including institutional forms, were found to have detrimental effects on health, regardless of the health indicator used, with an increased risk for psychological distress, suicidal ideation, state and trait anxiety and clinical depression (Hwang & Goto, 2008; Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002). Participants who reported experiencing

discrimination exhibited greater stress on a measure of stress and depressive symptoms (Pak, Dion & Dion, 1991; Salgado, 1987). The presence and prevalence of discrimination should be regarded as a relevant clinical issue, whether or not the client perceives it as a problem (Dobbins & Skillings, 2000). Unfortunately, institutional racism affects the allocation of and access to resources necessary for appropriate treatment and well-being for racial and ethnic minorities (Rollock & Gordon, 2000)

Differential Impact of Racial Microaggressions

Studies have shown the insidious nature of racial microaggressions and how the impact can differ based on the nature of the relationship with the perpetrator and the power dynamic that may exist (Solórzano et al., 2009; Sue et al., 2008). Although this was not the central question being addressed in these studies, it is evident that these factors may influence how one experiences a microaggressive incident, interprets the meaning and manages the impact. The nature of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator and its possible impact has not been studied in the context of racial microaggressions. However, studies have examined the perpetrator's relationship to the victim as a relevant factor in the area of childhood trauma. Research has found that close relationship with the perpetrator caused more serious effects (Kendall-Tackett, Williams & Finkelhor, 1993; Maynes & Feinauer, 1994), with victims reporting higher levels of distress when abused by someone they knew in comparison to strangers (Feinauer, 1989). Although these findings are limited to experiences of childhood trauma, due to the insidious and prevalence of experiencing microaggressions, the accumulated effects may be potentially damaging in a way that is similar to the way one experiences trauma.

Some studies have looked at characteristics of the perpetrator that may influence the impact of racial discrimination to the victims. A study looked at the different experience of

perceiving adult and peer discrimination with a sample of Black, Latino and Asian American adolescents in relation to psychological adjustment (Greene et al., 2006). Asian American adolescents reported more peer discrimination when compared to other adolescents, whereas Black and Latino adolescents frequently encountered institutional discrimination (Fisher et al., 2000; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). The authors suggest that discrimination by peers is possibly more detrimental to psychological adjustment than discrimination by adults, as peer discrimination was linked with changes in both self-esteem and depressive symptoms over time. Another study examined the differential impact based on the race of the perpetrator and found that African Americans' experience of discrimination was more strongly related to psychological distress when the perpetrator was Black and not White individuals (Mays, Cochran & Barnes, 2007).

These studies looked at different characteristics of the perpetrator (age and race) that resulted in differential impact. However, the nature of the recipient's relationship to the perpetrator, more specifically, the degree of familiarity and power difference has not been examined in the context of racial microaggressions. In a study that examined Asian Americans' experience of racial microaggressions, many participants spoke about the differential impact of perceiving microaggressions depending on if the perpetrators were peers, neighbors, friends or authority figures (Sue et al., 2007). Not only was it disturbing that personal or respected acquaintances could make such insensitive remarks, but participants also found themselves making excuses for their friends by denying their own racial reality and rationalizing the perpetrator's biases and hurtful remarks. This raises the possibility that microaggressive encounters may be easier to handle if the perpetrator was a stranger. Other studies reported the impact of racial microaggressions when the perpetrator was a friend (Solórzano et al., 2009) or

occupied a higher position of authority and power (Constantine & Sue, 2007). These studies did not explicitly focus on the differential impact of microaggressions with respect to the relationship and power difference between the victim and the aggressor. However, it remains a fundamental question to explore in advancing research on racial microaggressions.

For example, how does one experience a microaggression coming from a stranger on the street? Will it be different if it is a friend? Does the degree of closeness or familiarity between a target and a perpetrator impact the degree of psychological distress? One can argue that the presence of a close relationship with the perpetrator can cause more harm for the target, having to spend time and energy rationalizing the aggressor's behavior, and thereby, invalidate their own experience. It can also lead to re-traumatization of the event if the victim has regular or frequent contact with the perpetrator. On the other hand, the impact can be less because the target may come up with reasonable explanations to explain the damaging remark or action and may temporarily relieve oneself from experiencing negative emotions. This can be a form of self-protection after being hurt from someone they know and are familiar with. Additionally, how does the power dynamic or status influence the impact of a microaggression? For example, does a microaggression from a peer or co-worker have similar impact as when coming from a person of authority? Will it cause more or less psychological distress? One can argue that it may be more difficult to encounter microaggressive incidents coming from someone of power because there may be more consequences if one reacts negatively (loss of job, negative evaluations, etc). Therefore, the victim is forced to struggle with managing and holding one's own emotions, which can impact job or school performance, productivity and ultimately, cause harm to psychological and physical health. These are questions that have remain unexplored and left unanswered by previous studies.

Statement of Problem

One of the factors in identifying potentially traumatic racist incidents is the relationship between the recipient and the perpetrator (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005). The authors posit that being racially targeted by a familiar, trusted individual can be particularly traumatizing. This current investigation is intended to explore the differential impact of experiencing racial microaggressions based on two characteristics: the familiarity (presence or absence of a pre-existing relationship) and the power dynamic (equal or higher power) that exists between the recipient and the perpetrator. Below are the four conditions that will be presented.

Table 3

4 Conditions of the Study

	RELATIONSHIP *Familiar*	**RELATIONSHIP** *Unfamiliar*
POWER *Equal*	Friend, Neighbor, Co-Worker	Classmate in Class, Colleague
POWER *Higher*	Advisor, Supervisor	Guest Lecturer, Administrator

Research Questions

1. Do racial microaggressions directed at Asian Americans have harmful psychological consequences?
2. How does the presence or absence of a pre-existing relationship with the perpetrator impact Asian Americans' experience of racial microaggressions?

3. How does the absence or presence of a power dynamic impact Asian American's experience of racial microaggressions?
4. How does the combined effect of relationship and power status impact how Asian Americans' experience racial microaggressions?

Chapter III

METHOD

This study was conducted to examine the impact of racial microaggressions among self-identified Asian Americans. More specifically, a 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial design was used to examine 2 factors that vary the relationship between the target and the perpetrator of a racial microaggression: (a) the level of familiarity and (b) level of power. A quantitative design was utilized to explore how these variables may influence how Asian Americans experience racial microaggressions. The current chapter will outline the study's participants, measures, procedures and plan of analysis.

Participants

Participants were self-identified Asian Americans who are at least 18 years old. The sample consisted of 263 Asian Americans, ranging in age from 18 to 60 with a mean age of 32.71 (SD = 8.3). Approximately sixty-four percent of participants (n=169) were female and thirty-six percent (n=94) were male. In identifying their ethnicity, the majority of participants identified as Korean (38.8%) followed by Chinese (28.1%), Taiwanese (10.7%), Filipino (10.3%) and Japanese (8.4%). The sample was highly educated, with over 90% of the participants obtaining a 4-year degree (39.5%), master's degree (30.8%) or a doctoral/professional degree (20.2%). In regards to their generational status, sixty percent (n=159) identified as second-generation, participants born in the US with at least one foreign-born parent, followed by thirty-percent (n=78) identifying as first-generation or participants who were born outside of the US and immigrated. Approximately half of the participants (50.2%) identified their socioeconomic status as being middle class, followed by upper middle class

(36.9%), working class (12.6%) and upper class (2.7%). Please see Table 4 for complete demographic information about the sample.

Table 4. *Demographic characteristics of participants (N = 263)*

	N	Percentage	Mean	SD
Age	263	--	32.71	8.3
Sex				
Male	94	35.7		
Female	169	64.3		
Generational Status				
First-generation	78	29.7		
Second-generation	159	60.5		
Third-generation	28	10.7		
Socioeconomic Status				
Working class	33	12.6		
Middle class	132	50.2		
Upper-middle class	97	36.9		
Upper class	7	2.7		
Education				
High school diploma/GED	5	1.9		
Some college	18	6.8		
2-year college degree	4	1.52		
4-year college degree	104	39.5		
Master's degree	81	30.8		
Doctoral/professional degree	53	20.2		
Ethnicity				
Asian Indian	8	3.0		
Bangladeshi	1	0.4		
Bhutanese	0	0.0		
Burmese	0	0.0		
Cambodian	3	1.1		
Chinese	74	28.1		
Filipino	27	10.3		
Hmong	1	0.4		
Indonesian	1	0.4		
Japanese	22	8.4		
Korean	102	38.8		
Laotian	0	0.0		
Malaysian	2	0.8		
Nepalese	0	0.0		
Pakistani	0	0.0		

Sri Lankan	0	0.0
Taiwanese	28	10.7
Thai	4	1.5
Vietnamese	6	2.3
Other	17	6.5

Procedure

Participants were informed about the study and recruited via links on Asian American interest listservs (e.g. Asian American Psychological Association), social networking websites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter), and organizational email listservs (e.g. Asian American Community Foundation). Potential participants were also encouraged to ask friends, family and colleagues who meet the inclusion criteria to participate in the study. This technique known as snowball, is useful in recruiting participants from under-represented populations (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004). Participants were sent an email detailing the inclusion criteria and a brief explanation of the study with a link to the online survey. The use of online surveys for psychological research is becoming more acceptable, especially when concerned with achieving a large, diverse sample of participants (Heppner & Heppner, 2004). After clicking on the link, participants were directed to the informed consent, confidentiality and participants' rights pages. The participants gave consent to participate in the research study by electronically signing the informed consent form. Then, they were asked to complete the on-line survey in the following order: Demographic Questionnaire, Vignette, Reactions to Racial Microaggressions scale, Positive and Negative Affect Schedule-Expanded Form and Awareness of Perpetual Foreigner Stereotype Scale. The Survey Monkey algorithm randomly assigned participants to one of four vignettes (25% probability for each vignette). After completing the survey, participants were debriefed about the study and given the contact information of the researcher to direct questions about the survey, the informed consent or to inquire about the results of the study. Participation in the study was

confidential, voluntary and participants had a choice to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. The research data was password protected and only the primary investigator had access to the completed surveys. Although the participants were given unlimited amount of time to complete the online survey, the study required approximately 15-20 minutes of time. Participants did not receive any monetary compensation for participating in the survey.

A total of 308 participants clicked on the online survey link. Twenty-five participants did not respond to any of the questions, with additional 25 participants responding only to the demographic variables and did not proceed to the study. These 45 responses were deleted, bringing the sample size down to 263.

Manipulations

Participants were randomly assigned to read one out of four possible vignettes, each describing identical scenario that differs only in the description of the perpetrator (See Appendix B). The perpetrator in the vignette was described in relation to the target on two aspects of the relationship: (a) level of familiarity and (b) power status. *Familiarity* is defined as the presence or absence of a close relationship between the perpetrator and the target. In the vignette, this condition was manipulated in the description of the perpetrator having a pre-existing relationship with the target (familiar condition) or the perpetrator who interacts with the target for the first time (unfamiliar condition). *Power status* is defined as having equal or high power. In the vignette, this condition was illustrated in the description of the perpetrator as someone in a position of authority to evaluate, judge or assess the target. The perpetrator was presented as someone of authority (high power) or who does not possess authority over the target (equal power).

The four conditions in this study are: (a) Familiar and Equal Power, (b) Familiar and High Power, (c) Unfamiliar and Equal Power and (d) Unfamiliar and High Power. The vignettes were identical except in the description of the perpetrator in relation to the target. A manipulation check was given to the participants after reading the vignette to assess for its effectiveness in distinguishing the four conditions of the study. They were asked to respond to items that were designed to assess the extent to which they a) felt close to the perpetrator and b) perceived the perpetrator as an authority figure (See Appendix C).

Measures

The current study utilized 5 measures: 1) a brief Demographic Questionnaire, 2) Vignette, 3) Reactions to Racial Microaggressions scale, 4) Positive and Negative Affect Schedule-Expanded Form (PANAS-X; Watson & Clark, 1994) and 5) Awareness of Perpetual Foreigner Stereotype scale (APFS; Huynh, Devos & Smalarz, 2011).

Demographic Questionnaire. A brief demographic data form was given to participants to report on general background information including age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geography and educational attainment (See Appendix A).

*Vignette***.** The four vignettes used in the current study were developed from a careful analysis of common microaggressive themes experienced by Asian Americans, situational samples used in other studies, and related literature on perpetrator-target relationships. A similar study developed potential racial microaggressive situations based around themes such as feeling invisible, being perceived as foreigner in one's own land and treated like a second-class citizens (Wang et al., 2011). An item exemplifying a theme is "Imagine that you are at a domestic airport food court ordering a meal. The cashier rings up your order, pauses, and asks, "So where

are you from?" Another example is "Imagine that you are at a fraternity party with people you do not know very well. You try to join in on a conversation but no one pays attention to you."

In the current study, the vignette will provide an example of the theme "*Alien in Own Land"* derived from a study done by Sue and colleagues (2007) on Asian Americans' experience of racial microaggressions. This vignette will describe a scenario in which an Asian American individual interacts with a perpetrator after giving an oral presentation in class. This exchange between the target and the perpetrator will highlight the microaggressive theme, which was found to be prevalent and nearly universally voiced by Asian Americans of all ethnicities (Sue et al., 2007). This notion embodies the assumption that all Asian Americans are perpetual foreigners or foreign-born. An example of this theme manifested in a question would be "*Where are you from*?" or in a statement "*You speak good English*." (See Appendix B).

Reactions to Racial Microaggressions Scale. In order to assess for immediate impact after reading the scenario presented in the vignette, a 7-item measure was developed for the current study. Participants were asked to answer using a 5-point likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree)* to 5 *(Strongly Agree).* Examples of items include "I would be disturbed by this incident" and "I would continue to think about this incident for the rest of the day." The current study yielded Cronbach's alpha of .74.

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule-Expanded Form (PANAS-X; Watson & Clark, 1994). The PANAS-X is a 60-item, self-report measure that assesses different mood states, expanded from the original Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). In addition to the two original scales, the PANAS-X also assesses 11 states: Fear, Sadness, Guilt, Hostility, Shyness, Fatigue, Surprise, Joviality, Self-Assurance, Attentiveness and Serenity. Single adjectives rate the extent to which participants feel each of the mood states

using a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*Very slightly or Not at all)* to 5 (*Extremely).* Participants can rate the mood states depending on different time frames such as "right now" or "during the past month." This scale measures *state* affect or the short-term fluctuations in mood and *trait* affect or the measure of long-term affectivity. The current study will utilize the scale to measure *state* affect using Positive and Negative Affect.

In addition to the two 10-item scales measuring Negative and Positive Affect, the 11 subscales are classified into three broad categories: Fear, Sadness, Guilt and Hostility scales are classified as *Basic Negative Emotion Scales*; Joviality, Self-Assurance and Attentiveness as classified as *Basic Positive Emotion Scales* and Shyness, Fatigue, Surprise and Serenity are grouped as *Other Affective States* (Watson & Clark 1994). The General Dimension Scales include Negative Affect (e.g. *nervous*) and Positive Affect (e.g. *determined*). The Basic Negative Emotion Scales include four subscales. The Fear subscale includes items such as *afraid* and *shaky*, Hostility consists of *angry* and *irritable,* Guilt contains *ashamed* and *angry at self* and the Sadness subscale includes *alone* and *sad.* The Basic Positive Emotion Scales include three subscales. The Joviality includes items such as *delighted,* the Self-Assurance subscale includes *fearless* and the Attentiveness subscale includes *alert.* Lastly, Other Affective States include four subscales. The Shyness subscale includes *timid,* the Fatigue subscale contains *drowsy,* the Serenity subscale includes *relaxed* and Surprise subscale consists of *astonished.* Higher scores indicate stronger experience of a particular emotion.

The sample used for psychometric data was gathered from undergraduate students, but authors also provided data on various adult and psychiatric patient samples, totaling approximately 8,500 participants using eight different temporal instruments: (a) *Moment,* (b) *Today,* (c) *Past Few Days,* (d) *Past Week,* (e) *Past Few Weeks,* (f) *Past Month,* (g) *Past Year* and

(h) *General.* Cronbach's coefficient alpha for the Positive Affect scale ranged from .83 to .90, and from .85 to .90 for Negative Affect scale. The coefficient alphas for the 11 subscales were .87 (Fear), .87 (Sadness), .88 (Guilt) and .85 (Hostility), .88 (Fatigue), .83 (Self-Assurance), .83 (Shyness), .93 (Joviality), .78 (Attentiveness), .76 (Serenity), and .77 (Surprise). The scales demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity, providing less redundant and more differentiated assessment of affect and were found to be significantly related to measures of personality and emotionality (Watkins & Cark, 1994). Furthermore, the scales can be used to assess both *state affect* or relatively short-term fluctuations in mood, and *trait affect* or the measure of long-term, individual differences in affect. The current study yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .84 for Negative Affect Scale and .89 for Positive Affect scale.

Awareness of the Perpetual Foreigner Stereotype Scale (APFS; Huynh, Devos & Smalarz, 2011). This self-report measure consists of 13 items, rated on a 5-point Likert-type ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree)* to 5 (*Strongly Agree).* This scale measured the extent to which participants believed they were perceived as a foreigner by others. Items include "Most people have difficulty viewing me as an American" and "People sometimes ask me where I am from." The reliability for the scale was .87 for Asian Americans (Huynh et al., 2011) and .89 for the current study.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

This chapter will present the findings of the current study examining the differential impact of experiencing racial microaggressions for Asian Americans. The study utilized a 2x2 between-subjects factorial design using a vignette that differed on two conditions. Data was collected online via Survey Monkey and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS).

First, preliminary analyses were conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in participants responses based on demographic information. Then, additional exploratory data analyses were conducted to ascertain normality, homogeneity of variances, skewness, kurtosis and internal reliability using coefficient alpha for participants' scores on the scales used in this study. Lastly, main analyses were conducted to test the relationship among the variables and evaluate the four research questions.

1. Do racial microaggressions directed at Asian Americans have harmful psychological consequences?
2. How does the presence or absence of a pre-existing relationship with the perpetrator impact Asian Americans' experience of racial microaggressions?
3. How does the absence or presence of a power dynamic impact Asian American's experience of racial microaggressions?
4. How does the combined effect of relationship and power status impact how Asian Americans' experience racial microaggressions?

Preliminary Analyses

Prior to running the main statistical analyses, the distribution of continuous variables was explored in terms of their normality. For a listing of the descriptive statistics, please refer to Table 5. The tests for reliability all fell within acceptable range for all the scales used (Cronbach's alpha of above .70). Assumptions of ANOVA (normality, homogeneity of variances) were tested via Levene's test and by charting the distributions of the variables. The skew and kurtosis of the Reaction Scale, APFS and PANAS-X all fell within the acceptable range (-1 to 1). No significant outliers were found among the variables.

Table 5. *Preliminary Analyses (N=221)*

	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Reliability (α)
Reactions to Racial Microaggressions Scale	23.92	5.13	-0.47	0.22	0.74
APFS	40.96	9.44	-0.18	0.17	0.89
PANAS-X Negative	18.59	6.28	0.72	-0.27	0.84
PANAS-X Positive	21.98	8.73	0.76	-0.32	0.89

Note: APFS = Awareness of Perpetual Foreigner Scale; PANAS-X = Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale-Revised

To determine if there are any significant differences in participants' responses based on demographic information, each demographic variable was explored to account for potential differences that may impact the main analyses. Results revealed a main effect for gender on the Reactions to Racial Microaggressions scale [$F(1, 255) = 13.0$, $p < 0.01$]. Female participants rated the experience as significantly worse (M=24.76) than male participants (M=22.41). Analyses using the Reactions to Racial Microaggressions scale were conducted with gender in

the model to account for this difference. Additionally, t-tests and chi-square tests were used to compare the 45 participants who dropped out from the study with the rest of the participants who completed the survey. There were no significant differences in comparison of the demographic descriptive data among those completed the survey and those who did not.

Manipulation Check

A manipulation check was conducted to assess for the effectiveness in varying the conditions of familiarity and power. To test the familiarity manipulation within the vignette, participants responded to the questions, "*Please rate the degree of familiarity or closeness you feel towards the person you interacted with in the vignette*" (on a scale of “Not at all close” to “Extremely close”). To test the power manipulation, participants responded to the question, "*Please rate the degree of authority or power you feel the person has in the vignette*" (on a scale of “Equal status” to “Higher status”).

An independent samples t-test was conducted on each of these questions between the conditions. The reported familiarity of the perpetrator was in the expected direction as participants in the "familiar" (M=2.00, SD=1.24) condition rated the perpetrator as slightly more familiar in comparison to the "unfamiliar" condition (M=1.86, SD=1.11). However the difference did not reach significance, $t(261)=-1.00$, $p=.32$. The authority manipulation did have the expected effect as participants in the "high power" condition (M=2.8, SD=1.4) rated the perpetrator as significantly higher in authority than in the "equal power” condition (M=1.92, SD=1.2), $t(261)= -5.5$, $p <. 01$.

Tests of Primary Research Questions

Research Question 1: Do racial microaggressions directed at Asian Americans have harmful psychological consequences?

This question was answered in two parts. First, bivariate correlations were run on all the scales to determine if positive and negative affect, indicators of psychological consequences, were correlated with the Reactions to Racial Microaggressions scale and the APFS scale. Table 6 summarizes the results. The APFS scale was significantly correlated with negative affect, such that Asian Americans who reported higher incidences of feeling like a perpetual foreigner also reported higher negative affect, ($r=.39, p<.01$). Additionally, participants who reported the experience within the vignette as affecting them more negatively also reported more negative emotion, ($r=.59$, $p<.01$). Positive affect was not significantly correlated with either of these scales.

Table 6. *Variable Inter-correlations (N=221)*

Subscales	1	2	3	4
1. APFS	1.00			
2. Reactions to Racial Microaggressions Scale	.12	1.00		
3. Negative Affect	.39**	.59**	1.00	
4. Positive Affect	-.007	.006	.18*	1.00

Note: **indicates that the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. *indicates that the correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Next, a univariate analysis of variance was conducted to test if the manipulations had any effect on negative emotion, positive emotion and APFS scale responses. The manipulations of familiarity and authority showed no significant main effects on negative affect, nor did the interaction between familiar and authority reach significance. Refer to Table 7.

Table 7. *Analysis of Variance for Familiarity and Authority on Negative Affect (N = 220)*

Source	*df*	*F*	η^2	*P*
Familiarity	1	.159	.001	.690
Authority	1	1.819	.008	.179
Familiarity X Authority	1	.248	.001	.619
Within-Group Error	217	(39.63)		

Note: The value enclosed in parentheses represents mean square error.

Gender was also added as a covariate due to the results of the preliminary analyses of the differences between males and females. Results indicate that Gender did show a main effect, such that females reported significantly greater negative affect (M=19.29, SD=6.27) in comparison to males (M=17.24, SD=6.12), [$F(1, 213) = 5.4$, $p < 0.05$], η^2=.025. The interaction of gender with the other variables did not reach significance. Refer to Table 8.

Table 8. *Analysis of Variance for Familiarity and Authority on Negative Affect with Gender as covariate (N=221)*

Source	*df*	*F*	η^2	*P*
Gender	1	5.4*	.025	.021

* p < .05

For positive affect, familiarity did show a main effect such that participants who read about familiar perpetrators in the vignette reported lower positive affect, [$F(1, 215) = 5.81$, $p < 0.05$], η^2=.026. Authority, gender or the interaction between familiarity and authority were not significant in the analysis. Refer to Table 9. Lastly, no significant effects were found on the responses for the APFS scale for familiarity, authority, gender or any of the interaction terms

Table 9. *Analysis of Variance for Familiarity and Authority on Positive Affect (N = 218)*

Source	*df*	*F*	η^2	*P*
Familiarity	1	5.81*	.026	.017
Authority	1	.944	.004	.332
Familiarity X Authority	1	.089	.000	.766
Within-Group Error	215	(74.97)		

Note: The value enclosed in parentheses represents mean square error.

* p < .05

Research Question 2: How does the degree of familiarity with the perpetrator impact Asian Americans' experience of racial microaggressions?

A univariate analysis of variance was conducted to test if the manipulated conditions of familiarity had an effect on the experience of the racial microaggression measured by the Reactions to Racial Microaggressions scale. Familiarity of the perpetrator did not significantly affect the experience of the racial microaggression, [$F(1, 257) = 0.46$, $p = .5$], η^2=.002. This is possibly due to ineffectiveness of the manipulation indicated by the manipulation check. The results are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10. Analysis of Variance for Gender, Familiarity, and Authority on Experience of Microaggression (N = 257)

Source	*df*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Gender	*1*	*11.43***	*.044*	*.001*
Familiarity	*1*	*0.46*	*.002*	*.50*
Authority	*1*	*4.02*	*.016*	*.05*
Familiarity X Authority	*1*	*3.8*	*.015*	*.05*
Within-Group Error	*252*	*(24.78)*		

*Note: The value enclosed in parentheses represents mean square error. **indicates that the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level*

Research Question 3: How does the absence or presence of a power dynamic impact Asian American's experience of racial microaggressions?

A univariate analysis of variance was conducted to test if the manipulated conditions of authority had an effect on the experience of the racial microaggression. Controlling for gender, the authority of the perpetrator showed a marginally significant main effect on the experience of the racial microaggression measured by the Reactions to Racial Microaggressions Scale, [$F(1, 252) = 4.02$, $p = 0.05$], η^2=.0.016. Results indicate that high power perpetrators induced greater reports of more negative experiences (M=24.58, SD=4.87) when compared to equal power perpetrators (M=23.33, SD=5.31). Refer to Table 10.

Research Question 4: How does the combined effect of relationship and power status impact how Asian Americans' experience racial microaggressions?

A univariate analysis of variance was conducted to test the interaction of manipulated familiarity and authority of microaggression perpetrators. Controlling for gender, a marginally

significant interaction was found between familiarity and authority on the experience of the racial microaggression as measured by the Reactions to Racial Microaggressions scale, [F(1, 252) = 3.8, p = .05], η^2=.015. Refer to Table 10.

Results indicate that high authority and familiar perpetrators appear to exhibit the largest impact of negative experience, possibly driving the interaction effect. Refer to Table 11. Helmert contrasts revealed that the high power *and* familiar perpetrator condition induced significantly more negative experiences from the microaggression event than the other 3 groups combined, $t(253)=2.8$, $p < .01$. Refer to Figure 2 and Table 12 for summary of current study's findings.

Table 11. Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Measures by Familiarity and Power

	Equal Power				High Power			
	Familiar		Unfamiliar		Familiar		Unfamiliar	
Measures	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Reactions to Racial Microaggression	23.02	5.376	23.59	5.283	25.69	5.225	23.79	4.459
Negative Affect	18	5.964	18.08	6.691	19.57	6.675	18.81	5.875
Positive Affect	21.15	7.830	23.64	8.961	19.66	8.328	22.85	9.270
APFS	42.59	8.857	39.64	9.709	41.00	8.723	40.90	10.13

Figure 2. Interaction of Familiarity and Authority on Reported Negative Experience of Microaggression (p=.06)

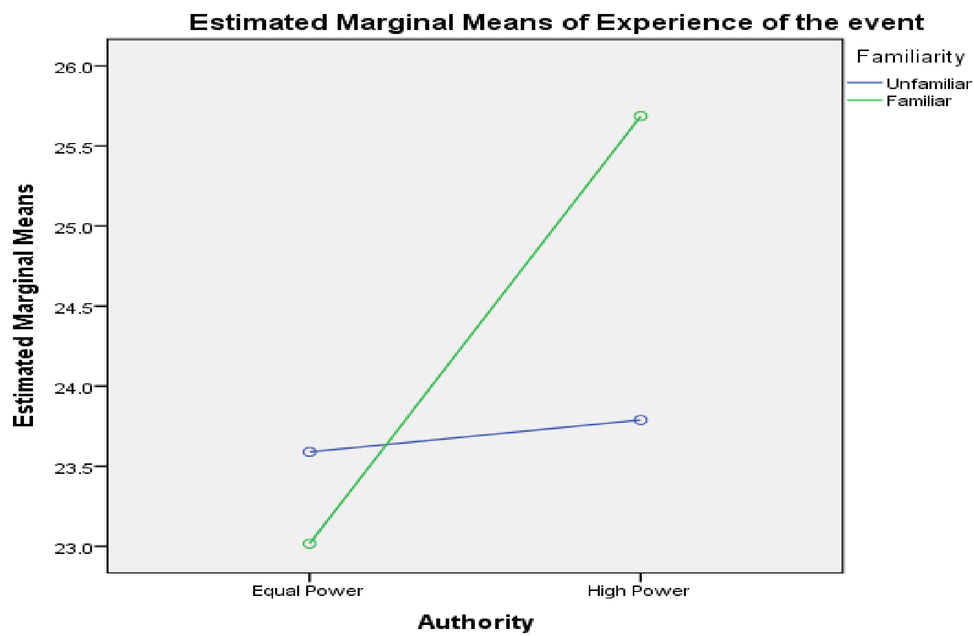


Table 12: Summary of Research Findings

Research Questions	Analysis	Results
1. Do racial microaggressions directed at Asian Americans have harmful psychological consequences?	a. *Bivariate correlations* (Reactions to Racial Microaggressions Scale, APFS, PANAS-X) b. *Univariate analysis of variance* (Conditions, PANAS-X, APFS)	• Asian Americans reporting higher incidences of feeling like a perpetual foreigner → higher negative affect • Negative impact of vignette → higher negative affect Negative Affect • No significance among different conditions • Gender added as covariate o Females reported greater –ve affect vs. males Positive Affect • Familiar perpetrator → lower +ve affect
2. How does the presence or absence of a pre-existing relationship with the perpetrator impact Asian Americans' experience of racial microaggressions?	*Univariate analysis of variance* (Familiarity, Reactions to Racial Microaggressions Scale)	• Relationship to perpetrator did not significantly affect experience of racial microaggressions as measured by Reactions to Racial Microaggressions Scale
3. How does the presence or absence of a power dynamic impact Asian Americans' experience of racial microaggression?	*Univariate analysis of variance* (Authority, Reactions to Racial Microaggressions Scale)	• High power perpetrators → greater reports of –ve experiences as measured by Reactions to Racial Microaggressions Scale
4. How does the combined effect of relationship and power status impact how Asian Americans' experience racial microaggressions?	*Univariate analysis of variance* (Interaction of familiarity and authority, Reactions to Racial Microaggressions Scale)	• High authority + familiar perpetrators → Significantly impact –ve experiences in comparison to other 3 conditions

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter presents an overview of the research findings and their relationship to the current literature on racial microaggressions. Conceptual and methodological limitations of the study will be highlighted and addressed. Lastly, a conclusion of the study and implications for future theory, research and practice will be discussed.

The purpose of the current investigation was to examine the differential impact of racial microaggressions for Asian Americans. Although the model minority myth continues to perpetuate the belief that Asian Americans have "made it" in U.S. society, and are somehow immune from experiencing prejudice and discrimination, an examination of their life circumstances indicates that they are subject to inequities in education, employment and health care (Sue & Sue, 2013). Furthermore, on an individual and group level, studies reveal how racial microaggressions contribute to the detrimental consequences on the psychological, emotional and mental health well-being of Asian Americans (Alvarez et al., 2006; Ong et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2007; Wong & Halgin, 2006). Encountering racial microaggressions has been associated with damaging effects on the emotional, psychological and physical health of targets. The constant exposure to racial microaggressions is linked to increases in heart disease, high blood pressure, back and neck pain, headaches, chronic pain and ulcers (Gee, 2002; Ryan et al., 2006). Additionally, emotional and psychological health are negatively impacted with an increased risk for psychological distress, suicidal ideation, depressive symptoms and anxiety (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002; Hwang & Goto, 2008; Pak et al., 1991; Salgado, 1987).

Many studies have examined the harmful impact of experiencing racial microaggressions. For example, microaggressions have been found to negatively impact psychological adjustment

with participants reporting lower levels of happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem and high levels of negative affect such as feeling irritated or sad (Ong et al., 2013; Torres et al., 2010; Williams, Neighbors & Jackson, 2003). Since Asian Americans have a tendency to exhibit psychological distress through physical symptoms such as fatigue and pain, the impact of experiencing racial discrimination may result in internalizing stress and expressing pain through somatization, thereby increasing the likelihood of developing chronic health conditions such as cardiovascular, respiratory and chronic pain conditions (Gee, 2002; Lee et al., 2001; Nadal & Davidoff, 2012; Weiss et al., 2009).

Although the detrimental impact of experiencing racial discrimination has been explored in various studies, the potential factors that may influence the degree or intensity of the impact remain unexamined. For example, the taxonomy of microaggressions identifies three different forms and multiple themes associated with their manifestations. Are there differences between microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations? How do different themes of microaggressions impact their targets? Studies have found that microaggressive encounters that re-enforce the idea of "alien in one's own land" or being perceived as a perpetual foreigner was the most common experience shared by Asian Americans (Nadal, 2011; Ong et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2007). However, the degree to which this common experience impacts the recipients in comparison to other less common themes (e.g. ascription of intelligence or pathologizing cultural values) is still unclear. The current study explored whether recipients of racial microaggressions have different reactions as a result of their *relationship* with perpetrators or the degree of power differences that exist between them.

In other words, is there a differential impact in encountering microaggressions from a friend when compared to a stranger on the street? What if the perpetrator was someone of authority like a supervisor versus someone who may have an equal power status like a colleague or peer? Therefore, the current study investigated whether level of familiarity and role of power in the recipient's relationship with the perpetrator differentially impacts the experience of a racial microaggression. These questions were explored through a vignette that illustrated a microaggressive encounter with a perpetrator who differed on these conditions.

Main Findings

Harmful Impact of Racial Microaggressions

Similar to previous studies, the results of the current investigation illustrate the negative impact of racial microaggressions with participants reporting high incidences of feeling like a perpetual foreigner or alien in one's own land, which is identified as a form of microinvalidation (Ong et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2011). These findings are consistent with past studies that revealed microinvalidations as the most common type of racial microaggressions experienced by Asian Americans (Nadal, 2011; Ong et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2007). Interestingly, participants reported having lower positive affect when encountering racial microaggression from a familiar perpetrator. This is in contrast to a study done by Ong and his colleagues (2013) that did not find any association between microaggressions and positive affect. Their study examined racial microaggressions experienced by Asian Americans using daily process methods as a way for participants to record their microaggressive incidents using a diary. The difference in their findings in comparison to the current investigation may indicate the accumulated effects of experiencing negative emotions rather than a *lack* of positive affect. Using a diary to record

their experiences, participants were able to report on multiple microaggressive incidents that occurred throughout the day. Additionally, participants encountering *real-life* microaggressions are more likely to remember the direct, immediate negative impact rather than reacting to an *imagined* scenario. Therefore, it is possible that the study highlighted the accumulated negative impact rather than a lack of positive affect.

Because microaggressive stressors are taxing to a person both physically and psychologically, people of color report exhaustion and fatigue (Sue, 2010). Having to deal with microaggressions on a daily basis, the cumulative effects may elicit a range of reactions in addition to anger, frustration and agitation. Future studies should examine not only the immediate impact of encountering a racial microaggression, but also how the *initial* reaction may change and evolve over time. In a qualitative study about Asian Americans' experience of racial microaggressions, participants reported that oftentimes, it was difficult to even determine whether a microaggression occurred. Even *after* acknowledging that a microaggression had occurred, participants would "make excuses" for the perpetrator by way of rationalizing their hurtful words or actions (Sue et al., 2007). These results suggest that what remains with the person may not only be the initial anger or rage to the specific microaggressive incident, but uncertainty in how to process and validate one's own experience.

Effect of Familiarity

The study did not yield significant results when examining familiarity between the target and the perpetrator. This may have been due to the ineffectiveness of the manipulation that assessed the degree of familiarity or closeness. The specific item may have been insufficient in capturing how *well* the recipient knew the perpetrator. This raises an interesting methodological

question as to how to manipulate and measure the impact of receiving racial microaggressions from a familiar perpetrator. Although Asian Americans reported encountering racial microaggressions from well-intentioned peers, neighbors and friends (Sue et al., 2007), the ways that it manifests in real-life interactions remain unexplored. For example, if someone already has a pre-existing relationship with the perpetrator of a racial microaggression, the recipient is less likely to be asked "where are you from?" because the perpetrator will already know that information. Future studies should focus on what types or themes of microaggressions are experienced depending on the nature of the relationship. Additionally, studies should examine how best to capture the target's experience *in the moment* rather than relying on recalling a specific memory or creating a fictional incident in a lab or in a vignette. For example, utilizing in vivo accounts or using daily process approach may better capture the experience of racial microaggressions as it occurs in real-life (Ong et al., 2013). Although this method has been utilized with African Americans and Latinos, it remains unexplored with Asian Americans (Burrow & Ong, 2010; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald & Bylsma, 2003; Torres & Ong, 2010).

Effect of Authority

The findings of the current study show that participants experiencing a racial microaggression from someone of authority reported a significant negative experience, with the strongest impact resulting from interacting with someone who is a *familiar* person of authority. This condition significantly made the experience more negative in comparison to the other 3 groups. The relationship between a superior and a subordinate is difficult for women and for employees of color because the power discrepancy is apparent and vast (Sue, 2010). This can result in negatively impacting stress levels between minority employees and nonminority

supervisors (Fox & Stallworth, 2004). Similar to the way that microaggressions delivered by supervisors or superiors result in minority employees reporting lower job satisfaction, feeling isolated and withdrawing from work, there can be negative consequences for a student in a situation similar to the one presented in the vignette. They may start to withdraw from class by participating less and feeling distrustful of the professor or the peers. This can result in receiving unjustifiable negative evaluations and can potentially cause students to drop out of the class or change their field of study. The impact can be even more detrimental if the student perceives the professor as a close mentor or advisor. Additionally, choosing to respond or to engage in an honest dialogue about one's experience with the perpetrator who is in a position of power can have damaging consequences such as getting demoted or fired from a work place or receiving a bad grade in a school setting. Sue and his colleagues have looked at the role of racial microaggressions in triggering difficult dialogues in a classroom setting (Sue, Lin et al., 2009; Sue, Torino et al., 2009). These studies draw attention to the various ways that students of color often feel invalidated and invisible in the classroom, reinforcing the role of power and privilege of White students and professors. Future studies should delve deeper into the role of microaggressions and its impact in an academic setting. More specifically, it may be helpful to focus on the injurious effects experienced by students of color and how it impacts their identity and sense of worth as a student.

Gender Differences

One of the notable findings of the study is the gender difference found in how males and females experience racial microaggressions. More specifically, females reported the experience as significantly worse than the male participants. Past studies have focused on gender

differences in examining the different ways each gender copes with racial discrimination or racism-related stress (Carver et al., 1989; Kuo, 1995; Liang et al., 2007). Although the current study did not examine coping, the gender differences that were found suggest that females and males may differ in the way they process or experience an event, which may consequently inform which coping mechanism to use. For example, studies have found that women may be more comfortable than men in disclosing their feelings about their experiences with racism (Kuo, 1995; Liang et al., 2007). The female participants in the study may have been more willing or comfortable reporting their emotional reaction after reading the microaggressive incident in the vignette. Additionally, studies found that men and women differ in their expression of specific emotions, such that women report more emotions such as sadness, whereas men have a tendency to report more powerful emotions such as anger (Birnbaum, Nosanchuk & Croll, 1980; Fabes & Martin, 1991; Fischer, Mosquera, Vianen & Manstead, 2004; Johnson & Schulman, 1988). Due to the subtle and innocuous presentation of racial microaggressions, recipients not only have to deal with the "inner turmoil and agitation" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 78) caused by an incident, but also experience conflict regarding whether or not to respond. This may create a sense of powerlessness and confusion as to how to *process* the event, especially since microaggressions are oftentimes perceived as being unintentional. If the participants experienced a similar process after reading the vignette, the findings suggest that the female participants may have been more comfortable in expressing a sense of helplessness rather than a strong emotion like anger.

Furthermore, gender socialization of females and males and how one should react and express emotions may be contributing to the resulting gender difference. Studies have found that expressions of sadness, depression, shame and embarrassment are viewed as "unmanly" and males who display such emotions are evaluated more negatively than females (Siegel & Alloy,

1990). The expression of anger and aggression are perceived to be more acceptable for males than for females because women anticipate more negative social consequences for expressing aggression and anger than men do (Shields & Koster, 1989). Conformity to displaying certain "acceptable" emotions are set relatively early in development and remain resistant to change as people continue to endorse gender stereotypes of emotions (Plant, Hyde, Keltner & Devine, 2000). For example, girls develop a similar gender identity to their mothers, learning to express a wide range of emotions, whereas boys develop a masculine gender identity by being *different* than their mothers, clearly differentiating and separating themselves in emotional expressiveness and minimizing emotional expression (Chodorow, 1978; Fast, 1984). These theories provide some support for the findings of the current study, suggesting that females may be more comfortable in disclosing their emotional reactions in a way that males are not used to expressing.

Gender Microaggressions

The findings for gender differences may also suggest an emergence of gender microaggressions that were specifically experienced by the female participants while reading the vignette. Similar to racial microaggressions, gender microaggressions are commonplace daily verbal or behavioral indignities that communicate derogatory or negative gender insults that potentially have harmful effect on women (Sue, 2010). They can be unintentional, unconscious and communicate hidden messages that may be internalized by both perpetrator and victim. Because microaggressions can oftentimes be presented in a more ambiguous and subtle forms, it leaves the target feeling perplexed as to what had occurred. As illustrated in the vignette, the target receives a well-intentioned compliment for doing a great job on a presentation and being

articulate and clear in presenting the information. This encounter was meant to convey the racial microaggression theme of being perceived as a perpetual foreigner by being asked regarding country of origin. Yet, it is also notable to consider that it may highlight a gender microaggression theme of *assumption of inferiority* (Capodilupo et al., 2010). Although overt and direct forms of sexism have decreased due to women's rights movements and discourse on feminism, more subtle and covert messages continue to be communicated to women regarding their inferior status, thereby negating their reality. Additionally, the vignette may also have captured the theme of *restrictive gender roles*. Traditionally, women are seen as being domestic, possessing characteristics such as being sensitive, passive, weak, quiet and submissive (Espiritu, 1997; Gardner, Peluchette & Clinebell, 1994; Tajima, 1989). Even the style of speaking has been described as being more indirect, collaborative and conciliatory in comparison to the more direct, confrontational and self-promoting speech styles of men (Weiss & Fisher, 1998), which may explain the under-representation of women in leadership positions (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). The situation described in the vignette of a confident, independent woman who is at ease speaking in front of a large group may not conform to these traditional descriptions and assumptions of women. Therefore, the female participants may also be reacting to the situation not only in their identity as Asian but as an Asian *female*. Although this current study did not examine the intersectionality of race and gender, the findings may warrant future research on the salience of different identities when encountering racial microaggressions.

Limitations

The findings of the current study should be considered within certain limitations. First, the current investigation failed to manipulate the level of familiarity in the relationship between

the target and the perpetrator. The phrase or word used in the manipulation check such as the "degree of familiarity or closeness" may not have been adequate or appropriate in capturing the degree to which how *well* the target knows the perpetrator.

Second, the majority of the sample identified as either Korean or Chinese and was highly educated, with over 90% of the participants obtaining at least a 4-year degree. Therefore, the results of the study may not reflect the experience of Asian Americans who do not identity with these characteristics. For example, the model minority myth does not encompass the experiences of Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders who are often ignored or overlooked, made invisible under the veil of "success" (Mossakowski, 2003; Noh et al., 1999; Sandhu, 1997; Wong, Lai, Nagasawa & Lin, 1998). Future research should examine differences and similarities between various ethnic groups in how they experience racial microaggressions. Furthermore, the setting of the vignette was in a classroom setting and may not be applicable to some participants.

Third, the participants were recruited using various Internet listservs and relevant Asian American organizations. Although utilizing the internet to recruit participants has become a useful way to reach out to a diverse group of under-represented populations (Illingworth, 2001; Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004), the sample may still reflect bias in being a representative of participants who are more involved and active in issues related to the Asian American community. Therefore, it is important not to generalize the results to other Asian Americans who may not engage in social media or activism. Fourth, this study utilized self-report measures to examine participants' reaction to a situation described in a vignette. Although self-report measures may help gather useful data (Chan, 2009), it is still a subjective measure and therefore, contain biases, assumptions and other factors that are unique to an individual. Because this

current investigation examined the participants' *reaction* after encountering a defined situation, there may be other variables that may play a role in how they responded to the items. For example, participants may recall similar incidents of racial microaggressions that occurred in the past. Depending on the frequency and intensity of previous encounters, the reaction to the vignette incident may be compounded by their past experiences. Furthermore, the Reaction to Racial Microaggression scale that was created for the current study may not accurately capture participants' immediate impact. A study utilizing daily process methods helped eliminate the process of having to recollect temporally distant events and allowed participants to express the types of racial microaggressions they experienced and the subsequent reaction of the event as it occurs in real-life (Ong et al., 2013). Future studies should explore different ways to assess and report participants' *immediate* reaction after encountering a microaggressive incident. Lastly, because this study focused on one example of a microaggression, the findings should be interpreted as applying specifically to the theme of 'alien in one's own land' and not to other types or themes of microaggressions. These limitations highlight the importance of interpreting the findings with caution. More studies should be conducted to assess the generalizability of the results to the broader Asian American population.

Implications For Theory, Research, and Practice

Theoretical Implications

The findings of the current study contribute to the theory of microaggressions in the following ways. First, it supports the theory that any marginalized group in society can be the target of microaggressions. Despite the image of being model minorities, Asian Americans continue to encounter racial microaggressions on a daily basis that lead to negative impact on

both mental and physical health (Alvarez et al., 2006; Ong et al., 2013; Sue & Sue, 2013; Wang, Siy & Cheryan, 2011). Second, the findings support the theory that microaggressions are not seemingly innocuous and significant, but rather more damaging and injurious than overt racist acts (Steele, Spencer & Aronson, 2002; Sue, 2003). The results highlight not only the harmful psychological impact of experiencing racial microaggressions, but specifically in receiving microinvalidations. This form of microaggression has been found to be the most common and distressing for Asian Americans because they are often presented in a complimentary manner (e.g. "You speak good English!"), but nonetheless negate or nullify the experiential reality for Asian Americans (Nadal, 2011; Ong et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2007). This illustrates one of the major dilemmas, the invisibility of unintentional expressions of bias proposed by Sue and his colleagues (2007). The incident presented in the vignette appears to be a pleasant interaction characterized by the perpetrator expressing sincere praise and compliments for the recipient's proficiency in using English to clearly present the material during a presentation. The recipient in this interaction may genuinely believe that the perpetrator had good intentions in expressing the sentiment, especially given that microaggressions tend to be subtle, indirect and more likely to emerge when other rationales can be offered for the prejudicial behavior (Jones, 1997; Keltner & Robinson, 1996). Perpetrator may not be consciously aware of their prejudicial thoughts or actions but rather, believe in their desire to want to give positive feedback to the target. The internal dilemma that a target experiences after encountering a microaggressive incident may further intensify the psychological distress and lead to detrimental consequences. The current study's findings support the theory that microaggressions are usually outside the perpetrator's level of awareness and suggest that microaggressions can have injurious impact despite the notion that subtle and unintentional forms of discrimination result in minimal harm.

Research Implications

The findings of the current study have several implications for research. First, this current investigation is one of the first to consider examining the differential impact of racial microaggressions depending on factors related to the target-perpetrator relationship. The experiences of Asian Americans with racial microaggressions still remain neglected in the field of research, largely due to the misleading image of being model minorities and immune from encountering acts of prejudice, bias and discrimination. Given that discourse on race relations and racism has largely focused on the experiences of African Americans and other marginalized groups, Asian Americans continue to be silenced and invisible. However, with the growing number of minority individuals that make up the U.S. population, it is inevitable that Asian Americans will interact with a diverse group of individuals in a social context. Therefore, it is important to not only continue research with Asian Americans, but to examine how racial microaggressions are enacted and experienced by this population. For example, future studies should examine how other variables such as ethnic identity or adherence to traditional Asian cultural values may impact the experience of racial microaggressions.

Second, the findings indicate a need for a closer examination at how females and males may differentially experience microaggressions and the intersection with gender microaggressions. Previous studies have looked at racial and gender microaggressions independently. However, given the insidious and daily incidents that occur in the lives of marginalized individuals who hold multiple identities, future studies should examine how salience of these two identities impact the awareness and experience of gender and racial microaggression. For example, for women of color, how is the impact of encountering racial

microaggression similar or different than experiencing gender microaggression? Does it influence their method of coping depending on the type of microaggression? Although this current investigation did not examine the role of coping, it may be helpful to consider how differential impact may play a role in the way people manage their reactions. In other words, do people utilize different forms of coping (e.g. emotion-focused vs. problem-focused) depending on their relationship with the perpetrator? What are the possible consequences, especially when encountering the microaggressive act from someone who may have the authority to enact negative consequences? Are they more likely to use emotion-focused coping in order to avoid ramifications that can lead to loss of job in a workplace or getting a bad grade from a teacher in a school? These are questions that remain unanswered and should be explored in future studies. Additionally, researchers should consider other forms of intersectionality such as class, sexual orientation, religion and disability as a way to understand how multiple identities interact to impact an individual's experience.

Third, the current study created a fictional scenario in an academic setting using a specific theme of microaggression, *alien in one's own land*. Although past studies have examined the presence of microaggressions in education, healthcare, and workplace settings, future studies should delve deeper in understanding how racial microaggressions are manifested in these settings and which themes are more likely to cause negative consequences. For example, how will the impact be different in a workplace setting with the perpetrator being a boss or a supervisor or in a clinical setting with the perpetrator being a doctor or a therapist? Because the findings of the current investigation indicate a differential impact when the perpetrator is someone of authority, it may be helpful to explore how Asian Americans' adherence to the value

of hierarchical relationships impact their experience and examine various settings that have clearly defined relationships based on power difference.

Lastly, the findings of the current study suggest the possibility that certain conditions result in differential impact for the target. This raises the issue of examining other potential attributes about the perpetrator that may differentially impact the target. Instead of manipulating power or familiarity, other characteristics such as gender, perceived race and age of the perpetrator may yield important findings about how it impacts the recipient. Lastly, the findings of the current investigation have implications to educators working with Asian American students. It is critical to not only be aware of one's own biases and assumptions, but the importance of receiving training and seeking consultation as to how to react or respond if a microaggressive incident occurred in a classroom. This may help foster healing for the student and allow the opportunity to engage openly in difficult dialogues that may promote understanding and awareness (Sue et al., 2009)

Practice Implications

Several implications for practice from the current study will be discussed in this section. In the field of education, the findings suggest that teachers and professors should be mindful of ways that their biases and assumptions may be communicated through seemingly innocuous "compliments" to students. Given the power difference and a clear presence of authority, the findings of the current study suggest the harmful nature of receiving it from someone of authority. This may further add to the stress of "Catch-22" of responding and result in lasting negative consequences. Studies on difficult dialogues occurring in the classroom highlight the presence of microaggressions and the impact it may have on students if they are left ignored or

invalidated (Sue et al., 2009). Therefore, it is important for educators to not only be self-aware and continue to challenge one's own beliefs and prejudicial attitudes, but to seek out training and consultation when appropriate.

In the field of counseling, mental health providers should be aware and sensitive to clients who bring up real-life experiences of racial microaggressions. Although they may not have the words to accurately describe their experience, clinicians should be mindful of what is *not* being communicated in the room and what it may mean for the therapeutic relationship. For example, Asian American clients have the tendency to view therapists as the "expert" in the room and may look to them for advice and direct feedback. In these cases, the clinician should be extremely careful not to communicate bias, assumptions or misinterpret their experience. This may result in the client re-experiencing the microaggressive incident through a re-enactment with the clinician in the therapy room. This can not only damage the therapeutic relationship, but increase stigma and feelings of distrust that Asian Americans have towards seeking mental health services. Therefore, it is important to work towards breaking down the power imbalance in the room and to foster a safe and open environment for clients to share their experiences of feeling invalidated and invisible. Additionally, supervisors who are in charge of training students should be mindful of the power difference as supervisory relationships are not immune from being negatively impacted by the presence of racial microaggressions (Constantine & Sue, 2007). This may result in harmful impact for the student in not getting proper, ethical supervision, which will adversely impact the clinical work with clients.

Summary & Conclusion

Asian Americans' portrayal as the model minority has sustained the belief that their "success" somehow shields individuals from experiencing discrimination, prejudice and racism. However, the detrimental impact of racial microaggressions continues to invalidate their racial reality and silence their voices. The current study examined the differential impact of racial microaggressions for Asian Americans. Using the theme of "alien in one's own land", a microaggressive incident in a classroom setting was illustrated through a vignette that varied on the 4 manipulated conditions. The findings suggest that interacting with a *familiar* perpetrator who is someone of *authority* results in the most negative impact for the target. The current study provides evidence of not only the harmful consequences of experiencing a racial microaggression, but how the impact may *differ* depending on the target's relationship to the perpetrator. This brings to question other facets that may be contributing to how one experiences, processes and reacts to a microaggression. Given its innocuous presentation and the complex process that begins internally for the recipient, there are still many questions left unanswered.

The current study adds to the existing literature of racial microaggressions by depicting the experiences of Asian Americans. A group that has been consistently ignored due to misunderstanding of what "success" actually means in their daily lives, the findings provide empirical support for the harmful impact of microaggressions and being made to feel like a perpetual foreigner in one's own country. It is essential to continue working towards unveiling the myth of Asian Americans' success and to bring to light their experiences of feeling invisible, invalidated and oppressed.

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Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions:

1. Sex: _____ Male _____ Female

2. Age: _____

3. State of Residence:______ (drop-down list of all US states)

4. Ethnicity/Group:

_____ Asian Indian _____ Cambodian

_____ Chinese _____ Filipino

_____ Hmong _______ Japanese

_____ Korean _____ Laotian

_____ Pakistani _____ Thai

_____ Vietnamese _____ Other (Please Specify: ______________)

5. Socioeconomic Status

_____ Working Class _____ Middle Class

_____ Upper Middle Class _____ Upper Class

6. Highest level of education completed:

_____ High School Diploma/GED _____ Some college

_____ 2-Year college degree (Associates) _____ 4-Year college degree (Bachelor

_____ Masters Degree _____ Doctoral Degree (J.D., Ph.D., etc.)

Appendix B

Vignette

It is Tuesday morning and you are exhausted because you were up late last night finishing the PowerPoint slides for today's presentation. As you review your notes and set up the computer equipment, you notice some familiar faces in the crowd, your fellow peers and professors from your department, as well as people from outside of your department who are attending the presentation. Everyone takes their seats and you stand in front of the room, ready to begin your presentation.

You begin by introducing yourself and spend the next hour going through the slides and presenting the material. Although you feel nervous in the beginning, as the presentation progresses, you begin to feel relaxed and at ease in front of the audience. Throughout the presentation you make eye contact with audience members and notice they are engaged and focused on what you are saying. You conclude your presentation feeling satisfied that you have done a good job. You are packing up your stuff when you are

4 conditions:

a) approached by a student in your department that you have gotten to know through a class you took together

b) approached by a student from another department that you have never spoken to before.

c) approached by your advisor that you have been working with.

d) approached by a faculty member from another department that you have never spoken to before.

Perpetrator: “Great job on the presentation! You were so articulate and clear in presenting the information. You didn’t seem nervous at all!”

You: “Thank you”

Perpetrator: “Public speaking can be so anxiety provoking, especially when people are not used to it. You spoke English perfectly! Where did you learn to do that?”

You: “Well, I was on the debate team back home in California and I think that helped me become comfortable in front of crowds”

Perpetrator: (The student has a confused look and says), “No, I meant where are you from originally?”

Appendix C

Manipulation Check

After reading the vignette, please answer the following questions regarding your perception of the person you interacted with in the vignette.

1. Please rate the degree of familiarity or closeness you feel towards the person you interacted with in the vignette.

___ 1 (Not at all close)

___ 2

___ 3

___ 4

___ 5 (Extremely close)

2. Please rate the degree of authority or power you feel the person has in the vignette.

___ 1 (Equal status)

___ 2

___ 3

___ 4

___ 5 (Higher status)

Appendix D

Reactions to Racial Microaggressions Scale

1. I would be bothered by this incident.

2. I would be surprised this incident happened to me.

3. I would continue to think about his incident for the rest of the day.

4. I would be disturbed by this incident.

5. I would be reminded of similar incidents that happened in the past.

6. I would feel the need to talk to somebody about this incident.

7. I would be shocked by this incident.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Neutral*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*

Appendix E

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule-Expanded Form

(PANAS-X; Watson & Clark, 1994)

This scale consists of a number of words and phrases that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to *what extent you would feel the emotion after encountering the incident in the vignette.* Use the following scale to record your answers:

1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
very slightly or not at all	*a little*	*moderately*	*quite a bit*	*extremely*

______ cheerful	______ sad	______ active	______ angry at self
______ disgusted	______calm	______guilty	______enthusiastic
______attentive	______afraid	______joyful	______downhearted
______bashful	______tired	______nervous	______sheepish
______sluggish	______amazed	______lonely	______distressed
______daring	______shaky	______sleepy	______blameworthy
______surprised	______happy	______excited	______determined
______strong	______timid	______hostile	______frightened
______scornful	______alone	______proud	______astonished
______relaxed	______alert	______jittery	______interested
______irritable	______upset	______lively	______loathing
______delighted	______angry	______ashamed	______confident
______inspired	______bold	______at ease	______energetic
______fearless	______blue	______scared	______concentrating
______disgusted with self	______shy	______drowsy	______dissatisfied with self

Appendix F

Awareness of the Perpetual Foreigner Stereotype Scale

(APFS; Huynh, Devos & Smalarz, 2011).

1. Most people see me as an American.
2. Most people have difficulty viewing me as an American.
3. I do not fit what people have in mind when they think of a typical American.
4. Due to my ethnicity, people sometimes assume I am not American.
5. Sometimes people think I am a foreigner.
6. Based on my physical appearance, people assume I am American.
7. Because of how I speak, people sometimes think I am not a U.S. citizen.
8. Sometimes people interpret what I do or say as if I was not American.
9. When people look at me, they see a foreigner.
10. My ethnic heritage sometimes disqualifies me as American.
11. People sometimes ask me where I am from.
12. People sometimes ask me how I speak English so well.
13. I have to work harder than most people to be accepted as American.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Neutral*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*

Appendix G

Invitation to Participate in Study

Dear Participants,

My name is Rachel Kim and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counseling Psychology program at Teachers College, Columbia University. I am recruiting **self-identified Asian Americans over age 18** to participate in an online study **examining experiences of subtle racial discrimination**. The survey should last approximately 10-15 minutes and will be accessible through a secure online website. Your participation is completely voluntary and any information you share will be anonymous and confidential. By participating in this study, you will provide great insight into understanding the impact of experiencing subtle racial discrimination directed at Asian Americans.

If you are interested in participating, please click on the following link or you may cut and paste it directly onto your web browser (https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/asianamericans).This link will direct you to a description of the study and ask for your consent to participate. Please open the link using **Internet Explorer or Safari**. It will not work with Firefox or Google Chrome.

If you would like more information or have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email (hyk2102@columbia.edu). Also, please forward this survey to any of your eligible friends or relevant listservs.

Thank you!

Rachel H. Kim, Ed.M.
Primary Investigator
Ph.D. Candidate, Counseling Psychology
Teachers College, Columbia University
New York, NY 10027

Appendix H

Informed Consent

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH: You are being invited to participate in a research study looking at the impact of how people experience subtle racial discrimination. You are encouraged to answer openly and honestly to the survey questions, as your responses may inform future research. Consenting individuals are asked to participate in an online that will last approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: The risks associated with this study are minimal. Participation has the same amount of risk students could encounter during a usual classroom activity or any conversation about race. Any information you share will be anonymous. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. Following the survey, the information that you as a participant provide will be kept confidential. Only the primary investigator will have access to the study materials. Although there are no foreseeable physical risks associated with your participation, in the event that you have concerns or questions, you may contact the principal investigator.

It is proposed that the benefits of your participation in this study may include an opportunity to voice your experience of racial discrimination and its emotional impact. This may inform future areas of research, programming and could offer more insight into how to better incorporate issues of diversity and multiculturalism. In addition, participation will be encouraged to ask questions, give feedback, and will have access to the completed dissertation. There are no direct benefits of the study.

PAYMENTS: No compensation will be provided.

DATA STORAGE TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY: The data will be collected anonymously and therefore, you will not be asked to disclose your name. To ensure greater confidentiality, you will be assigned identification numbers that will not identify you in any way. In addition, you will receive a link to access the online survey through a secure research website (www.surveymonkey.com). The research data will be password protected and only the principal investigator will have access to the completed survey protocols. The data will be kept for no longer than 5 years and then it will be destroyed.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

HOW WILL RESULTS BE USED: The results of the study are intended to give voice to Asian Americans about their experience of subtle racial discrimination and the emotional impact it may have to the targets. Results of this study are hoped to shed more light as to the role of interpersonal relationships in how racial discrimination is experienced and may be presented for educational purposes at conferences, in journals, or for presentation.