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Abstract

Given the lack of studies on the racialized experience of Asian American faculty in Christian higher education, the current study investigated Asian American Christian faculty's experiences of stereotypes and discrimination and their responses to those experiences. Using the Consensual Qualitative Research method, we analyzed nine interviews with Asian American Christian faculty. Major themes that emerged were the experience of stereotypes and discrimination at the interpersonal level, perpetuation of stereotypes and discriminatory practices at the institutional or systemic level, responses to stereotypes and discrimination, coping with stereotypes and discrimination, and the impact of Asian identity, stereotypes, and discrimination. Implications for future research and Christian higher education institutions are discussed.

Keywords: Model Minority, Asian American, Christian Faculty, Coping Strategies, Christian Higher Education, Racial Stereotypes and Discrimination

Asian American Faculty's Racialized Experiences in Christian Higher Education

In fall of 2017, eight percent of faculty in degree granting higher education institutions in the United States were of Asian background (National Center for Education Statistics/U.S. Department of Education, 2018). For Christian colleges and universities, the number is smaller but still meaningful; Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) reports that 3.51% of its faculty are Asian/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (2020). Given this representation across higher education in general and Christian higher education in particular, Asian and Asian American faculty experiences deserve empirical attention in the social science literature. Also, the smaller percentage of Asians and Asian American faculty on Christian campuses suggest that they might experience further isolation and marginalization, and so research that elucidates the intersection of Asian and religious identities against the backdrop of Christian higher education is sorely needed. Despite this need, research on Asian and Asian American faculty working in Christian campuses is limited. Our study addresses this need by qualitatively exploring the various racialized experiences of Asian and Asian American faculty in Christian higher education.

Racialized Experiences of Asian Americans

Historically in the U.S., both negative (e.g., yellow peril) and positive (e.g., model minority) stereotypes against Asian Americans have been commonplace. These stereotypes have been used to depict Asian Americans as perennial foreigners in the U. S. and a political and racial threat to Whites and other races. One manifestation of this type of stereotyping is that during the recent global pandemic caused by COVID-19, the number of hate incidents against Asian Americans has skyrocketed (Jeung et al., 2021). In addition, everyday stereotyping and

discrimination experienced by Asian Americans have negative impact on their mental health (Gee et al., 2009; Lee & Ahn, 2011; Salas-Wright et al., 2020).

Furthermore, positive stereotypes can also impact Asian Americans negatively. Gee et al. (2009) emphasized the importance of paying attention to the harmful effect of positive stereotypes (e.g., model minority myth) on Asian American's mental health. The model minority stereotype or myth refers to the overgeneralization that Asian Americans are hardworking, highly educated, and economically successful (McGowan & Lindgren, 2006). The model minority stereotype, although seemingly positive, can have unfavorable associations with social and psychological adjustment of Asian Americans. For example, in the academic setting, Asian American students might face unrealistic expectations and pressure to do better (Museus & Kiang, 2009), and this pressure can become a barrier to their learning process (Museus, 2008) and impair the performance (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000). Furthermore, the internalization of model minority can lead Asian Americans to feel inadequate, doubt their ability, and experience psychological distress and suicidal ideation (Gupta et al., 2011; B. S. K. Kim & Park, 2013; Wing, 2007). Also, those who internalized this model minority stereotype are less likely to seek mental health support (Inman & Yeh, 2007). Asian Americans who do not fit into the model minority stereotype might suffer from identity issues and experience others' judgement and exclusion, as well as loss of face (Chin & Kameoka, 2019; Chow & Feagin, 2008). Finally, the perpetuation of the model minority stereotype can result in homogenizing the Asian American experience based on the educational and financial success of the selective Asian groups, leading to misinterpreting the lived experience of a diverse group of Asian Americans in the U.S. (Gupta et al., 2011; Parks & Yoo et al., 2016; Poon et al., 2016; Sue & Sue, 2016).

In addition, the model minority stereotype compares Asian Americans against other racial minority groups in the U.S., essentially suggesting that Asian Americans are the most exemplary minorities (Yoo et al., 2010). Moreover, the model minority stereotype elevates the hard work of the individual over structural issues that might also impact success (Yu, 2006). In sum, the model minority stereotype emphasizes Asian American success due to hard work, compares Asian Americans against other minorities, and is based on an individualistic framework that minimizes the role of systemic or structural issues. In the current study, we anticipated that themes related to common Asian stereotypes, such as the perpetual foreigner and model minority stereotypes, might emerge from our sample of Asian American faculty working in Christian institutions.

Strategies to Cope with Racial Experiences

Prior studies have found that there might be some important ways that Asian Americans might respond to or cope with racial discrimination and stereotyping. They might respond indirectly to racial discriminations and stereotypes to maintain peace with others (Lee et al., 2012) or utilize avoidance strategies such as disengagement or distancing from the stressor (Chang, 2001; Liang et al., 2010; Sheu, & Sedlacek, 2004). Others have found that emotion-based coping strategies might be used, such as ones that involve seeking emotional support (Kuo, 2010) or engaging communal support (Wei et al., 2010) in response to racial discrimination and stereotypes.

Religion is another factor that can shape Asian Americans' responses to and coping with racial discrimination and stereotyping. The largest religious identification among Asian Americans is Christian, with 42% of Asian Americans in the U.S. identify themselves as Christians (Pew Research Center, 2012). Prior research has found that the church community is a major cultural and community support for Asian Americans (Guest, 2003), and religion might be

utilized for coping with racial discrimination (Lee & Chan, 2009). Similarly, researchers found

churchgoing was related to the lower rates of depression in Asian American participants

experiencing racism (Ai et al., 2013). More broadly, religion has also shown to buffer against the

effects of negative life events of Protestant church members (Bjorck & Thurman, 2007).

On the other hand, religion can have injurious consequences when misapplied for coping

with racial stressors. Hearn (2009) pointed out that religious institutions can contribute to color-

blind racism (Hearn, 2009). Similarly, P. Y. Kim et al. (2021) reported that there might be some

racial microaggressions that are specific to Christian settings based on misguided application of

Christian theology. Moreover, Christian Asian Americans reported discrimination at a

significantly higher rate than non-Christian Asian Americans (Ai et al., 2013). Taken together,

these studies suggest that religious factors intersect with experiences of racism and stereotyping

in a complicated manner, and that is important for researchers to continue to develop this

literature.

In the current study, we were interested in the experience of racial discrimination and

coping with it among Asian American faculty, against the backdrop of a Christian university

setting. Faculty of color face many barriers at their workplace, such as social isolation, lower

salaries, challenges to tenure and promotion, and other experiences of racial and ethnic bias (see,

Jayakumar et al., 2016; Stanley, 2006). In particular, Asian American faculty working in higher

education experience systemic issues (e.g., lower salaries for Asian associate professors

compared to their White counterparts; S. M. Lee, 2002).

In contrast to the literature on faculty of color and studies on Asian American faculty,

studies on the experience of Asian American faculty in a Christian university setting are limited.

We found two qualitative studies by the same group of authors that have examined an Asian

American faculty sample in Christian academia (C. L. Kim et al., 2010; C. L. Kim et al., 2011). C. L. Kim et al. (2010) identified themes such as the lack of diversity in faculty and students that contribute to their feeling of marginalization and a "missionary mentality" (e.g., treating non-Western Christianity and culture as inferior) that might interfere with Christian colleges' ability to recognize discrimination on campus and take action. Furthermore, C. L. Kim et al. (2011) identified key coping methods for women faculty as they dealt with racial and gender discrimination, such as reliance on intrapersonal resources and spiritual coping. Taken together, the qualitative findings of C. L. Kim and colleagues (2010, 2011) highlight that gender and racial discrimination as a part of the reality of Christian faculty and that they rely on various coping resources to navigate these challenges. At the same time, our study builds upon some of the limitations of the existing studies, by broadening the scope to include not only racial discrimination, but also other experiences of Asian American faculty (e.g., perception of being stereotyped). In addition, the qualitative studies from C. L. Kim and colleagues are based on female faculty only, so a broader sampling across gender groups will add to the literature. Therefore, the present study explores the racialized experiences (e.g., stereotyping, discrimination) among Asian and Asian American faculty working in a Christian higher education. Although the research question was broad, we deemed it necessary given the lack of literature on the Asian American faculty's experiences on a Christian campus. We paid special attention to the model minority stereotype and its implications, as it is a common stereotype experienced by Asians and Asian Americans in the United States.

Method

Participants

A total of eleven participants from two racially diverse faith-based institutions located in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States were interviewed for the study. However, only nine transcripts were used for data analysis because one interviewee's responses focused more on the students, not on the experience as faculty, and the other interviewee identified herself as a non-Christian at the end of the interview. All nine participants whose interviews were included in the data analysis identified as Asian, Asian American, or Asian Canadian; we have chosen to not report the specific Asian ethnicities of the participants due to potential risk of identification, other than to report that all participants reported Asian ethnicities that were East Asian. All participants identified as Christian. Two were born outside of the U.S., and seven were born in the U.S. The years of living in the U.S. ranged from six to 53 years. Out of nine participants, seven identified as female, and two as male. At the time of the interview, participants' years of employment at their institution ranged from 17 to zero, and the average years of employment at their institution was approximately five years. Four participants were pre-tenure, two were tenured, and three were on non-tenured track.

Research Team

The research team (also the authorship in this current manuscript) consisted of four Asian American faculty working at a Christian university located in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. The first author was a female faculty in counselor education; the second author was a male faculty in psychology; the third author was a female faculty in marriage and family therapy; and the fourth author was a male faculty in theology. First, second, and fourth authors conducted the interviews. Then, first, second, and third authors carried out the data analysis. The three authors who conducted the data analysis had prior training and experience in the current study's qualitative methodology, consensual qualitative research (CQR; Hill, 2012).

Furthermore, as noted in Sim et al. (2012), we discussed any potential biases that we might have prior to and throughout the data analysis. In particular, we were aware that our own experiences as Asian American faculty identity might influence how we interpret the participants' responses, such as our personal experiences with racial stereotyping and discrimination, and we kept each other accountable in this regard as we examined the data. Also, we kept in mind that our scholarly interest in Asian American experiences, including the model minority stereotype, might make us more susceptible to search for evidence of the model minority stereotype more so than other scholars. Finally, and related to our previous point, as individuals in the helping profession (counselor education, psychology, and marriage and family therapy), we kept in mind that we might more naturally interpret things from a deficit perspective; for example, we might have gravitated toward an interpretation that the internalization of the model minority stereotype has deleterious associations, which might not have been the perspective of our participants. We paid special attention to these potential biases and consulted with each other appropriately throughout the analysis phase of the study.

Procedure

Recruitment

We used purposive sampling and snowballing strategies to recruit participants who fit the study criteria: those who self-identified as (a) Asian American, (b) faculty, and (c) Christian. A graduate assistant created a list of Asian American faculty from two faith-based universities in the Pacific Northwest, and an email invitation to participate was sent to those on the list. Concurrently, we also sent the invite to our faculty network of individuals who identified as Christian and Asian American faculty. Interested faculty responded to the recruitment email, and their interview was scheduled by one of the three interviewers (first, second, and fourth authors).

Data Collection

Prior to the interview, the interview questions (see Appendix A) and the informed consent form were sent to the participants via email. The participants signed the informed consent form before the interview. All interviews were conducted at the participant's preferred locations either in person or via audio-only Zoom session. The length of the interview ranged from 30 to 90 minutes. Audio recordings were stored in the password-protected cloud server, and they were transcribed verbatim for data analysis using a professional transcribing service.

Data Analysis

The consensual qualitative research (CQR; Hill, 2012) was used for data analysis as it is "ideal for studying in-depth the inner experiences, attitudes, and beliefs of individuals" (Hill, 2012, p. 14). A key part of the CQR process is reaching a consensus among the researchers in analyzing the lived experience of the participants. We (i.e., the data analysis team described earlier) closely followed the recommended steps for conducting CQR (Thompson et al., 2012). First, we created a tentative domain list. Each person read a transcript individually, identified broad themes (i.e., domains), and assigned chunks of the transcript corresponding to the themes. Then, we met weekly or every other week and discussed the domains identified in the particular transcript, ultimately resulting in a list of domains for the transcript that we agreed on. This process was repeated for all transcripts. Second, we identified the core ideas. Similar to how we identified the domains, we began by first reading a transcript individually and identifying the core ideas within each domain. After that, we met to discuss our core ideas until we reached a consensus for that transcript. For each transcript, the process was repeated. Finally, we cross-analyzed the data to formulate categories based on the core ideas as instructed in Ladany et al. (2012). In each domain, we reviewed core ideas and created categories by discussing common

themes reflected among the core ideas. For all domains, this process was repeated. Based on

CQR (Ladany et al, 2012), categories were labeled as *general* (8-9 cases), *typical* (5-7 cases), or

variant (2-4 cases).

Auditor

Schlosser et al. (2012) emphasized the role of auditors in CQR for the quality of the

qualitative study and the trustworthiness of CQR data. The fourth author, who was one of the

interviewers, also served as an auditor. He reviewed the data analysis process and content,

including domains, core ideas, and categories, and he provided feedback. Based on the feedback,

the data analysis team revisited the results and as appropriate, revised the findings.

Findings

Table 1 displays the domains, categories, and frequencies of categories. In general, our

findings illustrate Asian American Christian faculty's experience of being stereotyped and

discriminated against at both interpersonal and institutional levels, and the varied ways they

responded to those experiences, such as cognitive, emotional, and religious strategies. The

domains we identified were 1) variations in Asian identity, 2) experience of stereotypes and

discrimination at the interpersonal level, 3) perpetuation of stereotypes and discriminatory

practices at the institutional or systemic level, 4) responses to stereotypes and discrimination, 5)

coping with stereotypes and discrimination, 6) impact of Asian identity, stereotypes, and

discrimination, and 7) hopes for others who interact with Asian faculty. Below, for the sake of

space, we reflect on the top two or three most frequently discussed categories within each

domain.

Domain 1: Variations in Asian Identity

Despite the shared Asian or Asian American identity among the participants, it is noteworthy that five out of nine participants pointed out that their Asian identity might be different from a "typical" Asian or Asian American identity. For example, one participant stated:

I think I don't feel like I am seen as Chinese and Asian. …I don't feel like I'm representing them. If I were to cross the street, jaywalk across the street, I don't know that I feel as if I'm representing a larger community. But I am very much aware of how I am being seen all the time. I'm very self-conscious of that, which I think is part of that extension of that a little bit. I think more for me and my brothers it was behavioral based with my mother even representing, but I don't know how much of that is cultural identity so much as reflecting on the family.

This participant shared his journey from not considering himself as Asian while growing up, to being confused by others' diverse perceptions toward his racial identity and to readily identifying himself as Asian American. Two participants described themselves as atypical in terms of their Asian identity. Participant three said, "And not saying that I don't identify as Asian American, but I feel that my earlier years living overseas, I think they definitely have provided different meaning to my identity." Two other participants identified themselves more strongly with White culture. Another participant said the experience of not being part of any Asian communities and therefore not experiencing any aspect of Asian culture while growing up.

Although this domain did not yield a "general" category, it illustrates the heterogeneity of the Asian and Asian American populations in the U.S.: not only are there many different languages and Asian origins, but also a variety of upbringing (e.g., being born in a foreign country and growing up in the U.S. or being racially mixed and growing up in the White

dominant community) that likely influence how they experience and process racial stereotypes and discriminations.

Domain 2: Experience of Stereotypes and Discrimination at the Interpersonal Level

Eight participants shared that they experienced discrimination. Examples of discriminatory experiences include others downplaying the participant's accomplishments, colleagues not trusting participant's leadership skills and coming up with the reasons to exclude the participant from leadership roles, and students treating a participant differently compared to White faculty colleagues. In addition to experiences of discrimination, two typical categories were identified: "Subtle or confusing experience of stereotypes and discrimination" and "No experience of the model minority stereotype." Participant eight said, "They were surprised, I can see, their eyes like, feel ... surprise and the fear, …" and shared the participant's White colleague was surprised when the participant asked critical questions in a voting meeting. Another participant shared they overheard colleagues described the participant (and by extension, Asians and Asian Americans) as the "new whites."

Interestingly, these two categories (experience of subtle or confusing discrimination, no experience of the model minority stereotype) appear to be contradictory at a first but the contradiction reflects might be understood in light of some participants reporting that they did not experience racial stereotyping and discrimination earlier in the interview, only to disclose experiences that were in fact racialized experiences later in the interview. This discrepancy can also reflect the fact that because the model minority stereotype can appear to be positive, and thus participants may not choose to dwell on incidents or messages that express the stereotype (also see Domain 4: Responses to Stereotypes and Discrimination). For example, one participant said, "It's always the feeling ... Any sort of accomplishment is downplayed. It's never ... Because

'You worked.' Or I worked really hard, or I was dedicated. It's, 'Oh. Well, of course, you did well. You're Asian.'" Another participant added:

> Like with my mentor and stuff like that, sometimes he just gave me a book and expected me that I can figure out SEM on my own. Again, I don't know if that's because of my actual ability, or in that he perceives that is my ability, but he never did that with his other students. I think with his other students there was a lot more handholding and a lot ... they weren't expected to be as independent as I was. So, like I said, I don't know if that's, again, an ability thing, or more of that, he just felt like I was able to do more. I think just ... yeah, I mean, faculty always expected me to be doing well in my classes. I felt like it was expected of me to have top-notch performance both in clinical work and research and in my schoolwork.

It is notable that when asked about the model minority stereotype and whether they have experienced it, a common response from the participants was that they were not sure. Some participants were able to share examples quickly when asked, but others tried to figure out which experiences reflected the model minority stereotype, and which were other commonly held stereotypes (e.g., being quiet, conforming, etc.) of Asians. That is, when some participants experienced being stereotyped by others, it appeared that they do not disentangle the model minority stereotype from the other stereotypes. Another possible reason that some participants had difficulty responding to the model minority stereotype questions in the interview might be due to the intersection of their racialized experiences with gendered ones. Indeed, several female participants, when discussing their racialized experiences, also mused if their experience was because of their gender. Alternatively, it is also possible that although more participants experienced the model minority stereotype or some variation of it, the participants were so

impacted by it that they did not explicitly label it as the model minority stereotype. For instance, concerns about psychological safety or the lack of opportunity to process such experiences might have prevented the participants from clearly recognizing and naming the model minority stereotype experiences. Given this, it seems especially important for higher education institutions to create intentional spaces for Asian and Asian American faculty to processes these experiences without the fear of retribution and judgement.

Domain 3: The Perpetuation of Stereotypes and Discriminatory Practices at the Institutional or Systemic level

Seven participants said they either experienced or observed stereotypes and discrimination against racial minority faculty at the institutional level. Examples include demeaning non-Asian racial minority groups using the model minority stereotype as justification, justifying the perpetuation of the model minority stereotype using racial color-blind perspectives rooted in "Christian" arguments, turning to the hiring of racial minority faculty members as a quick solution, and avoiding deeper conversations on race and ethnicity. Participants also pointed out that there are not many Asian Americans represented at the higher-level leadership positions, which contributed to lack of visibility of Asian Americans. Moreover, the participants did not feel that they were supported by their institution, or that their work was recognized by their respective departments. One participant shared:

> I feel like minority here is more sort of black. That's why I said I can't think of a clear; it's just my general feeling. …when they're thinking about [inaudible] thinking about the minority or want to deal with minority things, it's always like a black people face they try

to presenting there. Not so much about Asians. …we are a forgotten group of people.

Maybe we're just too good to mention.

In addition, participant eight questioned, "The fact that we are minority, we are clearly minority

on campus, when it comes to the number. And then ... I think sometimes it also make me feel

like Christianity is a white religion." Another participant added,

"…as a faith based institution, I wonder if we sometimes err on ... How should I say it?

Sometimes we emphasize grace over being truthful. … I would say that something I ... I

don't want to say I find true because I just something that I've experienced with this

institution on many issues and not just on this particular issue. ...How that translates into

peoples' behaviors that they might just gloss over, they may minimize it. Not coming

from a place with bad intentions, but I just feel that when you negate somebody's

experience, when you try not to engage in helpful conversation, then that could be

harmful, right, especially in the long run. That's my question and also experience working

in a faith based institution. It's sort of like, "We are brothers and sisters so we [inaudible

00:24:20] we can't hurt each other." We're broken human beings and I feel like that's

actually humility too in acknowledging our brokenness is the first step, right? That's

something that I feel like I'm hoping that we could continue to engage in a collaborative

dialogue…"

In sum, the experiences reflected in this domain are consistent with the notion that in

evangelical circles, individual racial experiences are more easily recognized as dysfunctional

relations, but the social or structural aspects of racism are not as readily discussed or recognized

(C. L. Kim et al., 2010). As Hearn (2009) explained, "there are those who fear that raising the

color issue and therefore pointing out difference might put them in a precarious predicament

where they are accused of racism" (p. 286). Some of the structural issues identified by the participants reflected this tension between institutional practices and messaging that institutions might not readily recognize as problematic (e.g., lack of Asian American representation in higher education) compared to individual acts of discrimination, whereas Asian and Asian American faculty can easily see how these are race and equity issues.

Domain 4: Response to Stereotypes and Discrimination

With general frequency, participants experienced cognitive and emotional responses when encountering stereotypes and discrimination. Some examples of cognitive response include mulling over the encounter and asking themselves questions to further process the situation. In addition, they reflected on previous situations where they behaved or responded differently. Also, they wondered to what extent the experience was in fact related to stereotypes. Emotional responses were mostly negative; they felt angry, upset, confused, hurt, stressed, irritated, puzzled, awkward, and frustrated. One participant's response illustrated some of the cognitive processes and feelings regarding an encounter:

> I feel that here, so I don't want to say that the Asian identity is the only attribution to this problem. Maybe what is some problems of my personality and how I approach the different things and the people. Maybe to them, I look a little maybe strict and rigorous, and then they cannot stand it. They cannot bear it. Then they just put it into a lot of words and anger there. Yeah. I think it's not very safe to say that it is because of my Asian identity. I think maybe many different factors.

When experiencing negative emotions as a result of possible discriminatory or stereotyping encounter, participants' responses were quite passive: while half of the participants tried to engage in conversation with others about what happened, most of the participants dealt

with the situation by themselves. As highlighted in the participant quote earlier, the tendency to internally process these situations is consistent with Asian Americans' not responding directly to racially charged situations (E. A. Lee et al., 2012). The categories that were ranked as "variant" also demonstrated these tendencies: likelihood of the participants responding to a possible racist incident depended on how frequently they experienced other racialized situations, who the other party was in the situations, and participants' level of comfort in responding to racialized incidents.

Domain 5: Coping with Stereotypes and Discrimination

Participants described dealing with race-related stress both on their own and by talking it out with others. Most of the participants who dealt with the situation by themselves reported that they re-played the situation in their mind but tried not to dwell on it and move on from it instead. Moreover, distractions, such as focusing on work or laughing about it were also used as coping strategies. Talking out with others, such as trusted colleagues or individuals from Christian networks, was discussed by four participants as a coping strategy. Importantly, most of the participants shared that they relied on their faith as a critical tool to navigate the negative experiences related to race and ethnicity. Faith helped participants to not get too affected by interpersonal interactions, recover from negative emotions, empower them to forgive the perpetrator(s), and not fear future encounters. One participant emphasized, "Yeah. And I think, yeah, going back to just trying to give everyone grace, it's because I know like, oh, it took me so much work to be able to recognize stuff in myself that I need to change. Like, I know how much work it would take for anyone else." Another participant discussed prayer specifically as a form of reflecting on what happened: "So, I guess one can say that the prayer and the reflection go together as this whole process…I think that gives me some more confidence, and some more

courage with each conversation to at least speak my mind instead of holding onto it, so it shortens the time between when I actually say something back to another person."

Relying on prayer and faith to reflect on various situations and processing them with the hope that God's spirit would work can be considered as positive religious coping (see Pargament et al., 1998). In asking God for spiritual guidance, participants seemed to find their peace. Although it was not clear (and beyond the scope of our study) if these positive religious coping approaches were effective in moderating the psychological distress caused by negative racial incidents, it is notable that Asian American faculty often turned to prayer and faith to process racial incidents.

Domain 6: Impact of Asian Identity, Stereotypes, and Discrimination

This domain reflected the actions that participants took as a result of experiences around racial identity, stereotypes, and discrimination. Specifically, the racialized experiences impacted the participants themselves and led them to do something for or with others. Especially with the model minority stereotype, one participant said that they tried to minimize the detrimental effects of the stereotype and encourage others, especially students, to debunk the inaccurate stereotype and advocate for other Asians. Other participants shared that they changed their behaviors to avoid or minimize burnout as a result of not meeting the expectations implied by the model minority stereotype and other Asian stereotypes. One participant shared:

> I want to equip my students with a deeper understanding of these nuances, like group dynamics and also within-group differences, but I'm also actually very mindful of how I interact with my students in class, as well as on research team. Do I interact with students from diverse backgrounds or Asian American backgrounds differently? Even like, do I make assumptions about students who identify as East Asian versus, say, Filipino

American. I think that definitely having this knowledge and personal experience with

model minority stereotype that also help me to become more mindful in my interactions.

That's how I have changed or modified my teaching and research.

Even as participants tried to alter their behaviors and teach others regarding stereotypes

about Asians and Asian Americans, they also admitted that in some ways, they could not help

but internalize some aspects of the stereotypes, such as the model minority stereotype. That is,

although at one level participants might take on a stance of being more mindful and strategic

about responding to racism and stereotyping, and how the model minority stereotype might be

used against other non-Asian minorities, at another level they might impose Asian stereotypes on

themselves, such as working extra hard, being perfectionistic, and even limiting their career

aspirations. As one participant described:

That was completely the way I thought about social inequalities right up through college.

Basically that, you know, other groups just weren't working hard or something like that.

Right? And that was really a belief that I had, I would say even passed graduating college

maybe up through the first beginnings of graduate school where that emotion got

disabused fairly quickly….I guess I do have the sense that like I always should be

working harder or doing something more. Right? And I don't think it's like dominating

my day to day life or anything like that. I'm not even sure how often it comes up, but

certainly, every once in a while, I get that kind of nagging in the back of my head. Like,

you should be doing more, probably from my childhood. Right? Like just pushing and

pushing and pushing.

Domain 7: Hopes for Others who Interact with Asian Faculty

Half of the participants spoke about what they hoped for Asian and non-Asian communities, specifically around issues relevant for this study (e.g., stereotypes, discrimination). Participants desired that Asian American students would not be impacted negatively by these stereotypes and suggested that both non-Asians and Asians need to change their assumptions about Asian Americans through increased education about different Asian subgroups and continued engagement in collaborative dialogues. One participant specifically called for church communities to talk more about race and how they treat each other in and out of the church setting. One participant summarized these sentiments well: "I feel like the best way to counter these stereotypes or even to help start making changes are, the first step, to become aware. Second step is maybe try to resist. Try to change some of those assumptions. That's how I was thinking about this question."

Discussion

The present study was an exploration of racialized experience among Asian American faculty in Christian higher education. Our findings provide vital information on the diverse identities of Asian American faculty working in Christian higher education, negative impact of racial discrimination and stereotypes on Asian American faculty, their coping strategies, and how they might be best supported on Christian campuses. As expected, many of the domains and categories that emerged clearly highlighted the challenges of Asian and Asian American faculty in higher education in general (e.g., racial discrimination). Furthermore, some important experiences and perceptions that were specific to Christian higher education were also highlighted, especially how racism and stereotyping might be perpetuated by the structure of Christian higher education.

Diverse Identities of Asian American Faculty

The participants' discussion on varying levels of Asian identity, which is not surprising given the complex nature of racial and ethnic identity and the heterogeneous nature of the Asian American grouping, is reflective of the diversity of Asian American population in the U.S. Given the wide variations of ways the participants described their Asian identities, higher education needs to be more intentional and sensitive about creating a space to invite diversity to campus. For example, disaggregating data accordingly for Asian/Asian American students and faculty would be necessary. Therefore, to better support Asian American faculty, higher education institutions might tailor their supportive programming for Asian American faculty to their specific Asian groups (e.g., support group for Korean American faculty), instead of a general Asian American group.

Impact of Racialized Experience of Asian American Faculty

Sue et al. (2007) documented Asian Americans' negative emotional responses to microaggressions, such as "feelings of belittlement, anger, rage, frustration, alienation, and of constantly being invalidated" (p. 77). Tran and Lee (2014) added that exceptionalizing stereotype (e.g., "You speak English well.") did not make Asian Americans evaluate the interactions positively. Further, the model minority stereotypes can lead Asian Americans to psychological distress (e.g., pressure to do better; Gupta et al., 2011). Consistent with these prior studies, the majority of the participants in our study shared negative feelings in response to their racialized experiences such as frustration, stress, and anger. Some felt anxious and confused, interpreting these feelings as a sign of weakness or mental health problems. Eng and Han (2019) described these constant feelings of being excluded and different by experiencing stereotypes and discrimination, "racial melancholia" (p. 34). Based on Freud's theory, Eng and Han explained Asian Americans experienced indefinite mourning in the process of assimilation to the U.S. and

claimed, "the suspended assimilation, the inability to blend into the American melting pot,

suggests that for Asian Americans ideals of whiteness are perpetually strained – continually

estranged." (p. 36) The consequences of racial melancholia are "psychically damaging" as

described in Freud's work. Sue et al. (2007) reiterated repeated microaggressions can be harmful

to the mental health and identity of Asian Americans. Further, some participants were

retraumatized by their colleagues or their university that would invalidate their racialized

experiences. Therefore, we encourage those in Christian higher education, especially

administrators, to find ways to validate the experiences of Asian and Asian American faculty and

create a work environment that is healthier and more culturally sensitive toward Asian American

faculty. For example, trainings on the myth of the model minority stereotype and racial

microaggressions toward Asian Americans might be helpful. We assert that this type of effort is

critical to create a work environment without fear of judgment and shame.

Coping Strategies of Asian American Faculty

Prior literature has found that Asian Americans generally tended to rely on avoidance

coping (Chang, 2001; Sheu, & Sedlacek, 2004) or reaching out to friends or families for support

(Yeh & Wang, 2000). Our study participants seemed to use similar tactics, such as not dwelling

on negative feelings or using faith as a way of healing. Additionally, our participants reported

that they utilized their position to educate students by disputing the model minority myth,

conducting more research on the topic, or initiating deeper conversations with their colleagues

about stereotypes and microaggressions commonly experienced by Asian Americans. This is

similar to the findings in McGee and Thakore (2017)'s study with Asian STEM (Science,

Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) college students' experience of the model minority

stereotype. In their study, participants tried to make meanings out of their experience and

contributed to dispelling the model minority stereotype. Similarly, it was clear that our participants wanted to tell their stories of racialized experiences and invest their energy to make their campus environment better for Asian Americans; they were eager to educate others as teachers, colleagues, and Christians. Furthermore, while it was not included as a theme, several participants shared at the end of their interview that their fellow Asian American faculty needed to take actions to speak up about the issues covered in this study.

Faith plays a positive role as demonstrated in participants' individual coping strategies. Especially prayers are used as a structured way of reflecting incidents and communicating with God regarding what comes to next after the racialized experience. However, it seems that faith-based institution may not provide the same level of support for Asian American faculty's racialized experience as church provides communal support for Asian Americans. On the opposite, participants reported experience of stereotypes and discrimination both at the personal and institutional levels while working in Christian higher education. This finding is consistent with the literature in that religion was used positively for personal coping (C.L. Kim et al., 2011) but did not intersect with topic like racial discrimination and stereotyping systemically (Hearn, 2009). Further, it appears at least the faith-based institutions where participants work do not function like churches where Asian Americans would get communal support (Wei et al, 2010) although staff and faculty in those institutions identify as a Christian. With being disappointed about their colleagues' responses to their racialized experience and experiencing lack of institutional understanding of racialized experience by Asian American faculty, participants did not turn to the institution for emotional or communal support but to their own churches.

Institutional Support for Asian American Faculty in Christian Higher Education

Colleges and universities that claim an intentional Christian identity and work to integrate some aspect of faith formation or Christian heritage into their curricula have much to learn from the findings of this study. Although Christian identity and context might provide some faculty with helpful perspectives and practices for coping with cultural stressors (C. L. Kim et al., 2011; Pargament et al., 1998), racial microaggressions, or other associated effects of the model minority stereotype, numerous participants also noted the realities of institutional bias and systemic racism in their institution, departments, and leadership structures (Hearn, 2009). Though the existence of these realities is unsurprising, key connections worth further exploration is the ways in which cultural assumptions about "Christian community" and socio-religious norms about racial conflict prevent or work against meaningful progress toward diversity, equity, and inclusion for faculty and administrators.

In other words, how might the institutional identity of Christian universities work to create and perpetuate the kind of injustices it claims to stand against in its educational mission? This irony or paradox is not unique to religiously-affiliated institutions, but the kinds of operative discourses particular to Christian *identity*—whatever that means in its various forms— are in need of closer examination (Jennings, 2020), especially the racialization of whiteness. Asian American Christian faculty must negotiate their racial identities not only in tension with longstanding institutional polarizations of whiteness and Blackness, but also with the religious and theological underpinnings of the race that have been woven into their personal faith, and the communities that have formed that faith (Jennings, 2015).

Relatedly, it has been well-documented that the model minority stereotype can be used to contrast the experiences of Asian Americans against the experiences of other non-White communities (e.g., pitting of Black experiences against Asian ones; Yoo et al., 2010). Christian

institutions must deeply reflect on how they might counter the possible deleterious effects of the

model minority stereotype among members of their academic community, especially given the

perspective that the model minority stereotype can function to divide communities of color.

Institutions might consider intentional programming to provide education about the experiences

of Asians and Asian Americans in the United States. Given the recent heightened attention on

anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Mostoles, 2020), Christian universities

might find it an especially opportune time to encourage their communities to demonstrate

solidarity with Asian and Asian American faculty.

Limitations and Future Research

We intentionally chose CQR as a research method to explore the voices that were

underrepresented and to investigate the deep meaning behind what the participants reported.

Given this, the present study can be limited in its interpretation and generalization. For example,

due to our qualitative methodology, we were not able to quantitatively control for variables such

as the strength of racial identity; as such, the sensitivity to racial encounters and awareness of

stereotypes were broad among our participants. Furthermore, potential biases and assumptions

might have influenced our interpretation of the findings, despite our efforts to minimize them,

such as the use of an auditor and bracketing to maintain the trustworthiness of the data. Third,

there are other salient Asian and Asian American experiences, such as the constant treatment as a

foreigner (Sue et al., 2007), that we did not assess in our study. We encourage future researchers

to examine this stereotype and its impact on Asian and Asian American faculty (e.g., how

students' perception of the faculty as a foreigner might influence teaching evaluations). Lastly,

even in deep and rich narratives of the participants, especially due to a lack of experience or

understanding of the nuances of certain constructs (e.g., model minority stereotype), it was

challenging to comprehensively and accurately capture stories about racialized encounters as Asian Americans.

Despite the shortcomings, our study suggests some important future directions for researchers conducting research on the psychological experiences of Asian and Asian American faculty against the backdrop of a faith setting, such as a Christian university. One, our findings indicate that it is a worthwhile endeavor to frame the research questions around complex cultural constructs specific to the Asian context, such as the model minority stereotype. We encourage researchers to continue to unpack the ways that other Asian cultural constructs can shape the lives of Asian and Asian American faculty. Two, our study findings suggest that the continued exploration of the intersection of religion and race among Asian and Asian American faculty is promising. Although there are some findings on the experiences of Asian American faculty in general (e.g., Chin & Kameoka, 2019; Denson et al., 2018; Hsieh & Nguyen, 2020), the literature on Asian and Asian American faculty who work in a Christian higher education setting is not as well-developed (for exceptions, see C. L. Kim et al., 2010; C. L. Kim et al., 2011). Due to the religious mission and distinctive campus culture of our participants' Christian institution, the domains and categories that emerged in our study reflected the intersection of religion, race, and ethnicity. In particular, our findings indicated that there are ways in which the religious context could be facilitative in the exploration of race and ethnicity of Asian and Asian American faculty, and other ways that the religious context might present challenges for Asian and Asian American faculty. Future studies should focus on the impact of religious context on Asian American faculty's mental health in the face of racism.

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Table 1

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies (N=9)

Domain/Categories	Frequency
1. Variations in Asian identity	
Atypical Asian identity	Variant (2)
More strongly identified with White culture	Variant (2)
A lack or weak sense of an Asian identity	Variant (1)
2. Experience of stereotypes and discrimination at the interpersonal level	
Direct experience of discrimination	General (8)
Subtle or confusing experience of stereotypes and discrimination	Typical (7)
No experience of discrimination and stereotyping	Typical (7)
Direct experience of being stereotyped by others	Typical (6)
Indirect experience of stereotypes and discrimination	Typical (6)
3. The perpetuation of stereotypes and discriminatory practices at the institutional or systemic level	
General stereotyping and discrimination	Typical (7)
Asian- specific stereotyping and discrimination	Variant (3)
Experience of positive systemic changes	Variant (3)
Intersection of Christian identity and stereotypes/discrimination	Variant (3)
No experience of systemic stereotyping and discrimination	Variant (2)
Characteristics of Asian American faculty	Variant (2)
Christian community tends to fall short in creating an inclusive community of ethnic minorities and non-Christians	Variant (2)
4. Response to stereotypes and discrimination	
Cognitive responses	General (8)
Emotional responses	General (8)
Behavioral responses	Variant (4)
Situation-specificity of responses	Variant (2)
Uncertainty about how to respond	Variant (2)
5. Coping with stereotypes and discrimination	
Religious coping strategies	General (8)
Intrapersonal coping strategies	Typical (5)
Interpersonal coping strategies	Variant (4)
6. Impact of Asian identity, stereotypes, and discrimination	
Behavioral impact	Typical (7)
Internalization of stereotypes	Typical (6)
Cognitive impact	Typical (6)
Emotional impact	Variant (2)
7. Hopes for others who interact with Asian faculty	
Hopes and wishes for those in the Asian community	Variant (3)
Hopes and wishes for non-Asian individuals	Variant (2)

Note. General = 8-9 cases; Typical = 5-7 cases; Variant = 1-4 cases (see Ladany et al., 2012)

Appendix A. Interview Questions

1. What are some implicit and explicit messages you receive from the [insert institution] community regarding your Asian identity?
2. Please share about a time when you were treated as a model minority during your time at your institution. What happened? Be as detailed as possible.
3. Please tell me about your experience if you have felt that you have also internalized the model minority stereotype in some ways.
4. What are some ways in which the model minority stereotype manifests institutionally/systemically at your institution?
5. What were some thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that you experienced after someone expressed the model minority stereotype to you, or treated you in accordance with the model minority stereotype? That is, how did the interaction impact you?
6. How did you cope with those thoughts and feelings when someone treated you according to the model minority stereotype?
7. How does the model minority stereotype impact your teaching, research, and service?
8. What role does your faith play in coping with being stereotyped as Asian American? Does a faith based community help or hurt?

Exploratory question: What are ways in which the model minority stereotype is used to oppress communities of color, including non-Asians?