NOT OVERREPRESENTED: THE MODEL MINORITY STEREOTYPE AT AN
ASIAN AMERICAN NATIVE AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER
SERVING INSTITUTION

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of ROSANETTE HERNANDEZ RIMANDO find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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Abstract

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For too long, Asian American and Pacific Islander students in higher education have been subjected to the persistent assumptions of the “model minority” myth which says that they are uniformly successful, industrious, and without need for support. They have become the most visible community of color in higher education whose needs go almost entirely unseen. The consequence of this neglect is evident in the achievement gaps only visible in disaggregated data. But the histories and narratives that illustrate these differences are rarely used by colleges and universities to make informed decisions about this population.

Fortunately, there is much promise in the U.S. Department of Education’s newest Minority-Serving Institution designation: Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions. First designated in 2008, AANAPISIs are funded to develop programs that address the needs of AAPI students. Six institutions were initially identified to pilot this effort, and today 14 institutions have been designated AANAPISIs, and federal funding has been committed through 2016 to continue. This is the first federal effort to address AAPI needs in higher education.
This case study examines the experience of one AANAPISI pilot, South Seattle Community College. I examine the experience of a college becoming an AANAPISI, and explore the strategies implemented and the outcomes realized from this effort. Because of my own role at the college, I utilize analytic autoethnography to include my own voice, experience and perspective in the case study. Critical race theory provides an effective framework to examine issues of race, seek out narratives, challenge long-held assumptions, and broaden the discussion of the findings to consider how a federal race-conscious initiative can have a transformational impact on a campus.

The findings reveal a college that struggled with institutional change through this process, while also grappling with the meaning of race and how it impacts service to AAPI student populations. The implications for this research are multifold, and touch practice, policy, research and methodology. They ultimately point to a continued need for higher education to reconsider assumptions about AAPI students, and provide better service and support that acknowledges the needs of this population.
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Chapter One: Not Overrepresented

Introduction

Asian American and Pacific Islander students (AAPIs) are regularly assumed to outperform other groups in the collegiate setting. However, aggregate data hides the complexity among groups within the AAPI community and subtly perpetuates the “model minority” myth that says that AAPIs are doing just fine economically, academically, professionally and personally (Kawaguchi, 2003; Laanan & Starobin, 2004; Lew, Chang, & Wang, 2005; Suzuki, 2002). Contemporary race politics also tend to keep the critical lens focused on the achievement gap for other communities of color, leaving the academic needs of AAPI students often unaddressed in higher education. In comparisons, AAPI statistics usually appear alongside those of whites or of a general population as a standard by which to compare other numbers. The reality is that today's population of AAPIs is too diverse to lump together into a homogenous group. There are at least thirty different subgroups that the AAPI category attempts to represent (Suzuki, 2002). The aggregate data cannot shed light on the needs that are unique to various cultures. Due to these assumptions, AAPI students become, as Hune (2002) describes, both highly visible in number and in statistics and highly invisible in programming and support.

Because aggregate data hides the complexity among groups in this community, it subtly perpetuates the “model minority” myth that says that AAPI communities are succeeding because of their culture or other tendencies as a presumably collective people (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Kawaguchi, 2003; Laanan & Starobin, 2004; Lew, et al., 2005; Museus & Chang, 2009; National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2008; Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Suzuki, 2002; Yu, 2006). The AAPI population contains within it the same risk factors seen in general community college populations: recent immigrants with limited English proficiency, first-generation college students, students from a low income background, and students who are underprepared for college-level work (National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2008).
Programs and strategies that are culturally-specific or which are intended to address needs specific to AAPI students are not common in higher education.

Though these issues have gone unaddressed for a long time, thanks to recently passed legislation, an opportunity has come to both understand and serve the unique needs of the AAPI community through the U.S. Department of Education's establishment of a new type of Minority-Serving Institution (MSI), known as Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions.

**Introducing AANAPISIs**

Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) are a new designation, set by the U.S. Department of Education in 2008. The purpose of AANAPISIs is to recognize those institutions who serve a large population, defined as 10% or greater, of AAPI students, and who serve a large proportion, defined as 25% or greater, of Pell grant-eligible students on Financial Aid ("Office of Postsecondary Education," 2008). Pell-grant eligibility serves as a proxy measure for the socioeconomic status of the student. A total of 14 AANAPISIs have been designated since 2008. These programs all seek to address the needs of underrepresented AAPIs through student retention efforts, strengthening curriculum, reducing barriers in college processes and even capital improvement. A complete list of all AANAPISIs is available in Appendix A.

**Clarification of Terms.** According to the U.S. Department of Education, as it relates to the AANAPISI designation, the term “Asian American” 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).” The term “Native American Pacific Islander” refers to those groups indigenous to America’s states or territories in the Pacific. This would include American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and several other Pacific Island nations.
There is not widespread consensus on the term to use to refer to all of these groups, though they are regularly grouped together in discussion and in statistics. In this paper, I have chosen to use “Asian American and Pacific Islander,” or “AAPI” while acknowledging that in the literature and in the community there are many other terms currently used, including APA (Asian Pacific American) and APIA (Asian Pacific Islander American). For the purposes of this study, the term “underrepresented AAPIs” calls for clarification. Over the past few decades, the general population of AAPIs has grown in many major American cities. As a result of this, the major institutions in these metropolitan areas have seen growth in the numbers of AAPIs enrolled. Coupled with the assumptions made by the “model minority” myth that AAPIs are natural math “whizzes” and are superior students, a common assumption is that AAPIs are actually overrepresented in higher education (Hune, 2002; National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2008). However, when one considers the complexity of this population, and realizes, for example, that a third-generation Japanese American does not have the same lived experience or face the same challenges as a Cambodian American refugee, it becomes more apparent that many AAPIs suffer the same marginalization, oppression, and exclusion from education as other groups of color. It is also necessary to acknowledge that even that third-generation Japanese American—whose family presumably would have assimilated and found success in American life—might still face many challenges to his educational success based solely on his race. It is because of the complexity within this group that I refer to AAPIs as underrepresented in higher education.

**Current AANAPISIs.** In September 2008, six institutions were identified by the U.S. Department of Education as pilot AANAPISIs: City College of San Francisco, DeAnza Community College in California, Guam Community College, South Seattle Community College, University of Hawaii at Hilo, and University of Maryland-College Park (National Council of Asian Pacific Americans, 2008). In 2009, two additional institutions, Queens College in the City University of New York system and Santa Monica College in California were also recognized and funded (National
Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2010). And in 2010, eight more institutions were
designated and funded ("AANAPISIs Receive $2.6 Million," 2010). These programs all seek to
address the needs of underrepresented AAPIs through a variety of student retention efforts,
strengthening curriculum, reducing barriers in college processes and even capital improvement.

All of the pilot programs have been funded under authorization from the College Cost
Reduction and Access Act of 2007 (CCRAA), which is a part of the Higher Education Reauthorization
Act ("AANAPISI Program," 2010). From 2010 through 2019, funding for AANAPISI programs is
authorized by Title III, Part A of the Higher Education Authorization Act of 2008, with monies that
were approved as part of the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010 ("AANAPISI

About the Study

This study examines how the U.S. Department of Education AANAPISI designation and grant
contributes to the increased success of Asian American and Pacific Islander students at a
community college, how a campus is changed by the designation, and how this designation works to
address the stereotypes and misperceptions held by the general population of AAPI students in
higher education.

Interest in the Research

My interest in this topic stems from my identities as both an Asian American woman and as
a community college student services professional with an interest in the success of AAPIs. I have
worked for several years in supporting the success of all students I have encountered, but have
seen firsthand the reality of some AAPIs who face similar struggles as other low-income, first-
generation or immigrant groups, clashing with the stereotype held by many in higher education
that AAPIs are widely successful and possess natural academic ability and superior work ethic. I
have seen how these stereotypes force struggling students to hide their true needs, and have
allowed institutions to exclude this population from support services for other underrepresented
groups. These dichotomies have long been troubling me, and with a recent opportunity to work for an AANAPISI grant program, I have been able to see how the system might finally be responding.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to understand the way one AANAPISI community college supports underrepresented AAPI students, and addresses the impact it has on the “model minority” stereotype. Until now, there was no nationally concerted effort to systematically address the needs of underrepresented AAPIs. Data aggregation and stereotypes hide the needs of this group. Through a qualitative case study approach, and the use of the emerging approach of analytic autoethnography, this study examines the progress of one AANAPISI institution toward meeting its own determined objectives of student success and retention, and examines how the AANAPISI designation in general addresses racial stereotypes and detrimental assumptions made about the AAPI population.

**Research Questions**

The overarching question that has guided the research is:

- How does the AANAPISI designation meet the needs of AAPI students?

The secondary questions that further focused this study are:

- How do AANAPISIs address the “model minority” stereotype?
- How do AANAPISI efforts impact student retention and success rates?

By looking at both the impact on students and the impact on perception, this study provides a more comprehensive analysis of how AANAPISIs benefit AAPIs and the higher education world.

**Theoretical Framework**

Critical race theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework that developed in the 1970s and 1980s out of the field of legal scholarship. Central to the thinking within this framework is the impact of race and power structures on communities and in law. At the time, many legal scholars were growing dissatisfied with the claims made by many that the civil rights movement provided the
needed “fix” for the social ills it sought to address, and considered the complacency following the civil rights movement to be a form of “backsliding” (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Taylor, 2009a). In CRT, issues of race are everywhere, and impact the complex social interactions and functions of society, systems, institutions, communities and individuals (Crenshaw, et al., 1995; Gotanda, 1995; Teranishi, 2002; Teranishi, Behringer, Grey, & Parker, 2009).

CRT is ultimately race-conscious, and cognizant of the power dynamics that influence inequalities. CRT scholarship seeks to both understand and change the social realities of racism, “it sets out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 3). While CRT looks critically at single acts of prejudice and recognizes racism as pervasive, CRT scholars have framed racism as “larger, systemic, structural conventions and customs that uphold and sustain oppressive group relationships, status, income and educational attainment,” rather than as acts of individuals to whom to assign blame (Taylor, 2009a, p. 4). This focus on racism at the systemic level enables CRT to serve as an effective theoretical framework from which to examine and understand topics of academic research (Taylor, 2009b).

The CRT framework has been very effective to examine the stereotypes and other negative experiences that have contributed to AAPI student achievement gaps. According to Teranishi (2009), this critical approach “permits the examination and transcendence of conceptual blockages, while simultaneously offering alternative perspectives on higher education policy and practice and the AAPI student population” (p. 59).

**Research Methods**

The research was conducted as a qualitative case study of South Seattle Community College (South), one of the first designated AANAPISIs. This case study involves document review of U.S. Department of Education and other reports, as well as interviews. Because I am a member of the AANAPISI program under study, utilizing an analytic autoethnographic approach (Anderson, 2006)
enabled me to include my own perspective as part of the findings of this study. Nested within the case study methodology, analytic autoethnography methodology provides the vehicle by which my own voice and unique perspective can be included as part of the case.

**Case study.** The case study approach is most appropriate for this research project because it allows for a very in-depth and holistic investigation of the program, which is very new (just over two years old) and one of very few (just one of eight pilot institutions) (Tellis, 1997). Without a history of other institutions to rely on, and without a larger number of designated institutions to comparatively study, many other methodologies would be prohibitive. Additionally, case-study methodology includes the use of a variety of data sources which I will employ, including document review and interviews.

The documents that were analyzed include the original grant application, reports submitted to the federal government, presentations made at professional conferences, and media coverage of the project. Interviews were conducted of AANAPISI program staff and South executive leadership. In addition to these individuals, some affiliated and stakeholder individuals were also interviewed. Because of my own unique positionality and direct affiliation with the AANAPISI institution, I have also been able to contribute my perspective and voice to the research collected.

**Analytic autoethnography.** Analytic autoethnography is a methodology rooted in anthropological and sociological uses of ethnographic inquiry. Proposed by Anderson in 2006 as an alternative to evocative autoethnography popularized by autoethnographers Ellis and Bochner, analytic autoethnography seeks to link the narrative and researcher-centric method of autoethnography to traditional symbolic interactionist ethnography (Anderson, 2006). The subject of this study is the institution and program in which I am employed. Additionally, I made significant contributions to South’s grant application research and writing, and have also been involved in the national advocacy effort to increase the number of AANAPISI-designations. Given my own “insider knowledge” of both the impact of the AANAPISI designation, and its history
and future, analytic autoethnography serves as an appropriate methodology for this study, allowing me to invoke my own voice and perspective in this research because of the five key features laid out by Anderson (2006): (1) “complete member researcher (CMR) status” which requires that I be a full-fledged member of the group under study, (2) “analytic reflexivity” throughout the analysis process, (3) “narrative visibility of the researcher’s self” in the report, (4) “dialogue with informants beyond the self”, and (5) “commitment to theoretical analysis” (p. 378).

Nested within the case study approach is the analytic autoethnography narrative. This has enabled me to analyze both the setting of the AANAPISI institution, and be able to contextualize my own experience and observation within the greater story of AANAPISIs.

**Implications of the Study**

The implications for my research in the universe of higher education are two-fold: practice and policy. On one hand, this research can impact how AAPIs are served by retention efforts by disseminating effective strategies to other higher education institutions and programs. Additionally, this research lays a foundation for the success of future AANAPISIs by exploring how a new program established itself and set out to serve students, and has done so through culturally relevant approaches in both student services and in instruction. This research also can impact policy. While AANAPISIs are a new and developing effort of the U.S. Department of Education, it can help inform the continuation and shape of future advocacy work and policy decisions. This research also impacts the profile of underrepresented AAPIs by discounting the “model minority” myth and demonstrating how this population is indeed in need of focused services. And finally, by raising the profile of this population, it can help increase the awareness of AAPI student needs within higher education and leverage funding for further support from other sources—federal, private, and local.

Ultimately, this dissertation will become a part of the largely unpopulated body of work that helps to move higher education forward in developing student support and student success
strategies that are inclusive of AAPI student needs. This research will hopefully spawn future and further research on the AANAPISI designation, and its long-term impact on the achievement gap experienced by many AAPIs.

To provide a solid foundation on which this study is built, the next chapter provides a thorough literature review of the theoretical framework that is employed in this study, as well as background about AAPI populations in higher education, and a review of the literature about Minority-Serving Institutions in general. In addition to these background areas, literature detailing the case study methodology, and the analytic autoethnography method are also presented. Each of these areas of literature influenced how the study was conceived, as well as how the data discovered through research was analyzed and presented.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

There are four categories of literature that are pertinent to this study. First, writings in critical race theory illustrate the theoretical framework that ground the study’s approach to the AAPI population and AANAPISI program and CRT helps guide the analysis. Also, scholarly reports and research on AAPI students in higher education paint the picture of the population on which this study focus. Additionally, related closely to this body of literature, articles critical of the “model minority” stereotype set the framework for critique of commonly held beliefs that this study and AANAPISI efforts seek to challenge. And finally, literature about the broader subject of Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) and special focus colleges provide context to the AANAPISI designation’s entrance into the world of U.S. Department of Education designations.

Critical Race Theory

To further dissect the effects of the “model minority” stereotype and deepen the critique, employing critical race theory (CRT) in this study serves to not only challenge stereotypes based on their effect on AAPIs, but also to view these assumptions in the context of power and the educational system. The application of CRT to this research functions in three key areas. First, CRT is explicitly race-conscious, and seeks to “reexamine the terms by which race and racism have been negotiated in American consciousness” (Crenshaw, et al., 1995, p. xiv). CRT recognizes that race is central to any issue involving individuals in American society, and requires that it not be ignored or written off as an incidental detail or fact (Crenshaw, et al., 1995; Gotanda, 1995). CRT also considers history and context to be ever-present in discussions of race and oppression, and resists the desire to write off racism as a thing of the past. Secondly, CRT values the voice of the individual and the oppressed in scholarly research as a means to combat that oppression. And thirdly, CRT is intended to be transformative of systems and institutions, not just of individuals. Through a constant consideration of how individual experience and narrative are impacted by systemic
barriers and institutional structures, CRT seeks to inform the development and revision of processes, policies, and laws that are otherwise oppressive of certain groups (R. S. Chang, 1993; Crenshaw, et al., 1995).

CRT makes many uncomfortable, because this theoretical perspective calls into question the very things that are commonly considered to represent a modern, pluralistic society: that racism was a thing of the past, that it is uncommon and surprising when it rears its ugly head, and that we as a community, a society, and a nation “know better” than to make the mistakes of past generations. It has been criticized as being negative, pessimistic, and cynical about racial progress (Crenshaw, et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). However, what CRT provides is an effective framework from which to ask questions of our assumptions about race, racism and oppression. And, it is not a total departure from the effort to create equality through civil rights, as CRT strives ultimately toward social justice.

In discussions of the often misrepresented population of AAPIs, tools like CRT have become invaluable to the struggle to dispute stereotypes about this population that describe dozens of cultures as monolithic, uniformly successful and without need for support in higher education and elsewhere, and describe a successful minority whose perceived cultural predisposition to success other minorities are often compared to. Within the world of higher education, CRT is also useful to critique longstanding structural barriers that necessitate Minority-Serving Institutions, and this theoretical perspective helps to make the case that race-conscious and culturally-conscious services and support such as those that AANAPISIs provide, are necessary in addressing adequately the needs of marginalized groups.

**Origins and historical background of CRT.** CRT first emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in response to the dissatisfaction of some legal scholars with post-Civil Rights era progress (Crenshaw, et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Taylor, 2009a), through a “perceived stalling of traditional civil rights litigation in the United States in arenas such as
legislative districting, affirmative action, criminal sentencing, and campus speech codes” (Taylor, 2009b, p. 2). Derrick Bell was CRT's first scholar. At the time, Bell was the first African American to be tenured at Harvard's School of Law (Taylor, 2009a), and is still presently active in the CRT movement (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Some of Bell’s Harvard students also became major contributors to the movement through writings of their own, including Kimberlé Crenshaw and Mari Matsuda (Taylor, 2009a). Bell resigned from Harvard in 1980, protesting the college's failure to hire women of color faculty (Taylor, 2009a).

**Key events in CRT development.** Following Bell’s resignation, students at Harvard Law School organized to demand that the administration hire a faculty of color to replace him. When Harvard did not, citing that there were no qualified Black scholars, students then demanded a course on race and law. When the institution responded with a three-week seminar on civil-rights and argued that issues of race were already taught in other courses, students developed the “Alternative Course.” This student-led course attracted guest scholars and continued Bell’s work, and looked at the law through the lens of race. Other similar movements of unrest transpired at law schools elsewhere in the country as well, and helped to forge a grass-roots community of legal scholars, professors and students (Crenshaw, et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 2009a).

The second series of key events that facilitated CRTs development transpired at Critical Legal Studies (CLS) conferences in the 1980s, which was a school of legal thought preceding CRT that was also critical of legal liberalism. This progressive perspective resonated with many legal scholars of color in terms of its assertion that “law was neither apolitical, neutral, nor determinate” (Crenshaw, et al., 1995, p. xxii). Though critical in its examination of the rule of law and the objectivity of legal decisions, CLS stopped short of a thorough critique from a perspective of race (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Scholars of color attending CLS conferences would point out the centrality of race and racism to hegemonic power. The eventual branching-off became apparent when a group
of scholars of color organized a discussion that examined the dimensions of racial power within CLS itself, which some CLS scholars questioned. As these scholars became separated from CLS, they too formed an informal network amongst themselves that eventually became the intellectual community from which CRT emerged (Crenshaw, et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

**Fundamentals of CRT.** As a theoretical perspective that critiques the simplification of one’s identity down to a single essential definition, CRT itself is appropriately complex and resistant to distillation. Derrick Bell (2009), who is credited as the father of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 2009a), states “although critical race theory is not cohesive, it is at least committed” (p. 42). While some authors identify different key themes, they are all aimed in the same direction of critical thought and research around race. Despite the hesitance to simplify its tenets into a concrete list, five key concepts emerge from critical race theory literature: (1) that racism is a normal and everyday occurrence, (2) that racial progress or change only occurs when there is “interest convergence,” (3) that race is socially constructed, (4) that the use of narrative is key, and (5) that the historical context always matters (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 2009b). The CRT perspective sees issues of race and racism as prevalent because of the hegemony constructed by the white majority throughout American history. Though in the past this was consciously constructed through exclusionary laws and forms of human subjugation, it is today carelessly maintained through structures, laws and values that still perpetuate racism and, at the same time, render racism invisible.

**Racism is common.** CRT is critical of the shock and surprise that the majority of Americans have to acts of racism and prejudice. Instead, CRT holds that racism, prejudice and bias are everyday, common acts, often perpetrated not in dramatic or violent acts, but through “microaggressions” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 2009b). A "microaggression" is a "stunning small encounter with racism, usually unnoticed by members of the majority race," which not only irritate but cause pain for marginalized groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 151). Because these
microaggressions usually go unnoticed by the majority group, and therefore appear to lack alarm, they are easily dismissed and the reactions of the members of marginalized groups are invalidated. CRT does not dismiss these small acts, but rather recognizes that the cumulative effect of hundreds and thousands of these “micro” experiences that go unaddressed further perpetuate the assumptions of racial hierarchy that maintain the institutional racism in our institutions, social values, and even interpersonal interactions.

Even when the racism is less subtle than a microaggression, it can still be invisible to the white majority. It can be so large, and so common, that it becomes a part of the atmosphere rather than a pollutant in the air. Because oppression and exclusion are institutionalized and so prevalent in many common matters, including education, hiring practices, housing, and in the legal system, it has become “uninteresting” to many Whites (Taylor, 2009b). Racism becomes so common, it becomes normal, blending in with daily American life (R. S. Chang, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1999). The invisibility that racism takes on in this context creates the need to uncover it through CRT.

**Interest convergence.** CRT scholars have explored and uncovered a phenomenon known as “interest convergence” in America’s racial history. Interest convergence occurs when “the majority group tolerates advances for racial justice only when it suits its interests to do so” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 149). The foremost example of interest convergence was presented by Bell, as described in Delgado and Stefancic (2001), who argued that the hallmark desegregation case of 1954, Brown v. Board of Education, only advanced desegregation because the United States was facing a public relations crisis abroad when during the Cold War period, images and stories in the international media of American lynchings, slavery, hate crimes and racist power figures, making US calls for democracy and equality abroad hypocritical and disingenuous (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 2009a). As Delgado and Stefancic (2001) describe, “It was time for the United States to soften its stance toward domestic minorities. The interests of whites and blacks, for a brief moment, converged” (p. 19).
**Race as a social construct.** Another theme of critical race theory is that race itself is a social construct, not a natural or essential grouping. “Social construction” is defined as the “process of endowing a group or concept with a delineation, name or reality” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 155). There is no “true” Black, Hispanic, Asian, or White race. These groups have always been far more diverse and complex in identities than their race categories can recognize. “Not objective, inherent or fixed, [races] correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 6).

In regards to Asian American and Pacific Islander racial grouping, Espiritu and Omi (2000) state that race classification comes about as a ”result of dynamic and complex negotiations between state interests, panethnic demands, and ethnic-specific challenges” (p. 43). In a very illustrative example of race as a social construct, they describe how the categories of “Asian American” and “Native Hawaiian” and “other Pacific Islander” came to be on the U.S. Census through several decades of protest, resistance, and negotiation over groupings and names (Espiritu & Omi, 2000).

**Anti-essentialism and Intersectionality.** A further critique of the concept of race as a social construction is the CRT perspective of anti-essentialism. Anti-essentialism is a challenge to the notion that a race—or any identity—can be defined as true or authentic. If essentialism is the “search for the unique essence of a group,” then anti-essentialism does not believe that there is a true essence of a group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 146). Therefore, to only define someone as “Black” or “Asian”—or to assume all Blacks and Asians have a common experience—is an inadequate identification, as any one individual has multiple identities related to gender, sexuality, experience, appearance, education, and more.

These multiple identities lead to the CRT concept of intersectionality, which posits that no one has a single identity, but that they have multiple identities that intersect and impact their lived experience in various ways. Although CRT considers race central to all issues, its scholars seek to bring to the forefront the multitude of issues and perspectives of people of color beyond simply
their race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Parker & Lynn, 2009; Taylor, 2009b). In this way CRT continually works to complicate rather than simplify the issues, identities, politics, policies, values and beliefs that relate to race.

**Narrative is key.** The use of narrative is another key component to CRT, which is used to challenge and redefine socially-constructed racial categories (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Taylor, 2009a, 2009b). Through the use of narrative and storytelling in law, in research, and in critique, the voice of the oppressed is utilized to counteract the narrative that has been told about them by history, policy, media and stereotypes. The use of these “counterstories” in CRT “challenge, displace, or mock these pernicious narratives and beliefs . . . stories can give voice and reveal that others have similar experiences. Stories can name a type of discrimination; once named, it can be combating” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 43).

Solórzano and Yosso (2009) identify four functions of counter-storytelling: (1) to build community among marginalized groups, (2) to challenge the “perceived wisdom of those at society’s center” though providing a context to critique and change existing belief systems, (3) to help marginalized individuals see a reality beyond what they have experienced thus far and to demonstrate they are not alone, and (4) to demonstrate that by considering both the narrative and the “known” reality, one can “construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009, p. 142). Through these functions, counterstories and narratives become a primary tool of critical race theorists in challenging and reframing issues of race.

**History matters.** Because the racism that has become institutionalized today has its roots in the policies and practices employed throughout history, historical context is always considered in CRT (Crenshaw, et al., 1995). However, Americans commonly experience a sort of “amnesia” around racism that renders its foundations in the past forgotten or disregarded (Taylor, 2009b). The tendency is for Americans to write off the wrongdoings of the past as the mistakes of an older
generation who are assumed to have nothing to do with today’s context. Many feel as if the civil rights movement and other efforts such as affirmative action indicate that as a society, we have done enough (Taylor, 2009a). Gotanda (1995) addresses this dismissiveness: “If the government and the Supreme Court erred, it was because of the bad thinking of the day. Prejudice and misunderstanding were the cause, not structural inequalities” (p. 131). However, this false satisfaction oversimplifies the impact of America’s history of racism, and creates the faulty assumption that we are so much better than our past.

It is dissatisfaction with “amnesia” that led to early writings that would frame CRT. CRT scholars seek to examine and uncover the persistent structural inequalities that many choose not to see. In CRT critiques, the history and context of an issue are ever-present. In order to understand and challenge oppressive structures, CRT scholars strive to reveal the history of its development.

**CRT and AAPIs.** Initially, CRT emerged out of what was largely considered to be a “black-white binary” (Gotanda, 1995), which has been defined as a “binary paradigm that considers the black-white relation central to racial analysis” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 142). Within this dichotomous simplification, even when other races are considered, they tend to be aligned with either Black or White, with Latinos and Blacks on one end of an issue, and typically Whites and AAPIs at the other (Teranishi, et al., 2009). However, it did not take long before scholars extended the fundamental components of CRT to other groups and identities, to even form spin-off movements (Crenshaw, et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT today strives toward a more nuanced understanding of race, one that goes beyond the typical duality of the black-white paradigm, which tends to focus the lens of race on either issues of black or white (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Gotanda, 1995; Teranishi, et al., 2009).

As CRT makes clear, race is a social construct. And as Ladson-Billings (1999) explains, “the creation of these conceptual categories is not designed to reify a binary, but rather to suggest how in a radicalized society where whiteness is positioned as normative everyone is ranked and
categorized in relation to these points of opposition” (p. 9). But when AAPIs are assumed to be monolithic and successful, at least among groups of color, AAPI itself becomes normative. In fact, this is exactly what the “model minority” myth sought to do—it sought to uphold AAPIs as the model and the norm that other races should aspire to (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Suzuki, 1977, 2002; Wang, 2007; Yu, 2006).

**CRT and the Social Construction of AAPI.** The development of the term "Asian American and Pacific Islander" is consistent with CRT’s assertion that race is a social construct. Today there are many names for the group referred to here as “AAPI.” Common terms also include Asian Pacific American (APA), Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA), Asian American, Pacific Islander. There are also emerging terms gaining traction in the national conversation, including Desi American, which is a term describing those of South Asian descent.

The determination of racial categories has been institutionalized by their use in the U.S. Census. Today, institutions of higher education rely on Census categories to organize their demographic data. The reliance on Census categories to insure consistency leaves those inadequately addressed by these groupings either hidden within data or completely excluded. Specific cultural and ethnic groups within the AAPI category are hidden by this data. In 1977, Directive 15 created the five racial categories commonly used today in data collection. This policy directive by the Office of Management and Budget institutionalized the sorting of people into one of five races. Though it also allowed Census respondents to specify their ethnicity, it also required that this data be reaggregated for ease of data analysis (Espiritu & Omi, 2000).

Directive 15 has set the precedent for racial and ethnic categorization across sectors, including higher education. While races may already have been constructed by popular discourse, this further institutionalized race categories, and has directly contributed to the assumption that the AAPI category is homogenous.
**CRT and AAPI History.** The “amnesia” of a racist past that Taylor (2009b) referenced plagues AAPIs as well, who are seen simply as today's success story, while Japanese internment, hate crimes, exclusionary immigrant laws, and many other histories of oppression are forgotten. From the Chinese laborers who arrived in California in the mid-nineteenth century, to the refugees of Southeast Asia that arrived following the wars waged in that region, to today's population of immigrants and their children's children's children, as well as indigenous populations of American territories, AAPIs have largely been treated precariously as guests, and “like guests, their degree of usefulness to and level of toleration by the dominant society was determined by the beneficence of their host” (Wang, 2007, p. 79).

The history of exclusion is important to consider whenever studying AAPIs in a contemporary context. Immigration laws were the first structural rejection of AAPIs, as evidenced by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, “a total exclusion by law and denial of citizenship by a country founded on principles of equality, freedom, and democracy” (Wang, 2007, p. 79). This created a template for how future Asian immigrant groups would be treated. The history of Japanese American internment is also relevant to issues affecting AAPIs today, as the assumption of loyalty to a distant “homeland” based on race alone was enough to imprison an entire population of American citizens during World War II.

As demonstrated by the recent cases of Wen Ho Lee (who was wrongly accused of leaking classified information to China) at Los Alamos National Laboratory in 1999, and James Yee (U.S. Army Chaplain and Captain wrongly accused of espionage in 2003), this history of exclusion and suspicion is not a distant one (Wang, 2007). The history of these two men is closely tied to the history of the Chinese Exclusion Act and Japanese American internment, and cannot be written off by “amnesia.” The same pervasive assumptions made about these decorated and accomplished men are commonly made about AAPIs everyday in every institution. CRT is effective in keeping history a part of the contemporary discussion.
**CRT and AAPI Narratives.** The narrative and counterstory as employed in CRT is a necessary tool in research and analysis of AAPI populations. The stereotypes about AAPIs that date back to when the first immigrants from Asian countries arrived in the U.S. have persisted from generation to generation. It is important that scholars examining AAPI populations “use counterstories to challenge, displace, or mock these pernicious narratives and beliefs” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 43).

The story that has been written about AAPIs by dominant society has made what is visible about them (based on stereotypes) very damaging. What is left unseen in this story is the untold narrative by AAPIs themselves: of dozens of different cultures, of profound underrepresentation by some in education, of the poverty of new immigrant groups, and the multigenerational and established communities in the U.S. This disparity between the visible story and the invisible narrative amounts to a persistent oppression of AAPIs. As Chang (1993) suggests, “narrative will allow us to speak our oppression into existence, for it must first be represented before it can be erased” (p. 1267).

The inclusion of narrative of AAPIs in research is critical to bringing about social justice through a refutation of stereotypes. Chou and Feagin (2008) in their book *The Myth of the Model Minority: Asian Americans facing racism* utilize narrative from their interviews of individuals from various Asian American backgrounds to dispute the “model minority” archetype. They demonstrate the power that narrative has in making an argument against racism through research. Milner (2007) addresses this strength of the narrative: “critical race theorists argue that narrative and counter-narrative should be captured by the researcher, experienced by the research participants, and told by people of color” (p. 391). This storytelling through research, and the capturing of narrative, can begin to retell the stories that have been long told of AAPI communities from many perspectives other than their own.
AAPIs in higher education

A condition that has prevented AAPI student needs from becoming apparent to the higher education world is the lack of disaggregated data. Institutions of higher education and the U.S. Census report statistics in aggregate form, and do not acknowledge how data might be different for subgroups that are lumped into the aggregate, despite the fact that there is a vast diversity to be found among subgroups (Espiritu & Omi, 2000; Hune, 2002; Kawaguchi, 2003; Kiang, 1992; Lew, et al., 2005; Museus, 2009a, 2009b; National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2008, 2010; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Suzuki, 2002; Yu, 2006). The diversity within the AAPI populations of culture, language, ethnicity, nativity, history and success is unlike that of any other racial or ethnic group. Asian American and Pacific Islanders "are an incredibly heterogeneous group of people, and there is simply no single narrative that can capture the range of educational experiences, opportunities, and outcomes they encounter" (National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2010, p. 3).

AAPI data. Nationwide, the population of AAPIs has been growing since the immigration wave beginning in 1965. Following the wars in Southeast Asia, the refugee population has been growing since the 1970s (Hune, 2002). Not only has it grown in number, but it has expanded in the number of ethnicities represented. The 2000 Census recognized 25 categories of Asian and 24 categories of Pacific Islander (Hune, 2002). These shifts in immigration patterns have added complexity and depth to the diversity of the AAPI umbrella. The population has become “bimodal,” with some AAPIs succeeding economically and in education, while others suffer high poverty rates and low educational attainment (Hune, 2002; Lew, et al., 2005). The fact that the data are often aggregated for all AAPI subgroups makes it impossible to see which groups need more support in succeeding economically and academically.

Origins of “AAPI.” In 1977 the U.S. Census Bureau, in an effort to simplify data gathering, grouped backgrounds they deemed similar together under “Directive 15” and created the five standard categories still widely employed today in government, education, employment, and even
consumer surveys: (a) American Indian or Alaskan Native, (b) Asian or Pacific Islander, (c) Black, (d) White and (e) Hispanic (Espiritu & Omi, 2000, p. 49). This categorization of “Asian or Pacific Islander” created the contradictory environment that both allows for respondents to specify their ethnicity (e.g., Filipino, Korean) but “required that such groups be reaggregated into five basic racial/ethnic categories” (Espiritu & Omi, 2000, p. 51).

Directive 15 has set the precedent for racial and ethnic categorization across sectors, including higher education. Although individual ethnic categories can be specified on the Census, often institutions do not collect data with the same detail, and rely on the aggregate classification identified as “Asian Pacific American” which Espiritu & Omi (2000) refer to—not as a true racial or ethnic category (which assumes either biological or cultural consanguinity)—but rather a “social and political construct” (pp. 52-53).

A social and political construct. The concept of race is problematic, especially as determined and used by the U.S. Census. Census race classification comes about as a "result of dynamic and complex negotiations between state interests, panethnic demands, and ethnic-specific challenges" (Espiritu & Omi, 2000, p. 43). For example, today the Census uses an aggregate grouping of “Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders” to discuss Pacific Islander data separate from Asian American data. This grouping came about as a result of resistance from the Native Hawaiian community to the inclusion with Asian American, and negotiation with an Office of Management and Budget representative who proposed combining all “other Pacific Islanders” with Native Hawaiian (Espiritu & Omi, 2000). This points to a marginalization even within a marginalized group.

The AAPI designation, itself, is problematic. Like race, this umbrella grouping is considered a social and political construct, rather than some sort of natural grouping. It has also been contested over the years by those it presumes to represent. The U.S. Census, because of its power to determine race and ethnic classifications, has become the battleground on which to fight ascribed
identities. Asian Indians (itself a socially-constructed term), Filipinos and Native Hawaiians have all contested their inclusion in this category for various reasons—all of which include refuting the fact that they are similar to other AAPI groups (Espiritu & Omi, 2000).

“Overrepresentation.” In higher education, AAPIs are sometimes assumed to actually be overrepresented in elite research institutions (National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2008). However, the data prove that AAPIs are nearly equally enrolled in four-year and two-year colleges and that they are mostly enrolled in public institutions (Lew, et al., 2005; National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2008, 2010). In fact, more than at four-year colleges, AAPI enrollment grew at community colleges by 73.3% from 1990 to 2000 (National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2010). In some regions of the country they saw even more growth. In Georgia, AAPI community college enrollment grew by 87.6%, and in Minnesota, AAPI enrollment grew by 147.7% (National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2010).

In Daniel Golden’s book, Price of Admission (2006), the experience of AAPIs in the elite institutions of higher education is portrayed in a provocatively titled chapter, “The New Jews: Asian Americans Need Not Apply.” Golden gives evidence that AAPIs are not seen as valuable to these institutions, and that they have “inherited the mantle of the most disenfranchised group in college admissions” essentially because they are perceived as too successful, and, ironically, do not contribute enough diversity to the institution (p. 199). His research discovered that Asian American applicants had to meet higher admission standards than any other racial groups to gain admission. Golden cites an MIT dean of admissions, Marilee Jones, as she explains why a very high achieving Korean American applicant was rejected: the applicant “looked like a thousand other Korean kids with the exact same profile of grades and activities and temperament . . . he just wasn’t interesting enough to surface to the top” and, in this applicants case, she could understand why the university would reject “yet another textureless math grind” (p. 201).
Once again, the “usefulness and level of toleration” of AAPIs is purely at the whim of the majority white perspective, which calls AAPIs “overrepresented.” The perceived success of AAPIs in higher education is seen as actually threatening to Whites, and—just like the “model minority” concept in the 1970s and 1980s—has also been used as a wedge against other groups of color in arguments around affirmative action, whether AAPIs are included or excluded in affirmative action policies. In these dichotomous arguments, when AAPIs are included in affirmative action, they are purported as benefitting from the policy disproportionately over other groups of color (as evidenced by their “overrepresentation”), implying that AAPIs are taking seats away from other groups, and where affirmative action is denied to AAPIs, they are seen as victims of affirmative action, losing seats to other groups of color, along with Whites (Ng, et al., 2007; Ong, 2000). What the concept of “overrepresentation” fails to account for is the bifurcation of the AAPI community in higher education, with a portion of the population at elite institutions, and the rest—actually the majority, “mostly children of the working class . . . of poor immigrants and refugees”—in public universities and community colleges developing basic skills and struggling with affordability and access (Wang, 2007, p. 80).

**Bimodal.** Careful research shows that underneath the AAPI umbrella are highly successful groups and others with very low educational attainment, income and greater risk factors. However, because of these two extremes, the AAPI collective community is seen as “bimodal” (Chew-Ogi & Ogi, 2002; Hune, 2002; Ngo, 2006). This bimodalism can even be found within ethnic groups. Vietnamese students, for example, are both touted for their educational success and dedication, and also are very much at risk of gang involvement (Ngo, 2006). This bimodal quality becomes problematic when coupled with the stereotype of the “model minority.” This perception gives much more weight to those who are most successful, and eclipse those who are not, creating a distorted view of who and what the AAPI community really is.
“Model minority” stereotype

Like a backhanded compliment, the “model minority” myth attempts to flatter AAPIs with a “simplistic model—the high-achieving minority, who proves that with hard work any student can accomplish anything and those who don’t have only themselves to blame” (National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2008). However, this characterization actually does damage to other groups of color. By referring to AAPIs as the “model,” the subtext that can be inferred suggests that other minorities are not models, and therefore creates a wedge between the communities of color (Lew, et al., 2005; National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2008; Suzuki, 2002). The origins of this stereotype run deep, and indicate just how pervasive the stereotype still is.

**Development of the “model minority” myth.** The concept of AAPI populations as the “model minority” is rooted in the 19th century, when railroad companies brought in Chinese labor to keep profits up and labor costs down. These laborers were also used as a comparison for other labor groups to aspire to (Ng, et al., 2007). They were positioned as a “model” labor force and used to exclude Irish immigrant labor and newly-freed African Americans from the South. And once again in the 1960s, at a time when there was much civil unrest among communities of color in American cities, several authors argue that that the “model minority” myth was perpetuated by the popular media as a wedge stereotype to divide communities of color against one another (College Board, 2008; Lew, et al., 2005; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Suzuki, 1977). With such demonstrations of unrest as the Watts riot in 1965, the mainstream media were lauding Asian Americans basically for “becoming accepted into white, middle-class society through their hard work, uncomplaining perseverance and quiet accommodation” (Suzuki, 1977, p. 23). Though immediately scholars and Asian American activists were critical of this characterization and resisted its application to the population (Suzuki, 2002), the stereotype has, nevertheless, persisted and continues to affect not just Asian Americans, but the other groups artificially combined with them into the more general category of AAPI.
Perceptions created by the “model minority” stereotype. Beyond the image of a studious, successful, mathematically-inclined Asian American that the “model minority” stereotype paints, this construct also creates a fear of AAPI student success (R. S. Chang, 1993; Ng, et al., 2007). AAPI students are already seen as “over populating” higher education (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Goel, 2006; Hune, 2002; Lew, et al., 2005; National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2008; Ng, et al., 2007; Wang, 2007). More specifically, AAPI students are perceived to be concentrated at the most elite universities in the nation, with colleges such as MIT and UCLA earning nicknames “Made In Taiwan” and “University of Caucasians Lost among Asians” (National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2008, p. 4). In reality, AAPI enrollment is balanced between two-year and four-year campuses, and the majority are enrolled in public institutions (College Board, 2008, p. 9).

And this perception is even more pervasive. AAPI statistics are often offered as the benchmark for success alongside—and sometimes even ahead of—Whites (Museus, 2009a; Museus & Chang, 2009; U.S. General Accountability Office, 2007). This perception of overrepresentation has positioned AAPI populations as not only the “model minorities” but also as the competition to beat.

In his essay, Wang (2007) takes issue with the term “overrepresented.” In a society that values merit and the notion that anyone can earn success based on the intelligence and abilities she or he demonstrates, the term "overrepresentation" implies that even if certain groups rightfully earn their success, that there is a limit, a saturation point at which there can be too many of a certain group, and they become undesirable (Wang, 2007). Wang goes on to point out that "Asian Americans have the dubious distinction of being the most visible yet most marginalized population in all types of institutions of higher education” (p. 90).

Impact of the “model minority” myth. The “model minority” myth “causes and/or reinforces people’s indifference and ignorance toward [AAPI] students’ needs and problems” (Yu, 2006, p. 330). By not correcting for the misjudgments caused by the assumptions of this stereotype, educators grossly miscalculate the needs of AAPI students, especially those underrepresented
groups such as Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders (Makuakane-Drechsel & Serra Hagedorn, 2001; Ngo, 2006; Yu, 2006). Strategies for pedagogy and instruction, student services and other forms of support do not consider the barriers many AAPI individuals have faced, and the cultural considerations that impact their participation and success in higher education.

"Model minority" myth in the classroom. Several researchers point out just how powerful a negative impact such a seemingly positive stereotype can have on AAPI student populations. Chang (2005), in a study that examined faculty-student interaction among students of color in community college, shined a light on a surprising finding: AAPI students are the least likely among other students of color to interact with faculty and staff. This is true when even predictors that are positively correlated with faculty-student interaction for other groups are present, such as well-educated parents, participation in orientation, and more time spent on campus. Chang points to a possible “cultural mismatch” between the communication styles of some AAPI groups and the methods of interaction in the college (p. 791). This mismatch can exacerbate the lack of interaction on two fronts: first, students do not feel comfortable approaching instructors when they are struggling because of a “culture of emotional restraint” (p. 790), and an instructor who buys into the “model minority” myth assumes that those AAPI students who do not approach her are doing fine.

Kiang’s (1992) study of first-generation immigrant university students illustrates the alienation that this particular AAPI population faces in the classroom and in trying to navigate support services and in choosing majors. Students reported a profound insecurity around their accents which prevented them from verbally engaging in the classroom or forming support networks within their classes. These students were also choosing fields such as computers or engineering, which in their estimation relied less on verbal and written communication skills than other fields. Kiang speculates that this further perpetuates the “model minority” myth assumption that AAPI students are “natural” math whizzes.
“Model minority” myth outside of the classroom. The assumption that AAPI students are successful affects them outside of the classroom as well. In an article in Diverse Education magazine, Lum (2008) finds that some Asian American students are avoiding applying for financial aid due to the discomfort of their parents with providing personal and financial information to the government. For some immigrants who came from a country with a more restrictive or autocratic government regime, providing information may have resulted in getting them into trouble. So even when their child can qualify for aid, they hesitate to participate in the federal financial aid process. For other groups, “financial aid” is synonymous with government support or welfare, and out of pride they refuse to apply and instead choose to struggle to pay out of pocket for the full cost of education. This lack of application leads some colleges to erroneously assume that AAPI students do not need financial support to attend college (Lum, 2008).

Compounded pressure. The “model minority” myth is sometimes internalized by many AAPI individuals struggling to find their place in society as new immigrants, and by students struggling to find their identity throughout their formative secondary and college years. Coupled with the emphasis in some Asian cultures to practice emotional restraint, students who are in need of support due to these and other factors, but who lack the experience or comfort with reaching out and seeking support, can easily go unnoticed by higher education professionals and unserved by support services available in such institutions (Kodama, McEwen, Liang, & Lee, 2001).

Lew, Chang and Wang (2005), in their review of literature about AAPI students in community colleges, points out that the “model minority” stereotype creates a struggle for students to achieve at expected levels. The pressure that this puts on students can be exacerbated for some who also carry the weight of their parents’ and family’s hopes and dreams on their shoulders. Students are left feeling not only the expectation of individual success by their institution and instructors, but also the pressure to not let the family down and to make their sacrifices as immigrants worthwhile (Kiang, 1992; Lee, Su, & Yoshida, 2005; Maramba, 2008).
Kiang’s (1992) interviews and findings also revealed the deep pain those interviewed felt as a result of these insecurities and struggles. Some students simply dropped out because they did not know where to go for help (p. 104). Others described a depression developed from the alienation they felt in the classroom and outside of it as well (p.100). Many described shame and even a spiritual emptiness because they felt so disconnected from everyone else (p. 103). Chou and Feagin (2008) uncovered similar pain in interviews conducted for their book The Myth of the Model Minority. In account after account, those interviewed revealed how much impact the “model minority” myth can have through subtle, but pervasive interactions and experiences.

**Minority-serving and special-focus institutions**

Because AANAPISIs are so new to the world of higher education, the literature about other types of Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) inform the anticipated outcomes of the AANAPISI designation. Just as community colleges are among America’s greatest creations, so too are Minority-Serving Institutions in the United States. Since the 1960s, this family of U.S. Department of Education institutional designations known collectively as Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) consists of colleges and universities who are either chartered to serve a particular ethnic, cultural or racial group or who are recognized for their high enrollments within a particular group. MSIs came about as a result of segregation policies (as in the case of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges and Universities), or out of the need to improve the institutions serving large communities of color. They are borne of the inequality and racism that have plagued American higher education, they were developed through America’s own struggle for civil rights, and they remain relevant because of the achievement and access gap that this nation’s prejudiced history has created (Townsend, 2006).

In his foreword to *Understanding Minority-Serving Institutions*, Walter Allen (2008) positions MSIs succinctly at the nexus of conflict: “Minority-Serving Institutions of higher learning exist at the intersection where the American Dream of unbridled possibilities meets the American
Nightmare of persistent racial-ethnic subordination” (pp. xv-xvi). It is important when examining MSIs and their place in higher education to acknowledge that their very existence points to inequities still present. Though the system of community colleges established a great democratizing force, providing open access to disadvantaged students, students of color have still struggled to gain access, persist and succeed.

Until recently, MSIs only addressed African American, Native American and Chicano/Latino/Hispanic populations in higher education. Finally, in 2008, the U.S. Department of Education started acknowledging the AAPI population’s needs in higher education through a new federal designation, called Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions.

**History of Minority-Serving Institutions.** MSIs, as they have been federally-recognized, have been serving their populations for over forty years, and today still serve the very important purpose of directly serving disenfranchised groups, while also developing and modeling programs, services, and pedagogies that other institutions can replicate, and conducting research to inform all of higher education about their represented population (Baez, Gasman, & Turner, 2008; Merisotis, 2008; Townsend, 2006).

**Special-focus colleges (pre-designation).** Because higher education in America was founded as a pursuit reserved only for the rich, White, male elite, its development since those days has seen a gradual and revolutionary transformation toward opening the gates for marginalized and oppressed groups to enter (Witt, Wattenbarger, Gollattscheck, & Suppiger, 1995). As part of that evolution, before the Department of Education began recognizing MSIs, the institutions that served the non-elite, non-White, and non-male were considered “special-focus” institutions. These institutions included not only those serving racial minorities, but also women’s colleges, and church-affiliated colleges who served their own denominations. Over time, there were fewer
women’ colleges as other institutions became co-educational, and smaller church-affiliated institutions closed for lack of financial viability (Townsend, 2006).

**Historically Black Colleges and Universities.** The history of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, or HBCUs as they are commonly known, is deep and a product of racial segregation. HBCUs are defined as colleges established prior to 1964 for the expressed purpose of educating African Americans when they were not permitted to attend white universities. Some of these earliest institutions were founded in the 1800s in the North by white churches, who often had the motivations of missionaries to Christianize freed slaves into their particular religion (Townsend, 2006). There were also African American churches founding Black colleges in the freed states at the time. With the passage of the Morrill Act in 1890, best known for expanding land-grant institutions, the federal government required that states with segregation policies in place establish agricultural and mechanical institutions for African Americans (Gasman, 2008). These institutions were intended to encourage the placement of African Americans in the trades to support the industries that brought local and national economies revenue. African American intellectuals of the time were demanding expansion of not just *any* higher educational opportunity, but of liberal arts education in particular (Gasman, 2008).

A major impact on HBCUs came in 1954 with the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision desegregating schools. Though this was a civil rights breakthrough, Black institutions were now competing with traditionally White institutions for students and were even being criticized as “vestiges of segregation” (Gasman, 2008, p. 21). In 1965, the Higher Education Act defined and recognized HBCUs as we know them today, and paved the way for federal support for them through presidential executive orders from the 1980s until now. (Gasman, 2008, pp. 19-23).

Today there are 102 HBCUs: 39 are four-year public institutions, 50 are four-year private institutions, only 11 are identified as two-year public institutions and 2 are two-year private
institutions. They are concentrated in the southeastern United States, although there are some in the northeast as well ("List of HBCUs," 2008).

**Tribal Colleges and Universities.** Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) as defined by the Tribal Controlled College or University Assistance Act of 1978 are accredited higher education institutions of whom 50% or more of the enrollment is Native American, and who are chartered by Native American tribes that are recognized by the federal government (Giegerich, 2008, p. 12). TCUs are also inextricably linked to the history of social justice movements that advanced the Native American population. During the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, Native Americans worked more and more toward addressing the unconscionable educational and economic achievement gap within the community (Gasman, 2008). In response to this, the very first tribal college was established in 1968 by the Navajo Nation in Arizona, and is today known as Dine College (Gasman, 2008; Townsend, 2006).

Although the 1960s saw the establishment of our nation’s first tribal colleges, the education of Native Americans has been of interest to various groups throughout American history, and often to the extreme detriment to the tribes. The education system was used as a means of cultural genocide through the infamous government boarding schools that sought to abolish all indigenous languages, cultural practices, tribal affiliation and personal self-esteem (Townsend, 2006). The reclamation of education by Native Americans grew out of the recognition that Native Americans were the most underrepresented group in higher education. Traditional pedagogy and learning styles in predominantly White institutions provide a cultural mismatch to the epistemology that drives Native ways of knowing and learning about the world, which is primarily through oral history (Gasman, 2008; Giegerich, 2008; Townsend, 2006). “TCUs . . . are unique institutions that combine personal attention with cultural relevance to encourage American Indians—especially those living on reservations—to overcome the barriers they face to higher education” (“American
Indian Higher Education Consortium,” 2008). Today there are 32 TCUs in 12 states—primarily in the west and southwest—as identified by the Department of Education (“Tribal College List,” 2008).

**Hispanic Serving Institutions.** Unlike HBCUs and TCUs which were institutions founded to serve their represented cultural group, Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) were identified as established higher education institutions that enrolled a large number of Chicano/Latino students (Gasman, 2008; Townsend, 2006). First recognized by the Department of Education in 1992, nearly all HSIs were identified by their enrollment of greater than 25% Chicano/Latino students (Connell, 2008; Gasman, 2008; Townsend, 2006). Later legislation required that HSIs show that their Chicano/Latino population was also at least 50% low income (Gasman, 2008, p. 23). Though this period marked the first federal recognition of such institutions, like HBCUs and Tribal Colleges, prior to this official acknowledgement, six Chicano colleges were developed by the community itself (rather than by churches or federal government) in the 1960s as a response to the great lack of opportunity and culturally-appropriate higher education opportunities for Chicano youth in particular (Townsend, 2006, p. 30).

Since the creation of the HSI designation in the early 1990s, the rapid growth in the Chicano and Latino population in the US has contributed to the rapid growth in the number of HSIs, located primarily in areas with high concentrations of these groups. The numbers of federally recognized institutions have doubled since 1992 (Gasman, 2008, p. 24). Unfortunately, unlike HBCUs and TCUs, the Department of Education website does not provide a definitive list of all federally recognized HSIs (”Hispanic-Serving Institution Definitions,” n.d.).

While the total count may be elusive, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), a national advocacy organization representing federally-recognized HSIs, as well as institutions with high Chicano/Latino enrollment but without federal funding or recognition, recognizes five different institution types, and lists federally-recognized HSIs as a single category.
Of their 469 member institutions and districts in 2008, HACU counts 212 HSIs among their membership ("HACU Members," n.d.).

**Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions.** In 1998, amendments to the Higher Education Act recognized both Alaska Native Serving Institutions (ANSI) and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions (NHSI), which are known collectively as Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions (ANNHSIs) ("Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions -- Title III Part A Programs," 2010). Similar to the aims of other MSIs, ANNHSIs receive funds to improve their capacity to serve native Alaskan and Hawaiian students, who are underrepresented in higher education. ANSIs are considered institutions having an Alaska native population of 20% or more, and NHSIs have corresponding populations equal to or greater than 10% ("Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions," n.d.). In 2007, the Department of Education identified 25 institutions awarded under these designations ("Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions -- Title III Part A Programs," 2010).

To date, a search for academic research or scholarly literature on ANNHSIs yields no results. There is not yet much known about ANNHSIs. Like TCUs, they are operating in small, and sometimes remote areas, and are only located in communities within Alaska and Hawaiʻi ("Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions," n.d.).

**The impact of MSIs.** These institutions, some with very deep histories in the U.S., come from a history of exclusion, especially in the case of institutions founded to serve specific ethnic groups (as is the case with HBCUs and TCUs). The designations of other institutions, as in the case with HSIs, NHSIs and ANSIs, came about to meet the needs of the large or growing numbers of the representative ethnic group population on identified campuses. These institutions largely provide “specialized services, curriculum, or pedagogy to support the success of their nontraditional student populations” (Laanan & Starobin, 2004, p. 49). In a special issue of Lumina Foundations Focus magazine highlighting the success of other Minority-Serving Institutions, President and CEO
Jamie P. Merisotis (2008) describes that while such institutions serve the most underserved students with much less funding than other institutions,

MSIs have learned valuable lessons that should be broadly shared and replicated. In other words, these institutions should be seen as sources of knowledge and inspiration ... as fertile ground for ideas that can improve student success at all colleges and universities. (p. 1)

In the same fashion, AANAPISIs have joined the ranks of these special-focus Minority-Serving Institutions that serve a majority (58% in 2004) of the entire nation's undergraduates of color (Li, 2007).

**Summary**

The three areas of literature that ground this study are critical race theory, AAPI demographics and the “model minority” myth, as well as Minority-Serving Institutions. These literature strands lay the groundwork for a study that considers how AANAPISIs can both serve the needs of underrepresented AAPIs and begin to challenge on a systemic level the oppressive notions of model minority and AAPIs as a homogeneous group. AANAPISIs hold the direct responsibility of developing strategies that serve their population, and have the distinct opportunity to reframe how the world of higher education understands and educations AAPIs. This dissertation, by studying and analyzing one institution’s efforts, contributes to this body of literature, and perhaps helps to formulate its own category for future researchers to contribute to as well.

The next chapter describes the methodology that is employed in this study. Considering what this literature review has revealed, and using this background as the context within which this study takes place, the following chapter will explain the questions that guide and hone the research, the methodological approaches that are most appropriate to examine these questions, and provides a detailed account of how the study was implemented. The fourth chapter details the findings of the case study that were gathered through document analysis and interview of key AANAPISI actors in
the case study site, and described through the lens of CRT. The fifth chapter will present the major outcomes of the case study research.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

Underrepresented Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs), as with any other racial group, are consistently subject to the biases and assumptions made about their race. However, AAPIs are far more diverse than a single umbrella category can account for, representing dozens of different ethnic and cultural groups. To complicate this homogenization of a diverse group, the “model minority” myth is a stereotype that says that all AAPIs—regardless of differences in culture, language, immigration experience, socioeconomic factors, education level and individual identity—are universally high-achieving, have high college-going rates, are naturally good at math and science, do not struggle in school, and are not at risk of academic failure. AAPIs are also assumed to be more likely to attend four-year institutions than community colleges, when in fact, this population’s community college enrollment is growing at a rate faster than enrollment in four-year universities (National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2010). By assuming that all AAPIs have shared experiences and experience these same levels of high achievement, the needs of many struggling groups remain masked by data that is often presented as an aggregate. (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Kiang, 1992; Museus & Chang, 2009; National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2008, 2010; Ng, et al., 2007; Ngo, 2006; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Suzuki, 1977, 2002; Teranishi, et al., 2009; Wang, 2007; Yu, 2006)

Through a new institutional federal designation called “Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions” (AANAPISIs), there is a growing effort to unmask these needs, and reorient higher education to see the diversity of AAPIs. However, as this is a new federal initiative with no history of proven success, and little recognition by higher education practitioners, these institutions also face the uphill battle of not only
advocating for the students they seek to represent, but also for their own recognition as an important part of the higher education universe.

**Research questions**

The overarching question that guides this research and directs the methodology is

- How does the AANAPISI designation meet the needs of AAPI students?

To further hone the work, two sub-questions specify issues to address through the data analysis:

- How do AANAPISIs address the “model minority” stereotype?
- How do AANAPISI efforts impact student retention and success rates?

**Research Methodology**

Because AANAPISIs were first funded in 2008, not enough time has elapsed to tell the story in quantitative terms of their accomplishments toward the charge of increasing student success rates. However, the qualitative approach can effectively tell the story of the short-term impact and even the anticipated impact that these programs will have on these institutions and the AAPI population. The qualitative case study is “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (Merriam, 1988, p. 21). This depth of analysis and description best serves AANAPISIs as an emerging topic, and is also well-suited to explore the barriers that these programs hope to address.

Case study methodology has been used to explore an AANAPISI pilot program, and employs both document review and interviews to tell the story of the progress and outcomes toward student success of one AANAPISI institution. In addition to this method, analytic autoethnography allows my own voice and experience—as a member of the AANAPISI program staff—to contribute to the findings of the study.

**Theoretical framework.** According to Merriam (1988), “the theory provides a framework for what is to be observed and what is to be collected in the form of data” (p. 58).
The theoretical framework that guides this study is critical race theory (CRT). CRT developed out of legal scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s as a theoretical framework from which to critique the institutionalized racism within the legal system, as well as the racist assumptions of laws and legal scholarship (Crenshaw, et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 2009b). When education scholars began to adopt CRT in the 1990s, they did so because of a belief that “racial analysis can be used to deepen understanding of the educational barriers for people of color, as well as exploring how these barriers are resisted and overcome” (Taylor, 2009b, p. 9). Ultimately, CRT as applied in methodologies is critical of education research and methodology that has “ignored historically marginalized groups by simply not addressing their concerns . . . relied heavily on genetic or biological determinist perspectives to explain away complex social problems, or . . . deemphasized race by arguing that the problems minority students experience in schools can be understood via class or gender analyses” instead (Parker & Lynn, 2009, p. 153).

Solórzano and Yosso (2009) identify five key components to critical race theory within educational research: (1) the “intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination,” (2) “the challenge to dominant ideology” that purports educational institutions to be objective, meritocratic, color-blind, espouse equal opportunity, and race neutral, (3) “commitment to social justice” with an agenda that seeks to eliminate racism, sexism and poverty and empower oppressed groups, (4) “the centrality of experiential knowledge” which CRT considers of people of color to be “legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination,” and finally (5) “the transdisciplinary perspective” which draws from knowledge and methodologies of a number of fields including ethnic and women’s studies, sociology, and law to better understand oppression (Solórzano, 1998, pp. 133-134). These components of CRT have guided my own perspective as a researcher, informed how I approach the data, have empowered me to elevate
the narrative voice of those that I interview and myself in the reporting of the findings, and have helped me consider how the results can contribute to the social justice agenda.

Critical race theory is a well-suited lens for qualitative research methods in general which assume that “reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured” (Merriam, 1988, p. 167). Qualitative research sees reality much like CRT sees the dominant reality or “truth,” and works to redirect the dominant gaze to see things from other coexisting points of view, and to see that what is assumed to be a truth is often a perspective (Dunbar, 2008; Taylor, 2009b). Because case study methodology seeks to construct a case through triangulation of various data sources, and considers interviews to be a primary source for data, it is in line with CRT’s value of multiple and transdisciplinary perspectives and narrative stories. Moreover, analytical autoethnography places narrative at the very center, and is a method by which the researcher can tell her own story in the research, something that CRT scholars do regularly in their writings.

In addition to informing, CRT has also guided the data analysis of this study, and informed the interview guide development, the interviews themselves, the coding of the data once collected, and the reporting of the findings.

Positionality. Because of the centrality of researcher narrative in both analytical autoethnography and in critical race theory, this explanation of positionality belongs at the front of the discussion of methodology. I identify as an Asian American—specifically Filipino American—and in my work primarily in the student services division of community colleges have observed with great interest and empathy the struggles that many AAPI students face with competing home and school pressures. I have worked specifically with AAPI student groups in the past and have made myself available as a resource to this population of students because of my own ethnic background, and my personal identification with this group. In
addition to this professional interest, I can say that I have experienced and reflected upon my experiences with the “model minority” myth, and other challenges unique to the experience of AAPIs throughout my schooling.

It is imperative at this point to discuss further my own pre-existing connection to the AANAPISI program. I am a full-time program developer with the AANAPISI grant at the case study site and have developed some of the programs that this research would evaluate. It has been my responsibility since the grant program began in October 2008 to develop the majority of the retention programs the grant set forth to implement. In addition to this, I was also on board with the writing of the initial grant proposal, and had research responsibilities in developing the argument as to why the AANAPISI designation was deserved, and why the accompanying funds were necessary to build the capacity of the institution. Once the pilots were identified and underway, I also established the relationship with other institutions to better align our efforts and to learn from one another. Additionally, I have also been charged by the college with writing the federal grant application for continued funding until 2016.

This intimate connection to the subject of this research project provides me with access that may not have been available to outside researchers, and with a unique perspective of the nuances and complexity of these newly-minted programs. Overall, my relationship has provided access that outweighs the risk for bias. Within the analytic autoethnographic approach, having “complete member researcher” (CMR) status confers privileges to me as the researcher that are unavailable through any other methods. Being a CMR allows you to be immersed in the subject much more than a non-member (Anderson, 2006).

**Case study methodology.** The use of case study methodology in education serves to “make the familiar strange and interesting again . . . to achieve specific understanding through documentation of concrete details in practice . . . to consider the local meanings that happenings have for people involved in them . . . to engage in comparative understanding of
different social settings… and to engage in comparative understanding beyond the immediate circumstances of the local setting” (Merriam, 1988, pp. 165-166). In general, case study can be defined both as a process by which a study is conducted, and the end product which comes of the research and analysis of a subject (Merriam, 1988; Patton, 2002). It can also be defined by the unit of analysis, or the case. According to Merriam (1988), a research project only qualifies as a case study when the phenomenon under investigation has boundaries (of time, of location, of scope)(p. 27). The AANAPISI designation is bound to just eight pilot institutions, and in the case of this study, one of the six designated community colleges will be the subject of this case study.

Patton (2002) recognizes that while a researcher might begin with a single or primary case to examine, through the research process she might identify multiple cases layered within. Each of these levels represents a layer of possible analysis (Patton, 2002, p. 448). For this study, the major case, or unit of analysis, is a single college program, and as a part of the program, interviews of staff and administrators will also serve as cases within this larger context. Under the case study process outlined by Patton (2002), the first step is to collect raw data, then to construct the case record through data analysis and classification, and finally to write the final case study narrative (p. 450).

**Fit for the study.** Case studies are considered ideal for situations where the research is focused on a new process or program, or on a phenomenon about which very little is known (Merriam, 1988; Meyer, 2001; Patton, 2002). Because the AANAPISI designation is just over two years old, and without any longitudinal data or previous reporting and analysis of outcomes, the case study method is a good fit for looking at the impact—real or expected—of the new AANAPISI designation. The case study method will allow me to collect a variety of data to accomplish this.
**Analytic autoethnography.** Anderson's (2006) proposed "analytic autoethnography" can be considered an alternative to other forms of autoethnography, which he feels are not analytic enough of the subject matter. Anderson points out that the general term "autoethnography" has come to be identified with the specific approach of "evocative autoethnography" which aims to evoke an emotional response from the reader through first-person prose, poetry and performance (Anderson, 2006). However, while the evocative autoethnography openly rejects traditional social scientific approaches to ethnography, analytic autoethnography seeks to harness the researcher's voice and experience, contextualize it within the larger research environment, and apply analytical framework to add value through explicit analysis (Anderson, 2006; Vryan, 2006).

**Analytic autoethnography development.** Analytic autoethnography can be considered a direct offshoot from the autoethnography methodology, a subset of the general world of ethnographic research. However, it differs in several key approaches to data collection and reporting. Before analytic autoethnography was proposed, the field of autoethnography became nearly synonymous with the more familiar forms of evocative or emotional autoethnography developed and promoted by Ellis and Bochner (2006), which Anderson felt was constraining the possibilities for autoethnography in research. As Anderson (2006) argues, those forms tend to rely almost exclusively on the narrative expression of the experience or observation of the autoethnographic researcher. Anderson requires of analytic autoethnographic research a dedication to analysis he feels is not present in the current autoethnographic approach. While Ellis and Bochner (2006) do argue that analysis is inherent to all types of autoethnographic approaches, they also caution that "If you turn a story told into a story analyzed, as Leon [Anderson] wants to do, you sacrifice the story at the altar of traditional sociological rigor" (p. 440). Anderson argues that "autoethnographic inquiry, which has been advocated primarily in recent years as a radically nontraditional, poststructuralist
form of research, actually fits well with traditional symbolic interactionist ethnography” (2006, p. 391).

**Analytic autoethnography in research.** Though analytic autoethnography is only four years old, and still an emerging methodology, its application in a few other studies demonstrates its diverse applicability. In an application similar to my own study, Griffin (2009) in her dissertation study of high school counselor leadership for social justice, utilizes analytic autoethnography to present her own experiences as a school counselor alongside interviews of colleagues. She collects data on herself through a research journal which she keeps throughout the data collection process. In a study of the unique kinetic connection developed between Argentine tango dance partners, Olszewski (2008) uses analytic autoethnography to present his own physical experiences as both a dance instructor and a dance partner alongside observations of his partners and field notes of his environments collected at various west coast tango dance halls. In both of these studies, the researcher’s experiences and perspectives are contextualized within the overall environment under study. Both researchers exhibit reflexivity and an awareness of how their own researcher perspective must be measured so as not to overly bias or limit their research. Overall, the insider knowledge each brings to her or his study outweighs the risk for bias inherent in their positionality.

**Five key features.** The five key features of analytic autoethnography according to Anderson (2006) are “(1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher’s self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis” (p. 378). Through this methodology, my own experience and insider knowledge become a part of the raw data collected as part of the case study process. This study utilizes these five criteria throughout the data collection and
analysis processes as guidelines for capturing and reporting my own experience in the larger context of the case.

**Fit for this study.** Analytic autoethnography is a good fit for me because I fit the three requirements of an AA researcher, which are defined as being:

1. a full member in the research group or setting,
2. visible as such a member in the researcher’s published texts, and
3. committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena. (Anderson, 2006, p. 375)

I have already established my full member status of the setting (AANAPISI). Through the use of this methodology, my own voice and perspective become explicitly visible in the dissertation findings. And because I seek to understand the impact on a global level the work of a single institution, I will be presenting my own autoethnography in the context of my colleagues whom I have interviewed, and the larger context of the institution and the AANAPISI designation.

**Analytic autoethnography and CRT.** Because CRT places a very high value on the personal narrative in its theoretical approach, analytic autoethnography serves as a very convenient vehicle by which to deliver both the content of a narrative that the methodology informs and the transformational value of first-hand narrative that the theory emphasizes. In a demonstration of the applicability of autoethnography to understanding white privilege, Boyd (2008) invokes analytic autoethnography as a means to present his own self-reflection following a jarring experience that exposed his own white privilege. Though he does not present his perspective alongside the data gathered to represent others, he employs researcher reflexivity through reflection over his interactions in a group and of his reactions and developing awareness. He also exhibits an utmost commitment to the theoretical analysis he sets out to develop. His use of narrative form, and reflexivity, as well as his pursuit of
analysis are representative both of a critical race theory framework and of the analytic autoethnographic approach.

*A place for positionality within analytic autoethnography.* My interest in this topic stems not just from an academic curiosity to further understand a phenomenon in higher education, but also stems from the values and interests I have developed as a member of and advocate for the AAPI community. As Anderson (2006) posits, "analytic autoethnography is grounded in self-experience but reaches beyond it as well" (p. 386). Like autoethnography in general, it is often the product of a desire for self-understanding. Anderson refers to a sort of self-understanding that "lies at the intersection of biography and society: self-knowledge that comes from understanding our personal lives, identities, and feelings as deeply connected to and in large part constituted by—and in turn helping to constitute—the sociocultural contexts in which we live" (p. 390). My positionality as a researcher then becomes both an asset to and a component of the research, rather than a limitation or potential for bias.

**Study Design**

This study is centered on the efforts funded by the AANAPISI grant at South Seattle Community College. Data has been gathered through review of existing reports submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, reports to and by media, as well as other internal campus reports of AANAPISI progress, including memos, meeting presentations, and internal publications. In addition to document review, a series of interviews has been conducted with program staff, key executive administrators, as well as stakeholders within the college.

**Site selection.** Six pilot institutions were identified and funded as AANAPISIs in 2008, and two more were identified in 2009. For the 2008-2010 funding cycle, two universities and four community colleges were identified. And for the 2009-2011 cycle, two more colleges were identified: one community college and one four-year college. Table 1 below provides a complete listing of all pilot institutions identified in 2008 and 2009.
Table 1

*Pilot AANAPISI Institutions, 2008 & 2009*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City College of San Francisco</td>
<td>two-year</td>
<td>San Francisco, CA</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeAnza College</td>
<td>two-year</td>
<td>Cupertino, CA</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guam Community College</td>
<td>two-year</td>
<td>Barrigada, GU</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen’s College, CUNY</td>
<td>four-year</td>
<td>Flushing, NY</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Monica College</td>
<td>two-year</td>
<td>Santa Monica, CA</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Seattle Community College</td>
<td>two-year</td>
<td>Seattle, WA</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Hawaii, Hilo</td>
<td>four-year</td>
<td>Hilo, HI</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Maryland, College Park</td>
<td>four-year</td>
<td>College Park, MD</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


South Seattle Community College (South) is the selected site for this study. One of the criteria for selecting this site was that it is one of the pilot community colleges identified in 2008. The first six institutions identified have faced and overcome a number of challenges of being a start-up, and are vanguards in the effort to permanently establish the AANAPISI designation. In addition to this, the activities its AANAPISI grant program has initiated are extremely varied, from student services to instruction, including transition from basic skills level to transfer from community college to a university.

**South Seattle Community College.** South Seattle Community College, or South, is a medium-sized urban community college located in a residential area of West Seattle. Founded in 1969, the school grew from blue-collar roots in vocational programs into a full comprehensive community college, with growth in all major areas: academic transfer, professional/technical programs and basic studies and continuing education. The
demographic breakdown is very diverse. It qualified for AANAPISI status with 21% Asian American and Pacific Islander students, is truly multicultural with 15% African American students, 9% Chicano/Latino, and 44% English language-learners ("South Seattle Community College Student Profile," 2007). South is part of a three-campus district, and in 2008 served 7,333 students (unduplicated headcount). They received the largest AANAPISI award to fund a comprehensive menu of services that focus on retention through several areas: transition from basic skills to college level, first-quarter and first-year retention, retention throughout enrollment, and graduation to transfer ("Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution," n.d.). They have converted the initial two-year award into three fiscal years of funding, and the program and funding is set to expire in September 2011.

**Semi-structured interviews.** “Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” (Merriam, 1988, p. 72). Interview is a key data collection tool for this research project because the research questions posed point to information not easily observed or discovered through existing documentation. While the stated intent of the program and the description of the activities as written in reports can shed light on how the AANAPISI seeks to support AAPI students, they cannot speak to the challenges in delivering these services, or the unintended roadblocks to building a program anew. Interview is also imperative to discussing the “model minority” stereotype and how the AANAPISI efforts are debunking these assumptions. I conducted a series of interviews of those with various perspectives related to the AANAPISI designation, including program staff and other individuals closely associated with the grant program, those responsible for writing the grant application, and other stakeholders within the college (including leadership). A semi-structured interview format yielded the most useful responses from those that I interviewed. More specifically, I will be utilizing Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) “responsive interviewing” techniques, which emphasize the relationship between the interview participant
and interviewer, and which focus on developing a depth of understanding, rather than general breadth. This model also "argues that researchers need to continually examine their own understandings and reactions" throughout the interview process (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 34). This is a necessary emphasis given the risk for bias based on my own positionality.

A prepared outline of questions and topics organized in an interview guide ensured that consistent information was gathered, and topics were not missed during interviews. Additionally, the semi-structured format allowed me to explore follow up areas as needed, and made for a conversational-style interview that put the subject at greater ease. The flexibility of this design enabled me to develop a depth of understanding by following certain conversational topics or themes that led, at times, to unanticipated connections.

The questions that make up the interview guide led the interview conversations toward addressing the three research questions outlined for this study. They focus on how AAPI needs at South are met through the grant, how negative stereotypes, especially the "model minority" myth are impacted or changed by the AANAPISI activities, and they address how the AANAPISI activities have or will impact retention and success in this population. The interview guide was also designed to be flexible enough to gather through a conversational style more personal information about those interviewed that helped to contextualize how they experience and view race and racism. This perspective is important because through CRT, this context is important in analyzing how the AANAPISI program is perceived and how the activities are implemented. Thanks to the responsive interview format, these interviews functioned as conversations, and allowed for follow up on issues raised that were of interest to this research, but not anticipated by the interview guides. Please refer to Appendices B and C to view the interview guides and questions.

**Participant selection.** There were three categories of colleagues interviewed for this project, for a total of 11 participants (including myself), selected by two different forms of
sampling (Merriam, 1988). I had first identified a broad list of individuals whose perspective would be a fit for this research, considering those who were directly involved in the work of the grant, those who were affiliated or partnered with the grant on specific strategies, and opinion leaders and key representatives from the broader college community. I contacted potential participants via email to solicit their participation. I clarified in my request that I was acting as a doctoral student researcher and not in my official capacity for the college. Despite the unavailability of some, and the lack of available time to conduct the interviews, I was able to interview all core AANAPISI team members, and a representative sample of stakeholders from campus.

**AANAPISI core team.** The first category of participants was made up of the four core team members employed by the AANAPISI grant and who are primarily responsible for the implementation of activities, services and programs funded by the grant. This group includes a project director, two other full-time project leads. As well, in the spirit of analytic autoethnography, I included myself as a participant by participating in an interview led by a fellow doctoral colleague that followed the same interview guide used with all participants. My role as a core team member, as well as my role in the historical development of the grant, provide added insight and ensure a complete representation of the group of individuals primarily responsible for the execution of grant strategies. All core team members were able to give a nuanced perspective of the grant, and could speak intimately and with authority about the history and development, the strategies, the challenges, the impacts and consequences, and reflect on their own personal experience doing the work the grant required. A chart illustrating the AANAPISI core team organization is available in Appendix D.

**Affiliated team members.** In addition to the core team, I also interviewed three individuals who were also affiliated with the grant in support of specific strategies or functions. These individuals, who were partially paid by the grant, were well-informed of grant
strategies, and observed challenges to implementation as well. This group was made up of a part-time program assistant who was partially reassigned to the AANAPISI grant from a position in an instructional program, a tenured faculty member of 19 years who taught one of the learning community courses the grant developed, and a college administrator in institutional research who also had decades of experience at the college. Because each of these individuals had many years of experience at the college, their perspective of grant successes and challenges was well-couched in their broader understanding of the college community and their sense of history at the college as well. An organizational chart illustrating all personnel affiliated with the grant is available in Appendix E.

*College stakeholders.* The third category of participants interviewed was identified through purposeful sampling of the college population (Patton, 2002), and considered executive cabinet members, and those with interests—though perhaps no direct involvement—in grant strategies. This group consisted of three executive leaders and one college administrator in student services. Though these individuals were not involved in the grant programming on a hands-on level (with the exception of one of the leaders who authored the grant), they were regularly informed of grant activities, and had a more universal perspective of how the grant fit with college interests, needs and culture.

The range of perspectives, the depth of knowledge, and the spectrum of experiences and roles that the entire participant group provided enables this study to be representative in its findings and thorough in its analysis. A complete list of the interview participants, including a synopsis of their involvement in the grant and impressions from their interview, is available in Table 2.
Table 2

**Brief Description of Interview Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Level of Involvement</th>
<th>Observation, description, self-described ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AANAPISI project staff</td>
<td>Project lead</td>
<td>Chose to participate out of connection to Chinese community, cautiously enthusiastic about effectiveness and sustainability, identifies as Chinese American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pete</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AANAPISI project staff</td>
<td>Project lead</td>
<td>Very enthusiastic about grant, embraces role as AAPI role model, optimistic about grant impact, identifies as Filipino American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosie</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>AANAPISI project staff</td>
<td>Project lead, <em>also this study's author</em></td>
<td>Passionate about AANAPISI, concerned with lack of success of strategies, Filipina American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vickie</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>AANAPISI project staff</td>
<td>Responsible for reporting, compliance to U.S. ED</td>
<td>Enthusiastic about grant, disappointed at invested in all aspects of strategies, identifies as Chinese American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernadette</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>College staff partially reassigned to AANAPISI</td>
<td>Half-time assigned to support budgetary functions</td>
<td>Forced onto grant against will, appreciated ideals of grant, very doubtful of intended effectiveness, identifies as White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>College administrator, paid in part by AANAPISI</td>
<td>Supported data and research needs of the grant program</td>
<td>Critical of grant implementation, supportive of grant strategies, affectionate about one particular strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasper</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>College faculty, taught AANAPISI course</td>
<td>Taught course funded by grant as needed</td>
<td>Supportive of programming, very cynical about sustainability, identifies as White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>College executive leader</td>
<td>Wrote AANAPISI grant proposal</td>
<td>Key champion through writing and implementation until departure in July 2010, identifies as Japanese American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>College executive leader</td>
<td>AANAPISI is a direct report</td>
<td>Generally enthusiastic and supportive, identifies as White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>College mid-level administrator</td>
<td>Supported new and targeted strategies of grant, member of AAPI Advisory Committee</td>
<td>Enthusiastic about grant, very optimistic about the impact of strategies, proud of AANAPISI designation, identifies as Filipino American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>College executive leader</td>
<td>Approved and supported instruction-related strategies</td>
<td>Informed as member of cabinet, generally supportive, proud of AANAPISI designation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. A = administrator, F = faculty, C = classified. All names but my own (Rosie) are aliases. Full AANAPISI organizational chart can be found in Appendix E.*
Interview data collection procedure. Interviews were conducted through responsive interviewing developed by Rubin and Rubin (2005). Prior to the interviews, interview guides were developed for each set of participants based on the literature review and background research, and knowledge of the college and the AANAPISI designation.

Because the interview guide asked participants to talk about racism on campus, and their perception of the presence of bias towards AAPIs, there was the potential for hesitation or withholding of information. Anticipating this, I assured interview participants that their identities would be anonymous, and their roles at the college masked as far as possible while retaining the validity and accuracy of their comments. One participant expressed much concern and caution, however the rest of the participants were comfortable being frank and honest.

All interviews started with an invitation to tell me about their background, personal or professional. This served not only to obtain important understanding of the perspective each one brought to the interview, but also served to put participants at ease. Because I am both known and familiar to all of the colleagues that I interviewed, I was easily able to establish trust and credibility in the interviews as the researcher.

Per the university’s Institutional Review Board’s human subjects research policies, authorization to collect data was first obtained prior to all interview scheduling. Additionally, written consent was also obtained from each participant at the start of the interview. A sample of the consent form used is available in Appendix F. Interviews were digitally recorded and conducted either in the participant’s office on campus or in my own office, depending entirely on the participant’s preference (one participant did not have a quiet, private office, and another’s was too small to accommodate us both).

Document analysis. The analysis of documents, which are broadly defined as “public records, personal papers, physical traces, and artifacts” (Merriam, 1988, p. 117), provides data that is fully grounded in the context of a study. “Because they exist independent of the
research agenda, they are non-reactive—that is, unaffected by the research process . . . a product of the context in which they were produced and therefore grounded in the real world” (Merriam, 1988, p. 109).

**Document sources.** AANAPISIs, as with many federally-funded programs, are well-documented publicly in the Federal Register and on the U.S. Department of Education’s website, and even directly to the U.S. Department of Education through their reporting requirements. As with most federal grant programs, they are governed by EDGAR (Education Department General Administrative Regulations), and there is already quantitative and qualitative data compiled by the programs themselves. The AANAPISI program at South Seattle Community College has been required to submit various reports to the U.S. Department of Education; a mid-year progress report in April 2009, a first-year Annual Performance Report (APR) in December 2009, and a second APR in December 2010. These reports contain quantitative analysis of the project’s progress toward stated objectives, as well as qualitative discussion of circumstances and conditions that have either contributed to or challenge the progress. I requested copies of each of the reports delivered to the U.S. Department of Education by the program, as well the grant proposal submitted in 2008, which included the needs the college sought to address through the grant, and additional background information about the college and the AAPI student population.

Additionally, program staff has presented on the AANAPISI designation and its activities at local and national conferences, and they have produced documentation and reports for their own institution and local community. They have also written applications for grant funding from other private or local funding programs as well, attempting to leverage the designation and federal funding as AANAPISIs. All of these sources provided a rich data set of quantitative analysis and qualitative discussion on which to base this case study. I obtained access to all of these additional documents for inclusion in this analysis.
And finally, South’s AANAPISI designation and activities have been covered in local media, and have been cited in national media as well. According to Merriam (1988), the use of media as a data source in the study speaks to the value of mass communication media in gauging the cultural change and trends. In this case, analyzing media coverage can illustrate how the various non-educational audiences view the program. These resources are largely available online, and was able to obtain all the media clippings thus far available, and other such resources as well. A list with descriptions of all documents analyzed can be found in Appendix G.

**Analytic autoethnographic interview.** To generate data on my own perspective that was consistent with what was collected from those that I interviewed, I enlisted the support of a fellow doctoral candidate who is also practiced in Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) responsive interviewing technique. This colleague interviewed me using the same interview guide developed for the other interviews, and I was able to transcribe and code this data along with the other interviews. This ensured that my perspective is collected similarly to the other interviews. I also utilized a research journal to collect my field notes and reflections throughout the process. Both of these sources of data constitute the analytic autoethnographic portion of the case study.

**Data analysis.** The data to construct this case study was collected primarily through interviews held in November 2010 through early January 2011, and analyzed in January and February 2011. The documents analyzed were collected in December 2010 and January 2011. Because the AANAPISI program grant was initially slated to exist until September 2010, but was extended for one year to September 30, 2011, the 2011 midterm and final program report for the U.S. Department of Education were not completed in time to be analyzed for this project.

Analysis of the data collected as part of this case study followed Patton’s (2002) general process for case study development. Once the data was collected through document
review of reports, media publications and other forms, as well as through interview of key program staff and stakeholders, using Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) approach, each interview transcript was reviewed and summarized individually, with themes identified from that interview and used as codes. Coding of the data gathered through interview, my observations, my research journal, and document review led to a very large list of main themes, sub-topics, and specific issues around the college culture, AANAPISI strategies, the experiences of the interview participants, challenges faced by the AANAPISI team, and impacts of the grant program. In this coding process, I looked for “convergent and divergent” information to find recurring themes and issues from the documents and interviews (Merriam, 1988, p. 133). Then, common themes were identified across the interview transcripts and the documents. This constructed the case record from which the study has been analyzed and written. This list was sorted into similar groupings, categorized and evaluated for patterns or recurrence. The list of themes and concepts was revisited and resorted three times to synthesize similar topics, eliminate uncommon ones, and identify major themes, and then revised into a comprehensive, but useful list of key themes, subcategories, and specific topics. What resulted is a list of coded themes found in Appendix H.

**CRT and data analysis.** The principles of CRT directly influenced the identification of coded themes. The complete list shows evidence of a focus on concepts and issues of race. Additionally, in the presentation of findings in the next chapter, and the discussion of implications in the final chapter, the CRT lens is employed on two levels. First, it is used on a micro level to examine the details and stories shared in the interviews with my colleagues. Because the study design was guided by CRT, the interview guide was designed to elicit responses specifically around race and racism. Second, it is used on a macro level to discuss the larger implications revealed by the findings of this case study. The overall focus of this research study is to address racial stereotypes, and how initiatives can actually change people’s attitudes about and an institution’s treatment of AAPI
students. CRT, with its focus on institutional and societal change, proves to be very effective at mobilizing this discussion on a macro level.

**Credibility and Trustworthiness.** The design of the study necessarily allowed for the emergent issues of AANAPISIs to be uncovered using case study design, assisted by the relatively new methodology of analytic autoethnography. This was also facilitated through the theoretical lens of critical race theory, which seeks to utilize narrative to uncover a better “telling” of an experience, and which ultimately comes from an activist standpoint. All of the elements in this study required that diligent effort be made toward establishing credibility, minimizing bias, and explaining dependability. As Merriam (1988) explains,

> Because what is being studied in education is assumed to be in flux, multifaceted, and highly contextual, because information gathered is a function of who gives it and how skilled the researcher is at getting it, and because the emergent design of a qualitative case study precludes a priori controls, achieving reliability in the traditional sense is not only fanciful but impossible. (p. 171)

Despite these caveats, the study design is both rigorous in its grounding in theory and methodological approach, and it is dependable, according to three criteria outlined by Merriam (1988): the investigator’s position, triangulation and an audit trail. I have explained the assumptions that I have made about the study at the outset of this discussion of methodology. I employed the triangulation of data-gathering techniques as a way to reach greater reliability of the results of the study. In Appendix G, I provide a complete chart of the sources of all documents analyzed for this research, creating an audit trail that any reader could easily follow-up on if desired.

Considering the critical race theoretical framework, Patton’s (2002) “critical change criteria” proves applicable to establishing quality and credibility in this study. These criteria include a critical perspective that increases consciousness around an injustice, which this
A study aims to do by making visible how AAPIs are marginalized in higher education. A criterion for credibility is also that the study represents the powerless or oppressed and engages them respectfully and collaboratively, which this study accomplishes through the relationships built in the “responsive interview” approach, and through the analytic autoethnography narrative. Other critical change criteria that will be met by the design of this study include: identification of the source and nature of injustice (in this case, stereotypes, misconceptions about AAPIs), “make visible the ways in which those with more power exercise and benefit from power,” identify “change-making strategies” in the efforts of AANAPISIs, explain the historical context, and demonstrate validity by the social consequences of the contribution this research may make (Patton, 2002, pp. 545, 548-549).

**Internal validity.** To establish the internal validity of the research project and establish that the findings both reflect reality and that the data collected measure what I intended to measure, I employed three of Merriam’s (1988) six basic strategies for ensuring internal validity. First, I used triangulation of data sources by using data generated internally by the AANAPISI program, document sources generated by the college, sources from mass media, and a variety of interviews of those within the program, and within the college. Second, I used member-checking during the interview process to allow my interview partners to view the transcriptions and the early drafts of data analysis to ensure that my findings were plausible. And finally, I have made clear my own bias to those that I interviewed and have assured them of how I am addressing my inherent bias in the study (Merriam, 1988).

**External validity.** External validity refers to how the results of a study can be generalized to other settings. The limitations of this study (being a case study of a single site, a new program, and my risk for bias) make establishing external validity challenging. However, I do address generalizability of my study through the applicability of findings to other AANAPISIs, to other colleges, and to higher education institutions who serve AAPIs. The
details of how South’s AANAPISI program operates will not be widely generalizable, but the competencies the program staff have used to develop and deliver programs, the conclusions drawn from the literature review, and the developing nature of the conclusions drawn can contribute to the usefulness of this study to others in higher education. By providing thick descriptions of the context, I am able to provide readers with enough information to draw their own conclusions of applicability to their experience and world (Merriam, 1988).

Limitations

How I choose to identify myself, my own life experiences, as well as my affiliation with the study site all present aspects that influence the research process to varying degrees, and present some risk in validity. However, the study has been designed so that positionality is an asset and limitations are clearly addressed. I have addressed my positionality as a researcher earlier, and it also addresses the limitations of the study.

By studying a new program, there are several concerns for the results. There is the risk of limited applicability of the research results of a pilot program. Since the program itself has not concluded, the outcomes might not be seen as relevant to other areas in higher education. However, I argue that by assessing their process and progress, the study results can inform other new AANAPISIs or other federally-funded capacity-building programs. Additionally, the value in evaluating pilot programs can ensure that the continuing or future programs avoid the same pitfalls, or follow the same successful implementation strategies.

Other concerns inherent in the design include the availability and willingness of the staff to participate. Because the U.S. Department of Education only funded these projects for two years, but still require them to show substantial progress in their chosen objectives, the staff has been under much pressure to complete their projects and provide adequate and positive reporting to the federal government. Two of the staff I had hoped to interview were unable to meet with me for interview, Both were working for the grant part-time, and in the
case of one of these colleagues her regular duties as faculty kept her from meeting with me. And in the other case the staff had changed jobs and left the institution.

I had also initially hoped to interview students who have been impacted by the AANAPISI programming. However, as the findings reveal, student participation has been a major challenge, and it proved to be very difficult at the time I was scheduling the interviews (near mid-quarter, and mid-term) and conducting them (at the end of fall quarter, over the holiday break), identified students could not commit to interviewing with me. At the time, I felt that this was a major setback, but as the findings reveal, the impact of the AANAPISI designation has been more prevalent on the institution and staff than the students thus far.

And perhaps the greatest limitation is my own potential for bias as a member of the AANAPISI program team under study. However, addressed through Milner’s (2007) framework for positionality, the potential for bias is outweighed by the unique, nearly unfettered access I have to all the data sources, and the case itself as a whole.

**Summary**

Ultimately, my aim through this research is as much to elevate the issue of AANPISIs and nudge this designation toward the spotlight, as it is to be transformed by the research, and in Milner’s (2007) words, to be “pursuing deeper racial and cultural knowledge about [myself] and the community or people under study” (p. 388). In order to effectively examine how the “model minority” stereotype is addressed by the AANAPISI selected for study, critical race theory has maintained a rigor of critique and perspective throughout both the study and the analysis. This theory has been complemented by the analytical autoethnography framework through the contextualized use of my own narrative. And finally, the case study methodology has allowed a necessary flexibility in studying the new AANAPISI phenomenon, and report on a single site with reliability and dependability.
This study will not only contribute to the swell of researchers who painstakingly debunk stereotypes about AAPIs over and over again, it adds a new venue for the conversation of AAPIs in higher education through the study of a pilot AANAPISI campus. As a part of a team that very much considers ourselves as pioneers in this movement, I am confident that through participation in this research study, they have also felt a sense of vindication that their work is worthwhile, but also validation in the choice they have made to focus on the AAPI community in higher education. Anderson (2006) says that every analytic autoethnography would likely have an element of the researcher's search for self, and I recognize that this has been an opportunity to continue on my ever-developing path of self-understanding and identity development. I have also benefitted from the experience of acute self-reflection over the last two-and-a-half years of work that I have considered to be the most personally and professionally rewarding of my career. Ultimately, this study has been transformational on a personal level, but also on a community level among my colleagues and those interviewed, and hopefully on a national level among the higher education community, and eventually—as part of a larger movement—on a social and cultural level as adding yet another voice of dissent against the “model minority” myth of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

I now turn to the findings in the next chapter. I present the results of the case study research from both the documents analyzed and interviews conducted, including my own perspective. Critical race theory serves as an effective tool in evaluating some of the findings, and contributes to the analysis. The findings reveal a richer description of the case study site, as well as the strategies attempted and implemented by the grant program staff, and the challenges faced throughout this project.
Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

The effort to address the needs of the Asian American and Pacific Islander student population in higher education through a Minority-Serving Institution designation is, at least initially, an ideological one. Creating the designation draws attention to this population which has been described at the same time as both highly visible and painfully invisible (Hune, 2002; Wang, 2007). The designation lends credibility to the effort to serve AAPI students as an underrepresented minority group, when AAPIs are widely thought of as already successful. The AANAPISI designation also sets a federal agenda that addresses AAPIs for the first time in higher education, and also opens the door to the AAPI higher education community via AANAPISI institutions, and presents the opportunity to be at the table with other Minority-Serving Institutions such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions. MSIs possess access to special sources of funding and other opportunities not available to non-MSI higher education institutions. Beyond this ideological effort, the AANAPISI designation also creates the space for the “hands-on” work with AAPI students to be done on college campuses. This work is not new, and has been in place in schools that have long-served large AAPI populations. However, the funding that the federal AANAPISI designation provides lends a gravitas to the programs developed that such efforts have not had before. This recognition indicates for the higher education community that the Asian American and Pacific Islander groups are distinct populations with a need for specialized support and pedagogies.

The implementation of the initiatives at the six pilot AANAPISIs has no doubt been very different, considering the diversity in institution type and makeup. Chapter Four presents the findings at one such pilot AANAPISI institution, South Seattle Community College, through the qualitative case study constructed with interviews of key college personnel and review of a variety of program documents. Also presented are my own experiences through analytic autoethnography
of being involved with the pilot AANAPISI program, from assisting with the writing to working on a team to implement the strategies.

**Research Questions**

To construct the case for this study, I conducted several interviews with AANAPISI program staff, and key leaders and college partners to address the following original research questions:

- How does the AANAPISI designation meet the needs of AAPI students?
- How do AANAPISIs address the “model minority” stereotype?
- How do AANAPISI efforts impact student retention and success rates?

Additionally, the interview guide questions sought responses that addressed issues of racism and bias at the college. To see the specific questions that were asked, please see Appendices B and C.

A thorough document analysis of the original grant application, all available reports, publications, and presentations and promotional materials about the AANAPISI project was also conducted. In addition, a doctoral program colleague also versed in Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) responsive interviewing techniques interviewed me utilizing the same interview guide that I used in my interviews of others. My personal research journal also contributes to the analytic autoethnography.

**Themes**

Though the interview guide questions were designed to elicit responses along the three specific themes of “Interviewee Background and Perspective,” “Perception of AAPIs and Issues of Race/Racism,” and “AANAPISI Impact,” the interviews revealed many key themes, which were derived through thorough coding of the interview transcripts. Appendix H identifies all of the themes and subthemes identified in the interviews.

Two distinct elements emerged from the findings: first, a descriptive overview of the strategies implemented through the AANAPISI grant program, and second, overarching themes revealed primarily through the interview findings. The strategy description consists of those
initiatives that were implemented as proposed or that were changed in implementation, and strategies that were identified and attempted after the grant started up. The main themes that emerged were (1) issues of race at South, (2) the making of the grant, (3) challenges, and (4) outcomes and impacts. The description, reflections and findings discovered within the data under each of these themes are discussed in the remaining sections of this chapter.

In Chapter Three, I presented a description of the case study site based on my initial research and my own historical knowledge. In this chapter, I first provide a description of the college, and the college culture into which the AANAPISI designation entered. Next, through a thorough description of the grant strategies, I present both what the college promised to do for AAPI student success, and what the grant program actually accomplished. These details are largely descriptive, and based on a combination of details shared with me in interview, found in analysis of grant documents, as well as from my own reflections having been deeply involved in the strategy implementation. This thorough description of strategies illustrates the broad and multifaceted approach to addressing the needs of South’s AAPI student population. These strategy descriptions also begin to indicate challenges to strategies targeting AAPI populations, and adjustments that were made as the grant programming got underway.

The interviews provided opportunity to describe in much more detail the environment that the AANAPISI grant and designation would enter in 2008. Through the interview conversations with my colleagues, I gained more insight into the college’s prerogative around race that informed how the AANAPISI designation and efforts were received and even challenged. In particular, descriptions of the treatment of diversity at the institution are presented through the interview narratives. I also present in greater detail the history of the development of the grant, from proposal to initial implementation, also illustrated through the voices of the interview participants.
This fourth chapter then explains the first of the key themes, the challenges faced by
the AANAPISI program staff in implementing the strategies. Challenges were evident through
the interviews, as well as in official documents that illustrated and explained changes in
course and direct obstacles to implementation. I am also able to draw on my own direct
experiences in describing the challenges. Finally, this chapter goes on to detail the outcomes
and the impact of the AANAPISI designation and programming. For this section, both
document analysis, insights gained through interviews, and personal reflection contribute to
the findings presented in this final section of the chapter. These culminating findings
demonstrate that though the actual implemented strategies changed, the some of the desired
improvements in student achievement were not realized, that there were still positive impacts
on the college overall, and even unintended impacts as well. These findings also illustrate that
the grant brought about a major identity crisis for the college, and challenged the surface-level
assumptions of the validity of color-blind approaches. Critical race theory is used in places
throughout this discussion of the findings to position the data within a critical theoretical
framework.

About the Case Study Site

South Seattle Community College (South) is a medium-sized urban community college,
serving a very diverse community that consists almost dichotomously of a working-class,
culturally diverse immigrant neighborhood, as well as a much more affluent and much less
diverse bedroom community of young urban professionals and their families. South was
founded in 1969, and the campus culture holds strong to its roots as a “paycheck college” that
once focused primarily on offering training in vocational fields. Today, it is very diverse. In
addition to its AAPI population of 21%, South also serves 15% African American students, 9%
Chicano/Latino students, and 44% English language-learners ("South Seattle Community
College Student Profile," 2007). South's instructional mix is also very diverse, with a near-even
distribution of students enrolled in professional/technical programs, transfer courses, basic skills training, and community education.

There are many long-time faculty and staff at South, with a number of people who have been with the college since its founding in 1969. This has led to a culture that is very strong, familial and casual. Within the Seattle Community College District, South is known for its sense of humor, as evidenced at annual “President’s Day” events where humorous skits help to kick off the school year, alongside president, union and trustee speeches. The college holds strong to its institutional culture, and eschews efforts that seek to change it, for better or for worse. In the case of issues of race and diversity, the strong culture of the college can pose a challenge. Though there are a few long-time faculty and staff of color, and even newer hires of color, the college is not reflective of its diverse population.

The AANAPISI funding was not the first major federal grant that the college has received. South has been the recipient over the years of several Title III “Strengthening Institutions” grants as well. As with previous Title III grants, the AANAPISI grant proposal sought to address deficiencies within the college’s instructional and student support programming. The proposal sought changes that were—in part—based in needs recognized by several functional areas of the college, including low basic skills-to-college level transition rates, and low transfer rates.

**Overview of Strategies**

Utilizing information gleaned from document analysis, details discovered in interview, and my own personal knowledge of AANAPISI grant program strategies, this section provides a detailed narrative description of the strategies—both those that were intended and those actually implemented.

Once announced, the AANAPISI project focused on several key areas for a comprehensive approach to addressing AAPI student needs. Planned strategies were organized into four categories according to an October 2007 whitepaper introducing the project: “Improved AAPI Freshman
Experiences,” “Increased AAPI Transition to College Coursework,” “Improved AAPI Retention, Intervention Strategies, and Outreach,” and “Increased AAPI Graduation and Transfer to Four-Year Institutions.” These four categories contained a total of fourteen individual strategies the AANAPISI program sought to accomplish in two years.

Though the grant application set up the program staff to accomplish these specific strategies, what the grant was actually able to accomplish varied—in some categories, greatly—from the original intentions. Several challenges through implementation, unforeseen and uncontrolled limitations and barriers, and adjustments in identified needs all led to some significant changes.

**Initial proposed strategies.** The strategies that were initially proposed by the program, explained in Table 3, were based on the activities that were written into the AANAPISI grant application. They covered a wide variety of areas, attempting to create substantial institutional change and make significant gains in student improvement in just two years’ time. Though these strategies reflected the original grant application and were a part of the earliest promotional documents and presentations, the grant team had to make many adjustments in implementation.

**Actual implemented strategies.** The AANAPISI program at South, despite the initial challenge of time, did produce a number of strategies. Most were directly from the list proposed at the onset of the grant, and other strategies met needs identified throughout implementation.

**Strategies to improve the “freshman” experience.** In a 2007 retention report disaggregating Asian American and Pacific Islander subgroups that informed the writing of the grant application, it was discovered that the AAPI students were most likely to drop out in their first year, and most notably in the first quarter. The grant-writing team decided that it was crucial to focus on the first year experience of AAPI students at the college.

**Family orientation workshop.** It was recognized through research for the grant application process that the first-generation AAPI college students were largely coming from families who had
very high expectations of educational attainment, but very low literacy around college readiness and college success ("Beyond the Model Minority Myth," 2008). To address this disconnect, the AANAPISI program developed a workshop that would target the family of a South student, in the hopes that a family better informed of expectations of students and college processes would better

Table 3

*Initial Proposed Strategies*

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<thead>
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<th>Categories</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Improved AAPI Freshman Experiences</td>
<td>College orientation for students and families (pilot)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Academic cohorts: Clustered learning communities (pilot)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased AAPI transitions to college coursework</td>
<td>Transition Workshop</td>
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<td>Transition portfolio</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Curriculum development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved AAPI retention, intervention strategies, and outreach</td>
<td>Service learning projects</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Virtual Asian American and Pacific Islander Resource Center for Higher Education (website)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Faculty/Staff Development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Disaggregated AAPI Institutional Data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased AAPI graduation and transfer to four-year institutions</td>
<td>Develop Asian Pacific Islander studies transfer program</td>
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<td>Strengthen pathways for AAPI students to become teachers</td>
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<td>Strengthen transfer pathways to four-year institutions</td>
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<td>Strengthen general transfer planning and support</td>
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support a student. Because of the age diversity at this college, “family” was defined very broadly to be inclusive not only of parents, but of aunts, uncles, grandparents, spouses, and even adult children. This workshop covered the basics of what is required of a college student, including time commitment and time management required of a college student, and the calendar they are subject to (the academic year and quarter system). The workshop also covered aspects of the home environment that are conducive to a college student, such as physical space and emotional support. It also introduced participants to key personnel in vital departments such as financial aid, advising and counseling, registration and security. FACS was advertised to all students, and for the first offering, was targeted to AAPI students through a special mailing sent to the home address of all students self-identifying as Asian or Pacific Islander. This was an original strategy written into the proposal.

**Learning communities.** Learning communities were not new to South, but the AANAPISI project proposed a new focus. Whereas prior to the grant, “Clustered Learning Communities” (CLCs) paired college-level courses with complementary content, the CLC through AANAPISI paired developmental pre-college level courses (English or math) with the campus’ college success course. The intent was not that the coursework be complementary, but that the college success course would support the students’ success in the developmental course. Additionally, the CLC was supported by student “peer navigators” who did further outreach to the students to connect them to resources and partnered with instructors to identify students at risk. In the first CLC, strategies to target AAPIs were discussed, and some special marketing implemented (flyers mailed to all self-identifying AAPI students below a certain English and math level). However, there were not additional targeting strategies to focus on AAPI students. CLCs were a strategy written into the original proposal.

**Strategies to increase AAPI student transition.** South had been focusing on increasing the transition rate into college coursework of its basic skill students in ESL, Adult Basic Education, and
GED preparation for several years prior to the AANAPISI designation. Prior to the grant, AAPI students in ESL courses in particular had the lowest rates of transition, which merited this focus through the project. The transition efforts were led by a full-time transition lead (an ESL faculty member), and supported by another ESL faculty working on the grant part-time.

*Transition workshops.* Another effort that was already initiated by the basic skills division was the Transition Workshop series. These workshops went more in-depth into select topics than Transition Day. It was an intermediate level of transition information. Workshop topics included goal-setting and scholarship essay writing. Through the transition lead, the AANAPISI grant funded further development of additional workshop topics, and developed materials that could be used every time the workshops were offered. This activity was not specifically targeted to AAPI students in basic skills courses. This was an original strategy written into the grant proposal.

*Transition portfolio.* The Transition Portfolio is a planning tool developed for basic skills students to assist them in exploring and preparing for moving on to college coursework. It is a notebook of guided activities in such areas as career exploration, financial aid preparation, and personal essay-writing. Under the AANAPISI program, the Transition Portfolio was created by the ESL faculty member assisting basic skills-to-college level transition efforts part time. She also created curriculum for each section of the Transition Portfolio, so that instructors could use the tool and the lessons as instructional activities. This tool has been adopted by all faculty in this division, and is online, available for other faculty—and even students—to use as well. There were no efforts to target this tool to AAPI populations, however. This was also a strategy written into the original grant proposal.

*Curriculum development.* The only curriculum developed in support of increasing transition of basic skills students to college level was the Transition Portfolio accompanying curriculum. There was no other curriculum developed, and none targeting AAPI students or AAPI pedagogy. This was an original activity written into the proposal.
Strategies to improve retention, intervention strategies and outreach to AAPI students.

This is, perhaps, the area of greatest focus of the AANAPISI grant project, with the most strategies falling under this category.

College success videos. A major strategy of the AANAPISI project was to produce fifteen short videos about topics related to college success, and especially relevant to AAPI student experiences and needs. It was intended that the videos could live online, and be a resource to students and families. Titled “Making Achievement Possible: Your Path to College Success,” according to a flyer about the series, titles include: “Financial Aid 101,” “Getting a Strong Start,” “Becoming a Successful Online Learner,” and “College Success for Your Family.” These videos feature South students speaking to these issues and sharing their real experiences, and South faculty and staff advising about these college success issues or explaining them. The videos were developed to be a resource to all students, even after the grant funding ends. As of February 2011, five of the planned fifteen are complete, and a total of thirteen are expected to be completed by the end of the grant period. The videos represent the great diversity of South’s student population, and care was also taken to ensure that AAPI students, faculty or staff were represented in each one. The videos were an original strategy of the grant, and were intended to be a long-sustaining resource as well.

Virtual AAPI resource center for higher education. To address the lack of research and resources for serving AAPI students in higher education, the AANAPISI project sought to create an online repository of best practices and resources that target AAPI students. This was an original strategy written into the grant proposal, and was officially launched on February 15, 2011. According to the website,

The Asian American & Pacific Islander Higher Education Resource Center (AAPIHERC) is an online clearinghouse and community for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) higher education professionals and higher education professionals who serve AAPI student
populations. Due to a lack of information and AAPI-targeted strategies in higher education, the AAPIHERC seeks to:

- identify promising practices for supporting AAPI college students;
- promote professional development opportunities that target AAPI higher education professionals or address AAPI student needs;
- catalog published research, data, and media about AAPIs in higher education;
- encourage the further development of the federal Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) designation in higher education; and
- create a community of higher education professionals concerned with the support and success of all AAPI students in colleges and universities.

("Asian American and Pacific Islander Higher Education Resource Center," 2011)

As a part of this online effort, the AANAPISI project also hosted four online seminars (webinars) targeting those in the higher education community interested in AANAPISI development, as well as AAPI student issues. Held in between May 2009 and August 2010, the webinars ranged from 20 to 74 participants from around the nation. Topics addressed AANAPISI grant application processes when subsequent funding competitions opened up, highlighted what pilot AANAPISI institutions were doing, and also addressed the need to develop a national AAPI higher education consortium of institutions. This was an original strategy written into the grant proposal.

Professional development. A great need recognized in the AANAPISI grant proposal was that of professional development for faculty and staff at the college to increase their cultural competency as it related to AAPI students and their success. However, the professional development that was implemented under the AANAPISI project focused generally on developing cultural competency among a group of campus leaders representing various divisions, employment classifications, and backgrounds. The program that was implemented was made up of a cadre of 26
South employees who attended an intensive, multi-day, off-site training in cultural competency and the social justice framework. This group was then charged with developing further programming on-campus, and becoming a team of leaders in a variety of diversity and multiculturalism professional development programming for the college at large. According to Elizabeth, who was a project lead in this effort, “We surveyed the campus community as a whole and asked general questions. Simultaneously, we surveyed [the diversity committee] and asked more detailed questions. . . . The results set us on the pathway to be inclusive rather than to focus solely on AAPIs.” She goes on to explain that making the programming general, rather than specific to AAPI content better ensured sustainability after the grant. Professional development was one of the key strategies written into the original grant proposal, though the actual effort did not focus on AAPI populations in the ways originally imagined.

Disaggregated student data. One of the largest impediments to serving AAPI ethnic groups adequately is the lack of data that are disaggregated to show how individual ethnic groups are succeeding, versus simply looking at all AAPI students as a homogenous group. While a robust disaggregated student retention report was completed in 2008 and informed the original grant application, and though the grant application called for continuing to use disaggregated data, no updated report has ever been created, and no additional disaggregated data have been collected or reported on.

Focus on the Pacific Islander community. To further develop the Pacific Islander content of courses as part of the Asian Pacific Islander Studies emphasis (described below), a doctoral student, Carol, from a local university was hired part-time to develop curriculum, and then teach the course, Contemporary Issues in Anthropology: Pacific Islander Anthropology. This part-time faculty member also spent time consulting with other faculty to add Pacific Islander-related content to their existing courses as well. For example, she assisted a music instructor in researching and
developing Pacific Islander cultural music to one of her courses. The coursework that Carol developed and consulted on became offerings toward the API degree emphasis.

More than developing a course, Carol, a Samoan American, also became a representative role model and magnet for Pacific Islander students. When her first course started, she had 11 students on the first day. By the end of the week, due to word of mouth and no further recruiting of her own, enrollment grew to 24 students. Her class was a mix of backgrounds, many of whom were Pacific Islander.

**Outreach to the Pacific Islander community.** Through the grant, Carol also developed a colloquium series, “Talk Story,” on a quarterly basis that presented panels of Pacific Islander community leaders and educational experts to discuss various topics concerning Pacific Islanders in higher education. The audience at these events was predominantly Pacific Islander and made a connection with that community that the college had not had before. This was not an original strategy of the grant.

**Study group.** After attracting a number of Pacific Islander students to her courses, Carol recognized the need for some form of group study that was more comforting to her students than the typically available tutoring options (which were not welcoming and were also very busy), and the library (where there was no food allowed, and very little option for group or collaborative study). She began an “AAPI Study Group” with just five students, in which she would tutor students generally. She also began to bring in representatives from campus resources, including advising, TRIO programs, and scholarships to talk to students directly. This study group grew from five to 26 participants in the next quarter, and has continued to remain popular. This strategy targeted AAPI student participation, but did not limit it. Though this was not an original strategy of the proposal, it has been very popular and successful.
**Strategies to increase AAPI graduation and transfer.** To address AAPI completion rates, which were very low for specific groups, including Cambodian and Pacific Islander populations, the AANAPISI grant proposed curriculum improvement and strengthened transfer support for AAPIs.

**Associate of Elementary Education.** To address the lack of AAPI role models in the local K-12 education community, the original grant proposal sought to implement a new degree option that would lead students directly into a university Elementary Education program, the Associate in Elementary Education (AEE). Because this was already under consideration by the college, the grant curriculum lead did not need to develop coursework. Instead, the grant paid to run under-enrolled classes in order to keep the program going. Normally, courses under a threshold for minimum enrollment (at the time, 15) would be cancelled. To allow this new program to continue, the grant funds were used to pay for the course to run even if only a handful of students were enrolled. Initially when the AEE was launched, a flyer was mailed home to all AAPI students enrolled in transfer programs at the college. However, since that mailing in fall quarter 2009, no further effort to target the AAPI population has been attempted. The AEE was an original strategy proposed by the grant.

**Asian Pacific Islander studies.** The AANAPISI grant proposal also sought to provide learning experiences for AAPI students where they could see their own background and history reflected in the curriculum. The curriculum team lead reorganized and renamed an existing, and very low enrolled program (Asian Studies) into a new transfer degree emphasis, Asian Pacific Islander Studies. The new area of study was intentional about including coursework that addressed Pacific Islander culture and history as well as Asian and Asian American topics. New courses were developed, including the Pacific Islander anthropology course created by Carol, and existing courses were modified to include Pacific Islander content, or to include any Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander content to qualify to be included in courses under this degree option (as in the
case with the music course developed with Pacific Islander content). This was a strategy originally conceived in the grant application, and because of its content, it was focused on AAPI populations.

Other strategies to support transfer and graduation. Apart from these two curricular strategies, no other activities were undertaken to increase transfer or graduation of AAPI students at South. There were no additional improvements or enhancements to existing transfer planning and preparation (as indicated in the grant proposal), and there was no targeted outreach or targeted strategies that addressed AAPI students specifically, encouraging them to transfer on.

The many strategies, both attempted and accomplished, created major change for the college overall. In some instances, it was welcomed, and in others the change was resisted. The interviews conducted for this study describe this change and the positive effects it had, as well as the resistance it faced. I now turn to the reflections from the interviews and key findings of this case.

South and Issues of Race

Because the interview subjects represented a range of perspectives—from new employees to long-term employees, individuals from various divisions, faculty, staff and administration, and some variety in ethnic backgrounds—a more nuanced view of the college background emerged. Interview participants spoke about how student diversity and issues of race are regarded on campus, which helps to better contextualize the college prerogative toward a race-based initiative such as an AANAPISI designation. CRT serves as an effective lens in analyzing these reflections in the context of theory. Key concepts from CRT emerge from the interview analysis, particularly regarding the college’s conflicting view of diversity, and provide a framework for discussion and analysis.

Diversity supported at the top. The interviews revealed conflicting impressions of the college’s administration’s commitment to diversity. Some felt that it was as strong as the level of diversity of the college. On the other end of the spectrum, some expressed a high mistrust for
administration’s real concern with issues of diversity and racism. The impression of the level of support for diversity appeared to be directly correlated with the individual’s position. Bernadette, the classified support staff interviewed, was the most cynical about support.

There is racism on this campus and . . . it’s everywhere, but it is in this campus and the administration thinks—which is, by the way, White—thinks that everything is just fine and they refuse. They don’t believe it when somebody brings a complaint.

Bernadette, who is White, has been frustrated by the timidity around race that she has witnessed. She has developed a mistrust and skepticism for the college’s administration to respond to issues of racism. She shares in her background that she was raised in a very social-justice oriented family, and as a White person, has been experienced in confronting issues of racism. Sitting with her for the interview and working with her on a daily basis, I know that she sees racism as very common, as espoused by CRT, and that she sees the lack of reaction to complaints and issues of racism and bias to be rooted in a fear and discomfort of confronting these issues.

The three highest ranking interview participants (Jason, Jack and Theresa) all spoke very affirmatively of the college’s commitment, and their personal commitments to diversity. Jason speaks with the most conviction: “. . . my commitment as [an executive leader], coupled with my personal commitment to diversity. I won’t put up with [issues of racism]. I won’t put up with that garbage. And [my direct reports] know that.” Jack remarked on the value of a diverse leadership team when he told of how he first heard of the grant on a visit to the one of the city’s ethnic neighborhoods. He recognized that he stumbled upon the AANAPISI opportunity because he was a person of color, reading an ethnic newspaper distributed in an AAPI enclave community. Theresa, who has a background as a faculty member teaching multicultural studies, and who speaks comfortably about the prevalence of and need to understand white privilege and white power in higher education, expresses her personal level of appreciation for diversity and the AANAPSI designation.
I come from Texas where Hispanic Serving Institutions are very common, where Historically Black Colleges are very common coming from the south. I’ve always felt, God knows why, that having a college where the focus is what would normally be a minority, that it hopefully helps students feel more empowered and also that there’s a commitment to providing strong support services . . . I actually like knowing that we’re at an AANAPISI serving college because to me it’s sort of like having your seal of Good Housekeeping. We’re being recognized for the fact that we have a strong commitment, that we really care about our students, and we really want to focus on this population because we think there’s more that can be done to enhance their success.

Theresa’s appreciation for diversity efforts, Jack’s appreciation for a diverse leadership team, and Jason’s own expressed personal commitment to diversity indicate that they strongly value issues of diversity. However, the disparity between their commitment and Bernadette’s impression does indicate that these values are not permeating the other levels of the institution.

It would appear that the group of executive leaders experiences a different institution entirely than Bernadette does. In her experience, issues of diversity—specifically issues of racism—do not receive the attention from administration. However, from the perspective of the leaders, the very careful and confidential way that they must handle complaints and allegations might also belie the transparency that they may intend in their dealings with such issues.

The three faculty members interviewed—Pete, Elizabeth and Jasper—each did not have an unfavorable view of the leadership’s commitment to diversity, but Elizabeth did express that she expected leadership to take the college further in strengthening their commitment to issues of race, and our diverse population. In discussing the cultural professional development programming, she explains:

Well I think this has been an opportunity not only for myself but also for the college to really go to the next step. We want to not only talk the talk but walk the talk and I think
that’s where we finally have put into place the things that have been brewing for a long
time. . . I guess there is a commitment from the college to actually make sure we do it. Partly
it’s because once you get a grant you are committed to do the things you are required to do,
but I think we are becoming more realistic about what we can do and that we’re going to do
it.

The range in perceptions of administrative commitment to diversity efforts indicates that
the personal and official commitment to diversity expressed by top leaders is not a message or a
priority that is being disseminated to all levels and to all employees. Elizabeth does not speak with
confidence in her interview that “administration” will take up the cause of the issues the AANAPISI
grant has addressed. Instead, she speaks with hesitation and concern that the mantle that she and
the AANAPISI team had been carrying will not be taken up at all. The fact that the spectrum of
opinions about the college’s commitment level to diversity is so broad reveals disconnection
between the intention of the leaders, and the experiences of the faculty and staff.

**Diverse but conflicted.** The interviews of AANAPISI personnel and college stakeholders
also revealed a distinct personality of the college that helps to frame both the effect the designation
and the strategies had on the college, and those challenges faced throughout the life of the project.
The college has a history of diversity in its student population, but according to the interviews has
long struggled to fully develop its collective cultural competency. A handful of those interviewed,
myself included, expressed concern and even cynicism about how culturally insensitive the college
is. Jasper, a 19-year faculty member, explains “we [the college] have a tendency . . . to equate
somebody who can’t speak English well or write English well or read English well with somebody
who’s not intelligent.” The stories told by my colleagues of issues of racism reflect certain key
themes of CRT—the importance of narrative, that racism is common, microaggressions, and the
misalignment between values and practice.
The importance of narrative. In her interview, Elizabeth, who has over twenty years of experience at South, tells of an experience she had as an ESL faculty asked to consult with technical program instructors who had started accepting low-level ESL students who had not yet developed adequate proficiency in English.

The complaint was that the students never say anything and they never go on break, they said . . . [the ESL students] are just unsociable and they don’t give a dang . . . Well what we come to find out due to translation—because they didn’t have high enough English—is that they didn’t understand what their teacher said, “take a break.” I mean that’s how low their English was! And number two is that they didn’t have a lot of money, so what was the point of them going out to get some coffee? Number one, they didn’t know they could go and number two, they didn’t have any money . . . So we went in there to talk to the students to find out they were suffering and flunking and this was just crazy! Why are you allowing them to come in when they are not ready?

Elizabeth’s recount illustrates a campus that was oblivious to the true needs and readiness of its students. This story speaks to the CRT emphasis on narrative as a form of dismantling racial assumptions. In this case, the instructors told themselves—and others—that the ESL students were unsociable and uncaring. But when Elizabeth and her colleagues were able to talk to students, to uncover their narrative, they found the real reason behind their behavior. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) would call Elizabeth’s intervention as being based in “perspectivalism,” which is the “insistence on examining how things look from the perspective of individual actors” (p. 55). This perspectivalism allowed her and her colleagues to reframe the students’ experiences and misunderstandings, and correct the assumptions of the faculty. Though Elizabeth’s example was from the 1990s, another participant tells of a more recent and more disturbing story.

Racism is common. CRT is also predicated on the concept that racism is not unusual or isolated, but that it is, in fact, common and ordinary (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 2009b).
Bernadette, with over eleven years of experience at South, told of a different technical program instructor who worked with a visiting group of students from Vietnam who came to the college in 2006 for two years of training.

[The instructor] was in the Vietnam War and he was so pissed off all the time, he did not call them by their names, he assigned them a number! . . . And all kinds of [complaints] were brought against him and he was allowed to stay until the very last complaint this Black woman made against him. Yeah. And then he retired.

Bernadette goes on to explain that this instructor was not fired, or disciplined, but allowed to retire on his own terms without reprimand. “Well, you see everybody in [the instructional program] was White. So you know. So do you think folks were more willing to look the other way? I think it took a number of complaints by students.” Her story draws an even more distressing image of the institution, one that is not only lacking in cultural competence, but may even sanction acts of racism by faculty through a lack of action or response. The perceived neglect of those in charge apparently deeply eroded Bernadette’s trust in campus leadership, as became apparent in the telling of this story and throughout the interview. This does not begin to speak of the impact this faculty’s behavior may have had on students.

The dehumanization of the students by assigning numbers, and what incidents must have occurred to spark additional complaints call to the CRT key concept that racism is, unfortunately, common. (Crenshaw, et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Acts of racism were allowed to pervade, becoming invisible, and therefore unremarkable. The response (if there were any to begin with) to this faculty’s actions was not swift. There were other complaints brought, presumably due to a lack of corrective action. The institution, whether through the actions (or inactions) of this faculty members’ supervisor, or through the limitations of the system (through procedural requirements, contract limitations, or other red tape), allowed racist treatment to continue.
**Microaggressions.** Another colleague interviewed tells of a less blatant recent incident, that can be characterized according to CRT as a microaggression, which is defined as “brief everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group” that are “so pervasive and automatic in daily interactions that they are often dismissed and glossed over as being innocuous” (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007, p. 72).

Renee, in her capacity of working with new and prospective students, helped a Southeast Asian man who was seeking information from the student services information desk for his wife, who was returning to school. He was treated with disrespect and verbally dismissed when the employee at the front desk could not understand his accent. Following her impatience with him, he walked away without the information he was seeking. Fortunately, he was able to speak with Renee. In considering the impact of this incident, she reflects,

> It gives an overall bad impression of the staff and it gives an overall bad impression of the school and how we treat our students . . . If their first impression when they’re trying to navigate a system that they don’t know is that someone’s blowing them off . . . I’m just glad I had an interaction with him afterwards because I don’t know if he would come back otherwise.

This experience was an indignity for this student in Renee’s telling of this incident. And as with other microaggressions, it was brief and commonplace, and was communicated both verbally and behaviorally in the interaction (Sue et al., 2007). Although this was a single incident, Renee did share that this was not the only time someone reported to her this type of treatment from the information desk. This act of microaggression indicates that racism and racist acts may not be only due to a single racist faculty, or an isolated and culturally insensitive individual program. This dismissiveness at the very front line of service—the access point at which a college would be most conscious about customer service and impression—points to institutionalized racism on a campus level. “Like water dripping on sandstone,” as Delgado and Stefancic (2001) describe, these
microaggressions—when they are not interrupted or addressed—add up to define a greater campus-wide problem.

**Values misaligned with practice.** The case that these stories begin to build is one that is in stark contrast to the intentions and values of the executive leaders as they shared with me during interview. On one hand, executive cabinet members speak clearly and even passionately about their values, but the experiences of my colleagues indicate that despite their leadership positions, these are not values that are reinforced by the institution and imparted on those areas which are overseen by these leaders. This does not seek to criticize the three leaders interviewed personally, but it does magnify the institutionalized barriers to change in the name of cultural competency, anti-racism, and social justice. The misalignment between the diversity priorities of leadership and the perspectives and experiences of some faculty and staff who work directly with students, sets the stage for the environment that the AANAPISI grant project entered into in 2008.

As the examples and the CRT interpretation indicate, there has been at South a passive acceptance of conflicting views of diversity. Through a CRT lens, the inclusion of the AAPI student narrative can illustrate the conflict, the ordinariness of racism becomes apparent, and microaggressions work to perpetuate the conflicting practice of valuing diversity in the midst of institutionalized racism. The conflicted concept of diversity also works to illustrate a misalignment in values around race and diversity at the college. Coupled with the inconsistency in messaging between the diversity values of leadership and what is experienced by faculty and staff, the environment of South (as it relates to issues of race) is very complex, and provided a bumpy road on which the AANAPISI grant would attempt to progress.

**Making of the Grant**

In addition to further contextualizing the backdrop of issues of race at the college, the interviews also served to piece together how various people experienced the writing of the grant, as well as the start-up of the grant programming. In this section, both interview data and personal
reflection help to explain how the AANAPISI grant came about at the college. The story that is revealed illustrates quite a bit of quick decision-making that was required to both get the grant written and submitted, and to get the project off the ground once funded. This was a departure from the norm in a college culture that is very process-oriented, with a high emphasis on shared governance and a resistance to top-down decision-making. Often, any change effort takes considerable vetting among impacted groups and stakeholders.

The South Seattle Community College AANAPISI grant was written primarily by Jack, assisted by a small team of college student services staff members, and guided by a professional education consulting firm. Jack first learned of the AANAPISI designation from a local ethnic newspaper in fall of 2007 that reported on the forthcoming federal designation, but stated that no Pacific Northwest colleges were eligible (Ly, 2007). Intrigued and challenged by the assertion no local colleges—including South—would be eligible, he brought the matter to the president at the time, gained permission to pursue more information by contacting the consulting firm. A consultant researched the forthcoming designation and looked into South’s potential for eligibility, and confirmed that the college could apply for eligibility. With the permission of the previous president, Jack proceeded to champion the effort, and turned around a competitive application in a very short time period, beginning the writing in March 2008 and submitting the proposal in June 2008. It was a short wait to hear whether South was selected, as all pilot AANAPISIs were notified in late September 2008 for start-up on October 1, 2008.

The announcement of the grant took the college much by surprise. Not only was the college receiving a grant most knew nothing about, it was for a staggeringly large amount of money in a short amount of time: a total of $2.4 million for two years (October 2008 through September 2010). For a college who was even praised in its most recent accreditation visit for transparency in the budget process ("Accreditation," 2010), the surprise announcement of this magnitude, for a purpose relatively undefined, left many unclear about what the money was to be used for in two
years of operation. This would create challenges faced in implementation, requiring a lot of explaining by the program staff once the grant started up.

**Building a team.** To earn maximum points with the grant application readers, the consultant strongly encouraged Jack to name key personnel who would be ready to “hit the ground running” when the grant was funded. This strategy, however, later created a perception of an elite and exclusive group, handpicked by the vice president.

During the writing of the grant, Jack began conversations with various people lining up individuals from the college who would step in to lead the project efforts. He was largely tapping AAPI faculty and staff who had been involved in the college’s AAPI Presidential Advisory Committee in the past, as they had demonstrated an interest in AAPI issues. It was at this point that the two grant-funded faculty members interviewed for this case study were approached. Pete tells of his invitation to work on the grant:

I was asked by [Jack] and . . . he wanted to know what suggestions I would have in terms of getting Asian American and [Pacific Islander] students to enroll here, what I would suggest, and maybe even what I did in my classroom to try to help them—well to keep them, and then help them succeed . . . based on my background as an instructor in academics. And then later on I was asked if I wanted to participate in the grant, and after learning more fully what the grant was going to do, I said of course I was willing to help out.

Elizabeth recalls her invitation with a bit less choice in the matter:

Well, I think it was a plan for me that I wasn’t involved with. In other words, someone had my future set up for me for the next couple of years. And I didn’t have any idea I was even a part of the discussion. I knew nothing about the grant, actually, and I found out [at an open house event in May 2008], and that is when [Jack] asked me if I wanted to take on that particular part of the grant . . . And my answer was ‘I don’t think so,’ I didn’t think I could
even do whatever it is I was supposed to do because I had no idea what we were supposed
to do! I had never heard anything about it. So it was really a shock.

Clearly, Elizabeth came around eventually, and got over this initial shock to consider the invitation
and agree to participate.

At this time, the person who would be the project director of the grant was identified and
recommended by the grant consultant. She was initially brought in by the consultant to assist with
the writing of the grant, and eventually was written in as the project director on the proposal itself.
Once funded, she joined the team and the college on a temporary basis to lead the grant. Jack
himself was never written into the grant as part of the staff, but would later continue his role as a
champion, advocating for the grant’s work through implementation.

It was at this point that I was also considered to become a part of the grant. At the time I had
been working at the college in various administrative positions for eight years. My professional
interests were in developing the college’s relationships with communities of color, and had been
involved in the campus’ diversity committee for several years. My demonstrated interest in
communities of color (especially my own) led to my direct involvement in the writing of the grant
at Jack’s request. As the grant strategies took shape, and other potential staff members were being
identified, I volunteered myself to lead retention strategies on a temporary reassignment from my
position for the two years of the grant. Jack considered it, and I was then chosen for the position,
and written into the grant proposal. I was excited for this opportunity. I acknowledge that,
compared with my colleagues who were asked unexpectedly to work for the grant, I had much
more information about the AANAPISI designation and the college’s proposal. For me, this was an
opportunity to bring my professional responsibilities in line with my passion for working with
communities of color, and my enthusiasm and concern for my own Filipino American and Asian
American community. It was also exciting to be a part of a federal pilot program that focused—for
the first time—on AAPIs in higher education.
Challenges to the Success of the AANAPISI Grant

Although many original strategies were abandoned, between the remaining strategies and new activities implemented, the sheer volume of work taken on by the AANAPISI project team, and the amount of time in which they had to implement and make them successful, there were many challenges inherent to the process. And as with any effort intended to improve and change a higher education institution, the AANAPISI grant was met with several challenges by the college community itself. Based largely on analysis of interviews, supplemented by my personal knowledge, and augmented in part by details found in official program documents, this section describes the challenges to the success of the AANAPISI grant.

Confusion about the program. As is the potential with any new initiative, there were logistical problems that lead to great confusion over what the grant was for, who it served, and what it was about. This confusion simply tripped up the progress of the grant at times, and in most cases, the confusion could be easily cleared. It was a large project, for a purpose that was unclear for many college employees, so clarification efforts on a consistent basis were needed to reduce these issues as challenges. Several points of confusion emerged—the term “Native American Pacific Islander,” the intention of the funds, and the restrictiveness of the resources to AAPI students only.

"Native American" Pacific Islander? Perhaps the most confusing aspect of the new designation has been the name itself. The term “Native American Pacific Islander” was introduced on a federal level through this designation. It was new to the higher education world at large, and especially to the community at South. In many of the program’s presentations to campus constituencies, the external community, and in conference presentations made nationally, explanations and definitions of what is meant by “Native American Pacific Islander” are consistent. The term created enough confusion that Native American students were approaching me in my office and around campus inquiring about the programming. I found myself explaining many times
over that the term refers to the indigenous people of American territories and states among the Pacific Islands.

Though this issue was easily clarified when AANAPISI staff had the opportunity to respond to the confusion (for example, when talking with a Native American student, or answering a colleague’s question), I think that the name will pose continuing confusion—and perhaps resistance—on a national level. Like OMB’s Directive 15, which is cited as constructing today’s five racial categories (Espiritu & Omi, 2000), the federal government has created a new race-based identity in Native American Pacific Islander. Not only is race, in this case, socially-constructed (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), it is federally-constructed. Though the name is a nod to the indigenous people of Pacific Islands, it also narrows the Pacific Islander category to only consider Pacific Islanders from U.S. states or territories, which excludes, for example, Tongans, who are a population in South’s community. In think that in the future, if this identifier is interpreted literally, then AANAPISIs would be in a position to exclude services from Tongan students, Fijian students, or students with roots in Western Samoa, for example. This would lead to resistance from these Pacific Islander groups who are also underrepresented in higher education. The federal designation of AANAPISI effectively assigned a new racial designation as well.

*Funding for the college or for students?* Another form of the confusion around AANAPISI services was the intent of the funding itself. The nature of the AANAPISI funding was to strengthen the college’s ability to serve AAPI students. The funding was intended to develop programs, and other activities that would build capacity, and was restricted from providing direct assistance to students through grants or scholarships. However, since the term “grant” is used in two ways at the college, (grants received by the college, versus grants given to students for funding), there was much confusion. Even after making presentations to several leadership teams, and even the entire college at the annual campus-wide pre-fall quarter kick-off, some staff in registration and elsewhere would send students to AANAPISI staff offices to request applications or information about how to
obtain individual grants. Renee explains, “I think there just wasn’t a lot of people that [knew] what the grant was, [there were] a lot of assumptions that there was just money coming in that people can utilize and [so staff were] sending students down to go see if they can get some of the money.”

In 2009 when the annual student handbook—which is distributed to all students on campus—was being designed, the description of the AANAPISI grant program services (which described the programming made available to students) was errantly placed under the heading “Grants & Loans,” further adding to the confusion.

**AAPI only?** There was also confusion around the exclusivity of the AANAPISI initiatives. Initially, it was widely assumed that it did only benefit AAPI students. Pete explains the confusion among academic faculty colleagues:

> When the AANAPISI grant came out, even after about a year of explaining it and so forth, there was at least a sense among one or two of my colleagues that the grant was only for Asian American and Pacific Islanders and I would say ‘we’re doing this, we’re doing that,’ and I would say ‘it’s open to all students.

The assumption that it was only for AAPI students was an easy one to make, given the title of the grant and designation. What complicated the implementation was the impression that focused services were somehow wrong or unfair. Diana explains,

> I think that people for all these years have been thinking that we need to serve all our students, and the idea of . . . to focus just on the Asian/AAPI . . . it’s just as educators, we don’t like to think that were going to just help a fourth of our students.

Vickie describes the discomfort that she observed: “In the beginning I think because we had funds for a special population, and I’m guessing this is the first time this college has received funds for an identified population this way, I think that there was resentment about that.” In my own observation, comparing this resistance at South to what I had observed, for example, at two California AANAPISI schools, was that targeted programming was new for the college, whereas
DeAnza and City College of San Francisco, had been offering targeted programming for many years—they had targeted programs and services for many ethnic groups, not just AAPI, and they did not report the same resistance when their AANAPISI designation was announced because of that. While they presumably faced resistance of their own, it seems that their longer histories of identifying specific groups may have better prepared their campuses for a new AANAPISI designation. This discomfort at South actually begins to hint at a larger challenge, discussed below, of resistance to the designation itself.

With any new major initiative, confusion around many aspects of the effort can be expected. However, the AANAPISI grant suffered from some fundamental misunderstandings that impacted the work far into implementation. The recurring confusion—even about terminology used in the grant title itself—proved to be a persistent challenge for the grant program staff.

**Timeline challenges.** In eight of the eleven interviews, participants highlighted time as being a major challenge faced by the AANAPISI project. Given what the grant proposal claimed to demonstrate in just two years, the challenge of time was inherent to the project from the beginning. This was made evident in many forms through the interviews.

**Not enough time to build support.** In describing the process he went through in writing the grant, Jack explains how the timeline may have complicated the effectiveness of implementation:

So I think the short timeline between notification and due date made it challenging to get [the right] sort of feedback, input or buy-in from the campus. It was just barely enough time to write the proposal. So we did the best that we could in a short period of time, and got the grant, but then we had this plan that was written pretty quickly that we then had to implement, that if we had made substantive changes to it, we had to get permission [from the U.S. Department of Education]. The timeframe in which to reply did not allow him to properly develop the proposal with input from impacted departments, and did not allow the feedback process with colleagues which may
have ensured the activities, objectives and measures were realistic and appropriate for the college’s needs. Additionally, without that process of input and vetting, Jack was unable in that time to adequately develop support for and understanding around the grant.

*Not enough time to launch and make progress.* Once the grant was received, because it was a large project for the college, it took considerable time to launch. In fall 2008, the State of Washington instituted a hiring freeze across all state institutions, including community colleges (Mulady, 2008). With this hiring freeze in place, it was very difficult to bring on all the necessary staff that the grant proposal called for. And because many of the activities were new to the college, getting them off the ground required research, development and piloting before they could be fully functional. In his interview, Pete explains that two years is not enough time to get a new degree program marketed, and populated with students. From the perspective of a vice president for instruction, Theresa felt that there was not enough time to get faculty on board, and to fully develop courses. Elizabeth reflected on the challenge to be fully inclusive given the time frame,

> Time is one thing because we are being innovative and we are doing things that are very different from before such as the professional development. To create a learning community is one thing, but to go across the board and have everybody from all different areas [of campus] have the opportunity to join the group, I think that was big.

*A five-year grant effort attempted in two years.* In comparing the implementation process of a five-year Title III Strengthening Institutions grant to the AANAPISI grant, Diana explains,

> So we tried a lot of things, it took us until we were halfway through the grant to know what we wanted to do, which strategies were successful . . . And I think that’s what happened with AANAPISI, during the first two years we spent a lot of time doing a lot of different things, and now we’re halfway through [what should be] a five-year grant and now is where we know what works . . . You’re spending a million [dollars] a year and really that’s too hard to do!
In fact, according to the "Year 3 Extension Budget Encumbrance Plan," which was the formal request made to the U.S. Department of Education to extend the AANAPISI project to a third year, just over half of the total $2.4 million budget, just $1.8 million, was spent by the end of the 2009-2010 fiscal year. According to the application,

The first year we developed grant components and related activities from the ground-up for the large population we serve. It was a monumental effort. The second year we implemented and piloted key grant components. On the basis of rigorous evaluation and feedback we received, significant refinement and modification is needed to truly institutionalize best practices and ensure their sustainability. Our promising work can be successfully completed within a third year.

The request was granted, and the project was allowed to extend to a third year, which many whom I interviewed felt still was not enough.

From inception, time was not on the side of the AANAPISI grant. Unfortunately, the lack of time was a persistent and very unforgiving obstacle to the grant efforts. The compressed timeline also created additional pressure not only on the grant program staff, but on other employees at the college as well.

**Budget climate challenges.** In addition to the constraint of time, the drastically changing budget climate in higher education nationwide, as well as in the state of Washington dramatically impacted the AANAPISI implementation at South. The hiring freeze made it very difficult and complex to get approved the additional positions needed to support the grant. So while the project director was hired, and the activity leads were temporarily transferred from their original positions to the grant, program support staff could not be hired immediately. This delay certainly slowed the early progress of the grant initiatives.

The downturn in the economy, and the real and perceived threats to the college budget also contributed to a low morale among the general population at the college. Although the
administration was quick to assure employees that all efforts would be made to avoid layoffs, there was the real threat that people would lose their jobs or see their hours reduced dramatically. This was the experience of Bernadette, who faced a reduction of 50% from her full-time position supporting a technical program. At that point, she was offered a position at half-time for the AANAPISI project. In this climate of fear and speculation, and without a clear explanation for how the millions of grant funds would be used, there developed both an assumption that this huge grant could save peoples’ jobs, and a resentment that a small group of people got such a huge amount of money to serve just one fourth of the population. The impression, as Diana retells it, was that

We got all this money at a time when the state funding was dropping and people were afraid of losing their jobs, and all of sudden there was this big pot of money . . . and I think it was a challenge to tell people we couldn’t be all things to all people [who thought] “You know you’ve got 2.4 million and . . . the college is losing a million a year, you could just somehow plug that hole!” I think that was a challenge too.

The assumption that the grant could simply “plug the hole” spawned resentment when it became clear that the grant was not able to be used in that way.

There was also the issue of “conspicuous consumption.” Where there was a travel freeze on all departments at the college, and all out of state travel state-wide, the grant was funded to send project team members to various national conferences. Project staff attended a number of out-of-state conferences during the travel freeze, to attend conferences in areas such as Washington, DC, Rhode Island, San Francisco, Chicago and San Diego. While no outright criticism of the grant or the grant team was reported, some faculty not on the grant asked to have travel costs paid for what they considered to be grant-relevant conferences. While all travel was approved by the president, the sense was that AANAPISI project staff were privileged and above the travel freeze. While these trips did not violate any rules, the appearance of the travel did create some negative impressions of the grant staff.
The state budget crisis and the college’s budget climate led to a heightened level of anxiety campus-wide. The introduction of a massive grant at this time put an uncomfortable spotlight on the efforts of the grant, the program staff, and the designation itself.

**Resistance and doubt.** To be designated as an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution is to take on a brand new identity as an institution. The threshold to qualify as an AANAPISI is just 10% of an institution’s population. Reflecting a significant number of AAPI enrollment, rather than an evident majority South Seattle Community College qualified with 21% AAPI student enrollment. However, the college is also very diverse, and has just over 30% of its enrollment reported as White. With a large population of students of color, it was difficult for some to see AAPIs as a majority population meriting the designation.

In fact, several of those interviewed mentioned resistance they saw at the college to the AAPI designation. Diana explains, “I think that’s been a challenge for the college to wrap itself around being identified as an Asian/AAPI-serving institution when they’re maybe just a fourth of our students.” With this resistance to thinking of itself as AAPI-specific, there was a fear that other populations would be neglected. I also encountered resistance to being an AANAPISI. I heard colleagues say, “What about our Latino population? What about our east African population?” It was a fear that the AANAPISI designation existed in a zero-sum game, that a focus on the AAPI population meant a neglect of other communities of color.

Even Jason, an executive administrator, shared this concern, “I was worried at first, and I know that [a district-level leader] was worried at first that there might be a feeling from other ethnic groups, ‘Why a special thing just for AAPI folks?’” In response, and even in anticipation of this concern, in a presentation to the Board of Trustees, Jack explained in a PowerPoint presentation how the college met the AANAPISI population requirement, and showed comparison figures for African American students and Chicano Latino students, demonstrating that the college
fell below the threshold of 25% of the respective populations to be considered either a Predominantly Black Institution or a Hispanic Serving Institution.

The resistance to the designation began to scratch the surface of some deep-seated thinking around race at South. Though cloaked in the college’s expressed value for its multicultural diversity, the challenge of “Why AAPIs and not others?” began to hint at a real discomfort with and unwillingness to focus on any race.

**Color-blindness.** In addition to the assumption of competition between racial groups for support, this general resistance to AAPI-targeted work seems to arise from what Bonilla-Silva (2010) refers to as racial ideology based in color-blindness, or “racism lite” (p. 9). This color-blindness contributes to the resistance described by the study participants. In the interviews, it became clear either through a direct use of the term, or through a description of attitudes that asserted that the college or the individual shouldn’t see race that color-blindness was a common perspective at the college. In terms of CRT, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) explain that “critical race theorists . . . hold that color blindness will allow us to redress only extremely egregious racial harms, ones that everyone would notice and condemn” (p. 22). Instead of these more blatant expressions of prejudice and bigotry, color-blind racism “otherizes softly” with biased assumptions thickly veiled in liberal ideals (“AAPI students aren’t the only ones who struggle, all students struggle”) (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 3). By proclaiming the college unwilling to serve AAPIs directly, the microaggression is soothed by the reasoning, “because we serve all students,” allowing the racism inherent to this resistance remain “untouchable” and “slippery” (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 25). The “abstract liberalism” of this argument uses politically liberal ideals in abstract and theoretical ways, but ignores the practical issues at hand: lower success rates, poor achievement, underrepresented ethnic groups (p. 28).

To target AAPIs through AANAPISI strategies—the first time the college has undertaken any significant effort that targets a specific ethnic group—meant that faculty and staff had to reframe
how they conceived of supporting students. In the past, the college seemed to have a prerogative that because it was so diverse, serving all students meant also serving diverse students by default, and therefore targeted strategies for any ethnic group were not implemented. The race-based strategies of the AANAPISI grant challenged the color-blind approach the college had relied on for a long time.

The interview participants painted a history of South that illustrated color-blindness as a pervasive attitude. Many put it into terms that said essentially, “we serve all students, not just AAPIs,” or “we help all students, regardless of their background.” This unwillingness to acknowledge the needs of AAPI students as unique, or the discomfort with serving AAPIs specifically points to an assumption that to do so is at the detriment to others. These sentiments cropped up in several responses. Pete, in reflecting on his experience as a faculty member prior to the AANAPISI designation remembers

> What I have seen prior to [the AANAPISI grant] was there was never any real discussions—and I’m talking about as a faculty member—I didn’t really hear discussions about “let’s help this one group based on ethnicity,” and it was more like “OK, everybody is a student and regardless of where they’re from . . . we just have to do what we have to do.” There wasn’t that concern that . . . maybe certain groups might have differing concerns or different needs and that by understanding them as a group we may help them.

This further makes the case that despite the college’s history of diversity, no efforts to help specific ethnic or racial groups had ever existed. Diana spoke at length to this issue, and even frankly about her own perspective:

> Now we want to help all of our students and especially I think we struggle with the idea that we’re identifying these students not because they’re the most needy, but because of their ethnicity. I think that’s a challenge for me, I think it’s a challenge for the college . . . I feel that my view is that the Asian/AAPI students are a microcosm of all of our students, and to focus
on them it seems like, well we should be focusing on the students that are struggling the most regardless of their ethnicity.

Her response represents the sentiment of many people who, despite all the diversity at the college, and its history of serving diverse populations, were still uncomfortable with specially targeted programs.

I had plenty of my own personal experience in my undergraduate years of participating in institutionally-supported programming targeted at Asian American students at my university. So it never gave me pause to consider that the AANAPISI designation would be the first ever large-scale program targeting a specific ethnic group at a college as diverse as South. As I saw this resistance and hesitation come into play through the reactions of colleagues whom I had known for many years, I felt that this perspective was at odds with the college’s diverse population. On one hand, the college in its publicity materials and the president in his public comments boast of being one of the most diverse institutions in the state, yet those working within the college are reticent to talk about and focus on individual groups that make up that diversity. It was as if we couldn’t focus on one group without looking at all groups. This sense that a focus on one meant a neglect of the other was crippling, and created an ideological resistance. We could boast about race, but we could not talk about it.

The ideological challenge proved to be the most difficult. Bonilla-Silva (2010) characterizes this form of color-blind racism as a “very indirect ‘now you see it now you don’t’ style” (p. 25). I believe many of us felt hamstrung by this attitude and perception. It was difficult to point out, we could only recognize it as a resistance, and we struggled to identify its source and to name it. If we couldn’t put our finger on it, we couldn’t hope to challenge it. Moreover, the color-blindness meant that the traditional white power structure was left unchallenged. Bonilla-Silva (2010) defines the racial structure of color-blind racism as "the totality of the social relations and practices that
reinforce white privilege” (p. 9). This white privilege was protected, to a great extent, because AAPI-focused work was suppressed.

The invisible force of resistance that I recognize now as color-blind racism also points to a lack of critical thinking around issues of race at the college. In fact, the college acknowledges that particular groups can have targeted support and programming, as evidenced through the college’s student Cultural Center which hires student commissioners to represent various groups. There are student commissioners to represent African, African American, Asian American, “Chicano/Hispanic/Latino,” Native American and Pacific Islander student interests. The programming these students provide had been the only race- or ethnic-specific programming offered by the college. However, it appears that targeted initiatives are only seen as the purview of student organizations, and not the business of the professional work of the college divisions. These student efforts are limited in their scope, and cannot adequately address the larger issues of achievement gaps seen by not only AAPI students, but by other groups as well. Leaving the work of targeting race-based initiatives for student organizers and resisting the responsibility to do so at the programmatic level demonstrates a complacency and satisfaction with the color-blind approach, and a sore lack of a critical viewpoint around issues of race. I will return to the issue of color-blind racism again in Chapter Five.

A color-blind approach dangerously makes room for stereotypes about racial or ethnic groups to prevail. If the college, or its faculty and staff are not looking critically at the needs of various groups or of race in the disparities of achievement, then the college is not looking critically at what assumptions might be at play. As I had assumed at the outset of my research, in the case of AAPI students, the “model minority” myth has indeed played a role in the neglect and misperception of South’s largest community of color.

“Model Minority” myth. The concept of color-blind racism is particularly salient when also considering the subscription to the “model minority” myth, which also helps to explain the
resistance to the AANAPISI designation. An additional challenge faced in implementation of AANAPISI efforts was how the assumptions of this stereotype came into play, which says that all AAPI students are alike, that they are naturally smart, successful and studious, and that they do better than any other racial group. This stereotype essentializes all AAPI students, and assigns them an identity and a narrative that is unconcerned with their actual, individual experiences.

The “model minority” myth was an observation that came up again and again. In nine of the eleven interviews, participants cited the “model minority” stereotype as one applied to South’s students or as a barrier to the grant initiatives. Across the board, there was an endemic assumption—either held by the interview participant or described in others by the interview participant—that AAPI students were successful, not in need of additional support, and the importance of disaggregated data in acknowledging differences between AAPI students. Theresa spoke to the doubt some had that AAPI students were in need:

There seems to be stereotypes on this campus, and I’m not saying it was necessarily across the board, but there did tend to be individuals who thought, “Why did we help Asian Pacific Islander students because they’re all doing well in college?” It was that . . . stereotype of the “model minority.”

There was also the sense among some that AAPI students weren’t necessarily the ones with the greatest needs, that there were other populations that had greater needs that the college should have been addressing. Several of those interviewed mentioned the doubt that AAPIs were in need of additional support. There is a very negative tone to these impressions throughout their descriptions. Diana explains it in terms that people thought that AAPIs were “getting more than their share.” Vickie describes it as “resentment,” and Renee mentions that people questioned why AAPIs needed a special focus.

The sentiments observed by Vickie and Renee reflect what Yu (2006) called the “indifference and ignorance toward [AAPI] students’ needs and problems” (p. 330). That some felt
AAPI students did not merit support proved to be a major obstacle, but it also uncovered some
dangerous assumptions that some at the institution hold about such a large part of the population.
However, without reliable race-based assessments of what groups needed help “the most,”
following the logic that AAPIs did not need additional support falls short. In other words, people
were resisting an AAPI focus based on assumptions, not on fact, that other groups were more
deserving. If there are no valid counter-arguments to an AAPI focus, then it becomes apparent that
the resistance based on this argument is completely rooted in Yu’s (2006) “indifference and
ignorance.” Moreover, the argument that “we help all students, regardless of race” also neutralizes
the resistance based on presumed merit of the races. If we indeed help all students, then it should
not matter who needs it the most.

In his interview, Pete addressed the assumption of success as well as homogeneity. He
explained what he knew faculty were thinking, “there is the sense that Asian Americans . . . do well
academically, but . . . we’re lumping all Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders into one giant group,
and my colleagues believe that as a group they tend to do well.” Jack describes AAPI students as “a
population that was not well-understood, and I think that like all higher education, the impression
was that our AAPI students were doing very well uniformly.” This line of assumption is related to
the perception that AAPIs do not need targeted support. That staff and faculty are indeed applying
this presumption to the many AAPI students in their classrooms and in their departments is very
concerning, considering the grant was written based on the argument that AAPI students struggle
to succeed across the institution. The pressure that this puts on students who hear of this
expectation is immense, and can even have negative effects on their personal well-being in addition
to the neglect of their academic success (Kiang, 1992; Lew, et al., 2005).

Interview participants also identified the benefit of the disaggregated data in combating the
“model minority” stereotype. Renee and Jason both mentioned the surprising information about
success rates for AAPI ethnic groups. Renee felt it was important that Cambodian student needs
were made clear, and Jason expressed surprise that Japanese students were achieving at such low rates. They recognized the impact of the initial disaggregated data report on AAPI students, and how that information indeed changed perceptions, as well as reinforced what many had observed anecdotally. The call for disaggregated data is an often-cited measure to combat the “model minority” stereotype (Espiritu & Omi, 2000; Hune, 2002; Kawaguchi, 2003; Kiang, 1992; Lew, et al., 2005; Museus, 2009a, 2009b; National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2008, 2010; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Suzuki, 2002; Yu, 2006).

**Summary of challenges.** The interviews and the documents of this case pointed to a number of challenges to the success of the AANAPISI grant efforts. There was quite a bit of confusion around several aspects of the grant that impeded the implementation and progress of the AANAPISI efforts. The timeline was also a major challenge, leaving little opportunity to make substantial institutional change, or have major impact on student success. Another major challenge recognized by many interviewees was the budget climate impacted by statewide (and nationwide) budget shortfalls as a result of the recession. The AANAPISI team also ran into resistance from colleagues within the college to the designation that focused on AAPI students. This was reinforced by the perspective of color-blindness that was prevalent at South. Also contributing to the resistance was the subscription to the stereotype of AAPIs as a “model minority” who did not need or deserve additional targeted support. Considering this array of challenges, the impact on the AANAPISI efforts is evident in the outcomes realized toward the end of the grant. Some of these outcomes were expected and hoped for, and yet others were unexpected.

**Outcomes and Impact of the AANAPISI Grant**

The research interviews and document analysis that construct this case demonstrate that there were many intended and unintended outcomes of the AANAPISI effort. The impact that this program has had on the college is also notable in that the intended quantifiable impacts were never
realized, but much greater than that, the qualitative and unplanned impact is very different, but also very meaningful for South.

**Quantifiable impact.** The AANAPISI grant application proposed quantitative performance measurements around quarter-to-quarter retention, year-to-year retention, transition from ESL to college courses, enrollment in developed transfer pathways, degree and certificate completion, and transfer rate. Two U.S. Department of Education Annual Performance Reports (APR) have been submitted, one in December 2009 reporting on 2008-2009 academic year, and the other in December 2010 reporting on the 2009-2010 academic year. A final APR will be completed in December 2011 reporting on the 2010-2011 final academic year.

The program met the quantitative measures for those objectives that could be measured in the reporting period. For example, in both the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 reporting periods, the AANAPISI program met targets for increasing AAPI student retention through the student's first year. The target was that by June 2010, the retention rate of AAPI students in their first year at South would increase by 10% over a baseline of 56.7% (from 2006-2007). By June 2010, the actual increase was 10.5% to 57%. And for the same two periods, the transition rate of AAPI ESL students to college courses also exceeded the targets set in the grant proposal. The target was a 20% increase in the ratio of AAPI students transitioning to college courses, from a baseline of 32.6% transitioning, to a target of 38.1% transitioning. This target was exceeded with an actual ratio of 43.9% AAPI ESL students transitioning from ESL to college coursework.

However, some objectives set were not measurable within the time specified. The grant hoped to show a 20% increase in the ratio of AAPI students earning degrees or certificates. As a two-year grant, initially, nothing was demonstrable in the first year, and the graduation rate after the second year would not likely have been the result of any initiatives of the project itself. Given that students are taking longer than two years to complete their degrees, it is unlikely that in the final report that any impact on graduation rates will be demonstrable as well.
The grant also hoped to show an increase in enrollment in the two new degree programs initiated by the curricular efforts of the grant, the Asian Pacific Islander Studies emphasis and the Associate of Elementary Education, as well as an increase in enrollment in the on-campus four-year degree programs (an existing Bachelor of Applied Science in Hospitality, and a program at a co-located private university). No increase was reportable in the first year, and the explanation on the 2009-2010 APR stated

Too early to report—delayed into third year extension. 2008-2009 was a developmental year. The new API Studies Emphasis and AEE pathways to four-year institutions were approved March 2009. In 2009-10, students served by the grant were in developmental classes and first-year classes and had not declared their majors. Data presented reflects students enrolled in the major pathways at time of report.

Again, the reported numbers did not reflect an impact of any of the project initiatives. It will be difficult even in the third year to capture the impact of these initiatives on degree program and four-year program enrollment rates of those students in developmental classes in 2009-2010. There is also an objective that the grant project will increase transfer rates of AAPIs to four-year universities. In the first two APRs, similar limitations were cited, and a similar shortcoming is anticipated.

**Qualitative impacts.** Though the quantifiable measures that the grant project will be evaluated on only demonstrate half of the success, the outcomes beyond these numbers-based measures will show that the AANAPISI project had significant impact in key areas, and some promising impact in others. There are several qualitative impacts that the AANAPISI designation had on the college, even though they were not a part of the original objectives. Nor were they usable for evidence of success in federal reporting. The qualitative impacts recognized in this study were a new focus on Pacific Islanders, two new degrees developed for the college, professional development programming based in cultural competency, a new perspective on the types of
support needed by students, and an increasing acceptance of the college’s newfound identity as an AANAPISI.

**A focus on Pacific Islanders.** Identified as an underrepresented AAPI group in the grant application, the Pacific Islander student population has benefitted from a particular focus on their needs at the college. Carol, the Samoan American part-time faculty member hired, largely took the initiative of identifying strategies to both partner with the Pacific Islander community and to develop student support methods that would best serve Pacific Islander students. She made tremendous connections with Pacific Islander students who became increasingly visible as she reached out to them, or as they came to her by referral from other Pacific Islander students. The numbers of Pacific Islander students are small, but appear to be growing, and the lessons learned by the AANAPISI grant staff and the college appear to be great. Prior to Carol, there were no representative team members who could have reached students the way she has, or that could have known with some authority what it would take to effectively reach the Pacific Islander population.

**New degrees for the college.** The AANAPISI effort funded the development of two new degrees, a transfer degree emphasis in Asian Pacific Islander Studies to provide curriculum AAPI students could see themselves reflected in, and the Associate of Elementary Education to encourage more AAPI role models in the field of education. The addition of new degrees is remarkable because the budget climate described above as a challenge limited development of any new degrees or coursework. While the enrollment in these degrees is slow to increase, the fact that two new degree programs have been established and are “on the books,” these programs and the courses will remain in the college catalog. The courses will remain available for any faculty member across the district to teach as well.

**Professional development.** Though the professional development did not address AAPI populations or AAPI cultural competency directly, the impression by many of those interviewed is that the impact of initiating this effort is one of the most positive impacts of the AANAPISI grant.
Jack identifies this as the most impactful strategy: “I think the professional development . . . may have the greatest long term impact on the institution and . . . it has the potential to create a critical mass of people that want to change or would continue to help the culture of the institution evolve.” Theresa agrees: “I would say when I think about your accomplishments what I think is most powerful even though I didn’t go through it was the summer institute [for professional development].” Vickie explains the impact she saw, “I think that with the professional development we’ve opened eyes for people who now may take a leadership role in terms of diversity and speaking out.” Regardless of whether it addressed AAPI issues directly or not, this strategy clearly had a strong impact and continuing value.

**Redefining support for students.** The focus on the family through a family orientation workshop has created a widespread awareness and acknowledgement that the family indeed has a place in college success. Whereas before this project only some at the college acknowledged the importance of family, and most in the college assumed that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) restricted family involvement, this workshop demonstrated how the family can effectively be engaged in student success. This was a new direction for the college’s student services, and for the college overall. Family engagement is now under consideration through other efforts that focus on orientation and first-year success.

**Openness to being AANAPISI-designated.** Though still spreading throughout the campus, it appears that from the leadership down, many more understand what it means to be an AANAPISI and are beginning to embrace this federal designation as part of the college identity. In preparation for the next AANAPISI grant competition, a “stakeholder committee” of over 15 faculty, staff and administrators has been convened to generate the strategies and implementation plan of the next grant. Unlike the isolated and rushed writing experience that Jack had in the pilot, this next process is already shaping up to be collaborative, with a broad range of input and well-supported by a range of interests on campus.
Though quantitative success was minimal, the AANAPISI grant realized a number of positive qualitative impacts. A well-informed focus on Pacific Islanders has allowed South to connect meaningfully with an underrepresented population in the neighboring community. The two new degree offerings create a diversity in curriculum that has the potential to benefit AAPI students directly. The efforts in professional development that focused on cultural competency is regarded by many as a major success. Also, because the grant was able to do research and development of new student support programming the AANAPISI efforts have reframed the college's approach to serving our student population. And finally, though not yet a major coup, over time the AANAPISI designation has been more accepted as a positive and value-adding identity for South. These impacts will hopefully leave an indelible mark on the college into the future. However, in addition to these internal impacts, there were a few positive impacts external to the college as well.

**Impact beyond the college.** There have also been some impacts that this AANAPISI project and its team members have had on a broader scale, greater than what has been impacted at the college alone. Thanks to the work initiated by AANAPISI institutions, there is a movement to develop a national organization, and there has been substantial advocacy work to continue the AANAPISI designation itself.

**Development of a national organization.** As a result of the AANAPISI designation across the country, a team of leaders at AANAPISIs and other colleges with high-AAPI enrollments began convening over conference calls to discuss the development of a national organization to represent AANAPISI interests and AAPI issues in higher education. Led in large part by Jack at South, I was also a part of those phone calls. This effort, which is in its infancy, seeks to develop an organization similar to the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. The South AANAPISI supported this effort through organizing the mission and purpose development, and hosting a webinar that convened the core planning group and invited other interested institutions to participate.
**Continuation of AANAPISI designation.** Though introduced in 2008 under CCRAA as a pilot initiative, through the advocacy work done by those involved in the emerging national effort, and connections made by this working group to the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, the Obama administration did fund through the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010 ten more years of AANAPISI designation and funding. South—and Jack especially—had an active part in this development, and helped to mobilize other institutions and individuals to reach out to their legislators around this issue.

South also wants to continue to be an AANAPISI, and pursue expansion of student success initiatives through continued designation and another grant award. Currently, the college is writing for AANAPISI funding for 2011-2016, that would continue some of the efforts initiated in the pilot, but would also introduce new initiatives based on lessons learned through the pilot. The new awards are expected to be announced in summer 2011, and funded beginning October 1, 2011.

In this interesting turn from the resistance and challenges faced in the pilot grant, thanks to the efforts of a small working group organizing to apply for continued designation, many key staff, faculty and leaders have been approached to support the continuation of the AANAPISI at South. What is evident now, thanks in large part to the general (versus targeted) impact of the pilot grant strategies, is that this funding can really help the college advance student success initiatives. What is different in the planning of this continued funding is an intentional specificity in the proposal writing that ensures AAPIs are targeted, but does not restrict any proposed strategy from being accessed by the general student population. For example, in the new proposal for 2011-2016 funding, a minimum percentage of AAPI participants will be required in each of the strategies, thereby ensuring an impact on AAPI students directly, while allowing the grant programming to be inclusive as well. The next AANAPISI proposal applies many lessons learned from the pilot. What remains to be seen is whether these built-in mechanisms that protect the ability to target AAPI students would survive implementation.
Should the college not receive further AANAPISI funding, there are a number of changes that would occur, in addition to those that have already been institutionalized. Because South had to apply for and received eligibility to be an AANAPISI prior to applying for funding in early 2011, even without funding awarded, the college is still identified by the U.S. Department of Education as an AANAPISI through the 2011-2012 academic year. However, without grant funds to accompany the designation, it is unlikely that the college would continue or pursue any efforts in the name of AANAPISI or on behalf of AAPI students as a result of the designation.

Regardless of whether the college receives continuing funding, all project personnel will return to their original positions, unless reassigned by the college. Financial support for strategies also ends, and it is very possible that even successful AANAPISI initiatives would die out, without a champion in place to maintain or grow them. Jasper speaks very directly to this in his interview:

The concerns about the grants are that a lot of energy is expended in doing the research and implementing the grant, and a lot of excellent collaboration is done and a lot of best practices are created. And then when the grant ends, the best practices are not implemented on any kind of long-term basis, and so there's a large degree of cynicism amongst the people who have participated in past grants about participating in future grants.

Especially considering the budget challenges the college continues to face, and despite the efforts by grant staff to partner with existing departments to prepare to “hand off” the strategies post-grant, when the campus is faced with lay-offs, closing programs, double-digit budget reductions, and a general overwhelming of the staff, the commitment to AANAPISI strategies after the grant is on very tentative ground.

Summary

The case study findings highlight that although the program did not realize all of the intended outcomes it set out to accomplish, it has faced substantial logistical and ideological challenges to its implementation, and it did have positive impact through other strategies.
developed along the way. The AANAPISI program at South is now in a very uncertain position. While the college works to complete a proposal for continued AANAPISI funding in spring 2011, the pilot AANAPISI grant program works to wrap up its initial efforts by September 30, 2011.

The findings demonstrate that the experience of the AANAPISI program staff is varied and the impression of all of those that I interviewed from the college is also varied, with some expressing cynicism over the lasting impact of the grant efforts and others expressing great hope for continued success. The comprehensive approach that this AANAPISI project took in addressing the needs of AAPI students may seem foolhardy to attempt in just two, and even three years, but it did expose, for the rest of the college to understand, the complexity of issues pertinent to its AAPI students.

Despite the struggles, resistance, and quantitative shortcomings, what is very clear is that this project accomplished an impressive amount in just two and a half years, and the impression that the college has had is largely favorable. The sheer volume of projects attempted—from curricular change, new student programming, production of a series of videos, development and launch of a new website, to broad-based professional development programming—is immense for a three year grant. At the end of the first year, in a compliance audit report by a third-party consultant, the reviewer closes with the following observation:

It is impossible not to close with a rave review on not only the compliance and management aspects of this AANAPISI project, but also with a standing ovation for the incredible accomplishments over the past 13 months. In two decades of working with institutional development and strengthening institution grant projects in Title III and Title V, I have never seen more amazing progress in such a short period of time.

Though this is a glowing review by an outside observer, there is a parallel irony that one of my colleagues noticed in this perception of a highly successful, ambitious, and hardworking model program. Elizabeth explains:
We lived the “model minority” [stereotype] to the fullest, being on this grant . . . we took on a lot in such a short period of time, and we were going to make damn sure we weren’t going to fail . . . So aren’t we being hypocritical in the first place by being successful like that, and working our tail off in order to get things done? And we weren’t going to step down a couple of notches in order to say “well you know we don’t need to do all of that.” That was our problem . . . but you know of course part of it was that it was set up that way . . . It was being over-ambitious and so we allowed ourselves to live the problem that we are trying to bust.

So I mean that’s a vicious circle.

In Elizabeth’s pained observation, the grant staff, in tackling the responsibility we were handed, were set up to either fail, or become the “model minority” through our relentless pursuit of success, and our ambition to make the strategies work no matter what.

Though externally, and even internally to campus leadership, the AANAPISI effort was seen as successful, on the whole, the case study analysis reveals some real struggles. For the first time, the college had to struggle with race-based change, and decide whether to allow programming and strategies targeting a specific racial group. The gut reactions of some of the college faculty and staff to either resist the designation, doubt the validity of the claim that AAPI students needed help, or eschew any targeted initiatives in the name of “education and support for all,” all begin to accumulate into larger questions of how the college really feels about its diversity, and how the balance of power is maintained.

CRT has been useful in further breaking down some of the findings and the themes that emerged from this research. Specifically, CRT has served as an effective tool to examine on a deeper level some of the challenges that were made evident through interview. Moving forward, CRT more fully enables me to consider implications on a macroscopic level, and see what these findings are communicating more broadly about the case of South’s AANAPISI grant program. In Chapter Five, I
use CRT concepts to a greater extent to conduct an analysis of the broader issues that emerge from this study, and to analyze and grapple with these issues of race, racism and resistance more fully.
Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

The findings discussed in Chapter Four present a difficult challenge for me. On one hand, I consider the AANAPISI work very close to my heart, but through the research I have uncovered shortcomings of the grant efforts and major institutional impediments to race-based strategies. In committing to the rigor of this research, I call upon Anderson’s (2006) description of analytic reflexivity, a key feature of an analytic autoethnography:

Reflexivity involves an awareness of reciprocal influence between ethnographers and their settings and informants. It entails self-conscious introspection guided by a desire to better understand both self and others through examining one’s actions and perceptions in reference to and dialogue with those of others. (p. 382)

Through the analytic reflexivity dialogue process—which includes myself, my colleagues and the additional data—I find myself in the difficult position of being critical of something I have held very dear, and something which my colleagues have held very dear as well, for the past two intensive years. The AANAPISI designation and grant projects have been a very meaningful development in my professional career, and they have had a significant impact on the campus as well. I put quite a lot of impassioned effort behind not only the strategies I was directly involved in, but also in educating colleagues about AANAPISIs, and making contributions to the national effort to both organize AANAPISIs and advocate for continued funding. At South, I see myself as a champion of AANAPISI efforts. My colleagues know me as a passionate individual, and recognize that my AANAPISI work has been both personally rewarding and aligned with my values. However, through careful research, with the analytic reflexivity required of the analytic autoethnography, and the critical stance guided by critical race theory, I have come to recognize and articulate some major challenges to the AANAPISI work, inadequacies of AANAPISI efforts in impacting AAPI student success, and a pervasive form of racism in the institution I have called home for the last decade.
CRT has helped me navigate this process and has equipped me with a very effective tool for asking better questions of the data as it pertains to race and racism. With its focus on the institution or system rather than the actions or behaviors of the individual, CRT has enabled me to see the evidence of racism found in my research as endemic of institutional biases and power structure. CRT has proven to be an excellent fit for this research as it augmented my background research into the supporting literature, helped me to form my research and interview questions, and it has focused my analysis of the data. The role of theory in research is to make connections between data and the larger environment in which the data is embedded. CRT has functioned in this project on two levels: first it has provided a framework from which to analyze the case data on the ground level. From this level it would appear that the AANAPISI grant was largely successful, and that the adjustments to the strategies had to be made in order to be sustainable post-grant. However, CRT also provides me with more critical questions to ask of my research. As a means to provide a broader analysis of the individual data, CRT helps me to look critically at the findings and consider the large-scale impact the AANAPISI grant—and the experience through implementation—has had on the college overall.

The goal of this chapter is to grapple with some of the deeper issues revealed in the findings using CRT. I turn again to some components of CRT, including a criticism of color-blindness, microaggressions, race-consciousness, the concept that racism is common and deeply ingrained, and that race is a social construct. This lens provides a way to examine what the large-scale implications have been for the AANAPISI pilot grant at South Seattle Community College. In this chapter I will more extensively use CRT to do three things: consider the impact of color-blindness on the college’s dichotomous treatment of race, analyze how white privilege served to resist a shift in power introduced by the AANAPISI designation, and discuss what the new AANAPISI designation has meant for the college in terms of its identity.
Major Themes

The data collected through eleven interviews of key AANAPISI personnel (including myself), and key college faculty and administrators, as well as document analysis led to a broad array of key findings. The last chapter, Chapter Four, explores these findings in-depth. Out of these detailed findings emerged some broader themes. The intent of this chapter is to extrapolate from the detailed findings the major themes that have been at play in South's AANAPISI pilot program from a macroscopic level. I will discuss the three major themes that emerge: a contradictory treatment of diversity and race that allowed the college to boast about diversity but avoid internal discussions around race, the shift in power away from white privilege that was implied by the race-conscious AANAPISI designation, and finally, what it meant for the college's identity to become an AANAPISI and a Minority-Serving Institution.

Boast about it, but don't talk about it: Color-blindness

A common talking point about South has been its diversity, which is treated dichotomously when discussed internally, compared to how it is presented externally. The claim to be one of the most diverse campuses in the state of Washington has been heard in speeches and presentations, it is mentioned in the original AANAPISI grant application, and it appears in promotional print materials for the college ("Beyond the Model Minority Myth," 2008; "Report To Our Community," 2008). And this is not lip service, the diversity is real: in 2008, the student population was made up of 21% AAPI, 14% African American, 9% "Hispanic," and 1% Native American ("Report To Our Community," 2008). A walk through campus confirms the statistics: students from a variety of backgrounds speaking the 35 languages represented on campus. The diversity of its student population is certainly recognized by everyone who works at South as celebrated and touted, though it also poses challenges from time to time both in and out of the classroom.

The racial and ethnic makeup of the college is an uneasy blessing. At once, it is a very clear visual indicator of something many institutions in higher education strive for: racial diversity. South
has naturally in its rainbow of faces, ages, and races what many college marketing offices strive for. However, because the college has roots in the traditionally white working class vocations, and because the diversity of its surrounding communities evolved from a combination of white flight and immigrant enclaves, the college has some fundamental conflicts between the racial diversity present on campus, and the institution-wide value and affirmation of multicultural diversity. Because South never had to try very hard to achieve diversity, it has not undergone the iterative process of asserting, questioning and debating the value of racial diversity that other, less diverse, colleges may have had. Because the college gets its diversity “for free” and without much additional effort, South takes for granted that it is indeed diverse, and that this diversity calls for special care and consideration.

The findings of this study complicate the college’s pride in its diversity. Evident in the interviews was a consistent avoidance, at least within the institution, of addressing issues of diversity or race directly. The tendency, instead, is toward a color-blinded approach that chooses to avoid a focus on race in the name of serving all students. I call on CRT’s criticism of color-blindness here, which posits that “aggressive, color-conscious efforts” (such as AAPI-targeted strategies) are what are needed in order to “ameliorate misery” that persists when only the most offensive, egregious, or blatant acts of racism are addressed (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 22). By eschewing race-based strategies that are targeted at AAPI students directly, the college chose instead to allow the systemic deficiencies that originally led to low AAPI student success to persist. Bernadette and Elizabeth both recounted incidents where issues of race and racism were clearly evident—in the case of the instructor who assigned his Vietnamese students numbers and the instructors who assumed their immigrant ESL students were anti-social, but went unaddressed. In these cases, color-blindness equates to blindness toward racism itself. In fact, Bonilla-Silva refers to this phenomenon as “racism without racists,” where values-based and race-free statements can be
made ("I believe in serving all students"), and policies and behaviors that oppress specific groups in practice are allowed to continue (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 4).

Where CRT seeks to be explicitly race-conscious, the color blind approach seeks to be the exact opposite (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Though the college touts its diversity through speeches, publications and talking points, at the very same time it suppresses any direct conversations about race by relegating it to the work of students through student programming. The expressions of faculty and staff of discomfort with race-based initiatives also serve to subdue a discourse that considers race at the forefront. The findings of the study are critical of the assumption that the college can be both diverse and color-blind. The two are, in fact, mutually exclusive in a critically analytical way. They are also mutually exclusive in a practical way. Though the college was recognized for its AAPI population (contributing to diversity as a brag point), was funded to provide services targeting the AAPI population (a $2.4 million grant becoming a brag point), the college and the AANAPISI team in large part elected to reject AAPI-targeted strategies as a response to arguments that general strategies were more sustainable, and that the strategies would have greater impact for the college (leading to a lack of quantifiable evidence of improved AAPI student success).

The AANAPISI designation put South's racial diversity on display. It called attention—to the tune of $2.4 million—to one particular racial group that helps to make up this diversity. As we have seen in the findings, this led to resistance and even an identity crisis. According to the interviews, there were several people within the college who were resistant to a focus on AAPI students, citing the abstract liberal ideals of equal-opportunity and standardized programming for all students. There was also the fear that other racial groups would feel neglected if AAPIs garnered the spotlight. These two reactions, in effect, served as a gag-order on any strategies targeting students who were AAPI. But instead of embracing the designation and the funding, and acknowledging that
AAPIs and many other groups contribute to South’s cultural diversity, the effect of these expressed concerns appeared to be a shrinking away from the attention the AANAPISI designation brought.

In fact, there was the possibility for interest convergence in this grant. CRT explains that for racial minorities, “equality is pursued when the interests of the majority are furthered” (Teranishi, et al., 2009). If the college did focus AANAPISI strategies on AAPI populations, as strategies were developed to target AAPI students, there would likely have been some transferability to other student populations. It is also conceivable that focusing on increasing AAPI success rates (in terms of retention, graduation and completion) could have raised the college’s overall success rates due to the large proportion of AAPI students. This approach would have allowed the AANAPISI grant team to meet its quantitative objectives and demonstrate—through focused attention—an increase in AAPI student success as a result. Unfortunately, interests did not converge to support the initial AANAPISI intentions.

The “slippery” resistance to AAPI-targeted strategies were often expressed to interview participants in the form of microaggressions, which are defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007, p. 271). Often, these microaggressions expressed elements of the “model minority” stereotype. For example, several interview participants mentioned that people at South doubted in conversations with them whether AAPI students were really in need of services, a question predicated on the assumption that AAPIs are universally successful. Renee’s account of a Southeast Asian student who was ignored because of his accent by a front-line employee communicates through a microaggression that his accent rendered him incapable of being helped. For my colleagues and the students of color, with the invisibility of carbon monoxide, these microaggressions begin to form a creeping manifestation of racism, despite the college’s diversity, that ultimately has a huge impact because of the college’s diversity.
This dichotomy—that we can brag about our diversity externally, but we are uncomfortable meaningfully addressing it internally—serves to maintain a predominantly white hegemony within the institution. While students of color can enroll in great numbers, while the college faculty and staff remains overwhelmingly White (the current president and two vice presidents are all White, presidential cabinet members are all White except for the dean of diversity, who is African American), disparities in achievement between racial and ethnic groups persist, and there are no special or targeted efforts to offer supportive programming to individual ethnic or racial groups. Though the AANAPISI grant program sought to initially develop and implement student support programming that was targeted at AAPI students, it was resisted by the institution and eventually, in most cases, had to be changed to address all students without targeting any students.

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) call it an extreme form of color-blindness when an institution refuses to take into consideration any aspect of race. What they describe in legal terms (Supreme Court opinions that consider it illegal to take race into consideration at all), is applicable here in the community college: that race cannot be used to determine services for students, even when research, peer institution practice, and federal designation call for it. In Bonilla-Silva’s (2010) framework of color-blind racism, the refusal to see student needs as different and meriting specific attention, is the employment of color-blindness as a shield, that ultimately “aids in the maintenance of white privilege without fanfare, without naming those who it subjects and those who it rewards” (p. 3-4).

The color-blind racism, by disallowing and resisting targeted programming that addresses the AAPI population, maintains at South a status quo that supports a white racial reality (in the name of color-blindness) institution-wide. In this case, what became evident was that the sentiment “We, as a college, cannot and should not target AAPI students for services because we care about all students” was the practical equivalent of saying “We, as a college, cannot and should not target AAPI students for services.” Despite the immense resources at their disposal, despite the initial
grant commitment to target programming and professional development to the needs of AAPI populations, despite the precedence for such a focus at other AANAPISI institutions, and despite the quantified and data-demonstrated need for targeted AAPI strategies, the color-blinded racial frame of the college prevented the grant program from achieving significant quantifiable impact on AAPI student success. Though this was our charge, due to the historical tendency to marginalize these issues at the college, we couldn’t completely accomplish what we had set out to do on behalf of the AAPI students the AANAPISI designation recognizes.

**AANAPISI designation as a power shift: Unseating white-privilege**

CRT considers history to be of paramount importance in matters of race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 2009b), and the history at South had been an institution that at first served the white working class of the city pursuing vocational degrees in the early 1970s, and it evolved to begin to serve the new immigrant communities that were moving into the service area since the 1980s. The college’s administration and faculty, meanwhile, have remained lacking in diversity through the decades, silently upholding white institutional leadership. Though today the college acknowledges, and often with pride, its diverse student population, the diversity level of staff and faculty remain lacking in representation of its students.

As a result of this history, South operates from a racial frame that reinforces a traditionally white privilege, as Bonilla-Silva (2010) describes. While the student population is very diverse, the college administration and faculty remain overwhelmingly White, creating a very large disparity between those in power, and those subjected to the decisions of that power. Considering the AAPI population at South, without more AAPIs in leadership positions, Teranishi (2010) argues that the “lack of AAPI high-level administrators often means fewer opportunities for bringing attention to the institutional challenges that are associated with the AAPI student population” (p. 142). It should be noted that though representation in leadership—and considering that on an individual level—is an important step toward more adequately addressing AAPIs and other groups of color, CRT
attempts to see issues of race as "the larger, systemic, structural conventions and customs that uphold and sustain oppressive group relationships, status, income, and educational attainment" (Taylor, 2009b, p. 4). The term “white” is used here to characterize the traditional racial viewpoint of the college and the system, rather than point out White individuals in the study. In the college’s history, and contextualized within higher education over all, the institution privileges the white point of view. Color-blindness has also contributed to maintain this by evading the points of view of other races, as was the experience of the AANAPISI team through implementation.

The grant strategies sought to disrupt this racial frame by creating a systematized way to address AAPI student needs directly. However, this signaled a shift in power from the traditionally white frame to a community of color, and it challenged that status quo. Because the college operates from a racial structure that augments white privilege within the institution, the designation as a college with a presumably strong AAPI identity was unsettling for many who were used to a color-blind identity. CRT sees racism as very deeply-ingrained and pervasive, and as the white identity is so common that it is seen as the norm, the white viewpoint, with this ingrained racism, is simply seen as the viewpoint. As Delgado and Stefancic (2001) point out, this all happens invisibly, through assumptions of what is normal and mainstream. The whiteness of this perspective is forgotten, and it simply becomes the way things are. The discomfort observed and expressed by interview participants at South comes from a fear of change from the norm and the mainstream, rather than strictly a denial that the college is, in fact, densely-populated with AAPI students.

Although I know that none of those who were uncomfortable with the AANAPISI designation actively and consciously sought to uphold white privilege at the institution, the racial structure in which we have been operating assumed that the predominantly white power structure was the norm. The designation by the U.S. Department of Education imposed an identity on the college that it never had for itself. Jack’s work in isolation in researching and writing the grant was indeed revolutionary for the institution, but not a revolution anyone else was seeking. The
designation shifted the power toward the AAPI student population and those who sought to serve them on the grant.

While the college initially celebrated the positive press that a $2.4 million grant attracted, those inside the institution’s walls quickly became wary of what it all meant for the college. Almost without warning, the college, its administration, its faculty, its various divisions, its students, and its community stakeholders, were asked to embrace a new race-based identity. Shifting from an internally defined identity, to an externally defined one ran against the grain that had been reinforced for years that the college identity was determined by the faculty and staff, not by the student populations it served. No longer was the college’s own culture and norms what students had to adjust to, now the college had to adjust to the students’ culture by way of this designation. This was the charge of the AANAPISI grant and its accompanying funds. As the college took on the funds and the project, it was expected to support this new identity as an AANAPISI.

**Adjusting to being an AANAPISI: Identity crisis, development and redefinition**

In considering what it means to be an AANAPISI, there are a number of issues that surfaced for the institution. Cynicism around grants in general emerged, and resistance to the AANAPISI designation was complicated by the discomfort with a race-based identity for the institution. The identity itself, as an AANAPISI, was one that was assigned to the college, and defined for South by the U.S. Department of Education. In struggling with this newfound identity and the resistance that it brought, the original AANAPISI strategies were at times subject to a dilution of efforts. In the case of other strategies, the focus on AAPI populations was abandoned or diminished. In these cases, strategies were reframed in a way that allowed for interest convergence, according to CRT. Beyond these issues of identity that played out on the strategy level, the AANAPISI designation on the whole does provide the opportunity for transformational change for the college.

In his interview, Jasper described a cynicism around grant initiatives and how this translated to a resistance to grant-funded initiatives by some. In the case of AANAPISI, this attitude
was compounded by the discomfort with the designation, and forced many at the college to consider whether they really wanted to change in exchange for the giant paycheck. It has created for South a split personality, there is the institutional culture that has been developed and reinforced for the decades, and there is the new identity as a diverse institution with an MSI designation. I believe that what I and my colleagues witnessed and were weighed down by was the development of an identity crisis for the college. South’s 40-year identity was being changed nearly overnight, and though the money it came with was incredibly enticing, those outside of the circle of AANAPISI program staff and their allies had to consider whether we, as a college, should have attempted such a feat. The work was further hampered by limitations of time, and a crippling budget climate, but overall, the biggest stumbling block between the college and embracing the AANAPISI designation, was the question of “Did we really want to do this after all?” Though this was work that many at the college had been doing already on a smaller scale, the AANAPISI designation sought to bring this effort and focus to light, and out of the shadows of color-blindness.

The identity shift that the college faced is also indicative of a key tenet of CRT: that race is a social construct, that it is invented and assigned to groups, and not a biological fact inherent to those groups (Crenshaw, et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The AANAPISI designation is a federally-constructed identifier that is used to pick out colleges serving many AAPIs. In fact, of note is that the eight AANAPISI institutions identified in 2008 and 2009 serve one in every ten AAPI undergraduates nationally (National Commission on AAPI Research in Education, 2010). In this case, the college’s identity has become “raced” as it has been assigned an identity by the U.S. Department of Education. This designation has included South in the league with other MSIs including Hispanic Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Ironically, South is now struggling as an institution with identity issues similar to what individuals have struggled with in terms of racial identities. I am sure that the vast majority at South had never considered that the college would one day become an MSI, let alone an AANAPISI.
However, being an AANAPISI, and being considered a part of the MSI community is quite significant. It gives the college access to major funding from foundations and government agencies that target only MSIs. The designation also puts South in a spotlight with other AANAPISIs as an expert in serving AAPI undergraduate students. The real meaning of becoming an AANAPISI, and the split personality it has created for the college, is that South's identity has already changed, and will continue to do so, especially should continued funding come for the AANAPISI designation. This new racial identity will continue to contribute to a shift in power.

In part, because South does not have a history of providing services designed for and targeted at specific ethnic groups, the way the college chose to implement the AANAPISI programs imposed changes that generalized the strategies for all students, rather than target AAPIs specifically. Some strategies were diluted, and others were edited to find interest convergence with the college's general student interests. The AANAPISI designation has also shown signs of a transformational impact on the college through the identity, through some of the strategies, and through the individuals who have been impacted in significant ways through their work on the grant.

**Dilution of efforts vs. interest convergence.** I argue that as a result of the resistance some felt at the college about serving AAPIs specifically, the strategies were diluted to be applicable to any student, thereby meeting the needs of the majority. When I first began conceptualizing this research through the CRT lens, I imagined that I would find that strategies were able to succeed because of interest convergence. Interest convergence occurs when the “majority group tolerates advances for racial justice only when it suits its interests to do so” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 149). My assumption was that as the AANAPISI strategies began to prove their worth and effectiveness in serving AAPI populations, that my resistant or doubtful colleagues would begin to accept the strategies and the AAPI focus as valid and useful for the “greater good” of student success. In this imagined process, the college also would fully embrace the identity of an AANAPISI.
In fact, I believe that this was the hope in the approach of the AANAPISI project from the beginning. There was a lot of emphasis early on in written materials used on campus and externally—including a whitepaper introducing the grant stating that “all programs and services developed by this grant will be available to any student and the lessons learned will be applicable to all other student populations” and that a major goal of the grant was to “become a national resource for both serving AAPI students and promoting student success for all.” While this inclusivity certainly went a long way in building buy-in, it did open up what would become a slippery slope of “backsliding” from the change to focus on AAPI students. What resulted was a warped concept of being an AANAPISI, that actually redefined the work to exclude (by way of not explicitly including) AAPI students. It became clear that it was more an issue of dilution of efforts and the AANAPISI focus than it was interest convergence that brought about change.

Unfortunately, in response to the resistance to focusing on AAPI students (whether in the name of color-blindness or not), the institution and the AANAPISI project never directly challenged the assumption that focusing on AAPI students was a bad thing. Instead, the project and the institution offered a compromise perspective by emphasizing that all strategies would benefit all students. This is evident in the whitepaper released about the project in October 2008, which largely set the tone for how the grant would serve the entire campus. However, as grant strategies were adjusted through implementation, the effect even went so far as the abandonment of a focus on AAPIs altogether. The professional development effort is a key example. In the initial grant application, it was stated that “developing and providing staff/faculty development will build capacity among faculty and staff to better teach API students . . . faculty stipends will be paid to allow faculty to review best practices related to API and make presentations to department meetings” ("Beyond the Model Minority Myth," 2008, p. 22). However, this focus on AAPI-relevant training was not pursued, and instead it was determined that a more general social justice-based cultural competency development that did not include any focus on AAPI students or AAPI
community issues was more fitting for campus. The long-term value of this decision is evident in the impressions of those interviewed, however this came about at the expense of the opportunity to focus on AAPI student issues. In this case, interest convergence may have made the professional development in general a racial justice-advancing measure, but did nothing for advancing the racial justice of the AAPI population this grant was intended to support. However, though interests converged, the strategy itself was simply diluted to achieve mutual acceptance, and therefore was not true interest convergence according to CRT.

As described in Chapter Four, there were several strategies that either never focused on AAPI populations or where targeting strategies were discontinued. However, this “generalizing” of strategies is not a cut-and-dry, good or bad issue. On the whole, the generalization of strategies allowed for broader buy-in across campus, and paved the way for the strategies to grab a stronger foothold. It is a valid argument to say that had the professional development or learning communities remained singly targeted at addressing AAPI issues that they would not have found mutual interest across the campus, and the strategies would have withered and died. However, in considering how the college redefined for itself the AANAPISI designation, I am left to question how much good have these, and other generalized strategies done for the AAPI students themselves.

The AANAPISI efforts that targeted AAPI students—professional development, any of the student support programming—became a victim of platitudes of abstract liberalism from the college’s staff and faculty who urged AANAPISI staff not to focus on AAPIs, and convinced us that focusing on all students would have more lasting impact. The meaning that the college has constructed around being an AANAPISI has become a reimagining of the original intent. While certain logistical adjustments can be expected to be made through implementation of a grant initiative, the rejection of race-based efforts creates the risk of a far too generous reinterpretation of the AANAPISI intent.
**Potential for transformational change.** Considering the risk inherent in a careless redefinition of AANAPISI intentions, the potential for real transformational change just may rest in the efforts of the continuing AANAPISI designation and the next opportunity for funding. However, considering what has been uncovered through this research, there is still great potential for change in these current efforts of the AANAPISI program at South.

What the research findings suggest is that the complexity that CRT embraces is upheld in this case study as well. On one hand, there are gains made for racial justice overall in professional development, and in support strategies that benefit many students of color. On the other, AAPI interests are diluted to satisfy the majority. CRT as a discipline aims to not simply change an individual, but to transform systems (Crenshaw, et al., 1995), and if this pilot AANAPISI project is seen as a CRT strategy, then it has started to create that transformation.

I consider the fact that the AANAPISI designation itself made people uncomfortable as an inch gained toward transformation. Never before had the invisible white privilege and color-blindness of the college been challenged. Clearly, the interview participants speak at length about how challenging it was to be considered an AANAPISI for many of their colleagues. The fact that the college on an official level, has decided to pursue continued designation and five more years of funding is an indication that the AANAPISI identity has not be rejected outright, and that it is embraced because the interests of the AANAPISI federal program and the college have effectively converged. The identity as AANAPISI has “stuck,” and individuals at the college will continue to be challenged because of it. However, it will not be this simple. The critical analysis applied in this research needs to be applied in practice at South should a continued AANAPISI designation move forward. Otherwise, the college is at risk of interpreting much too broadly what the intent of the AANAPISI should be, and losing sight completely of the impact it is intended to have on AAPI students. If a CRT lens—on the part of program staff, AANAPISI allies, and even leadership—can
build to create pressure, and ask questions of assumptions and intentions, then the AANAPISI designation might still have some greater CRT-based transformational change at South.

On a smaller scale, I see that the AANAPISI pilot project has indeed had a transformative effect on the program staff. All of those interviewed, including myself, mentioned how their involvement helped to further shape their own cultural identity and their conception of other AAPI cultural groups. Vickie shares, "getting involved in this project and seeing the diversity of us . . . helped shape my perspective and what more I have to learn . . . I guess the more exposure I have had to [the AAPI community] has just broadened my understanding." Pete is grateful that he was able to learn “more about my own culture and about the other Asian Americans and really the Pacific Islander culture.”

Diana is an excellent example of this transformation. Through her interview she talks about her own discomfort with the concept of being AAPI-designated, when for years she has identified herself as an educator who serves all. But she also talks about how her perspective has changed:

I think for me . . . one of the consequences of us having the grant . . . is I've become more aware of the Pacific Islander students, their needs as being different, their idea of their community, and . . . that they identify themselves as Pacific Islanders and not as Asians. I hadn't really noticed that before the grant.

Diana even found personal resonance with the study group strategy that was culturally specific. In her background information shared in the interview, she talked of her own doctoral dissertation which looked at women’s colleges, and where she learned that targeted programs make a huge difference. She saw a parallel in the AAPI-focused study group:

. . . it’s the affective feel of it where students, they just feel like they came in from the cold, they just sort of can relax. They . . . love the study group and they feel like this is a place where they can come to get help. And we’ve known from research for the last 30 years that if students feel that they're being treated with respect, if they feel that someone believes in
them, if they believe that they have peers that they feel comfortable with, if they have faculty/staff that they feel comfortable asking questions of, those are really keys to success, and they get all that.

Though CRT does not focus on the transformation of the individual, Diana’s personal transformation is indicative of how the AANAPISI strategy and project may impact others at the college to create a larger transformation.

These small transformations on an individual level speak to the power that the designation can have on other individuals, and eventually, a collective whole. Three years is not enough time to really bring about transformational, institution-wide change. However, it has begun to dismantle, bit-by-bit, the color-blindness and the white privilege that have had such a foothold at South for many years.

**Summary**

Critical race theory is an effective tool to consider broader issues of color-blindness, white privilege, and the meaning behind an institution’s identity shift to being an AANAPISI. Through CRT I have presented the implications of the challenges faced by the AANAPISI grant, and presented an assessment of South’s culture as it has attempted—somewhat unwittingly—major institutional change. The college was not completely ready for the changes, the questions it has raised, and the challenges this new identity has posed. CRT has enabled a thorough deconstruction of the tenuous dichotomy between boasting about race and also suppressing conversations around it. CRT has also facilitated the conversation around the challenge of a new “raced” identity as an AANAPISI, and the shift in power that this has brought. However, theory alone cannot bring about the transformational change that CRT, itself, aims for. I now turn to the many implications for this research in the arenas of practice, policy and methodology, and consider where this research can go from here.
Chapter Six: Closing

Introduction

The AANAPISI grant and designation at South has been noble work in terms of attempting to address a long-neglected group, but it has been very difficult work as well. South discovered that it may have bitten off more than it could chew in that the grant didn’t just mean money for projects, but with it came a new identity and a new focus. The pilot project was an experiment that the federal government has already committed to continuing, but the experimental nature of it is still being rendered at South today. There is much to learn in the study of this pilot program. Critical race theory has thus far done much of the heavy lifting required of this research into the AANAPISI Pilot program at South. And while the acute critical analysis of CRT is imperative to considering the applicability of this case study to the greater universe of AANAPISIs, MSIs, AAPI students and higher education at large, that is not all the work there is to be done. The findings of this research have some very important implications for practice, for policy, and even for methodology.

In this final chapter, I present these implications, as well as the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research. I close with my own analytic autoethnographic reflections for the impact of this work. CRT has enabled me to be very critical of the AANAPISI efforts at South, and look closely at the actual impact they have had. Despite this critical standpoint, I remain immensely proud of the effort overall, and still unabashedly optimistic for what the AANAPISI can become at South, and in general, as a strategy to help alleviate what Museus and Chang (2009) refer to as “the chronic burden of demystifying myths about Asian Americans.”

Practical Implications

The AANAPISI case study revealed several practical implications. There were some key lessons learned, including the fact that institutional change and positive impact on student success are not possible in a two-year span. As well, with any grant effort, the objectives and measures need to be tightly aligned with the strategies proposed so that the work of a grant can be adequately
measured and the successes effectively linked to the effort. The details of the findings illustrate these practical implications.

**Focus on Families**

For South, I think that one of the most impactful outcomes has been the focus on families in student success efforts. This is a strategy that addresses not just AAPI cultural norms, but also the experiences of other immigrant communities who rely on multigenerational households, or who have a more interconnected family unit. The practical implication here is that now the college knows how to address the family, and that FERPA need not exclude the family from a student’s experience. For any college working with a similar AAPI population, it is important to consider the family’s college success literacy, and work to educate the family in how to support their student in college. South must maintain this focus on the families, and continue to define family broadly, rather than just as the parents of a college student.

**Pacific Islander Focus**

The focus on Pacific Islanders that Carol, the part-time Pacific Islander faculty hired by the grant, brought to the table has also provided some practical lessons. The concept of representative role models has been reinforced through her ability to bring Pacific Islander students, seemingly out of the woodwork. The Study Group which is focused on Pacific Islander students is now a model that the next AANAPISI grant application hopes to expand. As well, it has been mentioned by several of my student services colleagues who have visited the group and remark on the positive “feel” (like what Diana called “the affective feel”), that the model is successful. Partnering directly with the Pacific Islander community has also been a very important lesson learned through the grant strategy. Through the “Talk Story” colloquia, Pacific Islander leaders have been attracted to the campus and the event series has given the community a forum in which to discuss the disparity of Pacific Islander representation in higher education. South must continue to support the
community outreach efforts of representative faculty and staff like Carol, and consider how diverse faculty and staff can better address other underrepresented AAPI communities as well.

**Holistic Student Support**

Another practical implication is that both the study group and the learning communities have further made the case for holistic support services for students. The success rates in progression from developmental courses to college coursework of the students in the learning communities have been shared across the English department. As a part of the college's broad conversation about student success and student achievement, these strategies are being referred to as models to replicate.

**Applicability to Other AANAPISIs**

And finally, this case study provides applicability to other AANAPISI projects, especially those that share similar campus cultural elements with South. As other institutions hope to become AANAPISIs, or as new AANAPISIs look to implementation, the challenges and issues addressed in this case study can be useful to these other institutions. The strategy models themselves might provide templates for programs at other schools, and the experiences and reflections can help prepare other institutions for adopting the identity of being an AANAPISI.

The limitations acknowledged by South’s experience can help future AANAPISIs be better prepared to more successfully impact student retention and graduation as South has tried. That the college could not do much for student success in just two years is a key lesson, and one that has already been addressed at the policy level where AANAPISIs are now funded for five years rather than just two. The CRT-based analysis of the implementation challenges also provides a report on lessons learned. For a college to take on the new identity of being an AANAPISI requires serious introspection, and consideration in advance of what that designation means.

The findings of the case study speaks to a few areas of practice: how the community college addresses the family, the importance of Pacific Islander representation and outreach, the value of
holistic student support programming, and it has practical applications for other AANAPISI institutions looking to learn from a predecessor. In addition to practice, however, this research also has implications in the policy realm.

**Policy Implications**

The AANAPISI pilot has had an impact on federal policy already. The case study can further impact policy on a federal level by contributing to the body of literature around AANAPISIs. With very little published about AANAPISI institutional experiences, this case study is positioned to be one of the first, if not the first deep examination of an institution’s experience with AANAPISI implementation.

As mentioned before, the lesson that two years is just not enough was learned and applied early on as evidenced by the new five-year award cycles of AANAPISIs. This case study helps to explain why two years cannot allow for adequate improvement. The policy impact of AANAPISIs as a whole is already underway, with the formation of the national group and the connections made with the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

When I began this research project in early 2010, there was less development than there is now. Today, the AANAPISI designation is now in its fourth award cycle, with the U.S. Department of Education having first awarded pilots in 2008, then awarded more in 2009, then opening a new application round for five-year projects in summer 2010, and now opening a new round for five-year grants in 2011. A complete listing of AANAPISI-designated institutions can be found in Appendix A.

It is exciting to consider that the community of AANAPISIs has already doubled in the course of conducting this research. The U.S. Department of Education's AANAPISI program is a dynamic phenomenon, and appears to be just gaining momentum. I am hopeful for what future policy development will bring.
The ideological goal of the AANAPISI designation I describe at the beginning of Chapter Four was to reframe not only an institutions’ concept of AAPIs as “model minorities,” but the nation’s assumption as well. From what I have learned about other AANAPISI programs, based on the discussions I have been a part of in encouraging the continued funding of AANAPISI programming, and from other developments in the AAPI higher education community in the last two years (increased national organization around AAPIs in higher education, more research in AAPIs in higher education), I believe that the AANAPISI designation has indeed begun the difficult work of changing the nation’s concept of AAPI populations. Although much of this work is very much the “chronic burden” of stating and restating the same refutations that Museus and Chang (2009) refer to, I believe that the AANAPISI designation itself has helped that burdened work to gain some traction in writing the counter-narrative to the essentialist concept of AAPIs as “model minorities.”

On a federal policy level, I recognize the great potential for AANAPISIs to do the work for the nation of identifying how to best address AAPIs in higher education. The AANAPISI designation is a necessary member of the MSI family, and I believe that it must persist, even beyond the next ten years of dedicated funding.

**Methodological Implications**

The study has also revealed that the case study methodology can be well-complemented by the emerging approach of analytic autoethnography. Where researchers may once have hesitated to conduct research “in their own backyard” for fear of issues of bias, analytic autoethnography as Anderson (2006) proposes it, has provided a profoundly useful way for me to conduct research in something I am passionate about, and directly involved in. The two methodologies have been complementary in many ways. Where case study method required that I collect “concrete details in practice . . . to consider the local meanings that happenings have for people involved in them” (Merriam, 1988, p. 165), analytic autoethnography required analytic reflexivity and “dialogue with
informants beyond the self” (Anderson, 2006, p. 378). Where the case study method relies on triangulation of data through a variety of sources, analytic autoethnography called for a commitment to an analytic research agenda. Both methodologies also require that the research itself contribute to the understanding of a broader phenomenon than just the case or the self (Anderson, 2006; Merriam, 1988).

I have found the marriage of these methodologies to be very valuable and rewarding as the researcher. Though analytic autoethnography may still be considered an emerging method, I encourage other researchers to explore it as a one that—especially when paired with a qualitative approach such as case study analysis—can create the space to study their own experiences and environments with analytic rigor, and within a well-defined framework.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

At this point, I would recommend any research on AANAPISIs because there is almost no scholarly research at this point to call on. As AANAPISIs continue to expand across the country, a multi-case study should be conducted to compare a variety of types of institutions in a variety of regions. This would allow for more common themes to emerge that would further inform future AANAPISI development. Also, because of the diversity of the AAPI population, and the differences in immigration histories in various regions (for example, west coast immigration patterns versus east coast, and the Midwest), it is useful to consider the AANAPISI and AAPI student experience by region. And as AANAPISIs mature, longitudinal studies measuring the impact on AAPI student achievement, enrollment patterns, and experiences would be hugely valuable in creating a better understanding in higher education of how AAPIs can be better served by institutions. I would also urge, in the spirit of CRT which values the narrative of people of color and oppressed groups, that future research focus on the experiences of students in AANAPISI institutions themselves, capturing their narratives and counterstories.
My Own Narrative

As explained in Chapter Three, I have been deeply involved in the AANAPISI pilot at South from inception to implementation, and now I am also writing the grant application for 2011-2016 funding. Through my direct involvement in the past, present and future of this institution’s AANAPISI project, and through my research for this project, I have been steeped in the topic of AANAPISIs and AAPI populations in higher education. What this has afforded me is deep, intimate and nuanced knowledge of the case under study, including the development of the grant writing, the implementation challenges and triumphs, and the interconnectedness between strategies, between people, as well as the campus climate that might not be apparent to an outsider. What this involvement has also afforded this research is that as a person who had substantial responsibilities for many strategies on this grant, I am also more critical of the successes and failures, and applied this critical analysis through the coding process and through the discussion of findings in Chapters Four and Five.

Ultimately, I am confident that my involvement in the AANAPISI pilot has been a great benefit to this research in Anderson’s (2006) terms of the five key features of analytic autoethnography: (1) “complete member researcher (CMR) status” which required that I be a full-fledged member of the group under study, (2) “analytic reflexivity” throughout the analysis process which was present through my constant acknowledgement (in interview, in the findings, and here in the discussion) of my own role on the AANAPISI team, (3) “narrative visibility of the researcher’s self” which is prevalent throughout this report, (4) “dialogue with informants beyond the self” which was a key function of the interviews I conducted, and (5) “commitment to theoretical analysis” which I have exercised through my use of CRT as well as by contextualizing the assumptions and findings against MSIs and larger issues of AAPIs in higher education (p. 378).

I have also been profoundly impacted by my work on this grant. I have always been interested in and passionate about my own community of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. As
an undergraduate student, my own identity was most influenced by my involvement in Asian American student clubs and programs, and the Filipino American student club at my university. Since then, I have not been directly involved with the AAPI community at large, and not in any official capacity with the AAPI student populations at the college where I work. But I have long been aware of my position as a role model for AAPI students, and have found—though my more recent positions have not put me in direct service of students—that AAPI students will seek me out to make connections with me. The AANAPISI project was an opportunity for me to be able to focus my work, finally, on the community from which I come and the population I identify with the most.

I concur with the sentiment shared with me by Pete that one of the greatest values has been working in a team of AAPI professionals. Our personal interest in this population only made our work that much more meaningful and rewarding, even as we struggled to maintain an AAPI focus, or as we faced resistance and challenges to the strategies. I have also found that in a higher education system where AAPIs are the least represented in executive leadership with less than 1% colleges and university with AAPIs at the helm (Hassen, 2007), I have connected with professional mentors and role models such as Jack and other AAPI leaders, which will impact me as I move forward in my own career.

And I feel empowered to focus on AAPI populations throughout my professional work. Whether or not the college continues to be an AANAPISI, I am reminded through this work that targeted strategies are necessary to strive for the racial justice of AAPI populations, just as they are necessary for the racial justice of other populations.

**Conclusion and Summary**

The AANAPISI designation at South has nudged the college forward in its treatment and conception of AAPI student populations, and it has impacted those individuals involved in the project on a number of personal and professional levels. The AANAPISI designation also uncovered a long-held color-blind approach to the student population at South, and the detriment this
perspective brings to those it chooses not to see. This designation has also begun to shift the power away from a traditional white-centric perspective, toward a perspective that includes at least one of the many groups represented at South. While this project did not impact student achievement in the ways that it had hoped in just three years, it did have impact through its many strategies, and even deep impact through those unintended strategies serving Pacific Islander populations.

While some of those interviewed for this study spoke at times of the dichotomy of visibility and invisibility of AAPIs that the literature has described, the AANAPISI project has contributed significantly of the effort of making the invisible visible. Though conflicted about the loss of focus on AAPIs, I recognize how much the college culture itself has been impacted by the AANAPISI work. Where AAPI students were previously unseen—their needs went unrecognized, their ethnic differences went unacknowledged, they were perceived as silent—the AANAPISI designation and some of this project's strategies began to unveil these unique needs, point out the cultural differences, and, in Chang's (1993) terms, “speak our oppression into existence, for it must first be represented before it can be erased” (p. 1267).
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Appendix A
List of AANAPISI-designated institutions

**Pilot institutions, funded 2008-2010 (some through 2011)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City College of San Francisco</td>
<td>San Francisco, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeAnza College</td>
<td>Cupertino, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guam Community College</td>
<td>Barriga, GU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Seattle Community College</td>
<td>Seattle, WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Hawaii, Hilo</td>
<td>Hilo, HI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Maryland, College Park</td>
<td>College Park, MD</td>
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</table>


**2009 institutions, funded 2009-2011**

<table>
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<th>Institution</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<td>City University of New York (CUNY) – Queens College</td>
<td>Flushing, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Monica College</td>
<td>Santa Monica, CA</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: ("Current AANAPISI Listing," 2010)

**2010 institutions, funded 2010-2015**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Institution</th>
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<td>Coastline Community College</td>
<td>Fountain Valley, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Community College</td>
<td>Santa Clara, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laney College</td>
<td>Oakland, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richland College</td>
<td>Dallas, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Massachusetts, Boston</td>
<td>Boston, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Guam</td>
<td>Mangilao, GU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ("Current AANAPISI Listing," 2010)
Appendix B

Interview Guide: AANAPISI Program Staff

Research questions:

- How does the AANAPISI designation meet the needs of AAPI students?
- How do AANAPISIs address the “model minority” stereotype?
- How do AANAPISI efforts impact student retention and success rates?

Interviewee Background and Perspective

- So tell me a little about your background. Your personal and professional history.
  - Your personal background
  - Demographics, whatever you are comfortable sharing: ethnicity, age/age range, occupation
  - What is your history here at the college?

- How did you come to work on the Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) program at South?
  - What will you do when the grant is completed in September 2011?

- What is your role with the AANAPISI program?
  - What are you responsible for
  - Description of activities you are involved with

Perception of AAPIs and Issues of Race/Racism

- How would you describe the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) student population at South Seattle Community College (South)? How is this population underrepresented?
  - Needs & challenges of AAPIs
  - What populations are present and not present (e.g. Cambodian, Filipino, Samoan)
  - How are AAPIs perceived among other students
  - Needs that the AANAPISI grant set out to meet

- What do you think the assumptions are among your colleagues and around the institution about AAPI students?
  - Stereotypes applied to AAPIs
  - Assumptions about “overrepresentation”, other assumptions

- What issues of race and racism do you see at the college? Do you see stereotypes such as the “model minority” myth being applied to AAPI students or others at South?
  - Stereotypes? Exclusion? Classroom or other practices and policies?
  - No racism?
- How do you see these types of issues being addressed?
  - Systematic response vs. individual response? None?

- What do you see as the relationship between the AANAPISI designation and stereotypes or misperceptions of AAPI students?

**AANAPISI Impact**

- What challenges have you seen in implementing the AANAPISI activities at South?
  - Resistance to designation
  - Challenges in light of budget crises, to implementation of new activities, of working with the targeted student population
  - Other challenges

- Considering the work that this AANAPISI program is accomplishing, how do you see the needs of AAPI students being met through these activities?
  - English Language Learners, transfer and professional/technical students
  - Other academic needs
  - Non-academic, student support needs
  - Personal or familial needs

- How do you think the retention and success of AAPI students will be impacted by these AANAPISI activities? Or how have they already been impacted?
  - Enrollment
  - Changes in degree choices
  - Involvement of family
  - Services to students
  - Transition from basic skills to college level
  - Other impacts

- Do you think the college has changed as a result of being designated an AANAPISI? If so, in what ways?
  - Changing perceptions
  - Awareness of AAPI population
  - Change how things are done
  - Other changes?

- Any other comments or information to share related to this AANAPISI program?
Appendix C

Interview Guide: Other Stakeholders

Research questions:

- How does the AANAPISI designation meet the needs of AAPI students?
- How do AANAPISIs address the “model minority” stereotype?
- How do AANAPISI efforts impact student retention and success rates?

Interviewee Background and Perspective

- So tell me a little about your background. Your personal and professional history.
  - Your personal background
  - Demographics, whatever you are comfortable sharing: ethnicity, age/age range, occupation
  - What is your history here at the college?

- What is your role at the college/your affiliation with the college?
  - What are you responsible for
  - Description of activities you are involved with

- How have you interacted with the AANAPISI program?
  - Collaboration
  - Administration
  - Student/stakeholder

Perception of AAPIs and Issues of Race/Racism

- How would you describe the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) student population at South Seattle Community College (South)? How is this population underrepresented?
  - Needs & challenges of AAPIs
  - What populations are present and not present (e.g. Cambodian, Filipino, Samoan)
  - How are AAPIs perceived among other students
  - Needs that the AANAPISI grant set out to meet

- What do you think the assumptions are among your colleagues and around the institution about AAPI students?
  - Stereotypes applied to AAPIs
  - Assumptions about “overrepresentation”, other assumptions

- What issues of race and racism do you see at the college? Do you see stereotypes such as the “model minority” myth being applied to AAPI students or others at South?
  - Stereotypes? Exclusion? Classroom or other practices and policies?
  - No racism?

- How do you see these types of issues being addressed?
  - Systematic response vs. individual response? None?
- What do you see as the relationship between the AANAPISI designation and stereotypes or misperceptions of AAPI students?

**AANAPISI Impact**
- What challenges have you seen in implementing the AANAPISI activities at South?
  - Resistance to designation
  - Challenges in light of budget crises, to implementation of new activities, of working with the targeted student population
  - Other challenges

- Considering the work that this AANAPISI program is accomplishing, how do you see the needs of AAPI students being met through these activities?
  - English Language Learners, transfer and professional/technical students
  - Other academic needs
  - Non-academic, student support needs
  - Personal or familial needs

- How do you think the retention and success of AAPI students will be impacted by these AANAPISI activities? Or how have they already been impacted?
  - Enrollment
  - Changes in degree choices
  - Involvement of family
  - Services to students
  - Transition from basic skills to college level
  - Other impacts

- Do you think the college has changed as a result of being designated an AANAPISI? If so, in what ways?
  - Changing perceptions
  - Awareness of AAPI population
  - Change how things are done
  - Other changes?

- Any other comments or information to share related to this AANAPISI program?
Appendix D

Core Team Organizational Chart

*Work in support of core team functions.*
Appendix E

Complete AANAPISI-effort Organizational Chart
AANAPISI staff, positions funded by grant, affiliated departments

- President of college
- AAPI Advisory Committee
- AANAPISI Project Director
- Core Team
- Retention Project Lead
  - Financial Aid Resource Developer
  - Hourly & student staff
- Curriculum Lead
- Transitions Lead
- Half-time Transitions Specialist
- Half-time Program Assistant
- Faculty supporting strategies
- Partially grant-funded college staff
- Pacific Islander faculty
- Dir. of Planning & Research
- Learning Community faculty
- API Studies faculty consultant
- Director of Diversity
- Dean of Diversity & Retention
- Institutional Researcher
Study Title: Not Overrepresented: The Model Minority Stereotype at an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution

Researcher: Dr. Kelly Ward, Principal Investigator (509) 335-4702
Rosie Rimando, Co-Investigator, (206) 356-6054 & (206) 764-5202

You are being asked to take part in a qualitative research study carried out by Dr. Kelly Ward (Principal Investigator) and Rosie Rimando (Co-Investigator) to fulfill dissertation completion requirements for a Doctorate of Education in Higher Education Administration, within the WSU College of Education. This form explains the research study and your part in it if you desire to join the study. Please read the form carefully, taking as much time as you need. Ask the researcher to explain anything you don’t understand. You can decide not to join the study. If you join the study, you can change your mind later or quit at any time. There will be no penalty if you decide not to take part in the study or quit later.

What is this study about?
This research study is being done to understand how a federal designation and grant funding can improve the success of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community college students. This study also seeks to understand how the designation and its related efforts can change the perception of the AAPI community. You are being asked to take part because you are either directly affiliated with the Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) program that is being studies, or because you are an identified stakeholder in the efforts of the program.

Taking part in the study will take approximately 60 minutes. You cannot take part in this study if you decline to allow voice recording of the interview.

What will I be asked to do if I am in this study?
If you take part in the study, you will be asked to participate in one interview conducted by the co-investigator (researcher). Following the interview the researcher may contact you to clarify responses. This is a qualitative study, and the researcher will use voice recording. You may refuse to answer any question during the interview, though no sensitive information will be requested. The results of the interview are to be used only for the dissertation research of the co-investigator.

Are there any benefits to me if I am in this study?
There is no direct benefit to you from being in this study.

Are there any risks to me if I am in this study?
The potential risks from taking part in this study are:
- Possible distress or discomfort in answering questions seeking your opinion or experience about your history at the college and issues of race and racism.
- Loss of confidentiality through sharing potentially sensitive information during the interview.
Will my information be kept private?
The data for this study will be kept confidential. No results will identify you, and your name will not be associated
with the findings. The researcher will create a pseudonym for you that will be used for notes and recording.

The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research
participants will remain anonymous. The data for this study will be kept for 3 years.

Are there any costs or payments for being in this study?
There will be no costs to you for taking part in this study.

Who can I talk to if I have questions?
If you have questions about this study or the information in this form, please contact the co-investigator: Rosie
Rimando, (206) 356-6054 or at (206) 764-5202, 14522 30th Avenue NE, Shoreline, WA 98155,
Rosannette.Rimando@email.wsu.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or would like to report a concern or complaint
about this study, please contact the Washington State University Institutional Review Board at (509) 335-3668, or
e-mail irb@wsu.edu, or regular mail at: Albrook 205, PO Box 643005, Pullman, WA 99164-3005.

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to be a part of this study.
There will be no penalty to you if you choose not to take part. You may choose not to answer specific questions or
to stop participating at any time.

What does my signature on this consent form mean?
Your signature on this form means that:
• You understand the information given to you in this form
• You have been able to ask the researcher questions and state any concerns
• The researcher has responded to your questions and concerns
• You believe you understand the research study and the potential benefits and risks that are involved.

Statement of Consent
I give my voluntary consent to take part in this study. I will be given a copy of this consent document for my
records.

__________________________________  ____________________
Signature of Participant              Date

__________________________________
Printed Name of Participant
Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect. I certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he or she understands the purpose, procedures, potential benefits, and potential risks of participation.

I also certify that he or she:

- Speaks the language used to explain this research
- Reads well enough to understand this form or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her
- Does not have any problems that could make it hard to understand what it means to take part in this research.

__________________________________________

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

________________________

Date

Rosannette Rimando

Co-investigator

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Role in the Research Study
Appendix G
Document Sources

**Federal Reports**
- **Year One Interim Report**
  - Reports on AANAPSI grant progress 10/1/2008 through 03/31/2009
  - Submitted 04/2009

- **Year One Annual Performance Report**
  - Reports on progress 10/1/2008 through 9/30/2009
  - Submitted 12/2009

- **Year One Compliance Visit Report**
  - Conducted by external evaluator, reports on compliance with regulations
  - Submitted 11/2009

- **Year Two Annual Performance Report**
  - Reports on progress 10/1/2009 through 9/30/2009
  - Submitted 12/2009

- **Year Three Extension Request**
  - Request submitted for extension of existing budget and activities to a third year (2010-2011)
  - Submitted 8/2010

**Campus publicity, marketing and outreach materials**
- “AANAPSI Whitepaper,” October 2008
- API Studies degree emphasis flyer
- “Grant Carry over to a Third Year”
- “AANAPSI Strategies 2008-2011”

**PowerPoint Presentations about AANAPSI**
- “AANAPSI Grant @ South Seattle Community College”
  - Presented 11/18/2008 to API Advisory Committee and community members
- “AANAPSI Report to the Board of Trustees”
  - Presented 1/8/2009
- “AANAPSI update for South Management Team”
  - Presented 2/3/2009
- “AANAPSI Report to President’s Advisory Committee”
  - Presented 2/19/2009
PowerPoint Presentations about AANAPISI (continued)

- “AANAPISI presentation to Curriculum and Instruction Committee”
  o Presented 2/23/2009

- “AANAPISI presentation to Foundation Board”
  o Presented 4/2009

- “Presentation to API Advisory & AANAPISI Steering Committee”
  o Presented 5/19/2009

- “AANAPISI Presentation for President’s Day”
  o Presented 9/2009

- “AANAPISI Program Update”
  o Presented 5/13/2010 to Board of Trustees

College publications and media clippings

- South Seattle Community College Update (campus-wide employee newsletter)

- South quarterly schedule, various features

- South student newspaper, The Sentinel
  o January 2009, February 2009

- Northwest Asian Weekly, “Report busts misconceptions of API students in higher education”
  o June 19-June 25, 2010 edition

- Northwest Asian Weekly, “South Seattle applies $2.4 million toward helping those hurt by model minority myth”
  o June 26-July 2, 2010 edition

- Northwest Asian Weekly, “Oct. 5: Five South Seattle CC students earn APIASF/Walmart Foundation Scholarships”
  o November 20-26, 2010 edition
Appendix H
List of Coded Themes

I) Interviewee Information
   a. Unofficial AANAPISI Role
   b. Official AANAPISI Role
   c. Affiliation with AANAPISI
   d. Role/History at College
   e. Personal ethnic background
   f. Personal experience with oppression and discrimination
   g. Personal identity development and Whites
   h. Had previous connection to AAPI students

II) AAPI Population Descriptions
   a. AAPIs as representative of general population
   b. Changing immigrant population
   c. Lack of Pacific Islanders prior to AANAPISI
   d. Invisibility of AAPIs
   e. Bimodal Nature of AAPIs in higher education
   f. Diversity of AAPI population
      i. ESL/ELL
      ii. Asian American versus Asian-born
      iii. International v, domestic

III) Strategy Descriptions
   a. Transition portfolio
   b. Study group
   c. Clustered learning communities
   d. Videos
   e. Professional development
   f. Family orientation
   g. API students degree emphasis
   h. AEE degree
   i. Peer Navigators
   j. Curriculum development
   k. Transition Workshop
   l. AAPIHERC website

IV) Experiences of AANAPISI staff
   a. Affection for grant initiatives
   b. Involvement provided personal cultural development
   c. Forced onto the grant
   d. AANAPISI work like community service
   e. Opportunity for change, cross training
   f. Wide variety of responsibilities assigned
   g. Unclear directives to reach goals
   h. Pride in AANAPISI
   i. Pigeonholed into responsibility
   j. Disheartened about lack of impact/progress
   k. Community built between AANAPISI team
   l. Encouraged to be or became a role model

V) College culture and background
   a. Color-blind attitude
   b. More awareness of socioeconomic issues than racism
   c. Timidity/politeness around race issues
   d. Institutionalized white privilege
   e. Lack of professional development incentives
   f. Cynicism about grant efforts
   g. BHAG
   h. Income disparity in West Seattle
   i. Lack of reflective AAPI faculty/staff
   j. Basic skills faculty more sensitive
   k. College history of racism
   l. Discrimination against basic skills/ELL students
   m. Faculty untouchable because of tenure

VI) Assumptions about AAPIs at the college
   a. Overrepresentation
   b. Model minority myth
   c. Student silence = lack of need
   d. Accent discrimination
VII) **What the grant addressed**
   a. Importance of community
   b. Importance/need for cultural competency
   c. Need for diverse leadership
   d. Problems with data collection
   e. Need for more culturally relevant curriculum
   f. Holistic support for students
   g. Need for intrusive services (handholding)
   h. Importance of professional development
   i. Need for advocacy group
   j. Value of AAPI advisory

VIII) **Challenges faced by grant**
   a. Resistance to AAPI designation
   b. Discomfort with AAPI/racial focus
   c. Doubt of need for support of AAPIs
   d. Budget climate
   e. Too little time
   f. AAPI focus – neglect of other groups
   g. Changing leadership (interims)
   h. Too much money
   i. AANAPISI = AAPI only
   j. Resistance to strategies
   k. Conspicuous consumption
   l. Comparison to other regions (open to MSIs)
   m. Not set up for success
   n. Restrictions from union contracts, regulations
   o. AANAPISI team seen as elitist
   p. Objectives misaligned with strategies
   q. How to get more than “core” early adopters involved
   r. Student participation (lack)
   s. Sustainability
   t. Confusion around purpose

IX) **Impact of grant and strategies**
   a. Impact of role models of color
      i. Engagement of students of color
      ii. Visibility of students of color
      iii. Increased success of students of color
   b. Impact of strategies
      i. On student self-concept
      ii. Professional development empowers staff
      iii. Developed allies within college
      iv. Increased success rate in ENGL 098
      v. PI participation
      vi. Increased success in CLC
      vii. Increased awareness of PI population
      viii. Increased visibility of PI population
   c. Impact of designation
      i. Eventual acceptance
      ii. Debunked MMM assumptions
      iii. New courses created
      iv. Unintended initiatives
      v. No quantitative improvement
      vi. Qualitative improvement
      vii. Attracted more AAPI
      viii. Comprehensive services developed
      ix. AAPI heritage month developed
      x. Improved curriculum
      xi. Seeing AAPIs in a disaggregated way
      xii. Empowers students
      xiii. Assumption of increase retention
      xiv. Create pockets of allies
X) What AANAPISI did well
   a. Expands exiting college efforts
   b. Connection with local community
   c. Applied lessons learned from disaggregation
   d. Gained a national reputation
   e. Importance of family involvement
   f. Has been visible
   g. Reputation of the college
   h. Applicability of grant strategies to other groups
   i. Unintended strategy
   j. Role of champion
   k. Grant allows innovation and change
   l. Reframing/generalizing as positive
   m. Focus on Pacific Islanders

XI) What AANAPISI did not do well
   a. AANAPISI fit model minority myth
   b. Overambitious
   c. Grant as short-term solution
   d. Failing strategies
   e. Futility of efforts
   f. Reframing/generalizing as negative

XII) Future perspective
   a. Next grant to build on success
   b. Desire for top-down leadership
   c. Need more time to make an impact
   d. Need to include more in “inner circle”
   e. Executive leadership’s role in institutionalization
   f. Need for a champion
   g. New generation of leadership