Introduction

Revisiting Contemporary Asian America

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As the new millennium unfolds, one cannot help but to notice dramatic changes that have transformed contemporary Asian America. Most significantly, the rapid pace of globalization and September 11 have altered the contours of our national identity while creating new challenges for Asian Americans. What is the current state of Asian America in the twenty-first century? How has it evolved and developed since the 1960s, a turbulent decade in America’s history that witnessed the birth of the nation’s ethnic consciousness movements? How have Americans of Asian ancestries constructed ethnic and national identities, and how has identity formation changed over time? To what extent has the Asian American community asserted itself socially and politically in American society? How are Asian Americans related to other racial/ethnic groups in the United States and to the people in their ancestral homelands and in other parts of the world? These are but a few of the questions posed by this anthology, an introductory reader for those interested in the urgent issues facing contemporary Asian America. We have selected a number of themes that critically inform the current state of the community. This anthology is meant to be personally meaningful to our readers, and to incorporate ideas that expose Americans to the struggles and triumphs of a racial minority group, to the evolution of Asian American studies, and to the broader social transformations in American society that have historically affected, and continue to affect, people of Asian ancestries and their communities.

Activism, the Movement, and the Development of Asian American Studies

For Asian Americans, these struggles profoundly changed our communities. They spawned numerous grassroots organizations. They created an extensive network of student organizations and Asian American studies classes. They recovered buried cultural traditions as well as produced a new generation of writers, poets, and artists. But most importantly, the struggles deeply affected Asian American consciousness. They redefined racial and ethnic identity, promoted
new ways of thinking about communities, and challenged prevailing notions of power and authority.
—Glenn Omatsu (this volume)

The Legacy of Political Activism

The birth of the Asian American movement coincided with the largest student strike in the nation’s history. At San Francisco State College, members of the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), a coalition of African Americans, Latino Americans/Chicanos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans, launched a student strike in November 1968. The organizers made demands on the university for curricular reform, initially aimed at three specific goals. First, student strikers sought to redefine education and to make their curriculum at once more meaningful to their own lives, experiences, and histories and more reflective of the communities in which they lived. Second, they demanded that racial/ethnic minorities play a more active role in the decision-making process and that university administrators institute an admissions policy to give racial/ethnic minorities equal access to advanced education. Third, they attempted to effect larger change in the institutional practices by urging administrators to institutionalize ethnic studies at San Francisco State College. The strike, in which Asian Americans played an integral role, brought about significant institutional changes; in particular, it led to the establishment of the nation’s first School of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State College. More than just a token concession to the students, the School of Ethnic Studies began to implement the students’ objectives of curricular reform and equal access to education.

In his seminal article, “The ‘Four Prisons’ and the Movements of Liberation” (this volume), Glenn Omatsu, a veteran activist of the movement, contends that the San Francisco student strike not only marked the beginning of the Asian American movement but also set the agenda for the articulation of an Asian American “consciousness.” Omatsu argues that those involved in the movement were not simply seeking to promote their own legitimacy or representation in mainstream society. Rather, the movement raised questions about subverting ideals and practices that rewarded racial or ethnic minorities for conforming to white mainstream values. The active involvement of Asian Americans extended well beyond college campuses on which many of these issues were being raised; it reached the working-class communities from which many students originated. Omatsu highlights several emerging themes that exerted a profound impact on the Asian American struggles in the 1970s: (1) building a coalition between activists and the community, (2) reclaiming the heritage of resistance, (3) forming a new ideology that manifested in self-determination and the legitimization of oppositional practices as a means of bringing about change to the racist structures inherent to American society, (4) demanding equal rights and minority
power, and (5) urging mass mobilization and militant action. For Omatsu, the Asian American movement was a grassroots working-class community struggle for liberation and self-determination.

The political activism of the 1960s unleashed shock waves that have continued to reverberate in the larger Asian American community today. As both Karen Umemoto and Glenn Omatsu recount in their pieces on the movement (this volume), the spirit that initially infused the period carried over into the next two decades, despite a changing political climate that marked the onset of what Omatsu (this volume) deems the winter of civil rights and the rise of neoconservatism. The movement has evolved to incorporate a broader range of diverse viewpoints and voices, helping frame the way in which many students approach Asian American studies today. Not only does the movement provide students with an understanding of the strategies employed by racial and ethnic minorities in their fight against racism and oppression in American society, it also suggests specific ways in which these strategies can be effectively used for minority empowerment.

Institutional Development

Shortly after the founding of the first ethnic studies program at San Francisco State College in 1968, other universities across the United States set to work on developing their own academic programs. According to a survey conducted by Don Nakanishi and Russell Leong in 1978, at least fourteen universities established Asian American Studies programs, including the Berkeley, Los Angeles, Davis, and Santa Barbara campuses of the University of California; the San Francisco, Fresno, San Jose, Sacramento, and Long Beach campuses of the California State University; the University of Southern California; the University of Washington; the University of Colorado; the University of Hawaii; and City College of New York. The programs at UC Berkeley and San Francisco State University had the largest enrollments, with fifteen hundred each, and offered sixty and forty-nine courses, respectively. The programs on other campuses offered four to sixty courses per academic year and enrolled one hundred to six hundred fifty students. All Asian American Studies programs, with the exception of UCLA’s, listed teaching as their top priority, with community work and research ranked as second and third priorities. UCLA, in contrast, made research and publications as its primary goal, with teaching ranked second. By 1978, at least three universities, UCLA, San Francisco State University, and the University of Washington, offered graduate courses (Nakanishi and Leong 1978).

Since the movement of the later 1960s, Asian American studies has experienced unparalleled growth as Asian American student enrollment has increased at unprecedented rates at American universities. Today, Asian Americans account for 6 percent of the US population, but Asian American students are disproportionately overrepresented in prestigious public and private universities. In
1995, for example, Asian American students represented more than 10 percent of the student populations at all nine UC campuses and at twelve of the twenty CSU campuses, as well as at Harvard, Yale, MIT, Columbia, and other top-ranked universities. These regional and national enrollment trends have continued to grow with no signs of slowing down since the mid-1990s. The UC system, in particular, has seen its Asian American populations grow rapidly. For example, Asian Americans compose roughly 13 percent of California’s population but make up more than one-third of the undergraduates enrolled in fall 2014 at the University of California system-wide, with 34 percent at Los Angeles, 39 percent at Berkeley, Davis, and Riverside, 44 percent at Irvine, and 45 percent at San Diego. The nation’s leading universities have also reported a dramatic increase in enrollment of Asian Americans, who made up 24 percent of the undergraduates at MIT, 20 percent at Stanford, 19 percent at Harvard, and 16 percent at Yale. About 26 percent of Asian Americans are US-born, and nearly 50 percent of US-born Asian Americans aged twenty-five or older have at least a bachelor’s degree—a rate more than 20 percentage points higher than that for average Americans (Pew Research Center 2012).

In response to these demographic changes, major public universities and a growing number of private universities in which Asian American student enrollments are disproportionately large have established Asian American studies departments or interdepartmental programs. Today, all the University of California and the California State University campuses have established Asian American studies programs, some of which have evolved into Asian American studies departments. Outside California, many universities and colleges have established similar programs, often in response to student protests, even hunger strikes, and pure enrollment numbers (Monaghan 1999). The current directory of the Association for Asian American Studies, complied at Cornell University, shows an incomplete count of thirty-two Asian American studies departments and interdepartmental programs, twenty Asian American studies programs within social sciences or humanities departments, and eighteen other universities and colleges that offer Asian American studies courses. These departments and interdepartmental or interdisciplinary programs offer a wide range of courses on the diversity of Asian American experiences and greatly enrich academic curricula on college campuses.

Despite the current boom, however, institutional development has often met with obstacles, ranging from the loss of faculty and staff positions to the retirement of veteran or founding faculty to budget cuts arbitrarily imposed on relatively young but growing departments. Although continued expansion of programs and departments is not inevitable, and likely to be a matter of ongoing conflict, demographic pressures, the political weight of the Asian American community, and the continuing intellectual development of Asian American studies as a field make the prospects for growth very promising.
Asian American Studies as an Interdisciplinary Field

What is Asian American studies? Is it an academic field with its own unique perspective and with intellectually cohesive themes, or is it a field that brings together people of different disciplines who share common interests and who work on similar topics? According to the Association for Asian American Studies,

Asian American Studies examines, through multidisciplinary lenses, the experiences of Asians in the United States. It is a field of study, creative and critical, interpretive and analytical, grounded in experience and theory. It is located in the academy and therewith shares some of the assumptions and values of intellectual production and pedagogy, but it is also rooted in the extra-academic community and therewith shares some of the assumptions and values of the prevailing and contested social and cultural relations. Its subject matter is the diverse (but united by “racial” construction, historical experience, political ends) peoples from Asia—from West to East Asia, South to Southeast Asia—who live(d) and work(ed) in the U.S. But its subject matter is also comparative and expansive, inclusive of America’s Africans, Europeans, Latinos, and native peoples, and its geographic range is transnational, extending beyond the borders of the U.S.

At the early stage of its development, Asian American studies understood itself as the offspring of the social movement from which it emerged. Thus, in its self-conceptualization, Asian American studies sought to reproduce central aspects of the broader movement for social change in which it started out as an oppositional orientation, preoccupied with refuting the prevailing theoretical paradigm of assimilation and fostering self-determination through a Third World consciousness (Nakanishi and Leong 1978; Omatsu, this volume; Umemoto, this volume). Both curricular development and research in the field focused on history, identity, and community (Tachiki et al. 1971). Meanwhile, Asian American studies explicitly served as an institutionalized training center for future community leaders, trying to connect scholars and students with grassroots working-class communities. Since the students and Asian American faculty of the 1960s and 1970s were mostly Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans, with a smaller number of Filipino Americans, most of the teaching and research focused on these ethnic populations.

Of course, the guiding theoretical principles and self-understanding of the founders, themselves still present and influential in the field, cannot be accepted without question. The founders’ views carry the characteristic traces of the baby boom generation of which the founders are a part: namely, the sense of constituting a unique group whose actions mark a rupture with the past. Indeed, in the late 1960s and the 1970s, both the Asian American movement and the
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academic field were intent on distancing themselves from the traditional academic disciplines and the more established, or "assimilated," components of the Asian American community. For example, the ethnic consciousness movements of the 1960s fundamentally changed how historians and other social scientists interpreted Asian American history. The pre-movement historiography of the wartime incarceration of Japanese Americans tended to interpret this experience as a grave national mistake, but one that had been corrected by the postwar acceptance of Japanese Americans into American society. The movement challenged this established interpretation and influenced Japanese Americans and others to reexamine the internment experience within the context of the ongoing debate over past and present racism in American society. Although redress was successfully obtained, the issue of Japanese American internment continues to be linked with contemporary issues of racial justice.

In retrospect, it is clear that contemporary Asian American studies stands in continuity with earlier attempts by Asian American intellectuals, within and outside the academy, to rethink their own experience and to link it to the broader sweep of American history. The connection is most evident in sociology: Paul Siu, Rose Hum Lee, and Frank Miyamoto, members of an older cohort, and Tamotsu Shibutani, Harry Kitano, James Sakoda, Eugene Uyeki, Netsuko Nishi, John Kitsuse, and many others, members of a younger cohort, have all made important contributions to the study of Asian America, as well as to broader areas in sociology. To the extent that Asian American studies involves activities that derive from an attempt at self-understanding, one also needs to point out the crucial literary, autobiographical, and polemical works of an earlier period: we note the writings of Jade Snow Wong, Monica Sone, Carlos Bulosan, Louis Chu, and John Okada, among others, a corpus that has now become the subject of considerable academic work within Asian American studies. Also noticeable is a small group of Euro-American researchers who work within the mainstream disciplines, but without the assimilatory, condescending assumptions that mar earlier work and who made significant contributions to the study of Asian America prior to the advent of the movement, providing notice to the disciplines that this was a topic worthy of their attention. The historians Alexander Saxton, Roger Daniels, and John Modell and the sociologist Stanford Lyman deserve particular mention.

In its recent iteration, Asian American studies is facing a new reality that is at odds with the Asian American community of the 1960s and 1970s. Asian American scholars have keenly observed several significant trends that have transformed Asian America, with attendant effects on Asian American studies within the academy: an unparalleled demographic transformation from relative homogeneity to increased diversity; an overall political shift from progressive goals of making societal changes toward more individualistic orientations of occupational achievements; unprecedented rates of socioeconomic mobility...
and residential de-segregation of native-born generations; and a greater separation between academia and the community (Fong 1998; Hirabayashi 1995; Kang 1998; Wat 1998). These trends mirror the broader structural changes that have occurred in American society since the late 1970s, which we shall discuss in greater detail shortly, and create both opportunities and challenges for the field.

To a large extent, Asian American studies has been energized by the interdisciplinary dynamism that exists not only in history, literature and literary works, and cultural studies, but also in anthropology, sociology, psychology, education, political science, social welfare, and public policy. The field has traditionally been guided by varying theoretical concerns—Marxism, internal colonialism, racial formation, postmodernism, and postcolonialism, among others—and has widened its purview of topics and subject matters. Interdisciplinary course offerings and research have touched on the daily experiences of the internally diverse ethnic populations: course subjects range from the histories and experiences of specific national origin groups to Asian American literature, film and art, and religion, as well as special topics such as gender studies, gay and lesbian studies, immigration, and health. The field has also expanded into comparative areas of racial and ethnic relations in America, diasporic experiences (including undocumented immigration), transnational communities, and the interconnectedness of Asians and Asian Americans, while maintaining a community focus through extensive internship and leadership development programs. These interdisciplinary and comparative approaches allow Asian American scholars and students to get beyond the simple assumption that, because people look similar, they must also share the same experiences, values, and beliefs. Asian American studies has also injected historical and ethnic sensibility into various academic disciplines and prevented itself from being trapped as an isolated elective subdiscipline.

On the academic front, however, there has been a debate over the relationship between theory and practice. Michael Omi and Dana Takagi voice a central concern over the lack of a sustained and coherent radical theory of social transformation, arguing that this absence may lead to a retreat to “more mainstream, discipline-based paradigmatic orientations.” These scholars see the “professionalization” of the field at universities, the demands of tenure and promotion for faculty, and new faculty’s lack of exposure to and experience of the movement of the earlier period as the main contributing factors to this trend of retreat. They suggest that the field should be “transdisciplinary” rather than “interdisciplinary” and that it should be revisited, rethought, and redefined according to three main themes—the scope and domain of theory, the definition of core theoretical problems and issues, and the significance of Asian American studies as a political project (Omi and Takagi 1995).

Meanwhile, some scholars and students express concern that Asian American studies is being diverted from its original mission of activism, oppositional
ideology, and community-oriented practices (Endo and Wei 1988; Hirabayashi 1995; Kiang 1995; Loo and Mar 1985–1986). As the field gains legitimacy at universities, it is increasingly uprooted from the community. Although students have continued to involve themselves in community affairs, their activities tend to be framed in terms of service provision, since the social infrastructure in many Asian American communities is always almost in need of volunteers, as one might expect. But volunteering is all too often a part-time event, in which students may pass through the community and then ultimately maintain a distance from it. Lane Ryo Hirabayashi (1995) points out that the divergence goes beyond the institutional “reward structure” that prioritizes theoretical contributions over applied research. He alludes to the problems of essentialized notions of race and ethnicity, the presumed unity of the community, and the impacts of poststructural and postmodern critiques aiming at deconstructing academic dominance. He believes that these concerns can be effectively addressed by redefining the community as a multidimensional entity with ongoing internal class, generational, political, gender, and sexual divisions, reconceptualizing Asian American communities as a dynamic social construct, and incorporating new theories and methodologies into community-based research. Kent A. Ono points out that the risk of dissociation from community struggles is of particularly critical concern, because September 11 has fundamentally redefined race in America (Ono 2005). He argues that, in the post-9/11 context, Asian American studies must reconfigure itself to become more conversant about the connections with Arab and Arab American communities, Muslim communities, and other marginalized cultural communities.

Finding a common ground from which to approach issues in Asian American studies is a challenging task. Many scholars have made concerted efforts to develop alternative paradigms and perspectives to deal with issues confronting a new Asian America that has become more dynamic and diverse. For example, Lisa Lowe (this volume) reconceptualizes contemporary Asian America in terms of heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity to capture the material contradictions among Asian Americans. L. Ling-chi Wang (1995) proposes a dual-domination model for understanding Asian American experiences that takes into account the diplomatic relations between the United States and Asian countries and the extraterritorial interaction between Asian American communities and their respective homelands. Sau-Ling C. Wong (1995) uses the term “denationalization” to address transnational concerns that have emerged from the intrinsic relations between Asia and Asian America. Sylvia Yanagisako (1995) advances the idea of contextualizing meanings, social relations, and social action and of liberalizing the confines of social borders that cut across nation, gender, ethnicity, kinship, and social class in Asian American history. Shirley Hune (2000) calls for the rethinking of race. She suggests that theoretical paradigms be shifted to articulate the multiplicity of racial dynamics that
has moved the black-white dichotomy and that more attention be paid to the
differential power and agency of minority communities in the United States
and to the situation of Asian America in connection to diasporic communities
around the globe.

Since the 1990s, Asian American studies as an academic field has flourished.
While the *Amerasia Journal* made its debut in 1971 as the first major academic
journal in Asian American studies, published by the Asian American Studies
Center at UCLA, there has been a growing number of publication outlets for
multidisciplinary works in the field, including *Journal of Asian American Studies*,
the official journal of the Association for Asian American Studies (since 1998);
*AAPI Nexus Journal: Policy, Practice, and Community* (since 2003), and *Asian
American Journal of Psychology* (since 2009), as well as student-run journals,
such as *Harvard Asian American Policy Review* (since 1990) and the *Stanford
Journal of Asian American Studies* (online since 2008). Sucheng Chan’s edited
volume, *Remapping Asian American History* (2003), offers new theoretical per-
spectives and analytical frameworks, such as transnationalism, the politics of
international migrations, and interracial/interethnic relations, and points to new
directions in Asian American historiography. Other more recent works include
*Asian American Studies Now: A Critical Reader*, edited by Jean Wu and Thomas
Chen (2010), *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model
Minority* by Ellen Wu (2013), *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became
the Model Minority* by Madeline Hsu (2015).

While the ongoing discussion of goals and methodologies is at once refresh-
ing and evidence of the field’s continuing vitality, it also testifies to the degree
to which intellectual and organizational tensions are built into the field. On the
one hand, the very language of the debate, often filled with jargon and trendy
concepts, stands in conflict with the self-professed orientation toward the com-
munity and its needs. On the other hand, there is a certain nostalgia among
veteran activists, now mainly tenured professors, for the spirit of the 1960s and,
to some extent, that yearning for the past ironically threatens to produce a divide
between US-born (and/or US-raised) scholars and some of their Asian-born
counterparts, especially those whose education in the United States was more
likely to begin at the college and graduate level, and who may not share the same
connections to a history that they never experienced. Moreover, the ideological
presuppositions of the scholars oriented toward the movement has the potential
to create distance between them and the growing number of Asian American
(often Asian-born) scholars who work on Asian American topics, but from the
standpoint of the more traditional disciplines of history, sociology, demography,
economics, political science, and so on. Of course, work in the traditional dis-
ciplines is by no means value-free, but the ideological presuppositions do not
preclude the potential for expanding our understanding of the Asian American
experience. Finally, we note the irony in the unspoken consensus about which
groups are eligible for consideration as “Asian American,” namely, everyone with origins east of Afghanistan. As Henry Yu has pointed out, the very definition of Chinese and Japanese as an “Asian American community” is itself the product of earlier externally imposed definitions of America’s “Oriental Problem” (Yu 1998). The field initially organized itself around the study of peoples of East Asian descent, leaving others who were no less eligible on intellectual grounds, nor, for that matter, any less vulnerable to discrimination or stigmatization than the “official” Asian American categories, to different schools of “Oriental” studies.7

In our view, Asian American studies is best construed in the broadest possible terms, understood as that body of scholarship devoted to the study of Asian American populations, conducted from any number of standpoints, from within the frameworks most commonly found among scholars affiliated with Asian American studies as well as from a standpoint more closely connected to the traditional disciplines. Just as we reject the conventional disciplinary boundaries, we also opt for an expanded view of the field’s geographical scope, in particular, emphasizing a transnational framework that enables us to “better understand the ways that flows of people, money, labor, obligations, and goods between nations and continents have shaped the Asian American experience” (Yanagisako 1995, 292; see also Lowe, this volume).

The first edition of Contemporary Asian America (2000) was the first anthology to integrate a broad range of multidisciplinary research in assessing the effects of immigration, community development, socialization, and politics on Asian American communities. It aimed to expose readers to contemporary developments in the field of Asian American studies and to highlight the changes that the field has undergone since its inception in the 1960s. The many issues—the Asian American movement, historical interpretations of the Asian American experience, immigration, family and community issues, religion, gender, sexuality, the construction of identity among Asian Americans, representation and the future direction of Asian American studies—that it covered are clearly of contemporary significance. It enjoyed great success precisely because of the range and depth of its coverage. In the second edition, we reaffirmed our commitment to providing historical readings on the birth and development of Asian American studies, Asian American community formation, new immigrant and refugee populations, queer Asian America, multiethnic Asian Americans, interracial and interethnic politics, and citizenship and identity, among many important topics. In this third edition, we have maintained the organizational structure of the anthology but revamped its contents by adding more recent works by young scholars. While it is impossible to cover every new and significant development of the entire field, we hope that the third edition continues to expose our readers to multiple interpretations of the multifaceted Asian American experience(s) and to serve as a valuable reference guide to illuminating some
of the most groundbreaking scholarship in the history and contemporary development of the field.

The Contents of This Anthology

The chapters in the third edition vary in content and information. Some are meant to raise larger issues pertinent to Asian American studies and to provoke critical thinking, while others provide substantial data to enlighten students about the makeup of the community and its evolution over time. We hope that these two kinds of sources provide students with the background to raise their own questions, to respond to the readings, and to generally make up their own minds about the contemporary issues facing Asian America today. At the end of each section, we provide a list of reading response questions for use in conjunction with course material to enable students to seek out the most important information from each article and evoke other questions for discussion.

Claiming Visibility: The Asian American Movement

Part I presents two classic works on the genesis of Asian American studies and the underlying ideologies that are instrumental for political mobilization. Umemoto’s piece surveys the history of the 1968 San Francisco State strike and offers an analysis of its importance to the development of Asian American movement. She shows the multifarious dimensions to which Asian Americans were part of the 1960s struggles. She argues that the student strike did not occur in a political vacuum, but rather was centrally informed by other ethnic consciousness movements and international Third World movements for liberation and self-determination. She asserts that the Asian American movement, specifically the outcome of the San Francisco State strike for Asian American students, left a legacy for the Asian American community and continued to influence Asian American student life on college campuses.

Framing his discussion in a much larger historical context, Omatsu underscores that the Asian American movement was a phenomenon centrally informed by the militant struggles against war, racism, and the multiple oppressions with which many Americans only began to grasp during the 1960s. He emphasizes that the Asian American movement was composed of diverse segments of the community and had one clear goal: liberation from oppression. He acknowledges the decline of the movement’s vitality during the 1970s and 1980s with the rise of neoconservatism, but nonetheless argues that the future of Asian American studies hinges upon the community’s ability to “forge a new moral vision, reclaiming the militancy and moral urgency of past generations and reaffirming the commitment to participatory democracy, community building, and collective styles of leadership.”
**Traversing Borders: Contemporary Asian Immigration to the United States**

Part II examines the effects of contemporary Asian immigration on Asian American demographics and communities. Zhou, Ocampo, and Gatewood provide readers with an overview of the profound changes that have taken place in the past half century and a survey of the terrain that makes up contemporary Asian America. They locate their analysis as a mapping of ethnic diversity to raise issues on how the steady influx of Asian immigrants impact the Asian American community at present and in the future and what challenges the community currently faces as it is claiming America. They predict that as the community grows in number and heterogeneity, so too will its representation in the broader socioeconomic, cultural, and political milieu that is typified as “mainstream America.”

Bankston and Hidalgo highlight unique aspects of international migration from Southeast Asia. By illustrating the unusual forces that bring refugees to the United States from Southeast Asia, the authors deftly suggest the differences—both subtle and overt—between refugees and their immigrant counterparts. Significant intragroup and intergroup differences exist among refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia and nonrefugees from the Philippines and Thailand in the varied contexts of exit and reception. Bankston and Hidalgo argue that the differential starting points, especially the internal socioeconomic diversity of particular waves and “vintages” within the same nationalities over time, augur differential modes of incorporation and assimilation outcomes that cannot be extrapolated simply from the experience of earlier immigrant groups of the same nationality, let alone from immigrants as an undifferentiated whole.

**Ties That Bind: The Immigrant Family and the Ethnic Community**

Part III focuses on the family and the ethnic community. The chapter by Parreñas deals with transnational Filipino households, broadly defined as “families whose core members are located in at least two or more nation-states.” Drawing upon interviews with Filipina domestic workers in Los Angeles and Rome, Parreñas documents the formation and reproduction of transnational households among Filipino labor immigrants as one of many mechanisms available to immigrants as they cope with the exigencies of their new lives. She argues that transnational households have long existed among Filipino migrant workers who have historically faced legal and economic barriers to full incorporation into the host society. The recuperation of this immigrant tradition by contemporary Filipino immigrants is the result of intersecting structural and cultural forces.

Xiong’s chapter focuses on the social and community relationships of Hmong immigrants and their descendants, a relatively small population on the opposite end of the socioeconomic spectrum. Hmong refugee communities face tremendous challenges adapting to life in the United States due to their lack of
formal education, high rates of poverty, and earlier experiences of war prior to migration, all of which have lasting effects on their US-born children. Xiong highlights how their dispersed resettlement in this country has prompted transformations in the family structure of Hmong Americans, which in turn present unique obstacles to second-generation upward mobility—a notable contrast to the widespread stereotype that Asian Americans are all model minorities.

The chapter by Li, Skop, and Yu examines new patterns of community formation. Since the late 1960s, the combination of global economic restructuring, changing geopolitical contexts, and shifting American immigration policies has set in motion significant flows of new and diverse immigrant inflows from Asia to the United States. While family-sponsored immigrants continue to grow, record numbers of highly skilled, professional immigrants and wealthy investors have also joined the flow as result of the economic boom in China and other nations in Asia. As a result, patterns of immigrant settlement have also changed. The authors show that traditional inner-city enclaves still exist to receive newcomers but can no longer meet the social and economic needs of these newcomers. Affluent middle-class Asian immigrants tend to bypass inner-city ethnic enclaves to settle directly in suburbs that offer decent housing, high-performing schools, superior living conditions, and public amenities. As more and more immigrants settle away from urban enclaves, ethnoburbs have come into existence. The transformation of American suburbs into multiracial, multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural, and multinational communities challenges the widely accepted characterization of the suburbs as the citadel of the white middle class and the traditional notion of residential assimilation.

**Struggling to Get Ahead: Economy and Work**

Part IV delves into the question of how immigrants adapt to life in their new land. The chapter by Dhingra discusses the case of Indian Americans, an immigrant group whose educational attainment and income levels surpass those of nearly every other immigrant group in the country. Based on his extensive research of Indian American workers in various professional and entrepreneurial sectors, Dhingra shows that economic success does not always translate to full social incorporation into the American mainstream. As his research illustrates, Indian Americans have had to strategically navigate their different forms of cultural and ethnic capital to successfully achieve upward mobility in America.

Espiritu’s chapter focuses on Filipina health care professionals, a much sought-after group among US immigrants. In Espiritu’s view, US colonial training of nurses in the Philippines highlights the complex intersections of gender ideologies with those of race and class in shaping US colonial agendas and practices. The overrepresentation of health professionals among contemporary Filipino immigrants is not solely the result of contemporary global restructuring,
the “liberalization” of US immigration rules, or individual economic desires, but rather is the product of historical outcomes of early twentieth-century US colonial rule in the Philippines. Espiritu also provides a detailed analysis of how migration processes, labor recruitment practices, and employment conditions have reconfigured gender and family relations. She shows that professional women, like most other working women, have to juggle full-time work outside the home with the responsibilities of child care and housework. In the context of migration, Filipina nurses often work in higher paid jobs, but lead lower status lives; their labor market advantage does not automatically or uniformly lead to more egalitarian relations in the family.

Eckstein and Nguyen address the working lives of Vietnamese immigrants working in American nail salons, which have emerged as a strong ethnic niche in and beyond the United States. As a result of their limited English proficiency and educational levels, Vietnamese manicurists have developed a foothold in the American beauty industry. Over the past few decades, Vietnamese immigrants, primarily women, have organically created a site in which they are able to develop strong professional networks and acquire important forms of career capital. Eckstein and Nguyen indicate that as the Vietnamese began to dominate the nail industry, they also began to diversify their services and transnationalize their clientele base all the way to Europe.

**Sexuality in Asian America**

Part V looks into an important subject area that has recently begun to receive its due attention in Asian American studies—the experiences of gay and lesbian Asian Americans. Nadal and Corpus, both counseling psychologists, examine how lesbian and gay Filipino Americans negotiate their sexual identity vis-à-vis the cultural norms of their ethnic community. Drawing on their qualitative research of lesbian and gay Filipinos throughout the country, their chapter addresses the unique factors that shape their social and emotional lives, including religion, family pressure, and race. They also discuss implications for how these findings can be incorporated into counseling programs geared toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Asian Americans, their families, and their communities.

Han’s chapter centers on the marginalized perspectives of gay Asian American men, who often encounter fetishization and racism within the mainstream, predominantly white gay spaces. Han dispels the idea that gay people, as an oppressed minority, are incapable of subordinating others. Instead, he draws on his analysis of LGBT publications to highlight how cultural representations of queer Asian Americans (and people of color) remain on the sidelines. Han shows how gay Asian American men face both overt and subtle forms of racism within a community that ironically portrays itself as accepting.
Race and Asian American Identity

Part VI examines issues of race and identity. The Asian American movement, inspired by the civil rights movement, has challenged the American racial stratification system and shaken its foundation. However, post-1965 Asian immigration has greatly complicated race relations. Janine Young Kim's chapter focuses on the (uneasy) relationship between the black/white paradigm and the Asian American civil rights agenda. Kim argues that the current race discourse oversimplifies the black/white paradigm and that the seemingly unproblematic discussion of the paradigm fails to articulate the full cost of its abandonment. She sees the black/white paradigm as retaining contemporary significance despite demographic changes in American society and as having direct relevance for the Asian American civil rights as well as for a deeper understanding of ever-changing and racially stratified society today.

Ocampo's chapter examines a new frontier in Asian American racialization. His study draws from surveys and interviews with second-generation Filipino Americans living in Southern California, a region where Latinos and Asian Americans now constitute a collective majority. Departing from the traditional black-white racial paradigm, his findings demonstrate that Filipinos most frequently negotiate their panethnic identity vis-à-vis Latinos and Asians. Specifically, he argues that the residual effects of Spanish and American colonialism have a deep influence on the way Filipinos develop (or do not develop) a sense of peoplehood with Latinos and other Asians. His chapter holds important implications for the direction of racial formation process as the United States becomes increasingly multiethnic.

Zhou's chapter takes another unique approach to Asian American racialization by asking the provocative question of whether Asian Americans are “becoming white.” Asian Americans have been labeled a “model minority” for their high rates of socioeconomic achievement, and they appear on track to being accepted as “white.” Zhou contends that the model minority stereotype serves to thwart other racial minorities’ demands for social justice by pitting minority groups against one another while also setting Asian Americans apart from whites. She argues that, given the “foreigner” image Americans still have of Asians, whitening is both premature and misleading and can be a heavy burden upon Asian Americans themselves. Zhou shows that even though Asian Americans as a group have achieved parity with whites as measured by observable group-level socioeconomic characteristics such as education, occupation, and income, they are by no means fully viewed as “American,” which is oftentimes synonymous to “white.” In the end, whitening is a lived cultural phenomenon that has to do with the ideological dynamics of white America, rather than with the actual situation of Asian Americans. Speaking perfect English, effortlessly practicing mainstream cultural values, and even intermarrying members of the dominant group may
help reduce this “otherness” at the individual level, but have little effect on the
group as a whole. Like the model minority image that is imposed upon them,
new stereotypes may unwhiten Asian Americans anytime and anywhere, no
matter how “successful” and “assimilated” they have become.

Interracialities and Multiracial Ethnicity

Part VII delves into the phenomenon of interracialities and multiracial/ethnic
identities. Lee and Bean’s chapter adds another level of complexity into the cur-
rent American population dynamics, calling attention to the increasing number
of people who claim a multiracial background. Based on the analysis of the 2000
census data, the authors find that more than one out of every four Asian Amer-
icans intermarry and that one in eight Asian Americans is racially mixed, which
is more than five times the national average in the United States. Today’s high
rates of Asian intermarriage would boost a substantial growth in the Asian mul-
tracial population, which is projected to be at least one in three by 2050. Lee and
Bean also discuss the implications for multiracial identification for America’s
changing color lines that revolve around a black–nonblack divide in the contexts
of diversity and immigration.

Park Nelson’s chapter approaches the question of ethnicity through the per-
spectives of transnational Korean adoptees. Korean adoption by American fami-
lies is a phenomenon that has been occurring for the past fifty years, but it is
only within the past decade that it has received attention within Asian American
studies. Park Nelson addresses the challenges that Korean adoptees face in deal-
ing with their racial experiences in the United States, given that many are raised
by white parents, whose experience with race is obviously distinct. Moreover, she
also addresses the strategies that Korean adoptees have used to explore their eth-
nic heritage, such as forming organizations specifically aimed at creating com-
munity among adoptees and their families and facilitating stronger connections
between them and their country of birth.

Confronting Adversity: Racism, Stereotyping, and Exclusion

Part VIII touches on several aspects of adversity confronting Asian Americans—
racism, stereotyping, and exclusion. Lisa Park’s original chapter speaks to
difficulties encountered by two sisters as they struggle to find their own place
in American life. Confronting her sister’s suicide in a meaningful way forces
the narrator to consider the emotional toll that societal double standards wield
on Asian Americans, especially those growing up in immigrant families. Park
points out that racism, the perpetual drive to assimilate racial minorities to a
white norm, the pressures placed upon the family and individual to live up to
the model minority image, the family’s frustration with downward mobility, and
the community’s reluctance to accept the mental health problem all play a part in her sister’s suicide. She exposes the detrimental effects of the “model minority” stereotype—“Do you see what a lie it is and how it is used to reinforce the American Dream and punish those of us who don’t ‘succeed,’ or who succeed ‘too much?’” She suggests that the “model minority” image not only places unrealistic and harmful expectations on Asian Americans who do not characterize the affluence and success, but also extends to other racial minorities, specifically African Americans and Latino Americans, who are asked why they cannot do the same. At the twenty-fifth anniversary of her sister’s suicide, Park writes another letter reflecting on her experiences as life moves on. She laments that there is “no such thing as progress” and that there is “no such thing as closure.” Park’s letters to her sister remind the readers that complacency inhibits process and that the fight against racism and social injustice demands constant vigilance, critical thinking, proactive attitude, and transformative action among Asian Americans.

Sunaina Maira lends her insights into the challenges faced by South Asian Americans in the wake of September 11. Drawing upon the experiences of young people in Boston, she assesses how racial stereotyping and the War on Terror have complicated identities and fostered an antagonism among men and women who see their opportunities constrained as a result of blatant stereotyping. The effect, Maira explains, is strengthened interethnic solidarity among Asians, but reduced desire for assimilation into mainstream American society.

Sue and his colleagues look at a form of racism that has become increasingly prevalent in the post–civil rights era—racial microaggressions. Racial microaggressions refer to the subtle messages that Asian Americans receive, both intentional and unintentional, that reinforce their sense of racial marginalization. Sue and his colleagues note that even supposed compliments such as “You speak such good English” or “You speak without accents” serve to remind Asian Americans of their forever foreigner status in this country. In this chapter, the authors use qualitative interview data to propose new metrics and surveys that can better measure these more covert forms of racial oppression that Asian Americans face in their everyday lives.

Behind the Model Minority

Part IX examines what lies behind the “model minority” stereotype. The publication of William Petersen’s article on the virtues of Japanese American in *New York Times Magazine* in January 1966 marked a significant departure from the ways in which Asian immigrants and their succeeding generations had been traditionally depicted in popular culture. In December of the same year, another article similar in tone extolled Chinese Americans for their persistence and success. However, the celebration of the model minority buttresses the myth that the United States
is devoid of racism and accords equal opportunity to all, and that those who lag behind do so because of their own poor choices and inferior culture (see Zhou, this volume).

The media circus that surrounded Jeremy Lin, the first major Asian American player in National Basketball Association (NBA), provided overwhelming evidence about the way American society was unable to comprehend that an Asian American man could become a star athlete. Leung chronicles how latent racist views of Asian American men came to the surface during the period of “Linsanity.” Comments from sportscasters, news outlets, and coaches clearly demonstrated that American society (minus other Asians) was unable to “see past his Asian features” and acknowledge Lin’s athletic prowess, despite his tremendous accomplishments as a high school and college basketball player. Ultimately, the attention that Lin received illustrated the incongruence of Asian bodies with an all-American pastime.

Lisa Sun-Hee Park’s chapter demonstrates further that birthright does not necessarily bring about a complete sense of belonging into American society. Her interviews with second-generation Chinese and Korean Americans reveal a deep sense of need for Asian immigrants and their children to justify their presence in the United States. Park notes that these second-generation Americans understand their parents’ migration story through an Orientalist lens that positions both them and their parents as foreigners in their adopted land. Against her own intuition, her analysis reveals that the migration stories that the second-generation Chinese and Koreans told were remarkably similar despite their age, gender, class background, and neighborhood. Such a trend reveals the tremendous impact of the racial stereotyping that Asian Americans confront.

Poon and Sihite’s chapter illustrates the angst that some Americans exhibit when Asian Americans become too integrated into US institutions, particularly when it comes to elite colleges and universities. The authors provide an overview of the complicated relationship that Asian Americans have had with American higher education—being excluded by quotas, being targeted as taking the spots of “more deserving” applicants, and being portrayed as vigorous opponents to affirmative action policies. Within these conversations about Asian Americans and higher education, Poon and Sihite insert a necessary discussion of government divestment from institutions of higher learning, which serves to disenfranchise all students in the process, Asian Americans included.

Multiplicity and Interracial Politics

Part X discusses the complexity of citizenship and interracial politics. Lowe’s chapter is a challenging piece to read in its entirety, since it may be open to multiple interpretations. Her purpose is twofold, first to disrupt the common tropes of generational conflict and filial relationships that permeate the Asian
American experience, and second to reconceptualize Asian American identity as an entity in a continual state of flux. The main point underlying her work is that Asian American culture is neither immutable nor vertically transmitted from one generation to the next. Asian American culture is as much a production of identities as a reception of traditions. As Lowe contends, “[t]he boundaries and definitions of Asian American culture are continually shifting and being contested from pressures both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the Asian-origin community.” These shifting constructions of identity constitute the heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity of contemporary Asian American community.

Nadia Kim’s chapter adds a critique to the long-standing tendency of sociologists to equate socioeconomic integration with whitening. While Kim acknowledges that Asian Americans’ racial experiences remain distinct from those of African Americans, she also notes that Asian Americans continually have their legal and social citizenship called into question more so than the latter. Kim argues that the deep historical and contemporary influence of US state relations with Asian nations functions as a necessary backdrop for developing a transnational framework for Asian Americans’ racial subordination along the lines of citizenship.

Ng, Pak, and Hernandez look at the intersection of the perpetual foreigner and model minority stereotypes, specifically within the sphere of education. They point out the inherent contradictions in the Asian American educational experiences. On the one hand, Asian Americans have been applauded for their representation in institutions of higher learning; however, the threat of their presence has incited resentment among whites. Ng and her colleagues advocate for the disaggregation of Asian American students by nativity and ethnicity to better elucidate the heterogeneity of Asian American educational outcomes. The way Asian Americans are “framed,” they argue, will have tremendous influence on their future in US higher educational institutions.

The chapter by Ramakrishnan and his colleagues draws from the 2008 National Asian American Survey about Asian American political behaviors, data they collected during the presidential primary and national elections. Their analyses show that race played a significant role in Asian Americans’ support for Hillary Clinton over Barack Obama during the 2008 primaries. However, during the national election between Obama and Republican hopeful John McCain, race-based considerations became less important relative to party affiliation and issue preferences. Their findings have implications for how political candidates and movements must be framed in order to galvanize support from Asian American communities.

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The chapters in this anthology taken as a whole illustrate the crucial prospects, possibilities, and problems currently faced by Asian Americans and
their communities and by the field of Asian American studies. It is our hope that readers approach these issues in a critical and reflexive manner, one that draws heavily from their own experiences, histories, and interpretations. This anthology is by no means a definitive end to the complexity and range of issues confronting contemporary Asian America. In fact, it is only beginning to raise questions that may not necessarily have clear or definitive answers. For some people, the resolution may be simple. For many others, however, the solution may require compromise. We are excited by the prospects for the future of Asian American studies, but cast a tone of caution—one that is cognizant of how far the field has come from those early days at San Francisco State College. Our greatest successes—legitimacy in the academy, recognition by mainstream departments at universities across the United States, and publication of works by major university presses—seem to have distanced us further from the original goals of the Asian American movement. Nonetheless, we are moving forward in the new millennium. There are no clear answers, only prospects and possibilities.

NOTES
5 The author gained insight from Yuji Ichioka’s comments. See also Yamamoto (1999) for detail.
7 Indeed, all persons born in Asia, including those originating from that area arbitrarily (and Euro-centrically) designated as the Middle East, were excluded from citizenship until the 1952 Immigration Act. For details, see Haney-Lopez (1996).

REFERENCES