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This paper describes Asian-American women with their inter-ethnic, inter-generational connections. Diversities in race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status influence their lives in family, participation in education, the labor force, and community life. Issues and implications about the myth of Asian-American as model minority, the influence of feminism, and social work service for Asian-American women are also discussed.

Asian-American Women: Backgrounds and Struggles

Asian-American women include immigrant women and their female descendants in America whose ancestry originates from Asia and the eastern Pacific. They should be appreciated for their inter-ethnic and inter-generational connections, for their common Asian heritage, and specific cultural diversities, for their common and unique struggles related to being Asian women in America. Because of the recent influx of Asian-Americans in the United States, especially Asian-American women, they have been an invisible minority and have been understudied by social scientists.

The early phase of Asian immigration to the United States (1848–1940) was marked by a virtual absence of female immigrants due to repressive immigration laws, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and the Immigration Act of 1924, which barred Asians from entering the U.S. In contrast, the new regulations admit Asians with needed skills and stipulate annual quotas for Asian women and their children; recent Asian immigration has been distinguished by the relatively increasing predominance of female immigrants. According to the U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 51% to 60% of all immigrants from Japan, China, the Philippines, and Korea between 1950 and 1975 were women.

The main reason for Asian women to immigrate is the reunion of their families. Others have also come for occupational preference and as refugees. The recent wave of immigration has increased the percentage of foreign-born Asian-American women, especially in the younger age cohort, increased the level of education, and decreased the male-dominated sex ratio in the Asian population. According to the 1990 census, Asian- and Pacific Island-Americans are among the fastest growing ethnic minorities (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991).

Asians are culturally varied according to nationalities, languages, and religions. Tsui (1989) described Asian-American women as needing "the armor of warriors" to survive the past 150 years, in which they have raised families and struggled against racism and exploitation from the earliest days as farm workers, prostitutes, and domestic servants. Presently they are viewed as a model minority with stabile families, and are represented in prestigious managerial and professional positions (Suzuki, 1989). The failure to recognize ethnic and status variations among Asian women has helped to perpetuate the myth of success surrounding Asian-Americans (Chow, 1983; USCCR, 1980).

Ethnic Identity of Asian-American Women

Because they are also members of racial and ethnic minority groups, Asian-American women develop their identification, self-esteem, and personality differently from either Asian or American women. In the midst of conflicting values, identity crises, and consciousness-raising, Asian-American women are in the process of building their Asian-American womanhood. Despite interethnic variations, Asian-Americans have a number of cultural values in common. Some of their values such as valuing education, achievement, hard work, and frugality, are similar to American values. Other Asian values, however, like filial piety (Nievera, 1980), obedience to authority (Chow, 1982), subjugation of the individual to the group (Fujitomi & Wong, 1976), a quiet and passive acceptance of one's situation (Matsudo et al., 1970), self-control, self-abasement, and a strong sense of family solidarity, are quite in contrast to American values which emphasize individualism, egalitarianism, independence, future-orientation, and mastery over one's environment (Furuto, 1992; Kluckholn, 1951).

As Asian-American women emerge as a significant group, their acculturation experiences and their relationships to self-concept formation deserves to be carefully examined. A central issue in the adaptation of Asian-American women is the extent to which they retain their own cultural traditions relative to acculturation and assimilation into American society. A review of existing literature reveals three major perspectives, all of which relate the degree of acculturation to the self-concept, behavior, and status attainment of Asian-Americans: (a) the retention of certain Asiatic values (Kuo & Lin, 1977); (b) subscription to American values (Kitano, 1976; Montero, 1982); and (c) the compatibility of Asian and American values (Connor, 1976; Fong, 1990).

Chow (1982), in studying Asian-American women on the east coast, examined how Asian and American values can differentially influence the personality development of Asian-American women. Four types of ethnic identities emerged from her data:

1. The traditionalist (low on American values, high on Asian values) tends to confine herself to her ethnic enclave, retain traditional values, and to be negatively disposed toward American culture. Her self-worth is defined by obedience to parents and by bringing honor to the family and her ethnic group. Tension occurs when feelings are in conflict with traditional expectations and when the individual experiences difficulties in dealing with members of the host society.

2. The assimilationist (high on American values, low on Asian values) tends to question traditional values, to defy parental authority, and to reject her native ethnic culture. Existing between the margin of two cultures, she suffers from an identity crisis and from intense feelings of guilt, self-denial, and even self-hatred (Sue & Sue, 1971). She defines her self-worth in terms of acceptance by Caucasians and considers herself more American than Asian; she desires access to all avenues of opportunity in American society.

3. The pluralist (high on both American and Asian values) tends to incorporate the useful aspects of both minority cultures by integrating her past experiences with her present conditions. She attempts to balance her responsibilities at home, at work, and in the community. She tries to be aware of intergroup relations. Her self-worth is defined by ethnic pride—frequent association

with her own people and the ability to retain many aspects of traditional culture while fully participating in mainstream American society. This type of adaptation is an outgrowth of continual attempts to reconcile the two cultures for a pluralistic cultural coexistence. It has a dialectic element that includes conflict and contradiction as part of the dynamic process of acculturation. Thus, each integration is only a temporary state leading to an affirmative and flexible identity.

4. The ambivalent (low on both American and Asian values) tends to reject both traditional and American cultures and to exhibit a great degree of social and cultural alienation. She is relatively isolated from her ethnic group and the host society, and she derives little cultural meaning from either world. She will withdraw from social participation when she feels ambivalent about her socio-cultural situation. She defines her self-worth individualistically, as it fits each situation, and she also develops anomic (normlessness) feelings.

The acculturation process is not linear from less to more assimilated into American culture. It is a complex process involving cultural (e.g., values, norms, language) and structural dimensions (e.g., primary groups, class, status, power) (Fong, 1990). For example, Meedmeduma (Furuto et al., 1992), in describing the support networks of Sri Lankan women living in the United States, examined issue of trust and gossip of family/kin member among co-nationals, as compared to non-family/kin member among non-nationals as support networks at different stages of the acculturation process.

Gender Role

An important component of the ethnic identity of the Asian-American women is her gender. While Asian values affect ethnic identities of Asian men and women, other cultural values define traditional sex role expectations and gender relationships. Generally, Asian culture tends to reinforce traditionally "feminine" characteristics-submissiveness, passiveness, affiliation, altruism, adaptiveness, and timidness—and to discourage the so-called "masculine" traits of independence, assertiveness, and competitiveness (Fong, 1965; Hsu, 1971; Weiss, 1973). Related studies have

found that Asian men and women generally to be more "feminine" in comparison to their Caucasian counterparts (Fong & Peskin, 1969; Meredith, 1973). Some studies have suggested a highly restrictive feminine identification expected of Asian-American women, who, for the most part, are confined to more traditional roles and are perceived as subservient to the males in their ethnic subcultures (Kim, 1975; Yun, 1976). The traditional sex-type orientation is transmitted by the family and other agents of socialization and reinforced in the gender roles Asian-Americans adopt.

The Asian family contains a hierarchy of authority based on sex, generation, and age. Young women are at the lowest level, subordinate to the dominant father-husband-brother-son and are restricted to well-defined sex roles. The father is conceived of as breadwinner and decision-maker; the mother is expected to be the compliant wife and homemaker (Fujitomi & Wong, 1976). Asian families tend to encourage the development of the male's personality and aspirations, while discouraging women to have self-esteem and individuality (Payton-Miyazaki, 1971). Although most Asian-American families have followed the Western conjugal nuclear family style, remnants of traditional culture still affect many of these families.

The racial and sexual stereotypes of Asian women subtly force Asian women to respond according to expectations. They are frequently perceived through media promotion, as shy, docile, quiet, exotic, submissive, demure, and erotic (frequently stereotyped as "China doll," "Suzie Wong sex pot," the "Geisha girl," or negatively as the devious and dominating "dragon lady"). They are also seen as good housekeepers and dutiful wives. The view of Asian women as sex objects and as worthy of little respect is part of a larger dichotomy contracting virtuous, pure Madonnas (white women), with exotic, evil whores (Asian women). These racial and sexual stereotypes are detrimental to the development of positive self-identity for Asian-American women. The racial stereotypes (e.g., slanted eyes, petite stature, flatnochests) contribute to feelings of inferiority and self-hatred. Fijitomi and Wong (1978) stressed that even favorable stereotypes are dehumanizing and are aimed at legitimizing Asian women as eligible marriage partners for American males. Asian men stereotype their own women by defining for them what it means to be "traditional" and

"unfeminine." The Asian men may be attracted by the American standard of beauty and prefer women other than their own. These stereotypes make it hard for women to develop their full potential as persons.

Androgyny, the integration of masculinity and femininity within the same person, is being found increasingly among Asian women (Chow, 1981). Androgyny was associated with a high level of occupational attainment. More importantly, it was closely related to work satisfaction and self-esteem. This association supports the relationship between androgyny and psychological well-being found by other researchers (Kaplan & Bean 1976).

In the transitional phase of acculturation, old images are discarded and new ones are developed; the sex-role attitudes of Asian women have begun to shift from a "traditional" stance to a more egalitarian one. Fong (1973) found the traditional pattern of social interaction between Chinese males and females was steadily moving away from the traditional pattern of male dominance toward more equality. Asian women can be expected to be more amenable than Asian men to accepting and actualizing sex role changes. As awareness of sex role variations increase, Asian women can be expected to discard the older images and develop new gender identities for themselves.

Many Asian-American women can be expected to uphold their ideal as women from their Asian tradition. For instance, many of the Vietnamese refugee women uphold the Confucian ideal of "cong" (versatile ability in the home), dung (subtle beauty), ngon (soft speech) hanh (gentle behavior), and "phuc Duc" (accumulation of family strength through generations and accomplishments of the past) (Sloat, 1977). Similarly, Chinese culture values women as good wives and good mothers, as well as valuing their contributions to the well-being of the family be working at home or engaging in employment to glorify ancestry and the family name. Asian-American women's motivation and success in family and labor force can be attributed to the cultural values for self-effacement, trustworthiness, hard work, and moral strength, so as to maintain the family in the generations to come (Sloat, 1977). Korean-American women work excessively hard at home as wives, and at work long hours in primarily family-run

businesses in order to keep the family economically and socially viable (Rhee, 1993).

Socio-Economic Status

Asian-American women occupying different levels of the socioeconomic structure experience acculturation and its associated success differently. While Asian-American women from middle-class backgrounds may have more opportunities to experience some degree of educational and occupational mobility, those from working class backgrounds tend to be trapped in traditional sex-role arrangements and to feel limited in their self-development and job advancement (OCWA, 1984). U.S.-born Japanese and Chinese women are more likely (21% and 47%) to hold professional and clerical jobs than foreign-born Japanese and Chinese women (22% and 24%, respectively). Still, about one-third of foreign-born Japanese and Chinese women are employed as craftsmen or operative workers. Asian women with higher levels of occupational attainment tended to be more accepting of American values, to have a high level of self-esteem, and to feel more satisfied at work than Asian women with lower levels of occupational status. Working class women, including those who are less visible (such as women in Asian enclaves, Indochinese refugee women, and wives of U.S. servicemen) are clearly disadvantaged, with their needs and wants often ignored or inadequately addressed. On the other hand, professional Asian-American women face problems such as inability to obtain licensing and certification due to restricted license rules and procedures (Cordover, 1976), underutilization and underemployment (USCCR, 1978), discrimination in firing and hiring, wage inequality with men for comparable work, and a lack of training in different areas (e.g., administration) (Fong & Cabezas, 1976).

Asian working class women yet face another set of problems: lack of English language proficiency (OCAW, 1984); the relative illiteracy of Asians (USDHEW); low level of education; low self-image and confidence (OCAW, 1984); high concentration in low-ranking, low-prestige, and low-paying jobs (US DHEW, 1974); lack of opportunities for training and job advancement; racial and

sex-based discrimination; and lack of child care arrangements and transportation (OCAW, 1984).

Model Minority

The "model minority" stereotype, first discussed in *The New York Times* in 1966, highlights the economic success of some Asians while masking the persistence of poverty and exploitation among Asians as well as the presence of virulent anti-Asian sentiment. There are many signs of Asian-American economic success. Much higher percentages of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipina women (30%, 20%, and 41%, respectively) have college or advanced degrees than do white-American women (13%). Poverty rates for Japanese and Filipina women were lower than for whites. Asian-American women who worked full-time and year round had 1980 median earnings of $11,519, more than the average for women of all races, $10,380. In many primary sector jobs, such as executives, engineers, and health diagnosticians, the relative concentration of Asian-American women was higher than that of white-American women. Compared to other minority women, Asian-American women have higher education levels, disproportionate representations in professional and technical fields (Owan, 1980; Woo, 1985). Although the economic successes of a segment of Asian American appear to support the model minority myth, the myth obscures the fact that many Asian-Americans are at the bottom of the economic hierarchy, at the other end of the bipolar distribution of income among Asians. A full 74% of Asian Americans are foreign born; of these, many speak little English, are segregated into low paying secondary labor market jobs, often in the hidden economy. Between economic exploitation, lack of legal protection, and maintenance of traditional domestic chores, many Asian-American women live in virtual slavery.

Woo (1985) found that Asian women do not earn incomes commensurate with their educational levels when compared to Euro-American men and women, even when employed in professional or technical fields with full-time employment. Labor market discrimination has continued to exist. Equivalent resumes from Filipino workers and white American workers were sent out, with white-Americans receiving requests for interviews

five times more than the Filipino applicants (Skrobanek, 1985). Asian-American shave filed suits against a number of employers, including United Airlines and Pacific Telephone, alleging discrimination.

Many Koreans heading small businesses have been unable to put their higher education in use because of discrimination, lack of English skills, and lack of certification by U.S. educational institutions. Their success extracts a high toll in self-exploitation, with the entire family working long hours from day to night. Korean-American women, while expecting to work in the family enterprise at upwards of 50 hours per week are still expected to carry on a full domestic load (Rhee, 1993).

Often, the economic success of Asian-Americans can be explained by high rates of labor force participation and high numbers of workers in the family. Hence, considering income per person rather than per family, Asian-Americans earn 10% less than Caucasians per capita. Since many Asian-American families are concentrated in high-cost urban areas in prosperous states with high costs of living (e.g., New York, Hawaii, California), their higher family incomes generally do not translate into higher standards of living.

The disproportionate overachievement of Asian-Americans has been a barrier to schooling and employment. Recent examples of racial preference practices include job ceilings that limit non-whites who are as competent or more competent than their Anglo-American peers from competing for and obtaining desired professional levels, higher pay for white Americans having lower educational qualifications than their non-white peers, and discriminatory university admissions policies at our most esteemed universities favoring less-qualified Anglo-American students (Chan, 1991; Devillar et al., 1994; Takaki, 1989). Asian-Americans are often denied opportunity in favor of less qualified Anglo-Americans. Asian-American groups have charged that the top colleges and universities are now discriminating against Asian-American applicants. For instance, the U.S. Department of Education has been investigating Harvard and the University of California at Los Angeles to see if they have established illegal quotas to limit the number of Asian-Americans admitted. Finally, the model-minority myth, combined with the increasing

economic power of Japan, may actually be responsible for in-
tensified anti-Asian violence. The Justice Department found that
anti-Asian incidents increased by 62% between 1984 and 1985.

Education

There are very few differences in high school completion and
college attendance rates by gender within Asian-American ethnic
groups or across ethnic and national groups. Compared to other
minority women, Asian-American women are as likely to have
received four years college education as white female Americans.
The overall college enrollment across ethnic groups increased
from 1976 to 1982, and tapering off from 1982–84. Despite this
decline, Asian and Hispanic female enrollment has continued to
grow. Compared to white Americans and other minority groups
in which women gradually surpassed men at the bachelor's and
master's levels among most groups, only Asian women remained
below their male counterparts in degrees awarded.

Asian-Pacific American (APA) females face similar cultural
and socioeconomic barriers to higher education as APA males.
Females also are socialized into traditional roles that do not re-
quire a college degree. Behavior appropriate at home, such as not
"showing off" in front of adults or fear of incurring shame by
responding incorrectly, may not only be not valued, but could
be interpreted in school as being uncooperative or too shy. Com-
petition for grades and individual achievement is appropriate in
school, while emphasis on group cooperation is more approved
of at home (Clark, 1983).

Teaching styles based on competitive standards, creativity,
individual responses and problem-solving are incongruent with
experiential, cooperative group learning, and learning by rote that
are the modes within APA culture. Lack of proficiency in English
for many bilingual, foreign-born APA students may affect their
understanding and problem solving abilities in American schools
(Cole & Griffin, 1987).

Family Roles

The traditional Asian family system is a patriarchal kinship
and a corporate unit, with the emphasis on preserving the patriar-
chal blood line. The traditional extended family typically includes

the head of the household, his wife, his married sons, their wives, his unmarried children, and his son's children. The principle of primogeniture, that is succession to the family headship and inheritance of the family property by the eldest son, is a feature of the traditional Asian family unit. Daughters usually hold a low status in the household, because they do not figure in the continuity of the family. Because traditional Asian families are patrilocal, daughters usually leave their family of origin upon marriage and become the daughter-in-law in the new family.

Traditionally, the Asian woman was to work for the family, and to bear children, especially a male heir. An Asian woman could not initiate a divorce; if she should leave the family, all the children she bore belong to the family, so she would have no legal claim to the children or to any family property (Glenn, 1986). Marriage often has been seen as a matter of duty and procreation rather than love and romance. Girls are socialized into traditional roles, with the older children taking responsibility for housework and taking care of the younger children. They unknowingly exempt themselves from nontraditional jobs with higher pay and status because of their traditional role socialization in their homes and schools.

Generally, Asian culture values self-reliance and interdependence within the family. The traditional Asian family is a cohesive extended network, with strong ties of obligations and respect for parents and siblings. This suggests that multiple workers may contribute to the well-being of a family unit in times of economic need. Chinese, Japanese, and Asian-Indian women preserve a reverential attitude towards work and education for all family members (Furuto, 1992; Jiobu, 1988). A strong commitment to employment combined with the cultural values of helping family members in times of need, suggests they can expect to seek financial support of other family members in lieu of receiving public assistance. Korean-American women, for example, often spend nearly every waking hour in domestic labor or work outside the home to keep the family economically and socially viable (Rhee, 1993). Southeast Asian (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Khmer, Hmong, and Mao), Hawaiian, Korean, and other Asian women may share the common cultural commitment to hard work and family.

Many Asian-American women experience much stress as their families go through process of cultural transition from their Asian country of origin to the new country in America (Hurh & Kim, 1987; Rhee, 1993). Recently arrived women often experience loneliness and isolation. With no or little English, many have to remain unemployed, or are employed in locally owned sweat shops. Amidst keeping the house and raising the children as traditional roles, working multiple jobs, Asian-American experienced much stress (Hurh & Kim, 1987; Rhee, 1993).

In transition from native to American cultures, women's status is destabilized because they have increased value in the marketplace. They may be able to obtain jobs that pay higher than that of their husbands. Employment outside the household exposes them to a new world of opportunity, cultures, and styles of living. The marital relationship, based on male dominance, may experience a strain sometimes resulting in violence directed at the wife.

Asian-American women are more frequently married but separated, than the general populations of female heads (17.1% versus 3.7%, respectively). They become female heads of households more frequently as a result of widowhood rather than divorce or out-of-wedlock pregnancy. These figures show that Asian women have greater marital stability, a significant factor for reducing poverty (Bane & Ellwood, 1983).

Differential rates of acculturation across generations, with children Americanized the fastest, create rifts between Asian-American women and their children, as if prior authority as parent was undermined by her children who managed to master the language and the American system better. Domestic violence, with wife battering, or physical abuse of children by frustrated father or mother, become common.

Asian-American feminists have been concerned about domestic violence. Although it is as prevalent in Asian-American communities as in the country in general, it remains hidden under the model minority myth and by victims' extreme reluctance to speak out and seek help. The traditional male dominance in Asian culture has resulted in Asian women being victims of physical and psychological abuse. For example, Song-Kim described that in traditional Korean culture, men were brought up to expect

services from women and to have authority over them; as such they were allowed to discipline their wives by any means, including violent punishment (Furuto et al., 1992). Rimonte (1989), the Filipina founder of the Center for the Pacific Asian Family, and of the first shelter for Pacific Asians in the United States, reported that Asian-American women are especially vulnerable to battering when they are employed, and traditional roles are upset or even reversed. The traditionally closed and hierarchical nature of Asian family, and the social stigma against divorce increase Asian American women's vulnerability to battering. Mail-order brides, who are on temporary visas for the first two years of their marriages, are particularly exposed. Shelters have been established for Asian-American battered women in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York City.

Sexual Exploitation of Asian-American Women

U.S. involvement in wars in Asia (Japan, Vietnam, Korea, the Philippines) and the presence of U.S. bases in these countries, has brought U.S. servicemen into contact with Asian women. Women who have married U.S. servicemen and came to the United States have faced social isolation on military bases, lack of familiarity with U.S. culture, and language problems, including poor communication with their spouses. Lacking information on their legal rights, wives have often been divorced, lost child custody and financial support, and have even been deported. The war bride problem has been compounded by the recent growth of a mail-order bride industry, which supplies Asian women to U.S. and European men by agencies through newspaper advertisements. Grace Lyu-Vockhausen, an Asian-American feminist activist and member of the New York City Commission on the Status of Women, regarded the mail-order bride industry as an international sex ring and another form of economic exploitation for women from countries of the capitalist periphery to sell their labor and sexuality to men in a commercial marriage market in capitalist core countries (Skropanek, 1985). Asian women are also commonly featured in tourist campaigns and in pornography. These forms of sexual exploitation undermine all Asian women in the United States. Assuming Asian-American women are particularly pleasing and unaggressive, employers deny them raises

and claim they lack leadership qualities needed for executive positions. Such stereotypes have also led to sexual harassment of Asian-American women.

In addition to coping with the strain imposed by the myth of the "model minority" stereotype, Asian-American women experience the current and historical effects of multiple oppressions, much like other women of color. The struggle of Asian-American women is rooted in the structural conditions of their lives in the form of racism, sexism, classism, and ethnic hatred (Fisher-Manick, 1981; Hirayama & Centingal, 1988). Within the Asian cultures, sexism can be illustrated by preference for male children, female infanticide, and in families giving birth to as many children as necessary until a male child is born. When compared to other women from the mainstream cultures, the prevalent stereotype and traditional expectations of Asian women being valuable primarily in their roles in child-bearing, child-rearing, and serving in the kitchen, predisposes Asian-American women to discrimination and oppression as part of the work-force. Socioeconomic barriers and discrimination experienced by many Asian-American women makes it necessary for them to counteract such forces with courage and resilience. Often they demonstrate endurance through working more than double, triple hard, in order to earn their credibility, and establish their competency before their non-Asian clients, colleagues, and employers. Such dynamics are often present when it comes to assuming leadership positions with comparable remuneration within the hierarchical structures of their occupations. The success of Asian-American women and their families has rested much in their reverential attitude about work and education for all family members while maintaining their equally important roles as traditional wives to their husband and others to their children.

Feminism and Asian-American Women

Although women's movement struggles for sexual equality for all women, its impact on Asian-American women has been minimal (Chow, 1983). Those who consider themselves feminists are primarily from middle class, college educated, and have professional backgrounds. Loo and Ong (1982) charged that feminism has failed to address the specific concerns of Chinatown

women who face multiple oppressions because of their class, culture, and race. Impediments to feminist organizing include: (a) Asian-American women are concerned about alienation from their male counterparts and face hostility from Asian-American men who claim they are destroying community solidarity (which is based upon male domination); (b) racism of white women who lack knowledge of the history or present status of Asian-American women; (c) the vast differences among Asian-American women, including ethnicity, language, and class; and (d) many women's needs to concentrate their energies on economic survival.

A few consciousness-raising groups were established in the 1970s among Asian-American women. They began to recognize their gender identity limited their role alternatives. They united and discussed issues, problems, and needs specific to Asian women. Asian-American women have founded Asian women's studies courses and study-groups, a writer's group, such as Pacific Asian American Women's Writers West, and regional feminist organizations, like the National Organization of Pan-Asian Women United. Asian lesbians have formed nationwide political groups such as Asia/Pacific Lesbian Network.

Asian-American women's economic history displays many common themes across ethnic groups, yet each group has its unique experience. They all begin as low-wage workers who were imported into a U.S. economy dominated by whites. They all were restricted from coming with their husbands at the beginning.

Community Participation

Besides playing a continually important role in the family, and entering into the labor force, Asian-American women have been very active and have contributed to the community in many other ways. For instance, in ethnic and American churches and temples, Asian women have been very active, and are increasingly involved in ministerial capacities than before. Women often organize themselves into women's clubs, whose main function was to facilitate church activities, such as the "fujunkai" of Japanese issei (first generation) women. The "fujunkai" helped in many community activities, including providing refreshment, visiting the sick, providing congratulations, dispensing janitorial services,

helping to raise funds by contributing handcrafts, needlework, and art work for sale at bazaars, teaching in religious and ethnic language classes, taking part in parent-teacher meetings, and supporting "undo kai," popular sports competitions for children. The Japanese tanamoshi, resembling the "hui" among Chinese, and "gyeh" among Koreans, function like an informal ethnically organized credit union. Asian-American women, through their voluntary participation are therefore able to use much creativity and judgment in serving the community (Nakano, 1992).

Conclusion

The self-development of Asian-American women has to be examined in the context of their social, cultural and economic circumstances. Cultural pluralism has emerged as a viable alternative for Asian women. With this perspective, Asian-American women could enjoy the best of both East and West. As they increase their gender consciousness, Asian women should be able to discard their old sex-typed images and develop a new, positive identity for themselves. They would be able to move from a traditional to a more egalitarian orientation with respect to their male counterparts. Through the inattention to class differences, Asian American women are often identified as socioeconomically successful while the exploitative circumstances of working class Asian-American women are generally ignored. Hence their needs should be addressed by feminists and by women of higher socioeconomic status.

To understand Asian-American women, we must understand their multiple statuses. Their issues and problems are imbedded in economic, historical, cultural, and social realities that should be treated as public policy issues. Policies and programs for Asian-American women should be nonracist, nonsexist, reflect the concerns of Asian women, and meet their specific needs. To help solve the specific problems of Asian-American women, existing governmental and private programs should include Asian women as beneficiaries, providing needed resources, funding, and facilities. At the same time, Asian-American women should become politically active in order to control their lives. They should also join force with other groups that aim to promote social equality and humanity for all people.

Asian-American women are multicultural and multiethnic. Asian women's contribution to social change in this country and in other parts of the world includes the Japanese women who survived the interment camps during World War II, Hawaiian land activitists, Filipino revolutionary movement leaders, unionizers of the Chinese garment workers, Cambodia refugee camp workers, and Korean "picture brides" (Guiterrez, 1990). In appreciating the hard work, strength, and female solidarity of their mothers and immigrant foremothers, Asian-American women are linked historically and currently to the international Third World women of Asian descent (Hirayama & Centingal, 1988). Asian-American women seek opportunity and acceptance to speak their minds, express their experiences, define their priorities, and devise their strategies for survival from their own cultural perspectives.

Further research needs to be conducted into the lives of Asian-American women using the life history method. The life history method sets out to document the everyday life experiences of ordinary individuals in their own sense. Feminist historical and anthropological conceptual frameworks of women as active strategists and creators of women's culture in the social/historical/cultural context can be applied to analyze Asian immigrant women's life histories (Chai, 1985). The mere remembering that there had been a history, a culture, and a story could be empowering to all women. While sharing the spirit of their fellow middle-class, white feminists, Asian-American women have also sought to cultivate a true sisterhood in their own terms for themselves. Thus, in their professional work, instead of westernizing themselves in philosophy, outlook, and approach, Asian-American women can use their additional Asian perspectives to sensitize their awarenesses of cultural similarities and differences, to generate new dimensions for analyzing issues, and to design paradigms and models for practice intervention and policy development. Rather than considering the men of their ethnic groups as the enemy, Asian-American women should value themselves and their roles as women as being different but complementary and reciprocal, with their men and their corresponding roles, within the circular yin-yang balance. In this light, Asian-American women pride in such processes that enhance mutual empowerment for both Asian men and Asian women, which will enhance the con-

tinual perpetuation of their strong, coherent family units and communities. Yet, at the same time, feminine solidarity must be used to protect women from masculine use of terror through rape, sexual harassment, physical violence, and economic exploitation of vulnerable females.

Asian-American women need to develop coalitions with other women of color to transform and expand Western feminism into Global feminism. From Fa Mu-Lan in ancient China who dressed as a man and lead her male army against the enemies of her people (Hunt, 1985) to Mila Aguilar in the Philippines, who became politically active against the oppression of the Marcos regime through both prose and poetry writing (Chan, 1986) to Benazir Bhutto, who emerged as the first Asian female Muslim leader, the spirit of women from Asia from past to present carries on in Asian-American women in America. Their struggles continue across generations, across cultures, towards success for themselves, their families, and the human race over the globe.

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