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Asian Americans and Race-Conscious Admissions: Examining Racial Consciousness

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Connie Ying-Chung Chang

2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Asian Americans and Race-Conscious Admissions: Examining Racial Consciousness

by

Connie Ying-Chung Chang

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Mitchell J. Chang, Chair

Race-conscious admissions policies have been debated throughout the years. It has been well-documented that members of the Asian American community have differing opinions on the policy (e.g., Poon et al., 2019; Takagi, 1992). Given these differing opinions, the purpose of this study was to understand the connections between identity and racial ideology and their impact on an individual's opinion regarding race-conscious admissions. To explore the relationship between identity, ideology, and opinion, I investigated the four components of racial consciousness defined by Sellers et al.'s (1998) multidimensional model of racial identity.

Findings indicated three forms of racial consciousness: race-avoidant, within-group, and collective liberation. Each form of consciousness is informed by different areas of literature, including literature on discrimination, racial identity, racial ideology, and attitudes regarding one's racial group. Characteristics of race-avoidant consciousness include a sense of inferiority to white norms, a cultural connection to racial identity, color-evasive ideologies to address racial

inequities, and alignment with whiteness. Key characteristics of within-group consciousness include a sense of inferiority to white norms, a cultural connection to racial identity, and a focus on Asian American-specific issues, such as data disaggregation and socioeconomic stratification. Collective liberation consciousness is defined by a political connection to racial identity, a belief that race is entwined with all other identities and ideologies, and a sense of solidarity with other communities of color.

The three forms of racial consciousness highlight the various ways Asian American college students make connections between their experiences with race and their opinion on race-conscious admissions. Without building critical racial consciousness, differing opinions within the Asian American community can unintentionally detract from important policies and have long-lasting and dangerous implications for racial justice.

The dissertation of Connie Ying-Chung Chang is approved.

Jessica Christine Harris

Robert T. Teranishi

Margaret Joan Shih

Mitchell J. Chang, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

-Lilla Watson

Dedicated to those committed to the liberation of all,

in the past, present, and future.

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VITA

| 2009 | B.A., Human Development |
| | University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, CA |

| 2010 | M.S.Ed., Higher Education |
| | University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA |

| 2010 – 2013 | Coordinator for Student Activities |
| | University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, CA |

2013 – 2015	Assistant Director for Multicultural Learning
	and Student Organizations
	Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA

| 2015 – 2016 | Graduate Assessment Coordinator, Bruin Resource Center |
| | University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA |

2016 – 2018	Research Analyst, Building, Recruiting, and Inclusion for
	Diversity (BRAID) Research Team
	University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA

| 2018 – 2019 | Graduate Student Researcher, Office of Residential Life |
| | University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA |

| 2019 | Instructor, Asian Pacific Studies Program |
| | California State University, Dominguez Hills, Carson, CA |

Select Publications and Presentations

Nguyen, M. H., Chang, C. Y., Kim, V., Gutierrez, R. A., Le, A., Dumas, D., & Teranishi, R. (Forthcoming). Asian Americans, admissions, college choice: An empirical test of claims of harm used in federal investigations. *Educational Researcher*

Blaney, J. M., Sax, L., & Chang, C. Y. (2019). Incentivizing longitudinal survey research: The impact of mixing guaranteed and non-guaranteed incentives on survey response. *The Review of Higher Education, 43*(2) 581-601.

Chang, C. Y., Nguyen, M. H., & Chang, M. J. (2019). *Affirmative action and racial identity: A quantitative study on the effect of Asian Americans' racial identity on position taking.* Paper presentation at the Association for the Study of Higher Education conference, Portland, OR.

Chang, C. Y., Nguyen, M. H., Ramon, A. C., & Sargent, A. (2018). *In their own words: A qualitative understanding of campus racial climate among ethnic minority undergraduates at UCLA.* Los Angeles, CA: University of California, Los Angeles.

Chang, C. Y., & Chang, M. J. (2018). *Asian Americans and affirmative action: A blind pursuit of whiteness.* Presentation at the National Conference for Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education, New Orleans, LA.

Chang, C. Y. (2018). *Finding a voice: A Chinese American choir countersite to orientalism.* Paper presentation at the Association for Asian American Studies conference, San Francisco, CA.

Chang, C. Y., & Nguyen, M. H. (2018). *Disrupting whiteness in higher education: Students of color experiences with racial campus climate*. Paper presentation at the Association for the Study of Higher Education conference, Tampa, FL.

Nguyen, M. H., Chang, C. Y., Lam, M., & Museus, S. (2018). *Protests, counter-protests, and Racism: The role of AAPIs in addressing campus tensions and building inclusive campus climates*. Roundtable presentation at the Association for Asian American Studies conference, San Francisco, CA.

Chang, C. Y. (2017). *Cross-racial relationships in a student-initiated retention program*. Paper presentation at the Association for the Study of Higher Education conference, Houston, TX.

Blaney, J. M., Sax, L. J., & Chang, C. Y. (2017). *How being a 'winner' affects future responses: A discussion of incentives in longitudinal survey research*. Discussion group at the Association for Institutional Research conference, Washington, DC.

Eagan, K., Winter, J. G., Ramirez, J. J., Lozano, J. B., Chang, C. Y., & Harris, D. (2016). *Examining the climate for diversity at Azusa Pacific University*. Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Since the civil rights era, the practice of affirmative action in college admissions has been debated. The Supreme Court has heard arguments for and against race-conscious admissions many times, from *De Funis v. Odegaard* (1974) to the cases of *Fisher v. University of Texas I* (2013) and *II* (2016)*. Even though the Supreme Court supported race-conscious admissions in the *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2016) case, anti-affirmative action advocates seem more determined than ever to ban race-conscious admissions on a national level. The Trump administration successfully pressured at least one institution, Texas Tech University's medical school, to end its use of race when considering applicants (McGough, 2019), and another race-conscious admissions case has been making its way through the legal realm.

A group called Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) filed a lawsuit against Harvard's use of race in their admissions process, specifically related to the treatment of Asian American applicants. SFFA was founded by Edward Blum, whose explicit mission is to end the use of race in college admissions nationwide (SFFA, 2019). Blum has been involved in many other complaints and legal cases against race-conscious admissions, including the high-profile Supreme Court cases of *Fisher v. University of Texas I* (2013) and *II* (2016). At the time of this dissertation, Judge Burroughs, a federal judge for the District of Massachusetts, has ruled that Harvard's use of race-conscious admissions is constitutional. Burroughs wrote in her decision that "Harvard's admissions program is not perfect" (Students for Fair Admissions v. President & Fellows of Harvard College, 2018, p. 127) but passes the litmus test of strict scrutiny. She concluded, "[R]ace-conscious admissions programs that survive strict scrutiny will have an important place in society and help ensure that colleges and universities can offer a diverse atmosphere that fosters learning, improves scholarship, and encourages mutual respect and

understanding" (p. 130). Although this is a win for supporters of race-conscious admissions, an appeal has already been filed and the case will most likely reach the Supreme Court. This case has been and will continue to be followed by activists, scholars, and the mainstream media, making it a high-stakes and high-profile case.

The fairness of college admissions criteria is often debated, particularly when race is a factor in admissions decisions. In general, those who are against race-conscious admissions argue using race as a factor for consideration is not fair or merit-driven. Instead, they advocate for admissions focused solely on measurable criteria such as SAT scores and high school GPA, as well as on socioeconomic status to address diversity. Supporters of race-conscious admissions argue race is an important factor to consider because of the many benefits of diverse campuses (Chang, 1999), the democratic mission of higher education to prioritize social mobility (Guinier, 2003), and because, at the heart of it, racism and white[1] privilege still exist and racial equity has not yet been achieved (Park, 2015). Put simply, those against race-conscious admissions do not see the significance of race, although those who support race-conscious admissions do. These opposing views on race sit at the heart of the controversy, fueling each side's staunch entrenchment in their opinion.

[1] Guided by critical race scholars such as Perez Huber (2010), I do not capitalize the term "white," but do capitalize Black, Asian American, Latinx, and other communities of color as a way to reject hegemonic white norms and empower communities of color through language.

The debate on race-conscious admissions includes an added layer of complexity because of the entanglement of Asian American[2] admissions. Not only is the issue of Asian American admissions being conflated with race-conscious admissions, but the controversy has shed light on the divided opinions within the Asian American community. Although the 2016 Asian American Voter Survey showed that around 65% of Asian Americans supported and 25% opposed affirmative action in higher education, both groups have been equally active in broadcasting their point of view. Activists on both sides have spoken out on podcasts and in mainstream newspapers to argue for their opinion (Reilly, 2019) and on the night before the Harvard trial began in October 2018, Asian Americans held opposing protests (Hartocollis & Siefer, 2018). Despite being in the minority, Asian Americans against race-conscious admissions are advocating just as loudly as those who support it.

Given the split in the Asian American community, the purpose of this study was to understand how different views on race influence individuals' opinions on race-conscious admissions. Those who support race-conscious admissions point to personal stories of Asian Americans benefitting from affirmative action (Hsu, 2018; Lee, 2019) and argue Asian Americans are being used as a wedge to uphold white supremacy (Kuo, 2018). Those against race-conscious admissions focus on the alleged discrimination against Asian Americans. The

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[2] I use the panethnic term Asian American throughout this dissertation because racial grouping is a powerful and effective political tool to advocate for the civil rights of Asian Americans (Espiritu, 1992; Lopez & Espiritu, 1990). Although more research on Pacific Islanders is critical and necessary, Pacific Islanders are not included in this particular study because of the uniquely different ways in which they are racialized (Hall, 2015), which leads them to experience the college admissions process much differently than Asian Americans.

Harvard lawsuit uncovered that Asian American applicants received much lower personality scores than their white counterparts during the admissions process (Gersen, 2017). Therefore, many Asian Americans against race-conscious admissions believe using race as a factor in admissions causes discrimination. Even though both sides see this controversy as a civil rights issue, these examples point to *fundamental differences in constructing racial meaning*. As such, this dissertation investigated the relationship between views on race and opinions on the race-conscious admissions controversy.

Background of Study

Much has been written about race-conscious admissions in both mainstream media and academia. To provide context for the controversy, I give a brief overview of significant concepts framing my understanding of race-conscious admissions. First, I dispel the myth of merit-based admissions by outlining the subjective history of college admissions criteria and highlighting the pretense of contest mobility. Then, I identify the *Regents of University of California v. Bakke* (1978) case as a significant historical moment when race-conscious admissions shifted its priorities to protect white privilege. Last, to better understand the role Asian Americans play in the race-conscious admissions debate, I discuss how Asian Americans are caught in its middle.

The Myth of Merit-Based Admissions

The history of selective admissions has been well-documented in higher education literature. Certain admissions criteria, particularly SAT scores and a personality criterion, were first introduced to keep unwanted Jewish students out (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Karabel, 2005). Karabel (2005) argued selective admissions criteria might seem objective and merit-based, but in reality, universities have the power to change the criteria; however, they see fit or use the criteria to keep out undesirable applicants intentionally. Therefore, selective admissions criteria are not

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objective at all; they merely admit those applicants who are desired and exclude those who are

not, thus serving as gatekeepers to highly prestigious institutions (Guinier, 2003). This type of

gatekeeping may be why 43% of white admits at Harvard are admitted through special channels,

such as being athletes, legacies, or the children of faculty and donors (Muldoon, 2019).

Furthermore, some studies have found pitfalls in only using numerical criteria to define

merit (Guinier, 2003; Park & Liu, 2014). Guinier (2003) argued a numerical definition of merit is

not an approach that creates upward social mobility, but rather maintains the status quo. Guinier

(2003) called this approach to upward mobility, *contest mobility*, which is:

> a very rough proxy for upward mobility achieved through competitive success on
>
> standardized tests. Elite status is the goal and is achieved by the candidate's own efforts
>
> in an open contest. . . . The ultimate goal of contest mobility is the distribution of
>
> opportunity based on individual competition and quantifiable measures of merit. (p. 12)

Contest mobility encompasses the arguments for merit-driven admissions policies, in which

those against race-conscious admissions argue should only include numerical criteria such as

SAT scores and high school GPA. Often, supporters of numerical merit-driven admissions argue

when an applicant works hard and does well on tests and in school, they deserve admission, and

those who do not get the same scores do not. However, the numerical merit argument ignores the

fact that SAT scores and high school GPAs better predict an individual's socioeconomic status

than intelligence and cannot predict post-graduation accomplishments such as financial success

or career satisfaction (Guinier, 2003). As such, contest mobility, or a numerical merit-driven

argument for college admissions, is short-sighted and continues to perpetuate existing socioeconomic inequities.

Some Asian Americans have done exceptionally well in attaining high SAT scores and GPAs. In *The Asian American Achievement Paradox*, Lee and Zhou (2015) sought to understand why this is. Because the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act gave preferences to immigrants with higher levels of education and skills, many came from home countries with highly selective universities (Lee & Zhou, 2015); the average Asian immigrant is, therefore, more educated than the average American. Also, many first-generation Asian Americans are raised in a home country where effort, rather than ability, is most important for academic achievement. These reasons give insight into why some first-generation Asian Americans are against race-conscious admissions and advocate for numerical definitions of merit (Lee & Tran, 2019).

It is also a common misconception that Asian Americans benefit from contest mobility and a numeric definition of merit. For example, anti-affirmative action activists often point to the increased numerical representation of Asian Americans at universities that do not employ race-conscious admissions as evidence for why race-conscious admission harms Asian American applicants. A commonly used example is the University of California system, where Asian Americans make up 30% of the student population,[3] a higher percentage than any other racial group. Anti-affirmative action activists use the University of California system as proof that

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[3] Literature has shown that upon disaggregating data, this number may disproportionally represent East Asians and South Asians, as Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders are not attending college at the same rates as their East Asian and South Asian counterparts (Nguyen et al., 2013; Teranishi et al., 2013).

without race-conscious admissions, the university is not able to racially discriminate against Asian Americans, thus resulting in their higher enrollment numbers.

Liu (2002) referred to the assumption an applicant would receive admission without race-conscious admissions as the causation fallacy. Often, anti-affirmative action advocates argue the removal of race as an admissions criterion would result in the admission of certain groups of students, particularly white students. However, studies have shown that even without considering race as a factor, those students would not have received admissions anyway (Liu, 2002). That fact is true for Asian Americans as well because of another phenomenon called negative action, or the unfair treatment of Asian American applicants (Kang, 1996). Even without race as a factor in admissions, elite institutions could still limit the number of admitted Asian Americans if they wanted to because of the subjective nature of college admissions criteria (Guinier, 2003; Karabel, 2005).

Moreover, even with the large numerical representation of Asian Americans in the University of California system, the *quality* of those Asian American students' experiences has not improved (Park & Liu, 2014). Park and Liu (2014) argued even though Asian Americans have the numerical representation (i.e., critical mass) that should help combat tokenism or feelings of isolation, that has not been the case for Asian American college students. Research has shown Asian Americans are not satisfied with their college environments (Park, 2009) and still experience racism and microaggressions on college campuses (Museus & Park, 2015).

In summary, merit-based admissions do not benefit Asian Americans in the long run. To define merit in numerical ways may help some Asian Americans enter college at higher numbers. Ultimately, a higher number of Asian American students does not mean better quality experiences, nor does it guarantee protection against racism and discrimination during college. If

Asian Americans against race-conscious admissions want to address deeper issues of racial inequality, they must look beyond details of admissions criteria. By campaigning for merit-based admissions and denouncing race-conscious admissions, Asian Americans limit their racial equity. This study's investigation into the construction of racial consciousness sheds light on why Asian Americans have such differing views on racial equity.

Shifting Priorities of Race-Conscious Admissions

When race-conscious admissions were introduced, it was a powerful way to address racial inequality by ensuring college access to students of color. After *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), President Kennedy encouraged government employers to take "affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin" (Exec. Order No. 10925, 1961). Because affirmative action was introduced during the desegregation era, the priority was to assist in desegregation and give reparations to those disenfranchised because of past racism. It created a guaranteed path to college, leading to a growth in enrollment for students of color, particularly Black students (Harper et al., 2009).

Over time, affirmative action policy has shifted away from a guaranteed path for racially marginalized students and led to the protection of white privilege. When the Supreme Court removed the use of racial quotas in the *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), Harris (1993) articulated how the decision to abolish the special admissions program and grant Bakke admissions protected white privilege:

> This analysis incorrectly assumes, first, that Bakke's expectation of admissions was valid and entitled to protection, and second, that the special admissions program impermissibly

infringed the equal protection rights of future white applicants. These presumptions in

fact mask settled expectations of continued white privilege. (p. 1770)

Thus, the *Bakke* decision was the first of many by the Supreme Court that weakened the initial

intent of race-conscious admissions and shifted the priority away from admitting students of

color.

In the era following the *Bakke* decision, universities and some states started to "de-

racialize" (Takagi, 1992, p. 5). For example, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, both the

University of California, Los Angeles and the University of California, Berkeley no longer

guaranteed admissions to underrepresented minorities who met the minimum eligibility

requirements (Takagi, 1992). In 1996, California became the first state to prohibit governmental

institutions from practicing affirmative action with the institution of Proposition 209 through a

close ballot initiative, with 55% of voters in support and 45% of voters against the proposition.

Shortly after, in 1998, Washington voters also banned affirmative action in governmental

institutions, and in 1999, Florida followed suit. The potency of race-conscious admissions was

once again diluted by these changes in admissions policies and the implementation of bans in

these three states. The desire to de-value race continued to gain momentum.

Asian Americans: Caught in the Middle

The debate on race-conscious admissions includes an added layer of complexity because

of the entanglement of Asian American admissions. The issue with Asian American admissions

first came to light in the 1980s when Asian Americans charged a set of universities, including

Harvard, for discriminating against Asian American applicants and limiting their enrollment

through the use of quotas (Takagi, 1992). Unfortunately, since then, the issue of Asian American

admissions has been conflated with race-conscious admissions. As a result, Asian American

admissions has been used to either support or oppose race-conscious admissions, with both sides positioning Asian Americans to further their agenda (Chang, 2015). It not only led to Asian Americans being used to undermine race-conscious admissions, but also to the dismissal of Asian Americans in conversations about racial equity.

In the battle over race-conscious admissions, the issue of Asian American admissions is used to support or oppose race-conscious admissions, but it is never addressed directly (Kang & Chen, 2019; Takagi, 1992). Without addressing discrimination against Asian American applicants (Hartocollis, 2018), elite institutions are left off the hook for using contrived definitions of diversity (e.g., the numerical representation of Black and Latinx students) without doing work to create systematic change (Kang & Chen, 2019), such as fostering campus environments devoid of racist events toward all students of color, including Asian Americans (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Museus & Park, 2015; Park & Liu, 2014). Moreover, Asian Americans are left with two "lose-lose" options: (a) side with anti-affirmative activists legitimizing claims of discrimination, albeit for their gain, and help take down a policy that is supposed to protect against racial discrimination, or (b) side with institutions holding anti-Asian American sentiment through support for race-conscious admissions. Asian Americans have been caught in the middle of the race-conscious admission debate. However, through this highly public debate, Asian Americans have helped push conversations about race-conscious admissions, diversity on college campuses, and racial equity to a new level.

Overview of Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

In this study, I drew from the multidimensional model of racial identity (MMRI) and the multidimensional model of raceclass frames and affirmative action (MMRFAA) to understand

the relationship between Asian Americans' experiences with race and their opinion on race-conscious admissions,

The MMRI provides an overarching framework for the internal process by which one's ideas about and experiences with race influences behavior (Sellers et al., 1998). Although Sellers et al. (1998) name this model as the multidimensional model of *racial identity,* this study uses the model as a way to define *racial consciousness*. Unlike a developmental model capturing a person's racial identity across time, the MMRI captures racial consciousness as it relates to one particular issue; for this study, the issue is the use of race in college admissions. Additionally, the MMRI's definition of racial consciousness includes four different components: *racial salience*, or the relevance of race in a particular situation; *racial centrality*, or the meaning of race to self-identity across time; *racial regard*, or feelings about own racial group; and *racial ideology*, or notions of how members of the racial group should act. Individuals interpret each of the four components of racial consciousness differently.

The MMRFAA articulates the ideologies informing individuals' opinions on race-conscious admissions (Poon et al., 2019). The framework, built from a critical race theory approach, provides two distinct ideologies to explain an individual's support of race-conscious admissions: conscious compromise and systemic transformation. Those with a *conscious compromise* mindset support race-conscious admissions because they believe diversity benefits all students. Those with a *systemic transformation* mindset support race-conscious admissions because of its efforts to increase access to students of color; these individuals also see race-conscious admissions as a part of a larger struggle for racial equity. The MMRFAA provides two ideologies to explain an individual's opposition to race-conscious admissions: ethnocentric nationalistic and abstract liberalism. Those with an *ethnocentric nationalistic* mindset oppose

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race-conscious admissions because they believe educational inequities exist due to cultural differences instead of larger structural issues. Those with an *abstract liberalism* mindset, however, do not support race-conscious admissions because they take a colorblind approach in which they interpret any mention of race as discrimination.

The MMRI and MMRFAA work together as the conceptual framework for this study. MMRI breaks down the multiple meanings of race by identifying four components of racial consciousness. By identifying these components, the MMRI shaped the interview questions and data analysis. Furthermore, it pinpoints differences and similarities between Asian Americans with different opinions on the race-conscious admissions controversy. The MMRI, therefore, provided an overarching framework connecting racial consciousness and opinion on race-conscious admissions. Used in conjunction, the MMRFAA can help predict the racial ideologies held by participants who support race-conscious admissions versus those who oppose it.

For example, an individual who does not support the use of race in college admissions may believe race is relevant to the controversy (racial salience) but may not believe race is an important part of their self-identity (racial centrality). That same person may also feel positively toward their racial group (racial regard) and hold an ethnocentric nationalistic ideology (MMRFAA and racial ideology). An individual who supports the use of race in college admissions may also believe race is salient to the context of the controversy and may have positive feelings toward their racial group. Racial salience and racial regard are, thus, similar to the individual who does not support affirmative action. However, the supporter of affirmative action may differ from the individual against affirmative action in racial centrality and racial

ideology by seeing race as an important part of their self-identity (racial centrality) and holding a systemic transformation ideology (MMRFAA and racial ideology).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this dissertation was not to prove that supporting or challenging race-conscious admissions is the right opinion for Asian Americans. Rather, the purpose was to understand the connections between identity, racial ideology, and their impact on an individual's opinion of the race-conscious admission controversy. To examine the relationship between identity, ideology, and opinion, I investigated the four components of racial consciousness defined by Sellers et al.'s (1998) MMRI. Therefore, the research questions that guided this study were:

1. What does racial consciousness look like in Asian American college students?
2. How does racial consciousness inform their opinion on race-conscious admissions?
3. In terms of racial consciousness, what similarities and differences exist between Asian American college students who have different opinions about race-conscious admissions?

Methodological Overview

To best answer the research questions, the methodology for this study was a constructivist qualitative approach. A constructivist approach fit well because it emphasizes the meaning-making process for each individual, or that each individual's reality is constructed out of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, a constructivist approach is important as Asian American college students make meaning of race in different ways. The approach depends on a multitude of factors, including their lived experiences, geographic locations, and other environmental factors (Chan, 2017a; Johnston-Guerrero & Pizzolato, 2016; Omi & Winant,

2015). Additionally, qualitative inquiry pairs well with a focus on participants' stories and lived experiences (Bhattacharya, 2017).

The phenomenon of interest in this study was the relationship between students' interpretation of racial consciousness and their opinion on race-conscious admissions. Study participants were self-identified Asian Americans willing to talk about their opinion on the race-conscious admission controversy. I interviewed 20 college students with varying opinions on the race-conscious admissions controversy, including support, neither support nor oppose, and oppose. Allowing space for a variety of opinions enabled me to examine the nuances in the relationship between students' racial consciousness and political opinions. Because this study used the race-conscious admissions debate at Harvard as a framework for investigating the relationship between notions of race and political opinion, I recruited participants from a similar institution: Azalea University (pseudonym, AU), another Ivy League institution with a highly selective admissions process that includes race as a factor of consideration.

Key Terms

This study uses a variety of terms; a few key terms are included:

Asian American: This study uses Asian American as a panethnic, political identity that includes South Asians, East Asians, and Southeast Asians. Pacific Islanders are not included in this study because their experiences with race, racialization, and race-conscious admissions are distinctly different and unique (Hall, 2015).

Race: This study uses Omi and Winant's (2015) definition of "race as a master category" or "a fundamental concept that has profoundly shaped, and continues to shape, the history, polity, economic structure, and culture of the United States" (p. 106). An important aspect of the symbiotic relationship between race and society is that

"race and racism in the United States have been shaped by a centuries-long

conflict between white domination and resistance by people of color" (Omi &

Winant, 2015, p. 3).

Race-Conscious admissions: The Supreme Court has defined and redefined race-

conscious admissions as a holistic approach to college admissions that includes a

host of objective criteria (e.g., SAT scores, high school GPA) and subjective

criteria (e.g., personal statements). Among those criteria is race, which is used

only as a plus factor to give reparation to applicants who face racial stereotypes.

Although race-conscious admissions is one aspect of the broader concept of

affirmative action, this study uses the term affirmative action interchangeably

with race-conscious admissions.

Racial consciousness: To operationalize how Asian American college students make

meaning of their racial consciousness, I utilized the MMRI (Sellers et al., 1998).

The MMRI includes four components of racial consciousness: *racial salience*, or

the relevance of race in a particular situation; *racial centrality*, or the meaning of

race to self-identity across time; *racial regard*, or feelings about own racial group;

and *racial ideology*, or notions of how members of the racial group should act.

Opinion on affirmative action: The MMRI also connects the relationship between

individuals' notions of race to their behavior. In this study, the behavior of

interest is the opinion taken by Asian Americans on the race-conscious

admissions controversy. I used participants' opinions on race-conscious

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admissions to embody the nontraditional ways Asian Americans participate in civic engagement and activism (Manzano et al., 2017; Park et al., 2008).

Significance of Study

As German philosopher Georg Hegel theorized, every idea has an opposite idea and through conflicting ideas, better solutions can be achieved. Given the decades of controversy over race-conscious admissions, the emergence of another controversy pushes the discipline of higher education toward a deeper understanding of race and racial equity. Although this particular race-conscious controversy is complicated because of its conflation with Asian American admissions, this study used the controversy to examine the relationship between identity and politics[4]. As such, the significance of this study is twofold.

First, this study adds to the understanding of racial consciousness by linking racial identity and racial ideology to an opinion on policy. Researchers have advocated for a move away from traditional stage models of racial identity development and toward an understanding of racial identity that allows for more fluidity (Chan, 2017b). I acknowledge the existence of multiple racial identities, but I take it one step further by connecting racial identity to how students develop beliefs about how the world should work, particularly as it relates to social and political issues. Therefore, this study contributes to how higher education researchers consider racial identity by developing a definition of racial consciousness. Racial consciousness is not only an internal process that affects an individual's thoughts and identity, but one that also shapes political opinions, which has real implications for college campuses and society in general.

[4] I borrowed this phrase from Lee's (2008) article, "Race, Immigration and the Identity-to-Politics Link."

Understanding why Asian Americans have differing opinions on race-conscious admissions can also inform understandings of the role of race in educational policy and other political issues. Given the controversial election of President Trump, political issues involving race have become increasingly polarizing (Iyengar et al., 2019). Almost 50 years after the 1960s civil rights movement, the fight for racial equity has not yet concluded, and this study contributes to understanding how views on race inform policies meant to achieve racial equity. In addition to understanding the controversy over race-conscious admissions, this study can also inform other issues such as immigration, on which Asian Americans' differing understandings of racial identity also contribute to polarization. Furthermore, I can help higher education staff, faculty, and researchers understand the relationship between racial identity and political opinion for other racial groups and can help explain why college students and the American public are split on sociopolitical issues, such as immigration, police brutality, and other race-related controversies.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Because this dissertation investigated how racial consciousness influenced the different opinions held by Asian American college students, this study contributes to our understanding of both Asian American racial identity development and Asian American students' opinions on race-conscious admissions. Participants' opinions on race-conscious admissions can be seen as one of the nontraditional ways Asian Americans participate in civic engagement and activism (Manzano et al., 2017; Park et al., 2008). Therefore, not only does this study inform the literature on racial identity and civic engagement separately, but it also defines racial consciousness, an understudied area in higher education literature.

This study sits at the nexus of three main areas of literature: racial identity, civic engagement, and racial consciousness. To best understand each area, this interdisciplinary study draws upon scholarship from Asian American studies, political science, sociology, and higher education. As such, I first situate the race-conscious admissions debate in the racial triangulation of Asian Americans between whites and Blacks. I then review a brief history of how Asian American admissions became conflated with the race-conscious admissions controversy and how—through the rise of neoconservatism, interest convergence with whites, a pursuit of whiteness, and engagement with anti-Blackness—a clear ideological divide emerged in the Asian American community.

Next, I establish the link between racial identity and civic engagement by reviewing literature on racial group consciousness and its effect on political participation. Because many studies examining this "identity to politics link" (Lee, 2008) assume all members of the same racial group make meaning of race the same way, I turn to racial identity development literature to understand the different ways students make meaning of race concerning sense of self. Then, I

review the literature on Asian American student civic engagement to define civic engagement as having an opinion on race-conscious admissions. Last, I review the multidimensional model of racial identity (Sellers et al., 1998) and the multidimensional model of raceclass frames and affirmative action (Poon et al., 2019) and discuss how both theories guide this study.

Racialization of Asian Americans

To understand how Asian Americans are caught in the middle of the race-conscious admissions debate, the racialization of Asian Americans in the United States must be discussed. Racial formation theorists have long emphasized the social and historical construction of race: "The process of race making, and its reverberations throughout the social order, is what we call racial formation. We define racial formation as the sociohistorical process by which racial identities are created, lived out, transformed, and destroyed" (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 109). Moreover, racial formation theory emphasizes "race as a master category—a fundamental concept that has profoundly shaped, and continues to shape, the history, polity, economic structure, and culture of the United States" (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 106). Put simply, race is deeply embedded in many, if not all, aspects of society and its ever-changing meaning is the result of a symbiotic relationship in which race influences and is influenced by society. Unfortunately, part of the sociohistorical construction of race includes the degradation of people of color: "Native Americans face removal and genocide, Blacks were subjected to racial slavery and Jim Crow, Latin@s were invaded and colonized, and Asians face exclusion" (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 8). As such, each racial group has a distinct relationship with race.

For Asian Americans, Kim's (1999) racial triangulation theory explained how Asian Americans have been racialized *in between* and *ostracized from* Blacks and whites. Asian Americans have been "racially triangulated vis-à-vis Blacks and whites or located in the field of

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racial positions with reference to these two other points" (Kim, 1999, p. 107). Kim (1999) used covert racism in the late 1800s as evidence for two simultaneous processes that have created the racial triangulation of Asian Americans: relative valorization and civic ostracization.

Relative valorization is when Asian Americans are placed in a relatively superior position to Blacks as a way to oppress both groups. The valorization of Asian immigrants in relation to Blacks first began as a way to maintain cheap labor. After the abolishment of slavery, Asian immigrants were positioned as superior to Blacks, but permanently foreign and unassimilable to white norms to create a labor force to fulfill the need for cheap labor without creating another version of slavery. However, the valorization of Asian immigrants was inconsistent as Chinese immigrants were sometimes lumped with, but also differentiated from Blacks. The relative valorization of Asian Americans meant that Chinese immigrants were simply demonized less uniformly and less frequently than Blacks.

Relative valorization can be seen today as the depiction of Asian Americans as the "model minority." The model minority myth is the false narrative that Asian Americans' "cultural values of diligence, family solidarity, respect for education, and self-sufficiency have propelled [them] to notable success" (Kim, 1999, p. 118). The status given to Asian Americans as the model minority explicitly suggests that other minorities, such as Blacks, should be able to bring themselves out of poverty and racism because if Asian Americans could do it, then other communities of color should be able to as well. In addition to relative valorization, the model minority myth attributes Asian Americans' success to their culture. As a result, it continues to racialize Asian Americans as unassimilable to white norms, and therefore as forever foreigners. Next, the second process of racial triangulation, or civic ostracization, is the assumption that Asians have no interest in politics or civic engagement.

Before defining civic ostracization, it is important to note that relative valorization also includes Asian Americans' own separation from Blacks in attempts to gain approval from whites. Kim (1999) wrote that during the late 1800s, Chinese American communities began to flourish in the South, mostly as grocery merchants, serving as the economic middleman between Blacks and whites. At that time, Chinese Americans moved from a proximity to Blackness to a proximity to whiteness through incremental gestures of acceptance from whites. Many Chinese Americans discouraged interaction and marriage with Blacks and attended white churches and organizations in attempts to become white. As a result, Asian Americans' struggle for advancement has rested upon appealing to whites and gaining privileges that are associated with whiteness, which are different than the struggles of Blacks, which have focused on racial parity.

The second process of racial triangulation is the civic ostracization of Asian Americans, where the "dominant group A (whites) constructs subordinate group B (Asian Americans) as immutably foreign and unassimilable with whites on cultural and/or racial grounds in order to ostracize them from the body politic and civic membership" (Kim, 1999, p. 107). Not only were Asian immigrants seen as unfit and uninterested in the American way of life, but they were also the only group in American history to be legally deemed aliens ineligible for citizenship. Moreover, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 is the only U.S. immigration legislation that explicitly excluded a specific ethnicity. The internment of Japanese Americans during World War II further exemplified the ostracization, or "foreignness," of Asian Americans. Because of this history of civic ostracization, Asian Americans are especially vulnerable to being co-opted by a white agenda, seeking appeasement from whites and maintaining their model minority status in attempts to minimize their exclusion (Kim, 1999).

Racial Triangulation and Race-Conscious Admissions

After the 1960s civil rights movement, the overt nature of racism shifted to one of covertness (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). At the same time, civil rights policies such as affirmative action were devalued by conservatives. Because of racial triangulation, Asian Americans were vulnerable to this "retreat from race" (Takagi, 1992) or "racial retrenchment" (Kim, 1999). Indeed, placing Asian Americans as superior to Blacks allowed conservatives to employ policies harmful for communities of color without appearing racist (Kim, 1999).

Even though most Asian American advocacy groups agree that Asian Americans, like Blacks, have benefited from affirmative action programs (Chang, 2015; Takagi, 1992), conservatives have continued to push the model minority narrative upon Asian Americans. By representing Asian Americans as superior to Blacks and as "honorary whites," it "redraws [the] boundaries" between whites versus non-whites to Asian Americans and whites versus blacks and other groups of color (Kim, 1999).

With racial triangulation in mind, I review a brief history of Asian Americans and race-conscious admissions, with a specific focus on a controversy in the 1980s that conflated discrimination against Asian Americans with race-conscious admissions; thus successfully shifting the debate away from the issue at hand—whether several elite universities imposed racial quotas on Asian Americans students to protect institutional image, status, and whiteness of the student body—to the doctored issue of whether race-conscious admissions practices unfairly discriminated against Asian Americans (Kim, 1999).

Brief History of Asian Americans and Race-Conscious Admissions

As mentioned in Chapter 1, race-conscious admissions went through a shift in priority with the *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978) case. To briefly summarize the significance of the *Bakke* case:

> Race-conscious admissions was saved, then, but only after it was effectively delinked from slavery, segregation, and the general contours of an anti-Black society. Blacks could be admitted in higher numbers to higher education, as long as this was framed not in terms of what was owed to them as a matter of justice, but rather in terms of what would enhance (white) students' abilities to thrive in a multicultural world. (Kim, 2018, p. 225)

It was around this time that dissatisfaction with Asian American admissions first came to light and became intertwined with race-conscious admissions. Takagi's (1992) book, *The Retreat from Race,* thoroughly documented how these two issues became conflated.

During the 1980s, Asian Americans had two major complaints about college admissions. First, universities were using quotas as a way to suppress the admission of Asian American applicants because Asian American enrollment did not proportionally match the increase in Asian American applicants. Second, colleges were not admitting Asian Americans at the same rates as white applicants, with one of the reasons being admissions officers unfairly giving Asian American applicants lower personality scores.

These two complaints were contradictory, however, because they encompassed different definitions of equity (Takagi, 1992). The first complaint framed Asian Americans, like other groups of color, as racial minorities who needed to be proportionally admitted. This argument emphasized equity as equal outcomes or the proportional representation of Asian Americans in higher education. The second complaint framed Asian Americans, unlike other groups of color,

as academically competitive with whites. This argument emphasized individual merit and competition and focused on the equal access of minorities to higher education, or the notion that "individuals from different racial groups should be evaluated by the same criteria" (Takagi, 1992, p. 24). These contradictory complaints not only represented confusion in the Asian American community, but also gave way for university officials to conflate Asian American admissions with affirmative action.

Conflation with Asian American Admissions

As Asian Americans continued to lobby their case, university officials responded in a way that pitted Asian American applicants against other groups of color, thus resulting in a conflation of the issues concerning Asian American admissions and affirmative action. At the same time, backlash against affirmative action continued from the *Bakke* decision. The discourse around affirmative action shifted from focusing on reparations to emphasizing diversity. Moreover, in response to complaints against Asian American admissions, university officials "constructed Asians as (nonracial) advantaged subjects" even though their "claims of discrimination identify Asian applicants as racially disadvantages subjects" (Takagi, 1992, p. 55). University of California, Berkeley president David Gardner argued that Asian Americans were overrepresented at Berkeley because Asian Americans were admitted at the expense of deserving underrepresented minorities such as Blacks and Latinxs. This counterargument attempted to (a) pit Asian Americans against other groups of color (or relative valorization), (b) reframe the intent behind Asian Americans' discontent with college admissions practices, and (c) absolve the university of any wrongdoing instead of confronting discriminatory practices. As a result, controversy around Asian American admissions became intertwined with controversy

around affirmative action, and once again, attention shifted away from addressing systemic racism and counteracting white privilege.

Although the issue of Asian American admissions was far from resolved, it was temporarily pushed to the side while attacks against race-conscious admissions continued. Because the priority of race-conscious admissions had already shifted from reparations to diversity, supporters of race-conscious admissions scrambled to convince the Supreme Court yet again of the value of race in college admissions. In 2003, two landmark cases defined race-conscious admissions as we know it today: *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) established the precedent that race-conscious admissions can continue in practice because of the many benefits of a diverse college campus, and *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003) established the practice of holistic admissions, wherein race must be one of many factors of consideration for admissions.

Although the Supreme Court ultimately supported race-conscious admissions, it was another step away from the initial potency of affirmative action to address systemic racism and counteract white privilege. Moreover, after those Supreme Court decisions, six states instituted a ban on affirmative action: Michigan, Nebraska, Colorado, Arizona, New Hampshire, and Oklahoma. The ban in Michigan was brought to the Supreme Court in *Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action* (2014) and ultimately the Supreme Court supported states' rights to amend their constitutions. Although the issue of Asian American admissions was pushed to the side, the foundations were built for it to emerge again.

Two Supreme Court cases, *Fisher v. University of Texas I* (2013) and *Fisher v. University of Texas II* (2016), continued to support race-conscious admissions as defined by the *Gratz* and *Grutter* cases. However, Justice Samuel Alito's dissent in *Fisher v. University of Texas II* (2016) foreshadowed the focus on Asian Americans in the race-conscious admissions

controversy. In his dissenting opinion of *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2016), Justice Alito used Asian American admissions to weaken the legitimacy of race-conscious admissions. He highlighted the long history of discrimination against Asian Americans, particularly in education, and questioned the Court's willingness to allow this discrimination to continue.

Justice Alito added that the University of Texas (UT) does not value Asian Americans the same way they value other students of color. He argued UT does not see Asian Americans as adding to cross-racial relationships, breaking down racial stereotypes, and contributing to the benefits of diversity. Lastly, Justice Alito concluded UT's treatment of Asian Americans as one homogenous overrepresented group as discriminatory. He questioned why UT lumped Asian Americans together to consider them overrepresented minorities when disaggregated data shows some subpopulations of Asian Americans (e.g., Southeast Asians) are not attending college at the same rates as other subpopulations (e.g., East Asians and South Asians).

Although the points highlighted by Justice Alito acknowledged the unfair treatment of Asian Americans in college admissions, his use of this argument to undercut race-conscious admissions does not focus on the core issue. Once again, instead of investigating the systems of racism and white privilege, Justice Alito reinforced race-conscious admissions as the culprit for the unfair treatment of Asian Americans—a false narrative constructed by conservatives in the 1980s. As a result, controversy over race-conscious admissions continued to percolate through the legal system, leading up to the *SFFA v. Harvard* (2018) case. The new Harvard case echoes the 1980s controversy, but with an emergence of neoconservative Asian Americans fueling the new lawsuit.

Rise of Neoconservative Asian Americans

One of the significant differences between the 1980s and 2019 controversies over Asian

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American admissions is the rise of neoconservatism among Asian Americans. As Omatsu (2010) identified, "There is one crucial difference: who is being empowered?" (p. 312). Prior to the 1980s, activism by Asian Americans mirrored those of other groups of color and focused on bringing power to the people, or the most disenfranchised (e.g., low-income laborers, youth, former prisoners, addicts, senior citizens, tenants, and small-business people; Omatsu, 2010) For example, Asian Americans and other students of color were integral in the college student protests that established ethnic studies in 1968 (Chan, 2010; Omatsu, 2010; Umemoto, 1989). However, in the 1980s, the empowerment of Asian Americans shifted to young professionals. Because they had benefited from the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s (e.g., desegregation in the suburbs, removal of quotas in universities and graduate programs, growth of job opportunities in middle-class occupations such as medicine, law, and education), their political ideas differed from those represented in the civil rights era. Instead, they represented new and different political ideas that Omatsu (2010) defined as neoconservative ideals, which included "speaking out against racism against Asian Americans but doing so in a way that goes against affirmative action programs and breaking the prevailing civil rights thinking of the past four decades" (p. 314). The rise of neoconservative ideals was expedited by the influx of Asian American immigrants, particularly from East and South Asia, who came to the United States to pursue graduate degrees and high-skilled labor jobs due to the parameters of the 1965 Immigration Act. This shift was from the Asian American immigrants who came to the United States to work on the railroads and other manual labor positions.

The rise of neoconservative Asian Americans established a few vocal advocacy groups that have fought against race-conscious admissions. Three of the most vocal and active groups are the 80-20 Educational Foundation, the Asian American Coalition for Education (AACE), and

the Asian American Legal Foundation (AALF). The mission of all three organizations is to fight racial discrimination toward Asian Americans, advocate for merit-driven admissions criteria, and make political change. They were involved in multiple statewide bans of affirmative action, including the Supreme Court case of *Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action* (2014), which affirmed Michigan's voter-initiated ban. S.B. Woo, the president and founder of the 80-20 Educational Foundation, successfully spearheaded a campaign against a proposed bill in California (SCA-5) that attempted to reverse Proposition 209, which had banned affirmative action in California.

Interest Convergence and Interest Divergence

Neoconservative Asian Americans' interest in ending race-conscious admissions is further compounded by interest convergence with a largely white anti-affirmative action movement. In the controversy, the anti-race-conscious admissions movement has been eager to "embrace Asian Americans in order to bolster the case against affirmative action" (Park & Liu, 2014, p. 42). Asian Americans are often used as racial mascots to advocate for numerically driven definitions of merit and as the example of hard-working racial minorities who are victims of affirmative action policy (Park & Liu, 2014).

However, Park and Liu (2014) argued that anti-affirmative action advocates "want quantifiable standards of merit when they keep out supposedly unqualified [underrepresented minorities] but appear willing to dismiss such rigidity if it works against their self-interest" (p. 47). For example, a study found that white adults are more likely to support holistic versions of admissions when they are reminded that in the University of California system, Asian Americans make up more than twice their proportional representation in California. However, when the

white participants were not reminded of Asian Americans, they favored admissions criteria emphasizing standardized tests and GPAs (Samson, 2013).

Furthermore, Park and Liu (2014) argued a high numeric representation of Asian Americans benefits universities but not Asian Americans themselves. Universities benefit from high numbers of Asian Americans because they "get high 'minority' enrollments and test scores" (Park & Liu, 2014, p. 52). However, the high numeric representation of Asian Americans diverts universities' attention from the unique needs of Asian American students. Instead of experiencing a sense of belonging or inclusion that might be expected when there is a critical mass of minority students, Asian Americans still feel isolated and experience racism, even at campuses with high numbers of Asian Americans (Park & Liu, 2014).

Pursuit of Whiteness

Asian Americans' growing opposition to race-conscious admissions represents a pursuit of whiteness (Chang, 2019). The pursuit of whiteness is unsurprising, given racial triangulation theory's emphasis on how the racialization of Asian Americans as model minorities and perpetual foreigners can easily entice Asian Americans to align with whiteness. Using Harris's (1993) concept of whiteness as property and Karabel's (2005) historical investigation into selective institutions' practice of changing admissions criteria to exclude undesirable applicants, Chang (2019) demonstrated that college admissions criteria represent a measurement of whiteness. Furthermore, because of immigrant parents' desire for status through education, Chang (2019) applied the concept of whiteness as property to argue Asian Americans are caught in pursuit of whiteness in that "those who obtain membership into those elite institutions come to enjoy essential privileges accompanying whiteness" (p. 12). However, Chang (2019) noted Asian American membership in elite institutions does not protect against racial discrimination,

guarantee success in careers, nor help lift all Asian Americans out of poverty or racism. In conclusion, Chang (2019) argued the ability to pass as white and gain admissions into elite institutions is not enough to address deeply rooted issues of racism and racial inequality.

Reinforcement of Anti-Blackness

Asian American opposition to race-conscious admissions reinforces anti-Black sentiment. Often missing in the analysis of Asian Americans' racialization in the race-conscious admissions controversy is Asian Americans' power dynamic over Blacks (Kim, 2018). Asian Americans have been called "honorary whites" or the "model minority," and to counteract that narrative, there has been an emphasis on Asian Americans as not white but as people of color who have experienced racism and exclusion. However, in Kim's (2018) deep analysis of how Asian Americans have been used throughout multiple Supreme Court cases to spoil or undercut race-conscious admissions, she offered the following poignant argument:

> From the arrival of the first Chinese immigrants during the Gold Rush to the present, Asians have been figured as *not white* but also, and primarily, as *not Black.* … white supremacy has pushed them down, and anti-Blackness has provided the floor beneath which they cannot fall. Which is to say, even the worst-off Asians – those burdened by refugee status, lack of citizenship, poverty, language barriers, and more—enjoy the boon of being not Black in an anti-Black society. (p. 226)

Therefore, conservative Asian Americans and whites who argue Asian Americans have succeeded despite experiences of racism are missing an important piece: that in an anti-Black society, Asian Americans "are positioned differently from Blacks" and therefore have "specific advantages, immunities, and burdens that emerge from this position" (Kim, 2018, p. 226).

In summary, the way university officials responded to Asian American complaints about admissions practices in the 1980s led to the conflation of Asian American admissions with race-conscious admissions. The race-conscious admissions controversy of this study's focus is reminiscent of what happened in the 1980s; however, there has been a rise of neoconservative Asian Americans since then. This rise in neoconservatism is supported by a convergence of interests with whites, leading to an unintentional pursuit of whiteness reinforced by Asian Americans' position above Blacks. This change in political ideology led to diverging ideologies in the Asian American community, as seen by Asian Americans adamantly on both sides of the race-conscious admissions controversy.

Opposite Positions and Dueling Ideologies

Much has been written about race-conscious admissions and its beneficial outcomes (see Jayakumar et al., 2018, for a comprehensive literature review). However, this section will focus on studies that address a split in position or ideology on race-conscious admissions among Asian Americans.

The controversy of race-conscious admissions has been of interest to researchers. Studies on race-conscious admissions have found certain characteristics more likely to predict support or opposition to race-conscious admissions. In general, students who are white, male, have higher socioeconomic status, and hold conservative political values are more likely to oppose race-conscious admissions (Sax & Arredondo, 1999). Interestingly, Asian Americans have been found to be the racial group most likely to oppose race-conscious admissions after whites and the most likely to support race-conscious admissions after Blacks (Inkelas, 2003). Inkelas (2003) found Asian Americans were most likely of all racial groups to strongly agree with race-conscious admissions in principle but to strongly disagree with race-conscious admissions in practice.

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Furthermore, researchers have found that Asian American support for race-conscious admissions varies by immigration status, with first-generation Asian Americans having the weakest support (Lee & Tran, 2019).

According to survey data, there is a clear divide among Asian Americans on the race-conscious admissions controversy. A national survey of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) voters found that around 25% opposed affirmative action and 65% supported it (Ramakrishnan & Wong, 2018). The study showed most AAPI voters have supported and continue to support affirmative action, except for a notable decrease among ethnically Chinese voters. In 2012, 78% of Chinese voters supported affirmative action; in 2016, this percentage dropped to 41% (Ramakrishnan & Wong, 2018). Studies have noted a difference in survey responses depending on the wording of items about race-conscious admissions (Wong et al., 2018). Overall, Asian Americans generally support race-conscious admissions, but questions referring to increasing the numbers of Black and minority students rather than increasing access to higher education have less support from Asian Americans (Wong et al., 2018).

Others have attempted to understand the divide in Asian Americans' positions by examining the amicus briefs submitted by Asian American interest groups. Chang (2015) looked at four specific amicus briefs in the first *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2013) case and identified how each amicus brief addressed or did not address Asian American racial stereotypes. The briefs submitted in support of race-conscious admissions successfully challenged the model minority racial narrative (i.e., the assumption that all Asian Americans are successful) by disaggregating data and highlighting the lower educational outcomes for some subpopulations of Asian Americans (e.g., Southeast Asians). However, Chang (2015) stated the argument from supporters of race-conscious admissions could have been stronger if they addressed the yellow

peril racial narrative occurring at universities. The yellow peril narrative is the fear of Asian Americans overtaking universities, a narrative related to the complaints that occurred in the 1980s about universities using quotas to limit the number of admitted Asian Americans (Kim, 2012; Takagi, 1992). Unfortunately, the arguments in support of race-conscious admissions did not address the yellow peril narrative, which could have helped address some of the claims being made by the opposition (Chang, 2015).

The racial narratives used by opponents of race-conscious admissions were the inverse, playing into the false narrative of the model minority stereotype by depicting Asian Americans only as high-achieving students that deserve admissions. However, the amicus briefs opposing race-conscious admissions did address the yellow peril narrative by making a case that universities are attempting to limit the number of Asian American admits. In conclusion, the failure to address both racial narratives limited Asian Americans' ability to transform conversations about racial equity. Instead, it constrained Asian Americans to conventional stereotypes and weakened Asian Americans' ability to "shape the future of civil rights" (Chang, 2015, p. 146).

Adding to Chang's (2015) analysis of the first *Fisher* (2013) case, Poon and Segoshi (2018) used critical discourse analysis to analyze eight amicus briefs from both *Fisher* (2013, 2016) cases. Although both sides agreed the issue was a civil rights case for Asian Americans, Poon and Segoshi (2018) found the amicus briefs represented an ideological split between the two sides. The challengers of race-conscious admissions took a colorblind approach (Bonilla-Silva, 2018) while the supporters of race-conscious admissions adopted a racial egalitarian ideology. Poon and Segoshi (2018) used Moses's (2016) definition of racial egalitarianism, in

which supporters of race-conscious admissions believe the purpose of race-conscious admissions is to give reparations to past and present racism and inequality in the United States.

In an extensive report on the 2019 race-conscious controversy, Garces and Poon (2018) demonstrated similarities and differences between the dueling sides. The researchers found that opponents of race-conscious admissions were predominantly Chinese American and used WeChat instead of other social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to distribute information. WeChat is a common platform used by Chinese American immigrants, which suggests that many opponents of race-conscious admissions are foreign-born. As for similarities, Garces and Poon (2018) found supporters and opponents of race-conscious admissions recognized racism exists in the United States, which has not been true for white opponents of race-conscious admissions. Both sides were found to have a poor understanding of what affirmative action means; most supporters and opponents thought affirmative action was the practice of using racial quotas in admissions decisions. Additionally, both sides supported the general principles of holistic review, including the consideration of criteria outside of tests and grades. This finding went against the common perception that opponents of race-conscious admissions believe test scores should be the only criterion for admissions.

To further expand on different ideologies, Poon et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study of 36 participants and found four distinct frames in which Asian Americans view the race-conscious admissions debate. Of the 36 Asian Americans, 12 represented anti-affirmative action groups and were all ethnically Chinese, and 16 represented pro-affirmative action organizations with a mix of ethnicities, including Indian, Filipino, Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese. Twelve participants were first-generation immigrants. Of the 12 participants opposed to race-conscious

admissions, 11 supported holistic admission review in principle and all 12 had an inaccurate understanding of affirmative action after the *Fisher* (2013, 2016) cases.

Poon et al. (2019) found Asian Americans against affirmative action prescribed either an ethnocentric nationalism or abstract liberalism way of viewing the controversy. Ethnocentric nationalism represented those who acknowledged racial disparities in educational resources but attributed these differences to cultural stereotypes. Those with ethnocentric nationalism did not have a racial or class-based analysis. Abstract liberalism was an ideology in which the participants' views "lacked a strong analysis of racial inequality and relied on an uncritical class analysis to justify their position" (Poon et al., 2019, p. 217). Poon et al. (2019) found supporters of race-conscious admissions fell into two categories: conscious compromise and systemic transformation. Those with a conscious compromise ideology supported race-conscious admissions because they saw diversity as a benefit to all, instead of prioritizing the needs of racial minorities. Those with a systemic transformation ideology identified the need to create structural change to address systems of racism and classism. Although the findings from Poon et al. (2019) gave great insight into the ideologies held by individuals who support or oppose race-conscious admissions, they did not incorporate a robust analysis of how racial identity construction and critical group consciousness shape an Asian American individual's position on race-conscious admissions.

All four studies I reviewed highlight the powerful role race, racialization, and racial ideology play in Asian Americans' positions on race-conscious admissions. The way Asian Americans have been racialized in the United States plays a large role in how Asian Americans are positioned in the affirmative action debate. However, none of the studies make connections to individuals' constructions of race in relation to self and others in the same racial group. One

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way to better understand the dueling positions taken by Asian Americans is to understand better how notions of race can impact an individual's position on controversial issues. As such, the next section will review literature on how different aspects of race, such as racial group consciousness and racial discrimination, impact civic engagement for Asian Americans.

Relationship Between Racial Consciousness and Civic Engagement

Literature on the relationship between racial identity and civic engagement has examined different aspects of race and how they influence political participation or civic engagement, two terms I will use interchangeably throughout this chapter. Typically, notions of race are broken down into three categories: racial group consciousness, panethnicity versus ethnic identity, and racial discrimination.

Racial Group Consciousness

Scholars have asserted politically disadvantaged individuals, such as racial and ethnic minorities, are more effective in getting what they need if they work as a group (Dawson, 1994; Miller et al., 1981; Verba & Nie, 1972). A key component of group-based politics is racial group consciousness, which has been shown to be especially powerful for Blacks (Chong & Rogers, 2005). Group consciousness is defined as "identification with a group and a political awareness or ideology regarding the group's relative position in society along with a commitment to collective action" (Miller et al., 1981, p. 495).

Miller et al. (1981) identified four components of group consciousness. The first component is group identification, or "a psychological feeling of belonging to a particular social stratum" (Miller et al., 1981, p. 496). Miller et al. (1981) further explained that there has to be "an awareness of the objective group's position in relation to members of other social strata and a sense of shared interest with those having the same stratum characteristics but not with those of

other strata" (p. 496). In other words, an individual has to recognize they are part of a group with shared experiences that only exist because of membership in that group. The second component is polar affect, or "a preference for members of one's own group (ingroup) and a dislike for those outside the group (outgroup)" (Miller et al., 1981, p. 496). This component of group identification is in line with traditional Marxist theories of social change, in which affinity toward one's group and conflict with other groups is integral. The third component is polar power, or the "expressed satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the group's current status, power, or material resources in relation to that of the outgroup" (Miller et al., 1981, p. 496). The fourth component is individual versus system blame, or "the belief that the responsibility for a group's low status in society is attributable either to individual failings or to inequities in the social system" (Miller et al., 1981, p. 496).

To be specific, Dawson (1994) found that because race is such a salient aspect to the lives of Blacks and they rely on their community to represent their needs, Blacks are a relatively politically cohesive group. Dawson (1994) attributed that behavior to the Black utility heuristic, also referred to as racial linked fate, or "the belief that one's fate is linked to that of the racial group" (Dawson 1994, p. 80). Studies have shown that for Blacks, "as long as race remains dominant in determining the lives of individual Blacks, it is 'rational' for Blacks to follow group cues in interpreting and acting in the political world" (Dawson 1994, p. 57). As a result, Dawson (1994) argued the way Blacks participate in politics (e.g., how they vote, the party affiliation they hold) is driven by the way they make meaning of race and their racial experiences. Moreover, even despite socioeconomic differences, Blacks still use racial cues to dictate their political behavior, unlike for whites for whom socioeconomic status predicts individualistic behavior (Dawson, 1994).

Inconsistent findings exist among the literature on the effectiveness of group

consciousness on political participation. However, Chong and Rogers (2005) argued those

inconsistencies could be due to differences in the operationalization of group identification and

consciousness or the possibility that consciousness might not be strongly connected to all aspects

of political activity. In their study using National Black Election Study (NBES) survey data,

Chong and Rogers (2005) found that understanding all four aspects of racial group consciousness

was, in fact, a weak predictor of the likelihood of voting, but a significant influence on other

political activities such as petitioning, protests, and boycotts. Using racial group consciousness

and racial linked fate in the Black community as a blueprint, researchers have since investigated

the relationship between racial identity and political participation for other groups of color.

These studies have questioned whether racial group consciousness or group-based

politics can accurately describe political participation for Asian Americans. Sanchez and Vargas

(2016) found the link between group consciousness and linked fate is much stronger for Black

Americans than for Asian Americans and other groups such as Latinxs and whites. Junn and

Masuoka (2008a) compared racial group consciousness and racial linked fate between Asian

Americans and Blacks. Using data from the 2004 Ethnic Politics Survey, which was collected in

California during November of 2004, Junn and Masuoka's (2008a) dataset included 416 Black

and 354 Asian American respondents. The survey included an experiment designed to measure

the effect of descriptive representation on racial group consciousness. Half of the participants

from each racial group were shown photos of U.S. Cabinet members of their racial group. For

example, half of the Asian American participants were shown a photo of Elaine Chao and

Norman Mineta, and half of the Black participants were shown photos of Ronald Brown and Rod

Paige. This group was considered the treatment group; the control group was not shown any

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photos. All groups answered five questions to capture racial identification, racial consciousness, and racial linked fate.

Junn and Masuoka (2008a) ran chi-squared tests between both sets of treatment and control groups. The percentage of Asian Americans who felt close to their racial group (67% of the control group and 78% of the treatment group) was lower than Blacks in either group (79% of the control group and 84% of the treatment group). The percentage of Asian Americans who felt a sense of racial linked fate (45% of the control group and 56% of the treatment group) was smaller than that of Black participants (56% of the control group and 64% of the treatment group). However, the treatment group had a significantly higher percentage of participants indicate a closeness to their racial group and racial linked fate than the control group, suggesting that being primed with a photo made a difference for Asian Americans.

Most notably, Junn and Masouka (2008a) found that "between a third (treatment group) and 44% (control group) of Asian Americans say that being Asian American is 'not at all important' to their political identity" (p. 733). Although Asian American participants identified as being Asian American, they did not see race as part of how they make political decisions. Junn and Masouka (2008a) theorized this distinction exists because race may not be as salient in Asian Americans' everyday lives. Although this study gave interesting insights into the complicated ways Asian Americans make connections between racial consciousness, racial identification, racial linked fate, and political identity, a quantitative study is not able to capture the nuances of how these components are interrelated and influence political decisions.

The way Asian Americans have been racialized led to complicated notions of Asian American identity. In a different study, Junn and Masuoka (2008b) interviewed 33 Asian American and Latinx youth from ages 18 to 35 in New York and California. There were three

main findings from their study. First, 40% of participants accepted a "whitewashed" identity, meaning they had more similarities with their white peers than peers from Asia or Latin America, but even those who identified with being whitewashed had a sense of racial linked fate. For example, one participant agreed she was "whitewashed" because she shopped at Abercrombie & Fitch. However, she started boycotting the store after an Asian American employee sued the company for racial discrimination. Second, Junn and Masouka (2008b) found that over 60% of their sample would consider the race of a political candidate, but that would not be the only criteria for consideration. Lastly, the researchers found that color evasive ideology, or the idea that race is not important, made participants hesitant to strongly attach themselves to race. For example, participants experienced tension between the desire to rely on a racial identity to make judgements and the expectation that race should not play a role when evaluating a political candidate (Junn & Masuoka, 2008b). All but six respondents felt it was important to be recognized by their ethnic background, particularly in a positive way. Junn and Masuoka's (2008b) qualitative study gave insight into the nuanced relationship between racial identity and political choices; however, it is difficult to tease apart those findings specific to Asian Americans due to the combination of Asian American and Latinx participants in their study.

Ethnicity and Panethnicity

Due to varying immigration patterns and many different ethnicities who speak different languages, a strong united panethnic racial identity can be challenging at times (Lopez & Espiritu, 1990). Therefore, scholars have examined political engagement in terms of ethnic and panethnic identity.

Panethnicity is a powerful and effective political tool to advocate for civil rights for Asian Americans (Espiritu, 1992; Lopez & Espiritu, 1990). Lopez and Espiritu (1990) articulated

a few different factors that influence a panethnic identity. For Asian Americans, they identified religion, language, and immigrant generation as three factors that vary widely across the many different ethnic groups among the Asian American population. At the time, they identified socioeconomic status as being the same for all Asian Americans, though this may not be true anymore (Lopez & Espiritu, 1990). They also identified Asian Americans as being concentrated in certain geographic areas and being racialized in the same ways. Therefore, the authors argued that "because the public could not distinguish among Asian groups, racism and deteriorating public attitudes toward Asians affect all members and require organization at the pan-Asian level" (Lopez & Espiritu, 1990, p. 210).

Lien (1994) studied the effects of ethnicity on political participation and found that neither group consciousness nor ethnic ties had a significant effect on Asian Americans' likelihood to vote. Lien (1994) did find that acculturation, or a sense of civic duty and level of political information, was the only aspect of ethnic identity that made a significant impact on voting and other types of political involvement, such as contributing to campaigns, contacting elected officials, and getting involved with groups to solve community problems. Moreover, Wong et al. (2005) found:

> those with a strong identification to a panethnic or ethnic identity did not participate in politics at a higher rate than those with a weak sense. Identity alone may not prompt political action. Instead, identity may have to be actively mobilized and politicized before it becomes a force toward political action. (p. 568)

Wong et al.'s (2005) findings demonstrated that racial identification alone does not predict higher participation in politics, but that critical consciousness needs to be raised for racial identity to influence political decisions.

Racial Discrimination

One way for critical consciousness to develop is through experiences of racial discrimination. Brown and Jones (2015) argued that a panethnic group consciousness occurs when ascription, or some type of racial discrimination, occurs. Brown and Jones' (2015) ethnoracialization model of group formation has three main components. First, the awareness of one's identity (either self-identity or group identity) is influenced by existing power structures. For example, Asian Americans are more likely to shed their ethnic identity to improve their chances at winning federal social services grants (Espiritu, 1992). Second, one's self-identity or group identity is continuously reinforced by external institutions or power structures, and one's identity can shift between ethnic and racial group identity depending on what is most beneficial at the time. For example, a person who identifies as Vietnamese American can shift to a Southeast Asian identity or an even broader Asian American identity. Although the model emphasizes the continuous movement between ascription and identification, it does not assume that ascription comes before identification. Last, the model acknowledges that experiences can strengthen or weaken group attachments, or what is termed discursive reattachment. For example, Filipinx Americans are ascribed an Asian identity by the U.S. Census, but some may self-identify as Asian and Latinx (Ocampo, 2014).

In support of the ethnoracialization model, Masuoka (2006) analyzed data from the 2000 Pilot National Asian American Political Survey and the 1999 Washington Post/Kaiser/Harvard National Survey on Latinos in America and found that "different measures of racial discrimination predict pan ethnic consciousness for each group" (p. 1009). Through simple descriptive frequencies, Masuoka (2006) found that approximately 46% of the 1,110 Asian American participants perceived no racial linked fate, in that they did not think what generally

happens to other groups of Asians in this country will affect what happens in their life. Moreover, using an ordinary least squares regression, Masouka (2006) found that income and racial discrimination predicted panethnic group consciousness, whereas immigration did not.

Aptekar (2009) found experiences of racial discrimination affect how Chinese and Asian Indian communities interact with politics. After interviewing eight political leaders and 23 leaders of Chinese and Indian organizations in a New Jersey town, Aptekar (2009) found the political leaders viewed Chinese immigrants as "insular and more interested in education than politics" (p. 1527). The one Chinese immigrant who was recruited to run for elected office ran for the school board. Aptekar (2009) concluded the perception of Chinese immigrants as the model minority limited their own goals and aspirations of political involvement. On the other hand, Aptekar (2009) found Asian Indians were more politically active because they were not racialized as model minorities. Because of their dark skin, some Asian Indians were stopped by the police and tensions between Asian Indians and whites were high; a mayoral candidate used anti-Indian rhetoric in his campaign, saying the white community was being overrun by Indians. Aptekar (2009) reasoned this incident occurred because Asian Indians are seen as "adversarial invaders rather than self-sufficient conformers" (p. 1528).

Aptekar (2009) pointed to how different experiences with race can impact political involvement in different ways. This conclusion has major implications for this study and establishes the link between experiences with racial discrimination and political action. Aptekar (2009) examined two specific ethnic groups in-depth and provided insight into how Chinese and Asian Indians are racialized differently. However, the race-conscious admissions controversy suggests that even among the same ethnic group, race is experienced and interpreted differently.

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Therefore, this study aimed to have ethnically diverse participants on both sides of the controversy.

Although the literature on the "identity to politics link" (Lee, 2008, p. 457) provides foundational knowledge of how race influences opinion, there is an assumption that members of the same racial group share common beliefs and want to achieve goals in the same way (Lee, 2008). Lee (2008) cautioned against the assumption that "populations will engage in collective politics simply based on shared racial and ethnic labels" (p. 466). He argued that with differing immigration backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, and ethnic backgrounds, the relationship between identity and politics is particularly complicated for Asian Americans. The next section will examine literature on the different ways Asian Americans make meaning of race and racial identity.

Asian American Racial Identity

Literature on college students' racial identity has traditionally followed a developmental model in which individuals move through different stages (Cross, 1995; Helms, 1990). However, because developmental models can be constraining, researchers have pushed toward increasingly fluid ways of thinking about racial identity for college students (Abes et al., 2007; Chan, 2017b). Furthermore, as race is a social construct (Omi & Winant, 2015), different experiences can influence an individual's identity development, including different geographic locations (Chan, 2017a), and can lead to different entry points to consciousness (Accapadi, 2012).

Kim's (2012) Asian American racial identity development (AARID) model was one of the first models to capture racial identity development for Asian Americans. The model identifies five stages through which Asian Americans develop their racial identity: ethnic awareness, white identification, awakening to social political consciousness, redirection to an Asian American

consciousness, and incorporation. Kim's (2012) model was the first to capture different levels of social consciousness and has been a helpful tool for understanding racial identity development for Asian Americans. The model includes ethnic and racial identity, "which illustrates how intertwined and yet dramatically different these two identities can be" (Accapadi, 2012, p. 67). However, a limitation of the model is its ability to fully capture varying experiences with race due to differences in ethnicity and other identities (Accapadi, 2012). Literature has shown that certain Asian Americans, such as Pakistanis or Southeast Asians, are racialized differently from East Asians and other Asian Americans (Accapadi, 2012; Hall, 2015). Although Kim's (2012) model is a strong starting point for understanding Asian American racial identity development, other scholars have developed models allowing for more fluidity.

To further explore how Asian Americans make meaning of their racial and ethnic identities, Johnston-Guerrero and Pizzolato (2016) conducted a qualitative study with 52 Asian American participants from two universities, Southwest University (SWU, pseudonym) and West Coast University (WCU, pseudonym). Seventy-five percent of participants included race or ethnicity when describing their identity, but their "utilization of [race and ethnicity] were varied, messy, and for some, even insufficient for describing their multidimensional Asian American identities" (Johnston-Guerrero & Pizzolato, 2016, p. 918). Of the 39 participants who included race or ethnicity, 24 included both race and ethnicity, 11 included only ethnicity, and four included only race. Of the 24 participants who included race and ethnicity, 12 participants used race and ethnicity interchangeably while the other 12 participants distinguished between the terms.

Therefore, Johnston-Guerrero and Pizzolato (2016) proposed a new theoretical model to describe how Asian Americans think about race and ethnicity in relationship to their identity.

Their multidimensional model of Asian American identity includes race and ethnicity as part of Asian American identity and incorporates four different questions about identity: "What am I?", "Where do I come from?", "Who am I?", and "What group do I belong to?". Their model emphasizes fluid movement throughout the model, similar to the movement of gears in a clock. Although the model emphasizes fluid movement, it does not provide a structure for how racial identity could influence political position; thus, the model was not a good fit for this study.

Another example of a racial identity model that departs from the stage model structure is the point of entry model of Asian American identity consciousness (POE). Accapadi (2012) developed the model to "[allow] for the possibility of multiple points of entry (or exits) on one's racial identity journey, which is fluid, continuous, and dynamic" (p. 72). The POE model identifies six different factors that influence Asian American identity formation: ethnic attachment, self as other, familial influence, immigration history, external influences and perceptions, and other social identities. The model theorizes students can enter racial consciousness through any of the points, or perhaps even through multiple points, throughout their racial consciousness journey; this fluidity is one of the model's strengths. Another strength of this model is its move away from the Black-white binary. Despite these strengths, the model did not fit well for this study because it only identifies how students enter or exit racial identity development without making connections to how their racial identity influences political position taking.

Geographic location is another factor influencing not just the beginning of racial identity development, but also the developmental process itself. Chan (2017a) conducted a qualitative study with 10 participants at a West Coast university, four from the Midwest, four from the South, and two from the Northeast. Chan (2017a) found that participants' racial identity

development was influenced by their different hometown and school environments and the different surrounding groups of people within those environments. As a result of these different environments and groups of people, participants made meaning of race in three ways: race as a construct for their cultural background, race as an academic concept, and race as a social identity. For those students who identified race as a social identity, their relationship with racial identity was complicated. Most became aware of their racial identity at the expense of racial jokes and distancing from their Asian American identity. However, some strategically "drew attention to their Asian American identity in an attempt to defuse uncomfortable social situations while also protecting one's sense of self" (Chan, 2017a, p. 1010). The differences in how Asian Americans make sense of racial identity in relation to their sense of self and their experiences with others highlights the many ways students make meaning of racial identity.

Johnston-Guerrero (2016) found college students make meaning of race in different ways. His qualitative study of 40 participants included 17 Asian Americans, nine white, six Latinx, five mixed-race, and three Black students. Participants were recruited from two West Coast public research universities; Asian Americans were the largest racial group on both campuses (48% and 38% of the student population, respectively), followed by whites (34% and 24%), Latinx (16% and 15%), Blacks (4% and 2%), and Native Americans (<1% on both).

After analyzing data gathered from one-on-one interviews, Johnston-Guerrero (2016) found students made meaning of race in six ways: race as a signal for physical markers; race that was created and maintained by a history of power and oppression; race as culture, traditions, customs, or values; race informed by lineage or heritage; race as something created by one's mind; and race as part of one's identity. Experiencing race in these different ways influenced how students made meaning of race. Despite these differences in the meaning of race, all

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participants agreed race is still an important factor in society and that the election of President

Obama did not indicate a post-racial era. Johnston-Guerrero's (2016) study is perhaps the most

extensive qualitative study about the many meanings of race. This study builds upon this to make

a connection between racial construction and political behavior.

Not only do college students make meaning of race in different ways, but they attribute

varying levels of significance to race. In another study, Johnston et al. (2015) investigated why

race matters to some students but not others. Their qualitative study included 59 participants

from two large public research universities, one in the Southwest and the other on the West

Coast. Of the 59 participants, 32 self-identified as Asian Americans, eight as Latinx, eight as

white, seven as mixed-race, three as Black, and one as Native American.

Overall, 52.5% of all participants saw race as a significant part of their self-identity.

Interestingly, 62.5% of the Asian American participants indicated that race did not matter to their

self-identity, the highest percentage of any racial group. When delving into reasons why race did

not matter, the most common reason was because race was not salient to the students' identities.

The second most common reason was because those students chose to use other ways to describe

race (e.g., culture and ethnicity) to avoid negative connotations of race and racial discrimination.

By examining the reasons why students do not think of race as an important part of their identity,

Johnston et al.'s (2015) findings provided a foundation for how participants in my study may or

may not consider race a significant part of their self-identity.

In summary, there are many different ways in which Asian Americans relate to or

identify with race. This dissertation expands our understanding of racial identity by recognizing

these differences and questioning how these differences influence individuals' positions on

certain controversial issues. Ultimately, the findings can add to the field of higher education's

understanding of racial identity, racial salience, and racial group consciousness.

Civic Engagement

This dissertation contributes to racial identity literature and literature on Asian American

students and civic engagement. Unfortunately, there is limited knowledge on Asian American

college student civic engagement and there has been a call for more research in this area (see

Chang et al., 2007; Park et al., 2008). Some scholars have argued the lack of literature on Asian

American students and civic engagement is symptomatic of the model minority myth, in that

Asian Americans are only seen as academic participants in college (Park et al., 2008). Others

have argued Asian Americans are redefining traditional notions of civic engagement, particularly

in terms of Asian American student activism (Gutierrez & Le, 2018; Manzano et al., 2017;

Nguyen & Gasman, 2015). Interestingly, literature on Asian American students and civic

engagement have each defined civic engagement in different ways, such as political

participation, student organization involvement, leadership, and activism. The varying

definitions of civic engagement suggest Asian American students do not fit traditional notions of

civic engagement and additional research is needed to understand how Asian Americans are

civically engaged.

Trends in College Student Civic Engagement

Colleges across the country have experienced an upswing in civically engaged students.

The Higher Education Research Institute's 2015 annual report on national trends showed college

students have a higher "commitment to student activism and augmented interest in community

and political engagement" (Eagan et al., 2015, p. 5) than ever before. Given the national climate

around police brutality, race-conscious admissions, marriage equality, and other civil rights

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movements, "the vast majority (96.9%) of first-time, full-time students who entered college in the fall of 2015 spent their senior year of high school witnessing (and perhaps even participating in) increased activism among high school and college students" (Eagan et al., 2015, p. 7).

In addition to the upswing of civically engaged students, college students are participating differently in civics than generations before them. Kiesa et al. (2007) found college students who belong to the millennial generation were generally more engaged than the previous generation of Generation X. However, millennials were less partial to "the competitive and confrontational atmosphere created by the parties and many do not seem to want their beliefs and identity limited by party affiliation" (Kiesa et al., 2007, p. 4). Furthermore, many millennials "have not developed opinions quite yet, and this may factor into their aversion to political parties" (Kiesa et al., 2007, p. 4). As such, millennials and current college students are not participating in the formal political arena in the same ways as prior generations, but are still engaging in political and societal issues.

With regard to Asian American students, two key studies examined 361,271 Asian and Asian American first-time, full-time college students at four-year institutions across 35 years. The first is a report titled *Beyond Myths: The Growth and Diversity of Asian American College Freshmen* by Chang et al. (2007). The second is a book chapter that builds upon the findings from the report, titled *Asian American College Students and Civic Engagement* by Park et al. (2008). Both the report and book chapter found trends in civic engagement for Asian American students. Park et al. (2008) found the percentage of Asian American first-year college students who had not volunteered prior to attending college decreased from 47.5% to 32.0% across time. Chang et al. (2007) found the percentage of Asian American students with a desire to have an impact on the political structure rose from 15.8% in 1971 to 21.4% in 2005. The percentage of

Asian American students who felt becoming a community leader is essential or very important increased from 13% in 1971 to 32.3% in 2005 (Chang et al., 2007). The findings from both studies provide a macrolevel view of how civic engagement for Asian American students is evolving over time and across different dimensions.

Political Participation

Traditional political science literature typically examines the influence of race on political participation, defined as "activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take" (Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 2). The cornerstones of political participation emphasize engagement in the formal political arena, such as voting, lobbying politicians, and other activities within the traditional political system (Verba & Nie, 1972).

To understand how Asian American students engage in activities in the political arena, Wray-Lake et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study based on the 2008 University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey with 3,556 Asian American respondents. They found 11% of participants were highly involved in civic engagement activities, including working for a campaign, contributing to a campaign, urging others to vote a certain way, and serving communities. Fifty-seven percent of the sample were moderately involved (e.g., encouraged others to vote). Those in this group were unlikely to participate in activities requiring higher levels of commitment and financial cost, such as working on or contributing to a campaign. Last, 32% were part of the uninvolved group, with lower participation on all measures of civic engagement indicators.

Asian Americans and Student Activism

Another way prior research has examined civic engagement for Asian Americans is through student activism. Although Asian Americans undergraduates have a long history with activism (Nguyen & Gasman, 2015; Umemoto, 1989), there is a dearth of literature on Asian Americans and student activism. As such, researchers have sought ways to redefine activism for Asian American students.

Through focus groups with 13 participants, Grim et al. (2019) found that although Asian American students supported many forms of activism, including national movements, social justice conferences, and dialoguing with other communities of color, there were challenges for Asian American student activism in their environments. First, Asian American communities were frequently left out of conversations about diversity and equity. Second, participants discussed the effect of "Midwest niceness," a culture encouraging niceness and avoidance of conflict. That type of environment discouraged students from engaging in perceived disruptive behavior and advocating for change. Furthermore, the Midwest environment further exacerbated the stereotypes of Asian Americans as passive and docile. Third, participants had limited access to knowledge about the history of Asian American activism in the Midwest. Last, participants discussed how Asian Americans had a desire to leave the Midwest region because of romanticized notions of Asian American activism on the East and West Coasts. This study highlighted challenges Asian American students experience with student activism in the Midwest.

Manzano et al. (2017) created a conceptual model reframing Asian American student leaders as leader activists. The model applies an Asian American identity lens to leadership and highlights the different change paradigms student activists and student leaders use. Manzano et

al. (2017) found student activists act in a transformational change paradigm, in which they seek to create systemic or structural change at the university. On the other hand, student leaders hold a change paradigm motivated by incremental change, achieved by holding student government roles and participating in university committees. The authors found students can be leaders and activists; the two identities are not mutually exclusive. As such, the conceptual model showcases the ways Asian Americans act as activists through incremental and transformational change.

Defining Political Opinion

Given the literature about the nontraditional ways Asian Americans participate in civic engagement, this study defines civic engagement as *an opinion on race-conscious admissions* as a way to broadly capture Asian American students' civic engagement. By focusing on students' opinions, this study captures a wide variety of Asian American students who exhibit civic engagement in nontraditional ways. I want to capture students thinking about their racial identity, racial issues, racial injustice in varying degrees; as such, I included in this study students ranging from those who have not thought much about their race to those who are extremely involved in identity-based politics.

<center>**Conceptual Framework**</center>

Because this study examined the relationship between racial identity and position taking on a controversial issue, its guiding theories were Sellers et al.'s (1998) multidimensional model of racial identity (MMRI) and Poon et al.'s (2019) multidimensional model of raceclass frames and affirmative action (MMRFAA). Although the MMRI is a model of racial identity, I use it to define racial consciousness. The MMRI defines racial consciousness through four components: racial salience, racial centrality, racial regard, and racial ideology. The model provides a framework for how these four components work together to influence opinion, which in turn

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influences behaviors such as voting on propositions to ban race-conscious admissions. The MMRFAA provides the framework for the racial ideologies held by Asian Americans about the race-conscious admissions controversy. I embed the MMRFAA in the MMRI to define the subcomponents of racial ideology.

Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI)

There are two major strengths of the MMRI. The first is it combines many different theories, making it a robust way of understanding racial consciousness. It captures four distinct aspects of racial consciousness: (a) race in relation to one's self-identity (e.g., racial identity development), (b) race in relation to the situation in question (e.g., race-conscious admissions), (c) race in relation to one's own racial group (e.g., attitudes about one's own racial group), and (d) race in relation to society (e.g., racial ideology). All four aspects have been studied individually and addressed in this literature review, but few studies have combined them into one multidimensional approach to racial identity.

The second strength of the MMRI is its depiction of the relationship between racial consciousness and opinion. Not only does it articulate a step-by-step process by which each aspect of racial consciousness is linked to influence opinion, but it also avoids the assumption every individual has the same interpretation of racial identity. The MMRI allows for multiple interpretations of each aspect of consciousness and asserts different interpretations lead to different outcomes, thus making the model a strong fit for this study.

The MMRI assumes that, in addition to existing as part of a person's identity across time, identities are influenced by individual situations. The second assumption is that individuals hold multiple identities (e.g., race and gender). Therefore, the MMRI allows for individuals to define the importance of race for themselves. Third, unlike other theories emphasizing behavioral

indicators of racial identity, the MMRI assumes individuals' self-perceptions of race are the most

valid indicator of their identity. This means the MMRI emphasizes individuals' perceptions of

what it means to be Asian American and makes no judgment on what a healthy or unhealthy

racial identity is. The MMRI recognizes certain identities may be associated with positive

outcomes such as higher self-esteem or psychological well-being, but those types of connections

extend beyond the scope of the MMRI. Last, the MMRI "focuses on the significance and nature

of an individual's racial identity at a given point in time in the individual's life as opposed to

placing an individual in a particular stage along a particular developmental sequence" (Sellers et

al., 1998, p. 24). This assumption falls in line with other racial identity models that recognize the

fluidity of racial identity, which does not exist in a strict stage model (Chan, 2017b).

With these four assumptions as a foundation, the MMRI then identifies four components

of racial identity, but for this study, I am conceptualizing it as racial consciousness: racial

salience, racial centrality, racial regard, and racial ideology. Racial salience "refers to the extent

to which one's race is a relevant part of one's self-concept at a particular moment or in a

particular situation" (Sellers et al., 1988, p. 24). This component captures the salience, or

importance, of one's racial identity at a particular moment or event. In this study, for example,

racial salience refers to the activation of participants' Asian American identities during the

college admissions process.

The second component of racial identity is racial centrality, which is the importance of

race in participants' self-identity throughout their lives; it stays consistent through different

situations. This component emphasizes individuals' perceptions of their race in terms of their

self-identity, across situations and in conjunction with their other identities. Separating this

component from racial salience captures the nuanced difference between how individuals make

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meaning of their racial identity across time versus in one particular moment. In this study, for example, Asian American participants may view their Asian American identity as an important part of their notions of self throughout their life, but at the same time believe their racial identity is not important during the college admissions process.

The next two components of the MMRI, racial regard and racial ideology, address the meaning individuals attribute to their racial identity. Racial regard is "the extent to which the individual feels positively about his or her race" (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 26) and consists of a private and a public aspect. Private regard is how positively or negatively individuals feel toward others in the racial group and how positively or negatively they feel about their racial identity. This component captures what other studies have described as racial or ethnic pride (Poon et al., 2019). Public regard is individuals' perceptions of how positively or negatively others view their racial group and captures the effect of racial stereotypes such as the model minority myth and the forever foreigner on individuals' racial identities.

Last, the racial ideology component is "composed of the individual's beliefs, opinions, and attitudes with respect to the way she or he feels that the members of the race should live and interact with society" (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 27). Four prominent ideologies serve as subcomponents to racial ideology: a nationalist philosophy, an oppressed minority philosophy, an assimilation philosophy, and a humanist philosophy (Sellers et al., 1998). Because these ideologies were based on research on Black individuals, I used the four ideologies of Poon et al.'s (2019) MMRFAA model instead, since they appropriately describe Asian American ideologies on the race-conscious admissions controversy. These four ideologies are: ethnocentric nationalism, abstract liberalism, conscious compromise, and systemic transformation.

Multidimensional Model of Raceclass Frames and Affirmative Action

The MMRFAA distinguishes different ideologies held by Asian Americans on the race-conscious admissions controversy. To develop these ideologies, Poon et al. (2019) used key tenets of critical race theory (CRT), including:

> the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination (i.e., intersectionality) as a fundamental organizing social force; the centrality of experiential knowledge to challenge majoritarian narratives (e.g., deficit thinking, myth of meritocracy); a challenge to dominant ideologies of whiteness and white supremacy; a commitment to systemic transformation for social justice' and a transdisciplinary approach to unveil hegemonic structures that uphold white supremacy (e.g., whiteness as property). (p. 206)

Using these tenets, Poon et al. (2019) found four distinct ideologies Asian Americans hold in support of or opposition to race-conscious admissions: ethnocentric nationalism, abstract liberalism, conscious compromise, and systemic transformation (see Figure 2.1).

Ethnocentric nationalism describes those Asian Americans who do not support race-conscious admissions and believe educational inequalities are due to cultural heritage and not racial and class inequities. Furthermore, those with ethnocentric nationalism are proud of being Asian and believe Asians are superior to other racial groups (Poon et al., 2019).

Figure 2.1

Multidimensional Model of Raceclass Frames and Affirmative Action
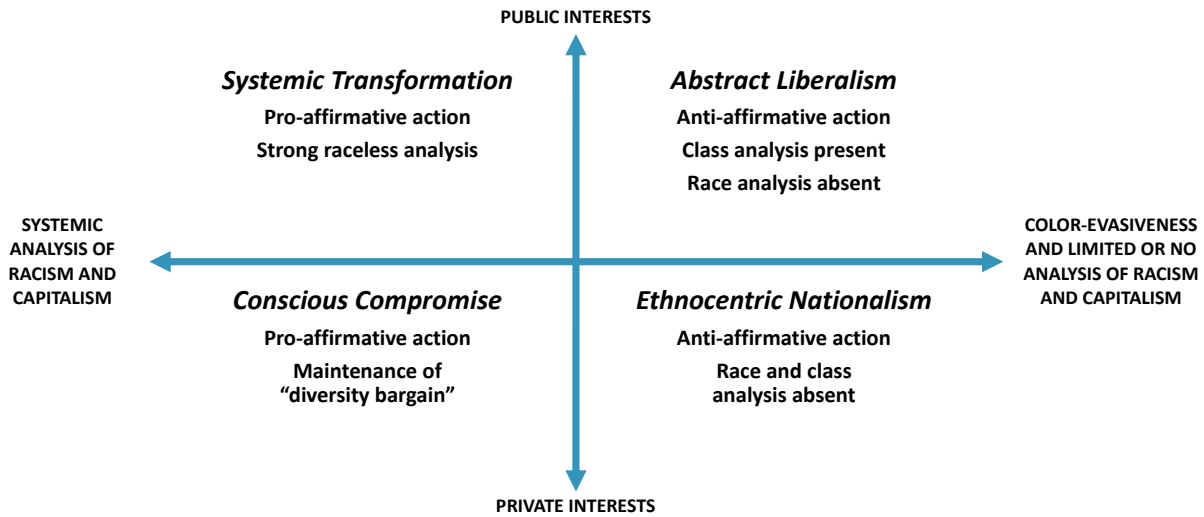
Note. Adapted from "Asian Americans, Affirmative Action, and the Political Economy of Racism: A Multidimensional Model of Raceclass Frames," by O. A. Poon, M. S. Segoshi, L. Tang, K. L. Surla, C. Nguyen, & D. D. Squire, 2019, *Harvard Educational Review, 89*(2), pp. 201–226. https://doi.org/10.17763/1943-5045-89.2.201 Copyright 2019 by President and Fellows of Harvard College.

The abstract liberalism ideology is defined by Poon et al. (2019) as "a racial frame that utilizes classically liberal ideas like equal opportunity and individualism to provide explanations for racial inequalities" (as cited in Poon et al., 2019, p. 217). Participants in Poon et al.'s (2019) study who held this type of ideology explained why they did not support race-conscious admissions by arguing, "[E]verybody's supposed to be treated fairly under law. Racism is bad. We shouldn't restrict opportunities for people based on race" (p. 217). Most participants with this ideology experienced discrimination based on their Asian American identity but advocated for diversity on college campuses through the use of socioeconomic status instead of race.

The next frame is conscious compromise, in which the motivation for supporting race-conscious admissions is not to prioritize the needs of racial minorities, but rather to maintain

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diversity on college campuses. Individuals who hold this type of ideology believe diversity on college campuses benefits all students (Poon et al., 2019). Other studies have identified this way of thinking as interest convergence, wherein support for race-conscious admissions only occurs when there are benefits to all students—which is code for white students (Harris, 1993). Ultimately, this type of ideology continues to uphold systems of racial inequality and white privilege.

The last frame defined by Poon et al. (2019) is systemic transformation. The participants in their study who held this type of ideology supported race-conscious admissions because they saw it as a way to combat structural racism. They were engaged in other activities that worked toward racial equity for all groups of color, such as supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. Participants who hold a systemic transformation ideology see how all groups of color need to work together to overcome systemic racism and see race-conscious admissions as one way to work toward that goal.

Racial Consciousness' Influence on Opinion: MMRI and MMRFAA Combined

Now that I have defined all aspects of racial consciousness, I move into a discussion of the process by which racial consciousness influences political opinion. Literature has shown that each component of the MMRI affects behavior. For example, the racial salience component is akin to what the literature describes as the effect of racial discrimination on racial group consciousness, which in turn influences political participation. Another example is the similarity of racial regard to what the literature describes as racial group consciousness. However, few studies put all the components of racial identity together. The MMRI argues in each situation (or in the case of this study, race-conscious admissions), different interpretations of the components

of racial identity (i.e., salience, centrality, regard, and ideology) influence an individual's response to the situation.

The MMRI and MMRFAA work together to provide the conceptual framework for this study (see Figure 2.2). The MMRI provides the overarching framework for the process by which racial identity influences political position, and the MMRFAA provides insight into how participants might view each component of the MMRI. The MMRI states in a given situation, each of the four components (racial centrality, racial salience, racial ideology, and racial regard) will activate to a certain degree. Individuals' unique activation of each component, together with cues gleaned from the situation, leads to a specific assessment and interpretation of the situation. The interpretation of the situation then results in a position of support, opposition, or neutrality regarding the use of race in college admissions. In other words, different activations of each component lead to different interpretations of the situation, which results in conflicting positions on race-conscious admissions.

Figure 2.2

MMRI and MMRFAA Combined
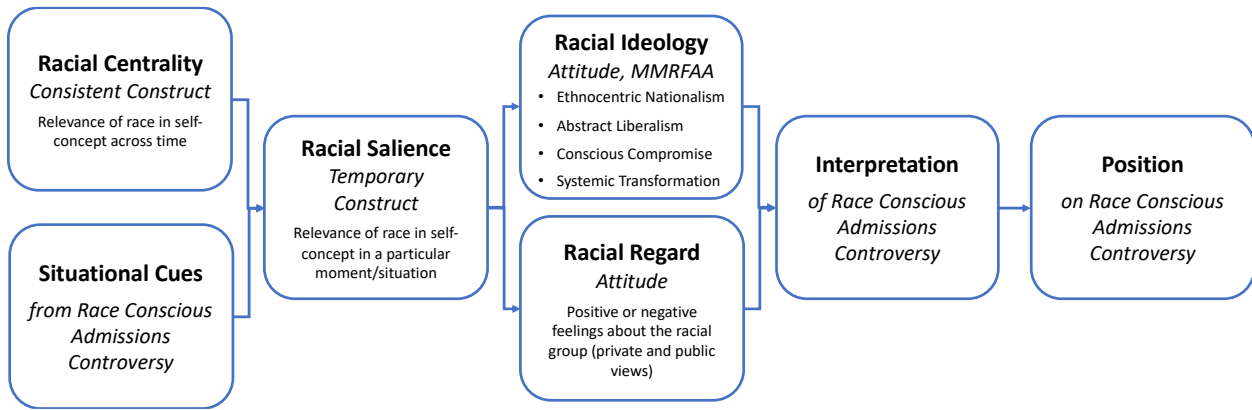
Note. Adapted from "Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity: A Reconceptualization of African American Racial Identity," by R. M. Sellers, M. A. Smith, J. N. Shelton, S. A. J. Rowley, & T. M. Chavous, 1998, *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 2*(1)*,* pp. 18–39. Copyright 1998 by Lawrence Erlbaurn Associates.

The MMRFAA operates within the overarching framework of the MMRI and gives insight into why one participant opposes race-conscious admissions while another supports it. Because each ideology (i.e., ethnocentric nationalism, abstract liberalism, conscious compromise, and systemic transformation) is built upon a sliding scale ranging from racial colorblindness to acknowledgment of systemic racism, the MMRFAA helps predict what each participant might say about racial centrality, racial salience, and racial regard.

For example, an Asian American who supports race-conscious admissions may see race as highly salient to the admissions controversy (salience), place a great deal of importance on their racial identity across time (centrality), believe that Asian Americans are seen negatively by other racial groups (regard), and hold an ideology that diversity is beneficial for all groups (conscious compromise ideology, see Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3

Expected Influence of Racial Consciousness on Support for Race-Conscious Admissions

Racial Centrality	Racial Salience	Racial Ideology	Interpretation	Support for Race Conscious Admissions
Sees race as an important part of self-identity over time	*Sees race as an important prat of self—identity in relation to college admissions*	*Holds an Conscious Compromise ideology*	*of Race Conscious Admissions Controversy*	
Situational Cues		**Racial Regard**		
from Race Conscious Admissions Controversy		*Believes others have a negative view of Asian Americans*		

Note. Adapted from "Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity: A Reconceptualization of African American Racial Identity," by R. M. Sellers, M. A. Smith, J. N. Shelton, S. A. J. Rowley, & T. M. Chavous, 1998, *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 2*(1)*,* pp. 18–39. Copyright 1998 by Lawrence Erlbaurn Associates.

On the other hand, an Asian American who opposes race-conscious admissions may see race as highly salient to the admissions controversy (salience), but may not see race as an important part of their identity (centrality) despite having a positive attitude regarding one's race group (regard), all while holding an abstract ethnocentric nationalistic ideology (see Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4

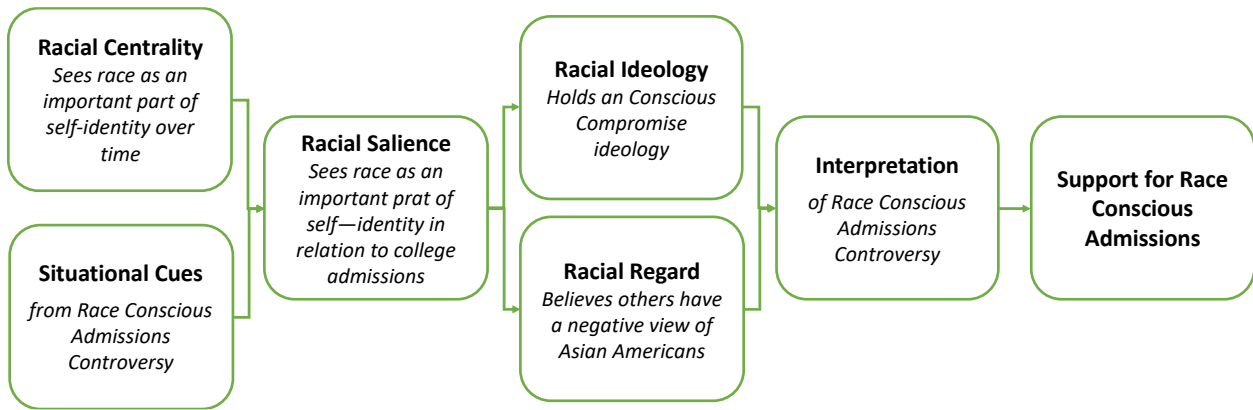*Expected Influence of Racial Consciousness on Opposition to Race-Conscious Admissions*
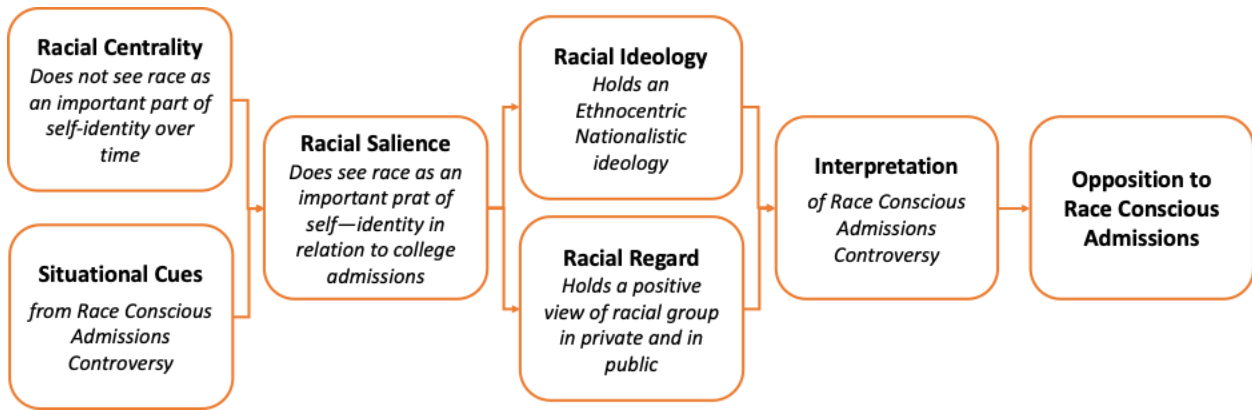
Note. Adapted from "Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity: A Reconceptualization of African American Racial Identity," by R. M. Sellers, M. A. Smith, J. N. Shelton, S. A. J. Rowley, & T. M. Chavous, 1998, *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 2*(1)*,* pp. 18–39. Copyright 1998 by Lawrence Erlbaurn Associates.

In summary, the MMRI provides the overarching framework and MMRFAA gives insight into how participants' racial identities may influence their political positions. Both theories work together to predict similarities and differences in racial identity among Asian Americans who support and Asian Americans who oppose race-conscious admissions.

Conclusion

In summary, this study addresses the gap in literature on racial identity and civic engagement in three ways. First, it builds upon the knowledge of Asian American racial identity by addressing the multiple ways in which race has meaning for individuals. Second, it builds upon the knowledge of Asian American civic engagement by examining the nontraditional ways in which Asian Americans engage in a controversial issue. Last, it addresses the gap in literature by examining racial consciousness, which builds a bridge between racial identity and civic engagement.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to understand how different worldviews on race and racial consciousness influence an individual's opinion on the race-conscious admission controversy. Therefore, the research questions that guided this study were:

1. What does racial consciousness look like in Asian American college students?

2. How does racial consciousness inform their opinion on race-conscious admissions?

3. In terms of racial consciousness, what similarities and differences exist between Asian American college students who have different opinions about race-conscious admissions?

This chapter describes the methodology I used to answer my research questions. First, I share my rationale for choosing to conduct a qualitative study guided by social constructivist epistemology. Next, I provide a detailed description of my data collection, data analysis, and data trustworthiness procedures. Last, I discuss my positionality as a researcher and the study limitations.

Research Design and Methodology

To best answer my research questions, I used qualitative methods guided by a social constructivist epistemology. Qualitative research "attempts to understand and make sense of phenomena from the participants' perspective" (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). The strength of a qualitative study is to capture the nuances of participants' lived experiences, which bodes well for this study.

A social constructivist epistemology emphasizes that "different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon" (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). Moreover, the meaning made by participants "are not simply imprinted on individuals but are

formed through interaction with others (hence social construction) and through historical and

cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives" (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). Thus, a social

constructivist epistemology guided my decisions on a study design reflecting the multiple ways

participants made meaning of their racial consciousness and, in addition, connects the meaning

made by participants to the particular sociohistorical context discussed in the literature review

and theoretical framework. Furthermore, a social constructivist framework ensures I represent

each participant's unique reality without imposing judgment on what is right or wrong.

Site Selection

The site of this study is Azalea University (AU, a pseudonym). AU is a private Ivy

League university located in the Northeast region of the United States. Ivy League colleges have

a long history in the United States, including a history of doctoring admission criteria to exclude

undesirable students (Karabel, 2005). AU's prestige as an Ivy League institution draws students

from all over the country. Like other Ivy League institutions, AU has a highly selective

admissions rate; less than 8% of applicants receive admission. Although there is no explicit

mention of race-conscious admissions on AU's website, there are news articles highlighting the

university's support of Harvard's use of race-conscious admissions. The institution has an

undergraduate enrollment of approximately 10,000 students, with 40% white students, 20%

Asian American/Pacific Islander students, 13% international students, 10% Latinx students, 7%

Black students, and less than 0.1% Native students. The university has an Asian American

Studies program that offers an Asian American Studies minor; the program's courses fulfill

AU's diversity requirement. Additionally, there is a vibrant Asian American student center that

houses multiple student organizations, hosts social events, and acts as a hub for students'

academic, personal, and professional growth.

AU is an ideal site for this study for a few key reasons. First, it employs a holistic, race-conscious admissions process. Second, the highly selective nature of the institution creates heightened competition between applicants and possible scrutiny over the use of race in the admissions process. Third, the characteristics of the institution are similar to Harvard, which makes it an interesting site without becoming too controversial. Last, it has a significant percentage of Asian American students, along with a robust Asian American Resource Center (AARC) and Asian American Studies Program (AASP).

Data Collection

To collect deep, rich, and participant-driven data, I interviewed 20 AU students for this study. Interviewing allowed for "understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 2013, p. 9). Interviewing allowed me to explore participants' narratives about their racial consciousness and how they connected their stories to their opinion on race-conscious admissions. To maintain consistency across interviews and cover all aspects of the MMRI, I employed formal semi-structured interviews, which involve "the researcher preparing questions in advance with possible probes identified" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 127).

Participant Recruitment and Selection

I utilized purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013) to recruit a diverse group of Asian Americans who could speak about their relationship with race and their opinion on race-conscious admissions. I worked closely with the AARC and the AASP to publicize my study through their email listservs and flyers in their spaces. I posted flyers around AU's campus, inside academic buildings (e.g., the music, engineering, and business buildings) as well as in student activity centers. The director of the AARC introduced me to students whenever I was in

the center. As an incentive to participate, I offered participants a $20 Amazon gift card in exchange for at least one hour of interview time.

I screened students interested in the study through a demographic survey (Appendix A) asking about their race, ethnicity, gender, immigrant generation, opinion on race-conscious admissions, and other information (e.g., major, political involvement). Forty-two interested students completed the demographic survey. From there, I purposefully selected a diverse group of students with varying ethnicities, genders, and opinions on race-conscious admissions for the final sample,

The final sample included 20 participants who all self-identified as Asian American (see Table 3.1 for participant demographics). The ethnic breakdown of participants included 14 East Asian students (eight Chinese, one Cantonese, and five Korean), three South Asian students (one Bangladeshi, one Pakistani, one Indian), one Vietnamese student, one Filipinx student, and one student who identified as Thai and Filipinx. In terms of socioeconomic status, eight participants identified as low-income, six identified as middle class, five as upper-middle class, and one as upper class. Thirteen participants identified as female and seven identified as male. Over half of the sample consisted of students who were second-generation Asian American (i.e., they were born in the United States to immigrant parents) and eight were 1.5-generation (i.e., they were born in a different country but moved to the United States before or during middle school). Two participants were born in China but grew up and attended high school in Canada. For these two Canadian participants, Asian American and Asian Canadian were used interchangeably in the interview. Participants' year in college was evenly distributed, with five 1st-year, six 2nd-year, five 3rd-year, and four 4th-year students. All but one student was traditionally college-aged (i.e., 19 to 22 years old); the only nontraditional student was 25 years old.

In terms of sexual orientation, four students identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual and the remaining 16 identified as heterosexual. The sample included a wide range of majors, including business, philosophy, nursing, chemical engineering, history, and political science. The majority of students were involved in the AARC and participated in its programs, workshops, and student organizations. The most common program mentioned by participants was the semester-long Asian American Leadership Program, which explored Asian American leadership, identity, and culture. Several students took AASP courses along with other ethnic studies courses in Black Studies and the school of education. There were a few students who were not involved in any Asian American-specific programs and classes.

Individual Interviews

Students participated in one 60- to 90-minute semi-structured interview. I modeled the interview questions (Appendix B) off Sellers et al.'s (1998) quantitative measurements of each component of the MMRI and Poon et al.'s (2019) MMRFAA. Appendix C compares the MMRI and MMRFAA to this study's qualitative interview questions. To bookend the questions on the four categories of the MMRI (i.e., racial centrality, racial salience, racial regard, and racial ideology), I included an additional set of questions at the beginning and at the end of the interview. In the beginning, I included warm-up questions to build rapport with the participant (e.g., What is your favorite thing about the Asian American culture/community?). At the end of the interview, I included questions regarding the relationship between racial consciousness and their opinions on race-conscious admissions and other controversial political issues, co-curricular activities, and political activities. I included the last set of questions to see how participants make meaning and connections between their racial consciousness and opinion of race-conscious admissions.

Table 3.1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Opinion	Ethnicity	SES	Gender	Immigration	Year	High School City
Anh	Unconditional Support	Vietnamese	Low-income	Female	1.5-generation	4th-year	Jonesboro, GA
Masie	Unconditional Support	Cantonese	Middle-class	Female	2nd-generation	3rd-year	Boston, MA
Min Jun	Unconditional Support	Korean	Middle-class	Male	1.5-generation	4th-year	Lakeville CT
Nadira	Conditional Support	Bangladeshi	Low-income	Female	1.5-generation	2nd-year	Glendale, CA
Zachary	Conditional Support	Korean	Low-income	Male	2nd-generation	1st-year	Los Angeles, CA
Isabella	Conditional Support	Thai/Filipinx	Low-income	Female	2nd-generation	3rd-year	Philadelphia, PA
Cathy	Conditional Support	Chinese	Middle-class	Female	2nd-generation	2nd-year	La Canada, CA
Chris[a]	Conditional Support	Chinese	Upper-class	Male	1.5-generation	1st-year	Vancouver, BC
Steven	Conditional Support	Chinese	Upper-middle class	Man	2nd-generation	4th-year	Plano, TX
David	Conditional Support	Chinese	Upper-middle-class	Male	1.5-generation	2nd-year	Sugar Land, TX
Jordan	Conditional Support	Chinese	Upper-middle-class	Female	2nd-generation	3rd-year	Johns Creek, GA
Hassan[b]	Neither	Pakistani	Low-income	Male	1.5-generation	2nd-year	Somerset, NJ
Coco	Neither	Chinese	Low-income	Female	1.5-generation	2nd-year	Sacramento, CA
Morgan	Neither	Korean	Low-income	Female	2nd-generation	3rd-year	Los Angeles, CA
Karen[a]	Neither	Chinese	Middle-class	Female	2nd-generation	4th-year	Vancouver, BC
Jessica	Neither	Korean	Middle-class	Female	2nd-generation	2nd-year	Newark, DE
Angela	Oppose	Filipino	Low-income	Female	2nd-generation	3rd-year	Rowland Heights, CA
Arjun	Oppose	Indian	Upper-middle-class	Male	2nd-generation	1st-year	St. Louis, MO
Martha	Oppose	Chinese	Middle-class	Female	2nd-generation	1st-year	Hightstown, NJ
Jeanne	Oppose	Korean	Upper-middle-class	Female	2nd-generation	1st-year	Wynnewood, PA

Note. [a]Canadian, [b]nontraditionally-aged student

Data Analysis

Taking an inductive approach, I performed multiple rounds of coding (Saldaña, 2016). Codes in qualitative research are "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). Saldaña (2016) suggested researchers "start coding as you collect and format your data, not after all fieldwork has been completed" (p. 21). Therefore, throughout the data collection process, I kept a field note journal to jot down any initial thoughts on codes. After interviewing participants, I sent the audio recordings to a third-party transcription service. Once the interviews were transcribed, I used Dedoose to organize, code, categorize, and write analytic memos for each interview transcript. Analytic memos are "jottings in the margins" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 22), or notes made before and throughout the coding process.

During the coding process, I followed the coding method articulated by Saldaña (2016) and conducted two rounds of coding. For the first round, I used in vivo coding and paraphrased the data using participants' own words. I looked for direct patterns and used selected codes repeatedly. For the second round, I subsumed codes into broader codes. I synthesized and combined codes to create new categories. Once the codes and categories were defined, I used them to create themes, and from there, I analyzed the themes to derive findings.

Trustworthiness

As a qualitative researcher, it was important to question if my understanding and presentation of the data was accurate (Creswell, 2013). Although there are many different methods and philosophical approaches to validity and reliability in qualitative research (see Creswell, 2013), I focused on two main aspects of data trustworthiness: the authenticity of the data and findings and the bias of the researcher.

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To ensure the trustworthiness of the data and findings, I employed member checking, peer review, and thick, rich descriptions of my findings (Creswell, 2013). In member checking, "the researcher solicits participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations" (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). As such, I showed preliminary themes to participants so they could check how their stories were being represented and offer changes or edits, if necessary. Second, I employed an external audit. I asked an Asian American colleague in higher education to review my preliminary findings and provide an informal peer review of how I was presenting the data and findings (Creswell, 2013). Third, to ensure the credibility of my data and findings, I used thick, rich descriptions so readers of my study would understand my research process; "rich, thick description allows readers to make decisions regarding transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants or setting under the study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). These three strategies—member checking, peer review, and thick, rich descriptions—ensured the trustworthiness of the data and findings.

To minimize the influence of researcher bias, I reflected on my positionality as an able-bodied, Chinese American, straight, cisgender female throughout the data collection process. I kept a research journal to track my thoughts and reflect on my decisions regarding this study. Moreover, I maintained a written account of the rationale behind participant recruitment, coding schemes, emergent themes, and other research decisions. Because I am an Asian American with an opinion on the race-conscious admission controversy, I have insights on the topic of this study, which allowed me to capture nuanced feelings such as being caught in the middle of the controversy. However, I was careful to recognize any preconceived notions or expectations I might hold as an insider of the Asian American population, particularly in how I see race as a

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significant factor in society and as part of my identity. Therefore, in the next section, I acknowledge my positionality as it relates to this study.

Researcher Positionality

Research is mutually shaped by the participant and the researcher (Bourke, 2014). As such, it is important to recognize the experiences, history, and identity the researcher brings to a research project (Bhavnani et al., 2014). In this section, I reflect on my relationship with racial consciousness and how the race-conscious admission controversy has sparked conversations in my life.

I grew up in a Chinese American household with parents who immigrated to the United States from Taiwan. I lived in a middle-class suburban area with many others who looked like me and shared a similar culture. The high school I attended was, at the time, almost 50% Asian American. I attended Chinese language school on Friday nights and sang in a Chinese American children's choir founded by my father; the majority of my friends were Asian American. In college, I continued to be surrounded by people who shared my Asian American culture. My undergraduate institution, the University of California-San Diego, was 30% Asian American. Although I participated in non-racial student organizations, such as serving as an orientation leader and singing in an a cappella group, there was always a large number of Asian Americans around me; I never felt like I was the only Asian American or ostracized because of my race. I was heavily involved in an ethnic-specific, Taiwanese American association that planned boba runs and hot pot nights, activities involving two popular Taiwanese cuisines. Although I was constantly engaged in racial- and ethnic-specific activities and had a majority Asian American friend group, I never thought critically about my racial identity until I started my master's

program at the University of Pennsylvania. As described in the literature, my relationship with race until that point was one of racial identification.

It was not until I started my master's program on the East Coast, away from my safe and comfortable community of Asian Americans, that a critical consciousness of my racial identity ignited. I experienced culture shock being in a school environment where there were only three Asian Americans in my program, one of whom ended up dropping out due to mental health reasons. It was the first time I was the "only person," whether the only Asian American in the classroom or the only student from California. Not only was I homesick for my friends and family, but I felt misunderstood; I had to explain aspects of my racial and ethnic identity that I never had to before. I experienced setbacks because of assumptions made about me, and although I was the only one in my cohort who attended both white and Black social gatherings, I missed having my community around me. Being in a completely new environment made me wonder if certain interactions I experienced, particularly the negative ones, occurred because of my race.

Although I missed my Asian American community, I was engaged in classes and readings that challenged me to think critically about race. Not only did I think critically about my racial identity, but I learned about the systemic nature of race and racism. It was the first time I took classes that explicitly talked about race, privilege, and oppression. One of my favorite classes was a class on race and racism in education. I was a budding critical race scholar, working on an independent study about Asian American microaggressions and working with my friends and colleagues on a paper investigating white students' experiences with racial discourse. I took what I learned at the University of Pennsylvania and brought it to my experiences as a student affairs professional and now as a doctoral student. As I embarked on this dissertation

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related to racial consciousness, it was important for me to reflect upon my racial identity journey and experiences with race. As a race scholar, I find race an important component of my identity.

As the researcher for this study, it was important to recognize I have opinions about and certain ideologies around race-conscious admissions. As someone who has spent a lot of time reading and writing about race, my raceclass analysis (as defined by Poon et al., 2019) is in line with critical race theory, and I see race-conscious admissions as part of a larger racial equity movement. Moreover, I have personal experiences with friends and family who disagree with my opinion of race-conscious admissions. Because of this dissertation, I have sparked conversations about race-conscious admissions with old friends at a wedding, with cousins around a large Chinese banquet table at Thanksgiving dinner, and with my brother during a five-hour drive from our childhood home in Cupertino to Los Angeles. I learned to ask questions about the reasoning behind their opinions of race-conscious admissions and listen to what they are saying instead of forcing my opinion upon them. These conversations prepared me for interviewing research participants and informed how I analyzed the findings. I recognized this study's findings may or may not match what I had learned from informal conversations with my community, and it was important for me to also recognize those conversations as part of my researcher positionality.

Limitations and Considerations

As with any empirical study, limitations exist. First, because of the single-site nature of this study, its ability to inform understanding about Asian Americans, in general, is limited. However, the strength of the study is its ability to capture the nuance and depth of Asian Americans' experiences with race.

Second, because I recruited participants who self-identify as Asian American, I was unable to capture the views of students who do not identify as Asian American. Furthermore, the students who self-selected to take the pre-interview questionnaire may be students who are more likely to be involved in Asian American activities, as well as other non-identity based co-curricular programs. As such, the findings may be skewed toward the view of more highly involved students, which would not capture the experiences of students who are more apathetic.

Third, it is difficult to tell how the high-profile, controversial nature of the race-conscious admissions issue affected the study. It was difficult at times to determine how honest participants were about their opinion on the controversy. There were times it seemed participants were not completely honest or were saying things they thought I wanted to hear. Moreover, half of the interviews took place in a public space due to lack of accessibility to a private room. Therefore, some students may not have felt completely comfortable sharing their honest feelings, given their peers were around.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In this chapter, I showcase the findings from my data collection. First, I provide a sociohistorical backdrop for the findings. Then, I highlight participants' knowledge of race-conscious admissions and their sense of discrimination within the college admissions process. Next, I discuss how Asian American college students (a) made meaning of their racial identity, (b) felt a sense of connectedness to the racial group, and (c) made sense of their ideologies around race. I argue the previously mentioned components are not just of racial identity, as suggested by the theoretical framework, but rather components of racial consciousness. Then, I examine the relationship between racial consciousness and Asian American college students' opinion on race-conscious admissions. While examining this relationship, I discuss similarities and differences between students who have differing opinions regarding the controversy.

Sociohistorical Context for Findings

Because this qualitative study adopts a social constructivist epistemology, it is important to provide sociohistorical context as a backdrop to the findings. To do so, I provide a brief description of the culture and environment at Azalea University (AU), as well as an overview of a few important events that took place before and after data collection.

AU is a traditional college campus nestled within a busy, urban environment. The campus, with large cherry blossom trees, red brick buildings, and statues of one of the founding fathers, sits within narrow city streets with trolleys, buses, and a subway station. On the border of campus, the scenery starts to change and there is almost an invisible line where the physical space of the Ivy League institution ends and where the rest of the working class city begins. As I walked toward the heart of campus, the number of students increased. I noticed most students are

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dressed in nice winter jackets and stylish shoes, which was a notable difference from the college students in California I am used to seeing in flip-flops, athletic attire, and shorts.

My visit to campus took place during the first few weeks of the new semester and decade, in January of 2020. On my way to the Asian American Student Center (AASC), I noticed flyers inside buildings that said, "Are Trump's immigration policies racist?" and "The Age of Reagan" with a large Black Panther photo as the background. The AASC shared a space with the Black Student Center and the Latinx Student Center. Each time I visited, there were students studying, chatting, and hanging out in all three centers. Inside the AASC were snacks, teas, and many comfortable couches. During my visits, I was able to use the Asian American Studies office spaces, which were a short walk from the AASC. Additionally, I attended a few events on campus, including a student's research presentation about her archival work.

Through my observations and interviews with students, I learned that Azalea's campus culture seemed polarized by political view, socioeconomic class, and race. The students at Azalea tended to be liberal and politically active. Specifically, many participants equated the Asian American student community with being liberal activists. Some faculty with whom I spoke even remarked that the overwhelmingly anti-Trump environment at Azalea prevented certain students from participating in class. However, a couple of participants shared a story about an article advocating for the removal of legacy admissions from Azalea. When published in the campus newspaper, the student author of the article started to receive hate mail and even death threats. Although it is unclear if those death threats were from students themselves or outside entities, the reaction to the article indicated a conservative side of Azalea underneath the view of its liberal students.

In terms of wealth, students spoke about the glaring wealth disparities at Azalea. Participants alluded to classmates who were the children of wealthy, well-known figures (e.g., Joe Biden and the Estee Lauder family). One participant mentioned students start taking out their Canada Goose jackets in the winter. Having no idea of the cost, she was shocked to discover these jackets can start at $800 and exceed $1500, more than she could ever afford on a jacket. A different student, who came into the interview wearing a Canada Goose jacket, used Canada Goose as an example of wealth disparities at Azalea. However, in her social circles, the style of Canada Goose was used to judge a person's wealth; among Canada Goose jacket owners, there was further discrimination by jackets deemed more or less desirable than others. Interestingly, it did not cross her mind some students could not afford *any* type of Canada Goose jacket. The juxtaposition of the two participants' views on Canada Goose jackets is a simplified, but illustrative way of articulating the class discrepancies at Azalea.

In terms of racial polarization, participants mentioned the overwhelming whiteness they felt at Azalea. Isabella, a Thai and Fillipinx 3rd-year participant said, "There are some very predominantly white spaces at [Azalea] and I just do not even go there. I do not enter those spaces." Most participants shared that they are not in the "white spaces" because of their involvement with church, cultural student organizations, or the AASC, but some participants did mention they rubbed elbows with white peers because of fraternity activities or classes (e.g., business classes and philosophy classes).

In addition to the culture at Azalea, two notable events took place during this study. The first was the Democratic primaries that took place in early 2020, during my data collection period. The 2020 primaries were particularly significant because candidates were not only fighting for the Democratic nomination, but they were trying to prove they could win over

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President Trump, a notoriously polarizing president. The 2020 Democratic primaries included the first high-profile Asian American candidate, Andrew Yang. A businessman and moderate Democrat, Yang's policies focused on economic security for those in lower-income communities, particularly to protect against what he saw as inevitable changes to the economy, such as the automation of millions of jobs. His platform included a policy called the Universal Basic Income (UBI) that proposed $1,000 be given to each American every month as a form of protection against these changes.

At Azalea, some participants supported Andrew Yang as a candidate only because he was Asian American, but others were adamantly against him because they did not agree with the way he represented Asian Americans. When asked about Andrew Yang, Hassan, a Pakistani American 2nd-year nontraditional student, got notably excited and said, "Oh, I love Yang Gang, absolutely, absolutely." He then went on to share that the main reason why he supports Andrew Yang is because he is Asian American; he felt that it was "refreshing to see somebody that is not white."

Although Yang's policies were popular among some participants, others did not support him because of his seemingly immature understanding of race. He played up the model minority stereotype by using the slogan "MATH: Make American Think Harder." Even Hassan recognized that this was not the best approach, but it ultimately did not deter him from supporting Yang. He felt Yang was "trying to appeal to people's stereotypes about Asians" to make himself electable. Other participants, however, had issues with how he used model minority stereotypes and his misunderstanding of race. Isabella remarked:

It is funny to watch but to actually see it on stage in a political platform, I think to myself,

'Oh no, why are you the first Asian American up here?' It is a little sad, but I mean at

least people know that it's possible for Asian Americans to go into politics.

Ultimately, Isabella did not support Yang in his candidacy because of his lack of racial

understanding.

Interestingly, many participants said they did not consider race when deciding who to

support. Zachary, a Korean American 1st-year student who was another big supporter of Yang,

said:

I am personally a big Yang Gang guy. It is policy that brings people together and gives

people ownership of their life and financial stability. Just because money, cash rules

everything around us. He could be fucking any color; I just like his policies.

Like Zachary, other participants did not take race into consideration and focused solely on

policy. Nadira, a Bangladeshi American 2nd-year student, even challenged the idea of identity

politics and having racial representation. To her, being a certain race did not mean candidates

would advocate for low-income populations in any specific racial group. Therefore, for Nadira

and Zachary, policies addressing socioeconomic disparities were more important than having

racial representation.

The second major event to occur during this study was the global pandemic of COVID-

19. The beginnings of the pandemic for the United States emerged in January, when most of the

data collection for this study occurred but when the eventual social distancing and other

measures were not yet put into effect. However, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how

quickly Asian Americans fell from their model minority status to being dirty, foreign, and even

un-Americans. Anti-Asian sentiment, racist attacks on individuals, and blatant racism from the President were rampant (see Hong, 2020) during the writing of these finding. The quick demonization of Asian Americans during the global health crisis is an important backdrop because it reinforces the fact that Asian Americans are not immune to racism.

In summary, this study's findings are framed by Azalea's unique campus culture in terms of the polarization of political views, stratification of socioeconomic status, and the separation of racial groups. Andrew Yang's candidacy bookends this study in the 2020 democratic primaries and the global pandemic of COVID-19, during which Asian Americans experienced racist attacks and anti-Asian sentiment.

Knowledge About Race-Conscious Admissions

Almost all students had a relatively accurate definition of race-conscious admissions, referred to as affirmative action, regardless of their position. Karen, a Chinese Canadian, middle-class participant who neither supported nor opposed race-conscious admissions, summarized her knowledge of the issue as:

> I've heard [affirmative action] in the context of being aware of race on your admissions, and then using it as a criteria to help level the playing field, so to speak, for racial groups that have been historically, and continuing into now, systematically discriminated against

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5 The use of "un-American" here refers to the opinion piece written by Andrew Yang in response to the increased racism against Asian Americans (see Zhou, 2020). As a way to combat racist incidents, he encouraged Asian Americans to show their "Americanness" by voting, volunteering, and wearing red, white, and blue. This sparked outrage from the Asian American community as his message implied that for better treatment, Asian Americans must behave better.

such that the playing field isn't necessarily even for them. And trying to adjust for that

consciously at the time of college admission.

Most participants, regardless of their position on the issue, understood many nuances of race-conscious admissions. Karen understood that the purpose of race-conscious admissions is to adjust for historical and systemic racial injustices.

Others felt that even though the purpose of the policy is to correct historical injustices, Asian Americans are treated differently than other folks of color. Cathy, a Chinese American middle-class student in support of race-conscious admissions, said:

I guess what I know is that, historically, affirmative action has helped people of color be

admitted into schools that are historically white or don't have that big of a person of color

population, but I know recently, a lot of Asian Americans have felt like they've been

burned by that a little bit because, though they are people of color, because maybe they

come from towns that are better off socioeconomically or with resources that they feel like

it's giving them like an unfair chance.

Cathy pointed to an understanding of the tensions felt by Asian Americans in relation to race-conscious admissions. Asian Americans have been historically marginalized and systemically excluded throughout U.S. history; however, because of a variety of factors (e.g., critical mass in higher education, higher socioeconomic status among segments of the population), they are not considered to benefit from a policy like race-conscious admissions.

Moreover, a majority of participants did not believe race-conscious admissions allowed for less qualified Black and Latinx applicants to gain admission. When I asked Jessica, a Korean American middle-class participant who neither supported nor opposed race-conscious

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admissions, whether the policy allows for less qualified Black and Latinx applicants to gain admission, she responded:

> Again, it's why are Black and Latino students your target here? Also how are we defining less qualified? Maybe some applicants' high schools did not have AP classes but yours had 12. If Black and Latino students are being admitted based only on their race to the point where they are not succeeding in the school they were admitted to, then that would be a different story. However, if you're just looking at their race and background and drawing a conclusion that they are less qualified, I can't help but think that's just being pretty racist and again ignoring the 50% or 60% of the pie that's going to a cultural and demographic majority in this country.

Jessica astutely pointed out the assumption Black and Latinx applicants are less qualified is based on stereotypes and racism. Instead, she advocated for the examination of white students' proportion of admissions, demonstrating an understanding of racial dynamics and white privilege.

On the other hand, when I asked Cathy, who supported race-conscious admissions but believed socioeconomic status should be taken into account, if she felt race-conscious admissions allowed for less qualified Black and Latinx applicants to gain admissions, she said, "I feel like inevitably that might happen, but I do not think it is a justifiable reason to stop doing it." Interestingly, even though Cathy supports race-conscious admissions, she also believes race-conscious admissions could admit less qualified Black and Latinx applicants. Ultimately, she "does not think it is a justifiable reason to" end race-conscious admissions. Instead, her issue with the college admissions process was the way high schools were considered. She believed that

if you attend a higher-achieving high school with many applicants to institutions such as Azalea and Harvard, it would be competitive to be admitted.

Participants acknowledged the Harvard lawsuit was manipulated by a white man who had the sole agenda of removing race-conscious admissions entirely from all higher education institutions. Min Jun, a Korean American, middle-class participant attributed the entire lawsuit to this individual, Edward Blum:

> I know the impression is students of East and South Asian descent are contesting the use of race-conscious admissions policies at Harvard. However, much of it is being orchestrated from behind these white supremacist organizations or politically perverse white privilege individuals who are seeking to leverage this narrative of oppressed Asians, like dismantling a biased admissions policy in service of not our needs, but of the white polity.

Min Jun's framing of the controversy also demonstrates knowledge about power and privilege as it relates to race.

When I asked participants how they gained knowledge about race-conscious admissions, some shared they had learned about affirmative action in Asian American Studies classes. Isabella, a low-income participant in support of the policy, for example, had written a final paper on the topic. Others learned about affirmative action through co-curricular activities; Chris, a Chinese Canadian upper-class participant in support of race-conscious admissions, participated in a debate on race-conscious admissions in debate club. Participants had conversations about the controversy with their friends and family, particularly when they went through the college admissions process.

Only two participants had misinformation about race-conscious admissions. Martha, a 1st-year middle-class student who opposed the policy, was one of the few participants who still believed quotas exist:

> Affirmative action is when the college admissions is race-conscious, right? When they're trying to fill some kind of quota for this percentage of this race, that percentage of that race. I think that it is primarily beneficial for African Americans. I know that there's some controversy around it about whether it's fair, whether it should be in place and stuff like that.

She believed the policy was only beneficial for Blacks, which other participants believed, whether they supported the policy or not.

In summary, regardless of participants' opinions about race-conscious admissions, they had accurate knowledge of the policy, the lawsuit at Harvard, and the national debate on the issue. Only one participant, Martha, believed quotas were used in the admissions process. Despite the students' knowledge about the controversy, there were a few differences in how students framed the debate and on which aspect of the debate they focused. Further discussion about the differences between participants will be included in the last section of this chapter.

Discrimination in the Admissions Process: Racial Salience

Now that I have presented the contextual backdrop, I present the findings, organized by each component of the theoretical framework; each section maps onto a component of the MMRI. For the racial salience component, participants generally agreed that Asian Americans were treated unfairly in the admissions process. Even though most participants felt it was discrimination, a couple did not. When it came to their own admissions process, if participants

were rejected from their first-choice institution, they would not attribute the decision to their race but rather some other factor.

Most participants believed there was discrimination against Asian Americans in the college admissions process. Arjun, a 1st-year, middle-class participant who opposed race-conscious admissions, said:

> I think if anything is based on race, it's discrimination. So that's why I say get rid of race entirely. I definitely think there might be discrimination towards Asians because I think I watched a video that said something like, "Oh, they play the violin. All of the Asians do that." Something like that. Yeah, so there is definitely some discrimination.

Not only did Arjun believe Asian Americans were discriminated against in the college process, but he believed any type of acknowledgment or categorization of race constitutes discrimination. This belief highlights a misunderstanding of the nuances of race and racism. Arjun's definition that anything based on race is discrimination does not acknowledge the power and privilege that exists when it comes to racial dynamics in the United States.

Other students believed discrimination existed because they had to try harder to stand out during the admissions process. Sophia, an upper-middle class participant who opposed race-conscious admissions, said:

> Yes, I think there is discrimination against Asian Americans. From my college counselor, she made it clear to me. She was like "You're going to have a tough time because you're an Asian woman and all the other Asian people, they're all going to have straight As."
> And I was like, "Oh, dang it. You're right."

Many participants felt Asian Americans were treated unfairly during the admissions process, and therefore were discriminated against.

Because of messages from college counselors like the one Sophia shared, some participants thought about their Asian American identity throughout the admissions process. Morgan, a low-income student who neither supported nor opposed the policy, stated:

I did think about my identity a lot, especially because my mixed friends would choose white over Asian. Because they didn't want to be pooled with all of the Asians plus the stereotypes. So, I applied everywhere, and I remember my counselor telling me, "If you apply to Trinity or something, which is really white, you'll get a lot of money because they want more non-whites on campus to diversify." And I told him, "I cannot be the token Asian. Like I can't. I'm so sorry." I also do recognize if I had applied to a lot of very white schools or PWI, primarily white institutes [sic], I maybe would've gotten more aid.

In this example, Morgan's counselor advised Morgan on how to position her Asian American identity in a way that would benefit instead of disadvantaging her. This advice was to apply to a predominantly white school, which implied lower numbers of Asian American students. Because Morgan grew up in California, surrounded by many other Asian Americans, she was not interested in being the "token Asian" even though it might have potentially given her additional financial aid. As such, Morgan did not apply to Trinity and ended up at Azalea, where Asian American students make up most of the non-white student population. For Morgan, being at an institution with a critical mass of Asian Americans was important.

Complicating Discrimination

A couple of participants made the distinction that holding Asian Americans to a higher standard may be considered discrimination. David, a Chinese American, upper-middle-class participant, who went to high school in Texas, said, "I don't know if it's called discrimination.

Maybe it is like holding Asian Americans to a higher standard." David attended the same high school as Abigail Fisher, the plaintiff in the *Fisher v. University of Texas* case, so he admitted this topic was "kind of near and dear to some of my experiences." For him, it was important for universities to be truthful about their racial composition because it was clear to him that universities manipulate admissions processes to create a racially diverse campus:

> I think it's just a fact that they have certain racial engineering practices and that they hold Asian Americans to a higher standard. I think that's really not a question of debate. I think the more important question of debate is, what issues are more important or less important than holding Asian Americans to a higher standard.

David astutely shifted the conversation away from race-conscious admissions and focused on the treatment of Asian Americans in college admissions. He went on to say he understood why some of those issues might take precedence over treating Asian Americans fairly in the admissions process:

> Harvard has a lot of different interests to balance, so I understand [why they have to hold Asian Americans to a higher standard]. On the one hand, they want to pursue these higher ideals like diversity, inclusion, meritocracy. And on the other hand, they have a lot of donors that probably would want their children or their children to be supported and also for some of the activities that maybe they were involved in, like athletics, to also continue to be supported.

David recognized universities have many competing interests to juggle, or that college admissions are, unfortunately, a zero-sum game. For David to bring up this level of nuance indicated a deep understanding of the debate. However, one aspect left out of his analysis was the connection to institutions' reproduction of privilege, in particular white privilege. David

argued the manipulation of college admissions criteria is to doctor a diverse incoming class, but Harris (1993), Karabel (2005), and others have argued institutions change admissions criteria to protect the interests of wealthy white board members and those in power. Therefore, David's point about institutions balancing multiple interests is not simply about appeasing donors, but rather protecting white privilege.

Discrimination in Theory, but Not in Practice

Interestingly, although most participants felt there was discrimination against or unfair treatment of Asian Americans in the college admissions process, many also said they would not attribute a rejection in their own admissions process to their race. Arjun, who believed any decision based on race is discrimination, said:

> I always felt like I had to work harder, but I don't even know if it's because I'm Asian. I just felt like since I'm more of an upper-middle class, I have to get the highest possible scores and the best possible grades so that I can ensure or have a good chance of going to an Ivy League institution. There were definitely other Asian kids around me who felt like, "Look, we have it the hardest. Schools are not going to take us in because of our race." But I never looked at it that way as much. I just thought, "As long as I do what I need to do, I'm going to get into a good university."

Arjun did not think his race would have an impact on his college admissions process. He felt his socioeconomic status might have worked against him more so than his race. His mentality seemed to indicate race was not a salient factor in his interpretation of the college admissions process, and perhaps his worldview. This comment, along with his belief that any decision based on race is discrimination, again indicates a narrow understanding of race and perhaps even an unwillingness to acknowledge the importance of race.

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Although most participants said they were admitted to Azalea through early decision, one was admitted through legacy admissions as his father attended the institution. Several participants attended Azalea, however, because they did not get into their first-choice college. Angela, a low-income participant who opposed race-conscious admissions, said her first-choice college was Stanford, but she did not get admitted. When I asked her why she thought she did not get in, she said:

> I tried extra hard but not because I was thinking of it in the sense where "I'm Asian, I won't get in." It was more just like, "I know college is really hard to get into for anybody." But I honestly felt I did not get in because I was not good enough. Yeah, I didn't really think of it as my Asian identity. I thought, "Oh, maybe my grades and SAT scores weren't as high as other people who apply."

Similar to Arjun, Angela's racial identity was not activated during her college admissions process. Even when she did not get into her first-choice school, she did not attribute that rejection to her race, but rather her grade point average and test scores. For Angela, the college admissions process was strictly based on numerical merit.

Summary

In summary, there was a range in how participants interpreted the treatment of Asian Americans in the college admissions process. Some felt the treatment indicated discrimination against Asian Americans, whereas others did not. One participant, in particular, advocated the Harvard lawsuit focus on the treatment of Asian Americans instead of race-conscious admissions. Participants indicated though they understood the reason behind Asian Americans' discontent with the policy, they would not attribute a rejection from a university to their racial identity.

Ultimately, all participants believed there was unfair treatment of Asian Americans in the college admissions process and therefore were aware of their racial identity when applying to colleges. Experiences with discrimination have been found to jumpstart the development of racial consciousness (Brown & Jones, 2015) and be a motivating factor for political engagement (Aptekar, 2009). Therefore, the awareness of unfair treatment of Asian Americans in the college admissions process is one component of participants' racial consciousness and marks the entry point into its development.

Racial Identity: Racial Centrality

The next component of racial consciousness I discuss is racial centrality, which I refer to as racial identity. In general, there was wide variation in how relevant participants saw race as part of their identity across time. Four major themes emerged from the data: racial identity as a cultural identity, being Asian American means being different, racial identity as rebellion, and racial identity's relationship to other identities.

Inferior to White Standards

Another major theme that emerged from the data was how being Asian American meant being different, especially while growing up. Arjun, a 1st-year Indian American student who grew up primarily in the Midwest and the South, shared his experience has "always been different":

> Because I grew up and lived mostly in the Midwest and the South, I've always been different. I would not think anything of it if I grew up on [Azalea's] campus, but since my whole life I have been surrounded by people who are not Indian, I've always been different.

Arjun felt because he was not surrounded by other Indians or Asian Americans, he always felt different. He even stated if he "grew up on [Azalea's] campus," which has a larger proportion of Asian Americans than where he did grow up, he probably would not think about his racial identity. However, because he was one of the only Asian Americans in his K-12 experience, he noticed his racial identity was different than others around him.

This feeling of being different echoed throughout other participants' descriptions of their experiences growing up. Jessica, a Korean American 2nd-year student who grew up in the Northeast, shared:

> I realized I was Asian American for the first time in elementary school because my sister and I were the only Asian people there. I was only there for a year. That experience was a little bit alienating. It was a long time ago, but I got comments such as, "Oh, are you Chinese?" I also got kids pulling their eyes.

Jessica's experience with her classmates not only exemplifies participants' feelings of Asian Americans being different, but it, unfortunately, highlights the racist teasing Jessica experienced at a young age. Those experiences alienated Jessica because they targeted the differences in her physical appearance. Moreover, her classmates confused her ethnic identity by assuming she was Chinese instead of Korean. The caricatures of slanted eyes and mistaken ethnic identity are reoccurring tropes throughout history, depicting Asian Americans as forever foreign and inferior to whites (Kim, 1999).

Another example participants shared about feeling inferior recurs and continues to fuel the forever foreigner stereotype of Asian Americans. Steven, a second-generation Chinese American who grew up in Texas, shared he was put into the English as a Second Language (ESL) class when he was a child, even though he was born in the United States:

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I don't know when the first time I realized what my race was, but I was definitely aware of it in kindergarten because in my entire kindergarten, there was me and the Korean kid that lived down the street from me that were the only Asians. I was put in ESL, even though I was born here. So, it was not anything negative, but it did make me aware that something was a little bit different about me.

Although Steven says it "was not anything negative," the placement of an Asian American student into an ESL class is another example of how Asian Americans are seen as inferior and foreign. His comment about this not being a negative experience aligns with a finding I present later, in which many participants felt Asian Americans do not experience racism as badly as other minorities.

Some participants grew up surrounded by many other Asian Americans. Because of this different dynamic in their geographic locations, their experiences with racial identity were different than those who did not grow up around many other Asian Americans. Angela, a Filipina American 3rd-year student who grew up in in the Los Angeles area of California, described going through a culture shock when she first transitioned to Azalea because she was transitioning from an area with many Asian Americans to a different environment:

Coming to [Azalea] was my first culture shock because I didn't know how diverse it could be. [Azalea] was just really different because I actually didn't know Asians were considered a minority. Because in [Los Angeles], we were all Asian, so I didn't think of us as a minority population.

Because Angela grew up surrounded by others who looked like her, she had never been confronted about her Asian American identity through racist teasing or being one of the few

Asian Americans. Because Asian Americans were the majority population in her home neighborhood of Los Angeles, Angela never thought of herself as a minority in broader society.

Interestingly, being surrounded by many other Asian Americans still made Angela feel some discomfort with her racial identity. She described how she wanted to be special by being white:

> That's funny because growing up I was always around Asians. I thought to myself, "I kind of wish I was something different." Maybe like . . . I don't know. I thought white was the superior race. I know I shouldn't have. Especially because every time I'd watch TV, like Disney Channel or whatever was on TV, they were all white people and I looked up to them. And I was like, "Wow, they're so pretty. I wish I can be like them."

Because Angela wished she could be white and pretty, she implied she was not pretty because she was not white. In her mind, being Asian American meant being ugly or not the "superior race" nor "special." The negative associations with being Asian Americans indicated a feeling of inferiority or dissatisfaction with one's appearance and identity. Therefore, even though Angela grew up surrounded by many other Asian Americans, she was still getting messages from the media that she was inferior and not the desirable, attractive race.

In summary, these findings highlight a plethora of examples in which Asian American participants were made to feel different, or specifically inferior, by white standards and norms. Not every participant explicitly stated it was their white peers who made them feel different, but most students who experienced feeling different grew up in predominantly white areas. Even for those who grew up around other Asian Americans, the media still led them to feel inferior and believe being white meant being superior and attractive.

Cultural Identity

When I asked participants what their racial identity meant to them, many responded with a connection to their cultural identity, which included characteristics such as language, food, home countries, and ethnicity. David, a Chinese American 2nd-year student, shared his racial identity meant having a strong connection to the Chinese language and visiting China on a consistent basis, particularly because he moved from China when he was one year old and thus identifies as a 1.5-generation Asian American: "So I think, for me it means having a pretty strong background in Chinese, the language. Going very often to China, like I used to go once a year and I used to go once every two years before." To David, his racial identity was strongly correlated with his language ability and ability to visit his birth country; in other words, his racial identity was intertwined with his ethnic identity.

Other participants described their ethnic identity when asked what their racial identity meant to them. Nadira identified as a 1.5-generation Asian American because she immigrated from Bangladesh when she was 12 years old. The first time she realized she had a racial identity was when she stepped off the airplane at the airport:

> In 2012, May 13th, 2012 is when I immigrated to the U.S. I was born and raised in Taka, Bangladesh and everyone is black, everyone's brown, everyone's dark-skinned or everyone spoke the same language, same religion. So, being from there to a new place where I knew I was a foreigner now, that was it for me.

For Nadira, her immigration experience was one of the salient moments of her life. As such, she had a strong connection to her immigration journey and its impact on her identity. Because of this experience, Nadira's racial identity was strongly impacted by her status as an immigrant, and in turn, her family's lower socioeconomic status. For her, being an immigrant meant living

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paycheck to paycheck and being aware of the limitations her family had because of their lower-income status.

Participants who were born in the United States felt a strong connection to their cultural identity. For Isabella, who was second-generation on her mother's side and third- generation on her father's side, her racial identity also meant a connection to her culture:

It means having this shared kind of immigration pattern or this shared nostalgia for my parents' culture, homeland, and traditions and all of that, while also trying to learn more about it but in a genuine kind of way.

For Isabella, understanding her parents' and grandparents' culture was an important way to understand her racial identity. She expressed desire to understand her family's immigration journey as a way to understand herself better. Other second-generation participants shared how aspects of their culture influenced their racial identity daily. Karen, a Chinese Canadian 4th-year student, shared how some of her daily habits, such as meditating, language, and cooking, are connected to her racial and ethnic identity:

Well, I think so. For me it does, through a lot of my daily practices. I meditate every day. And that for me is really tied to my racial identity. Because all the meditation I've learned and do was in Chinese. Also, the foods I cook are also influenced by what I ate growing up.

Karen connected with her cultural and racial identity daily and it influenced her career trajectory after graduating from Azalea University, as she planned to go back to where she grew up and work for a Chinese-speaking nonprofit organization.

Interestingly, the majority of participants described their racial identity as a connection to their culture. Although some literature has found a connection to a cultural identity means a

limited or immature analysis of race (Poon et al., 2019), that was not necessarily the case for all participants in this study. In fact, a majority of the participants understood concepts such as white privilege, systemic racism, and other concepts relating to race and racial inequities. I present further discussion of participants' understanding of racial inequities and the systemic structures of race next.

Racial Identity as Political

Although the majority of participants described a strong cultural connection when I asked about their racial identity, some participants described their racial identity differently. In particular, Min Jun shared two examples, poignantly describing his racial identity journey. Min Jun is a 1.5-generation Korean American who grew up in a predominantly white community. When he was in the third grade, his teacher gave him an assignment in which he was to draw a portrait of himself in the future and what he wanted to be. Min Jun described what he drew:

> I was this hyper-zealous, ambitious kid. I obviously drew myself as a president of the United States, but when I submitted my assignment, Ms. Garcia looked at me confused and she was like, "Did you not understand the assignment?" I said, "No, no, no, I did. This is me as the president." It's only afterwards that I realized she was confused because what was before her was not a portrait of say me, an Asian cis[gender] man, as a president, but more rather a white male with blue eyes and blonde hair. And so obviously in that moment, I didn't have the sophistication to parse what I had internalized and what I was envisioning of myself, because I was obviously echoing my peers or what they looked like, and since there were no other Korean Americans or immigrants or Asians, really, in my environment.

Min Jun was surrounded by so many other white peers that his vision of himself was warped. The self-portrait he drew, with blue eyes and blonde hair, showed how his identity as an Asian American was such an inferior identity; it did not even exist in his mind, even about himself.

From this experience in elementary school, Min Jun transformed into a 4th-year college student, primarily studying ethnic studies. He took many ethnic studies courses and gravitated to the Black studies department. His plan after graduation was to attend graduate school to continue his interest in racial issues. When asked what being Asian American meant, he responded with the word "rebellion":

> I just think our [Asian American] literal existence in Western society is an intervention against their [white] hegemony. When we experience joy, despite living in a society that has systematically tried to strip us of that entitlement, I think we're exercising the purest form of rebellion because, well, obviously capitalism doesn't care about our pleasure. But when we can do things despite that, by simply being alive and experiencing the full breadth of those experiences, I think it is incredibly empowering.

In contrast to participants who felt being Asian American meant food, language, and culture, Min Jun saw his racial identity as a political act of resistance to the everyday structures that hold people of color down. This powerful association between his identity and rebellion against systemic racism highlights his deep understanding of racial inequities as it relates to society and his identity.

Relationship to Other Identities

Although most participants acknowledged race was an important part of their identity, several participants felt some of their other identities were more salient than race. Nadira, who identifies as low-income, said:

I would say my income status and my citizenship status is more of what defines my

identity more than my race. I came to the West Coast as an immigrant so in my middle

school, there were many Latinx, Black, and brown people that I never had to experience

racism. But, my income status was something that stayed with me on a lived experience.

Since we immigrated to the U.S, my parents, we have faced poverty since we came here.

Because Nadira immigrated to the West Coast, an area with many other people of color, she felt

her low socioeconomic status was a more salient part of her identity than her race. She spoke

passionately about her family's daily financial struggles and being hyper-aware of her family's

budget of $30 a week. She and her family relied on government-funded programs such as food

stamps and Medicaid as a way to barely make ends meet. Because of those issues she faced as a

low-income student, she felt her socioeconomic status hindered her from having the same

opportunities as her peers more than her racial identity did:

These types of paycheck-to-paycheck issues were things that defined more of my identity

here than any sort of race issues I faced because as I was navigating the high school

education system, I was trying my best to take all these AP classes and all of these

extracurriculars. But I knew my best efforts were not enough to match the support that

my peers in wealthier zip codes were getting, purely because of income status, because of

the funds that were generated by the local tax.

Due to experiences with myriad factors such as geographic location, immigration history, and

low-income status, Nadira felt those parts of her identity were more salient than her racial

identity. She felt disadvantaged compared to peers in wealthier zip codes, particularly in college

admissions, because they were receiving more resources and access to more advanced classes

because of the higher funds generated by property taxes. Therefore, not only was she more aware

of her low-income status, she felt that it was a barrier to her success in education. Most notably, Nadira did not see her racial identity in connection to these other parts of her identity; instead, she saw it as a separate entity.

Another participant, Jordan, a 3rd-year Chinese American from the suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia, also felt her racial identity was not as salient as her other identities:

I would say I've always kind of recognized that I was Chinese American, or Asian growing up. But I don't necessarily think I associated that with my race until way later on. I identify as part of the LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender] community. I identify as a woman. I would say actually I think something that really stood out in [a service-learning organization] is I realized the amount of privilege that I have coming from a pretty well-off area and having a good public-school education, having a lot of resources growing up.

Because Jordan's sexuality, gender, and socioeconomic status were the more salient parts of her identity, she did not think much about her racial identity until college. During her 2nd year of college, she participated in a semester-long seminar focusing on Asian American identity development. Many of the other participants mentioned this program, hosted by the AARC, as well. Jordan also mentioned race did not play a major role in her everyday life: "I think the only thing that about everyday life is I sometimes bum around at [the AARC]. I'm not really involved in like any Asian American organizations, but I like, come for the tea and cookies."

In Jordan's response, she saw race as connected to the activities in which she was involved (i.e., visiting the AARC and not being involved in Asian American student organizations), as those were social interactions she thought of when asked how her racial identity influences her everyday life. Throughout her interview, she also associated her identity

with different organizations in which she was involved. For example, she had been involved with the LGBT community since high school, making it seem as though that identity was more prevalent to her than racial identity.

When I asked Jordan why she felt less in touch with her Asian American identity, she shared it was because she had a tenuous relationship with her parents and because she lacked knowledge about Asian American issues:

I had a very tenuous relationship with my parents and a lot of that was I did not understand their perspective on basically anything. Part of that was a cultural clash and part of that was just like, because we have very different styles of communication. So that was part of it. And then the other part was I've never considered what it meant to be Asian American. I don't know what it means to be Asian American.

Having a strained relationship with her parents and not knowing what it meant to be Asian American led Jordan to dig deeper into her racial identity. Although she has done some exploring of her racial identity, speaking about her racial identity in terms of the activities in which she is involved suggests a narrow understanding of race and how it relates to self and society. Jordan has not yet made connections between power, privilege, systems of racial inequities, and her racial identity.

Other participants also mentioned their racial identity in relationship with other identities. However, Min Jun, in particular, recognized the intersection of his identities and how they are connected, not separate like Jordan did:

When I came to college, I started to realize the intersection between my queer identity and my Korean identity. Again, [Azalea] is very much a space of whiteness, as is queerness at large, especially in the Western world. That was a meaningful paradigm

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shift for me because high school and middle school, I just wasn't sexually active and so I

didn't encounter the stressors that would force me to realize that in a lot of ways, to my

white counterpart[s], I am not desirable and not worthy of affinity and intimacy. Here at

[Azalea], well in the queer community, there is a common refrain of "no fats, no fems, no

Asians."

The phrase "no fats, no fems, no Asians" refers to those identities the largely white, queer

community deems unattractive. Therefore, when considered through an intersectional lens

(Crenshaw, 1991), Min Jun experiences overlapping layers of oppression due to his racial and

queer identities. This example again highlights Min Jun's deep understanding of racial identity

and how it is intertwined with his other identities, unlike those participants who saw their racial

identity as separate from their other identities.

Summary

Even though the vast majority of participants mentioned feeling inferior because of their

Asian American identity, there was still variation in how students understood race as part of their

self-identity throughout their life (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016). Most participants made cultural

connections to their racial identity, although only a small subset transformed their feelings of

inferiority into the belief that their racial identity existed in a system of power, privilege, and

oppression; in other words, they saw their identity as political. Moreover, some participants felt

race was less salient than and separate from their other identities, such as socioeconomic status,

citizenship, and sexuality, while others saw their racial identity as intertwined with these and

other identities. Interestingly, those who saw their Asian American identity as political were

more likely to see it intersect with their other identities, whereas those who saw it as a cultural

identity believed their racial identity was separate from their other identities.

Because variation in identity makes it difficult to form a cohesive racial group consciousness (Chong & Rogers, 2005), the findings in this section hint at the existence of different forms of racial consciousness. Those who saw their racial identity as cultural and a less salient part of their identity are in a different group from those who saw their racial identity as political and a salient part of their identity. Therefore, this is the first component of racial consciousness differentiating the participants.

Attitude About Racial Group: Racial Regard

Racial regard is the next component of racial consciousness defined by the MMRI. It refers to participants' attitudes about their racial group and how they think others perceive their race group. Most participants felt inherently comfortable around other Asian Americans, but some felt disconnected to the Asian American community, specifically at Azalea University. Moreover, most participants felt others had a mostly positive view of Asian Americans, but some recognized the harm that positive stereotypes could have on the community.

Comfort Around Other Asian Americans

Many participants expressed a natural comfort around other Asian Americans. For example, Angela, a 3rd-year Filipina American nursing student, shared that even in high school, most of her friends were Asian American because she felt a connection to them:

> I just always feel a little more comfortable around them. And I feel like we can just relate like the stuff, like talking about what our parents went through, how we're raised. We all had pretty strict parents, so we all could understand each other like, "Oh, we can't go out often." Whereas, I guess, my white friend was always going out.

Like Angela, Morgan, a 3rd-year Korean American nursing student, also expressed her comfort around other Asian Americans, which she also believed was because of shared cultural

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experiences: "I think it's just because of a lot of culturally shared experiences. We don't feel the constant need to explain ourselves." Students like Angela and Morgan recognized their automatic comfort with other Asian Americans, mainly because they have shared experiences and do not have to explain themselves as if a part of their identity and who they are was already understood.

Some students made it clear that although they feel comfortable around other Asian Americans, it does not mean they are only comfortable around Asian Americans. Hassan, a Pakistani American nontraditional 2nd-year student, shared he feels comfortable around other Asian Americans but has also learned to connect with others:

> I do feel like a certain level of comfort with Asian Americans because we have a similar experience. It's like we're on the crossroads between being Asian and then also being American here in the United States. That's a very unique experience that a 100% American person or 100% Asian person can't really relate to. But then again, I've also learned to connect with people that are both either just American or just Asian as a byproduct of growing up here.

Hassan feels comfortable around Asian Americans because of a shared feeling of being between "Asian" and "American." However, he also mentioned he has learned to connect with non-Asian Americans as well because of his time serving in the military and his full-time job.

Nuances to Asian American Racial Group

Participants also mentioned how the Asian American community has nuances, specifically in relation to the campus culture at Azalea. Sophia, a Korean American 1st-year student, articulated the three different groups of Asian Americans she saw in her mind: "I recently distinguished international Asian, Asian American, and adopted Asian. They're all

Asian, but they lead different lives. I feel like if you're outside of the Asian group, you don't really understand that."

Particularly concerning international Asians, some participants felt the need to distinguish themselves from that group. Karen mentioned:

I've definitely noticed it myself that sometimes there's a tendency to want to identify myself as not a mainland. Someone who just immigrated from the mainland. Being able to speak English without a very obvious accent I think is helpful in that regard.

Despite wanting to distinguish herself from international Asian students, Karen also felt empathy for students with accents:

It also makes me very uncomfortable because I see the way that people with accents are treated in classes and in sort of in general. It's not anything very obvious. I think maybe part of it is I'm hypersensitive to this, but it seems like people tend to disengage when they hear someone speaking with an accent, especially if they're speaking for like a longer period of time. It may be harder to understand them, but that doesn't mean that their ideas are less valid.

One possible reason Karen feels empathy towards international students speaking with accents is because those students remind her of her family and a part of her identity, especially because she is connected to the Chinese language. She meditates in Chinese and is pursuing a job with a Chinese nonprofit organization after graduation. Therefore, she feels close to international Asians but also desires to distinguish herself from them, so she does not also get treated with disrespect.

Given the nuances within the Asian American community, there were also students who felt disconnected from the Asian American community. Nadira, who identifies more with her

low-income status, mentioned how she does not feel connected to the larger Asian American community:

> There are so many Asian American students at [Azalea]. Their wealth drives me crazy, especially international students. Like the amount of money that they have just drives me crazy. I could care less. I wouldn't share an identity with them just because we are from the same race.

Nadira saw more differences than similarities with other Asian Americans, especially when it came to socioeconomic status. Her low-income identity outweighs her racial identity to the point that she feels disconnected from other Asian Americans. Despite feeling disconnected, however, Nadira is also the founder and president of a nonpartisan AAPI political group, which she started to encourage her Asian American peers to get more involved. When I asked her why she felt compelled to start a race-based organization, she said she wanted to work against the apathy from the Asian American community.

> Morgan also mentioned experiencing a wealth difference with international Asians:
> There's so many rich international Asians. And I'm saying this because when winter season hits, it's so many Canada Goose [jackets] and I'm just like, "That thing cost so much money." As a freshman, my roommate and I were like, "What is that?" and we would look it up. When we saw the price of a jacket, our jaws just dropped.

Interestingly, both participants attributed wealth to international Asians, but that may just be a stereotype they have about international Asians, as some of the wealthy students might also be within the Asian American community at Azalea. I only interviewed Asian Americans for this study, and some participants attended their interviews wearing Canada Goose jackets.

Steven's definition of the Asian American community revolved around the Azalea dance troupe, from which he felt disconnected:

> I guess there is kind of a joke that all of the Asians know each other. But, I don't think I'm really integrated into it. Because, for the most part, I'm involved with my church group. I guess, when I think about events that a lot of Asians go to, it's like the pan-Asian dance troupe. And, then when I go there, I don't know them, but everyone seems to know each other.

Min Jun, who holds a deep understanding of the role race plays in his life and society, also did not feel connected to the Asian American community, particularly at Azalea:

> I think there are many ways in which I feel dissonance with how I conceive of myself and of my Asian American-ness versus others. One aspect is political activism. I can go through the actions of being civically engaged and I recognize that there's importance there, but it doesn't invigorate me whatsoever. For me it's more important to invest in the intellectual labor of Asian Americans, which I think is still servicing the grand project of our identity and our group or coalition, but it's just not in the same ways that my peers would do it. Another is [big pause] I don't enjoy EDM [electronic dance music].

Min Jun subtly hinted he does not feel connected to the larger Asian American community because he is not politically active and does not enjoy EDM. These two characteristics point to two distinct ways he believes the Asian American community is defined at Azalea. Instead, Min Jun saw himself participating in the Asian American community through a different method: his academic pursuits. After graduation, he plans to pursue a master's degree to continue his intellectual contribution to the Asian American community.

Min Jun's characterization of the Asian American community as being politically active falls in line with other participants' comments as well. Some, like Min Jun, were surprised at how politically active the Asian American community was. Others, who were in the political in-group, lamented there was a large population of Asian Americans who were apathetic. Isabella, who interned for Asian American Studies department, remarked:

> I know that here at Azalea there's so many Asian Americans that just don't care about any social issues and it's really, really frustrating. I think it's a very particular group of people that are involved in [the AARC and the Asian American Studies program], I see them very often, but there are also many, many other Asian Americans who focused on their own studies. Which they have the right to do, but I feel there could be more attention paid to social justice, and art history.

Min Jun's second characterization of Asian Americans liking EDM refers to a type of Asian American who enjoys a certain party scene. Other participants referenced this type of Asian American student at Azalea as well: the type that liked to be involved with white fraternities and sororities. Masie, a Cantonese American 3rd-year student, described that type of Asian American woman as either the "dragon lady" or the "lotus baby":

> I think the dragon lady group are the ones that want status. It isn't necessarily passing as white, but it's the whole Asian baby girl stereotype. Some of them do associate more with just the white community and they may be in sororities that are mostly white. Also they like to party often and dress in a way that's more revealing, and a lot of them do end up dating white guys. Then I think the lotus baby thing is how people see anyone who isn't in that group. Some guys, they want someone who's submissive and that's why

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they're going for the lotus baby. I also think part of it has to do with how anime portrays

women.

Masie's descriptions of the dragon lady and the lotus baby highlight how Asian American

women are fetishized. These stereotypes depict the "ideal" Asian American women as seen from

the white gaze instead of recognizing the wide diversity of Asian American women who are not

confined to those two definitions of womanhood.

Different Understanding of Stereotypes About Racial Group

Some students felt others' perceptions of Asian Americans were mostly positive. Even if

they experienced othering while growing up or microaggressions during their time at Azalea,

they felt the stereotypes Asian Americans face are mostly positive. Martha, a Chinese American

1st-year student from New Jersey, shared:

I think others' perceptions are more positive than negative. I think that there are high

expectations for Asian Americans or Asians in general. But honestly I think a lot of the

stigmas and stereotypes are positive in a way. Like the stereotype that Asians are all

really smart doesn't seem like a bad thing.

Martha's comment that the model minority stereotype is not harmful to Asian Americans

suggests a slightly narrow understanding of Asian American history, racial relationships, and

how the model minority myth is used to oppress all communities of color (Kim, 1999).

On the other hand, some participants understood the complications behind positive

stereotypes. Isabella stated:

I don't know if I can get a definite answer because I think a lot of people do believe that

the model minority myth and all of that. That Asians are very hard workers, very good at

STEM [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics] or whatever. But I don't

think these are necessarily compliments. I think these are still ways of objectifying a

certain race and seeing that they're only really capable of doing one thing. There's a lot

of imagery in the media of Asians being associated with robots, and technology, and

cyborgs. So I think there are good and bad things that people think about Asian

Americans, but in the end it's still stereotyping, so it's still inherently negative.

Isabella untangled the reasons why positive stereotypes are harmful to Asian Americans. She

understood positive stereotypes trap Asian Americans into a single narrative. Masie also brought

up how positive stereotypes harm different subpopulations of Asian Americans:

I think mostly positive. But I recognize that, in the API [Asian Pacific Islander] space,

Chinese people hold a relative privilege because many of them have higher education or

higher income, and there are a lot more Chinese people. That's what people think about

when they think about Asian in America, and that's how it's caused the whole model

minority stereotype and overlooking other populations such as Southeast Asians that may

need more support from the government.

Masie recognized the model minority myth hides the needs of subpopulations under the Asian

American umbrella. She and other participants pointed to the socioeconomic and immigration

differences between East Asians, Southeast Asians, and South Asians. Most participants had a

good understanding of the importance of disaggregating data on the Asian American population

to better address the nuances that exist among subpopulations.

Racism Compared to Other Racial Groups

Although almost all participants were acutely aware of the oppression faced by groups of

color, there was an acknowledgment that Asian Americans "did not have it as bad" and therefore

were treated differently than other groups of color. Chris, who supported race-conscious

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admissions but also recognized the unfair treatment of Asian American college applicants, explained why he still supports the policy:

> While I absolutely agree that Asians have faced discrimination in North America in the past, I don't believe that this is the responsibility of universities to address. While Asians certainly have faced obstacles in education, the reality right now is that African Americans suffer far more in terms of their ability to access postsecondary education and be represented on university campuses. Since universities, unfortunately, can only take so many students, there ought to be a priority made in consideration for those that are underrepresented.

Chris supported race-conscious admissions because he believed the needs of underrepresented minorities outweigh the needs of Asian Americans, who are, in general, attending universities at a much higher proportion. Although he did not acknowledge differences in college access among Asian American subpopulations, other participants did acknowledge that not all Asian Americans are attending college at the same rates. Regardless, many participants still held the belief that Asian Americans do not experience racism as badly as other groups of color—not only in terms of college enrollment, but also in terms of stereotypes and racism.

On the other hand, some participants believed that because of the perception Asian Americans do not have it as bad, the challenges faced by the Asian American community are often forgotten and overlooked. Hassan, a low-income Pakistani American who served in the military before coming back to pursue his undergraduate degree, said:

> In the United States, I don't think that Asian Americans are counted as a disenfranchised community only because as a collective, and I think they view that from statistics and data, as well that as a collective they're doing a lot better economically than, let's say, an

African American community or a Hispanic community. Because of that fact, I think

people sometimes forget about the challenges that Asian Americans face in the United

States. Sometimes that part of the discussion is left off the table.

To Hassan, Asian Americans may seem better off than other communities of color, but, this

perception harms the community because it masks the challenges faced by Asian Americans. As

a result, Hassan saw himself as on the fence, neither in support of nor in opposition to race-

conscious admissions. Hassan was less willing than Chris to believe Asian Americans do not

experience racism in the same way as other minorities, but similar to Chris, he was unable to

separate race-conscious admissions from discrimination against Asian Americans, defined by

Kang (2005) as negative action.

In general, this attitude misses a key point in the race-conscious admissions controversy:

discrimination against Asian Americans is a separate issue from race-conscious admissions.

Most participants reasoned that because Asian Americans do not experience racism as badly as

other communities of color, it is fine to focus solely on Black and Latinx applicants in race-

conscious admissions. This belief diminishes the historic racism that Asian Americans have and

continue to face. Furthermore, it highlights an attitude of acceptance for unfair treatment of

Asian American applicants in exchange for a supposedly more important priority. Fascinatingly,

these Asian American college students downplayed racism against their own racial group as a

way to support other communities of color.

It is important to note, this belief that "Asian Americans do not have it as bad" did not

come from a place of malicious intent, but rather one that wanted to recognize some of the

privileges Asian Americans hold. However, because of the distance they placed between Asian

Americans and other groups of color, participants who felt Asian Americans do not have it as

bad did not see commonality between their and other groups of color's experiences with race. As a result, these participants lacked a desire for coalition building and a belief that the liberation of Asian Americans was tied to other groups of color.

Summary

In summary, participants had varying attitudes about the connectedness of the Asian American community. In terms of participants' private racial regard, which is how individuals feel about their racial group, most participants held positive beliefs because of natural comfort around other Asian Americans and an immediate understanding of shared culture. However, a few participants felt distant from the Asian American community at Azalea because of nuances in the community (e.g., international Asians, socioeconomic status, political activism, co-curricular activities, and social circles). In terms of public racial regard, or how individuals believe others perceive their race group, some participants believed perceptions were only positive and other participants understood the negative implications of positive stereotypes.

These variations are in line with previous studies about the challenges of a panethnic Asian American racial identity (Lopez & Espiritu, 1990). However, the different ways participants responded to the positive stereotypes placed upon Asian Americans is another area that differentiates participants in their racial consciousness. The participants who understood the harm of positive stereotypes demonstrated a more nuanced understanding of Asian Americans' racialization. They understood the harm of the model minority myth and therefore had a different type of racial consciousness than those who simply accepted the positive stereotypes that others hold of Asian Americans. Those who accepted positive stereotypes of Asian Americans had a more simplistic view of stereotypes that is not informed by a critical understanding of Asian American history. Without knowledge of Asian American history, the participants who accepted

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positive stereotypes did not view Asian Americans as an oppressed minority racial group. Therefore, they saw fewer similarities between Asian Americans and other communities of color and possibly more similarities between Asian Americans and whites.

Interestingly, despite the differences in the depth of knowledge regarding stereotypes, almost all participants had mostly positive experiences with their racial identity. In other words, even though participants understood the harm that positive stereotypes create, they did not directly experience many negative interactions because of their race. For example, besides feeling othered or unfairly treated during the college admissions process, most participants had a difficult time sharing a time where they experienced microaggressions or racism. As such, this dissonance between *knowledge* of harm and *experiences* of harm made participants believe that Asian Americans do not experience racism as badly as other groups of color.

Because some participants believed they did not experience racism to the same extent as other groups of color, it made it difficult for them to see commonalities between Asian Americans and other groups of color. Although those participants also experienced feelings of inferiority and other types of microaggressions, there was also a sense of guilt or desire to recognize "Asian American privilege." This sense of Asian American privilege is exacerbated by the 1965 Immigration Act, which shifted the demographics of Asian immigrants from working-class immigrants to immigrants pursuing higher education and white-collar jobs (Lee & Zhou, 2015). At the same time, the children of the 1960s Asian American civil rights activists moved into professional careers, gaining socioeconomic status and wealth (Omatsu, 2010). Participants also acknowledged Asian American privilege in skin color. They recognized they do not fear being shot by the police or having to deal with other life-threatening consequences because of

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the color of their skin. Because of those examples, participants believed Asian Americans did not experience racism as badly as other communities of color.

Although there is truth to their different experiences with racism, participants did not recognize the liberation of communities of color are all connected. Although some Asian Americans may not feel as threatened as other communities of color, this status of the "model minority" can change quickly. As seen with the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian Americans quickly fell from their "model minority" status and started to be seen as foreign, disgusting, and disease-infected (Hong, 2020). As such, the sentiment that Asian Americans do not experience racism as badly as other communities of color is only a temporary status and could change at any moment. It is a type of thinking that is only true in certain situations and therefore limits Asian Americans' ability to promote long-term and long-lasting racial justice.

Racial Ideology

The last component of the MMRI, or racial consciousness, is racial ideology. Three major themes emerged from the data in regard to participants' racial ideology, or their worldview on race and its role in society: (a) race is entwined with everything, (b) Asian Americans do not have it as bad, and (c) socioeconomic status is more important than race.

Race Entwined

Only a few participants believed race is entwined with everything. When I asked Min Jun how he would respond to somebody who believed race-conscious admissions harmed the integrity of merit-driven admissions, he responded:

> Merit is inherently racialized, and race is inherently meritocratic. Even as a thought
> experiment, if I could imagine Harvard practicing a policy of pure merit, that reading to

me is inherently racialized. My merit as an Asian American is going to look or be held to

a different rubric than my white counterpart.

To Min Jun, race and merit are inextricably linked, so he does not believe admissions criteria can

ever be race-neutral or race-blind. His view on race is it is entwined with every part of society.

Even when I asked him what he thought about the use of socioeconomic status as a way to

diversify college campuses, he said:

It sounds like an interesting solution. But again, poverty is racialized in my mind too. I

think I'd use the same argument that there's an interplay between these systems that

actually cannot be segregated from one another. But again, if I were to think of a thought

experiment wherein which Harvard admissions was practicing [socioeconomic status-

conscious admissions], would I anticipate that there was a diversification of racial

backgrounds at these schools as a function of that change in policy building? I think I'm

too disenchanted to see hope in that approach.

Again, Min Jun sees race interwoven with socioeconomic status in that if socioeconomic status

was used to diversify college campuses, white applicants would be privileged and college

campuses would not be diversified. This again demonstrates a deep understanding of race,

power, and privilege. His understanding that power and privilege have an important role in issues

of race sets Min Jun apart from other participants.

Masie, a Cantonese American middle-class student, and Ahn, a Vietnamese American

low-income student, also did not see socioeconomic status as a viable way to diversify college

campuses. Both participants understood how embedded race is in society and how significantly

racism can affect groups of color. When I asked them their thoughts on using socioeconomic

status instead of race to diversify college campuses, Masie said, "I don't think it's necessarily something that's been used to systematically discriminate against them" and Ahn replied:

> I guess people would probably be more supportive of that just because people don't like
> talking about race. I think I've read some statistics about a Black president who is
> wealthy still has to work twice as hard as a middle-class white man. I just think that it's
> great to say you don't care about race, but the reality is there's a lot of racism that's not
> just in the academic atmosphere, but every other industry that affects academics. It is not
> really a solution to just say we're going to cut out race and just focus on income alone.

Anh acknowledged race is a difficult thing to talk about, which is why some individuals may gravitate toward a socioeconomic approach instead. She understood that even though people do not want to talk about race, it does not mean racial inequalities do not exist. Ahn brought up a good example of how wealth and higher socioeconomic status does not automatically protect you from the effects of racism.

Importance of Socioeconomic Status

The third ideology that emerged from the data is the strong belief that socioeconomic status needed to play a more significant role in conjunction with race-conscious admissions. Participants who believed socioeconomic status was more important than race varied in their support for race-conscious admissions. Some supported the policy but thought socioeconomic status needed to be considered as well, but others fell into the neither support nor oppose or the opposed group. Arjun, who opposed the policy, articulated why he thought socioeconomic status would be a better approach to diversifying college campuses:

> You have to talk about race because, for example, Black people are targeted more by
> police. That can be fixed by changing the system of policing. So it's a combination of

both economics and race. I just seem to focus more on economics. Let's say, for instance, we were able to reduce crime. There would be less police officers patrolling the street and there'd be less police officers doing racist things. Like in New York, stop and frisk. That was a racist policy because police officers targeted people of color, Hispanic people, Black people. But if we were to, for whatever reason, help people economically so they didn't have to go and commit crime, then police officers wouldn't have to be on the streets to worry about it. I know economics won't solve everything, but I feel like it would be a good way to start.

Arjun, like many other participants, felt strongly about socioeconomic status as a way to address inequalities and shared his belief that racial tensions stem from economic issues. To him, racial inequities, racism, and the election of President Trump—all could have been avoided if people in the United States were not experiencing economic distress. Even though it is clear Arjun cares about racial issues and understands the negative impact racism can have on individuals, his logic of using economic relief to address racism assumes racism exists because individuals are of a lower-income status. Therefore, using economic relief would not work for those in higher income brackets where racism still exists. Asian Americans and other groups of color from higher socioeconomic status are still susceptible to racism; for example, in early 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic hit the United States, Asian Americans across the country faced racist attacks on an individual level and from President Trump when he called the virus the "Chinese virus" (Hong, 2020).

Regarding the policy of race-conscious admissions, many participants advocated for the consideration of race and class instead of just race. Interestingly, many were low-income students. Zachary, a Korean American participant, shared he had to work three jobs during high

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school to support his mom, who was diagnosed with cancer. When we spoke, he was in his first

year at Azalea and was still supporting his mother financially. He expressed his frustration:

> Some of my closest friends are DACA [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals]
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> recipients and they're at MIT and Harvard, really good schools now. I'm sorry, I worked
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> really fucking hard. I had to work my ass off to get to where I am and the fact that I had
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> to have a 200-point higher score, do I think it should have been that way? I wish I didn't
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> have to. Because it made my life a lot harder and while I do support getting Black and
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> Hispanic kids into school, because diversity does make school a better place, but I think
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> there's a better way to do it.

For many low-income participants, the unfair treatment in the college admissions process was

heightened because of the struggles they had to overcome due to their socioeconomic status.

Zachary felt he had to work even harder than his Black and Latinx friends because of his low-

income status and racial identity as Asian American. Instead of feeling a sense of solidarity with

other groups of color, Zachary felt they had an easier time than he did during the college

admissions process.

Summary

In summary, participants differed in how they viewed the relationship between race and

socioeconomic status. Some participants understood race and socioeconomic status as entwined,

whereas others believed socioeconomic status is more salient than race to their identities and the

reason behind inequities in society. The differing views between addressing race or addressing

class to solve racial justice issues is a longstanding debate within affirmative action discourse

(Cancian, 1998). Although the purpose of this study was not to determine which ideology is right

or wrong, this finding highlights the ease with which some Asian American college students

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defer to economic means to address racial inequalities, especially given the unique characteristics of Asian Americans as a racial group, with varying immigration patterns and socioeconomic statuses (Lopez & Espiritu, 1990).

Furthermore, a key difference in participants' ideologies was where they received their meaningful education. Osajima (2007) found when raising critical consciousness for Asian Americans, one important factor included moments of new information and knowledge that impact perspective. For a majority of participants, they attributed their knowledge to courses taken in Asian American Studies or through an identity development program hosted by the AARC. Interestingly, most of those participants advocated for a combination of socioeconomic status and race to be considered as part of race-conscious admissions. On the other hand, for a subset of participants like Min Jun, whose ideologies highlighted the interconnectedness of race and class, they received their meaningful education from Asian American studies courses and other departments such as the school of education and Black studies. In particular, Min Jun attributed most of his knowledge and way of thinking to the courses he took in Black studies and to transformational friendships with Black women. Those cross-racial relationships were critical to his development of racial ideology. As such, the differing ideologies point to different types of racial consciousness held by Asian American college students.

Influence of Racial Consciousness on Opinion

Now that I have presented each component of racial consciousness, I put all four components together to highlight how they influence students' political opinions. Participants fell into four categories of opinion on race-conscious admissions: (a) those who supported the policy unconditionally, (b) those who supported but wanted to change the policy to include socioeconomic status and/or ethnicity, (c) those who neither supported nor opposed the policy,

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and (d) those who opposed the policy. As I describe the characteristics of each opinion group, I also discuss differences between the groups. Before discussing differences, however, I first describe similarities across all opinion groups.

Similarities

There were many similarities between participants who held differing views on race-conscious admissions. All participants, regardless of their position on the policy, described moments of othering during their childhood, recognized microaggressions they experienced and understood the importance of race and white privilege. For example, Martha, a middle-class student who opposed the policy, and Coco, a low-income student who neither opposed nor supported the policy, both wished they were white when they were younger because they saw white women as more beautiful than themselves. Morgan, a low-income student who neither supported nor opposed the policy, gave many examples of microaggressions she faced in her nursing program, from faculty and patients, while she was on clinic rotations. Many of these examples stemmed from the forever foreign stereotype, in which she was seen as exotic and foreign. Steven, an upper-middle-class student who conditionally supported the policy, stated that he could not ignore race:

> We can't live in a colorless society. I told you I had a conversation with my Turkish friend. He says the exact same thing. He says, "Why does race have to matter so much, and why can't you just ignore it?" But, you can't ignore it because it's not ignored in our life. And Asian Americans don't have as much privilege as white people.

These examples show that all participants have an awareness of the systemic nature of race, racism, and privilege. However, participants differed in their application of this knowledge, as I detail in the section discussing differences across groups.

Additionally, all participants had knowledge of both sides of the race-conscious admissions debate, sometimes also referred to as affirmative action. They understood, to an extent, that the purpose of the policy is to provide reparations for communities of color who have experienced systemic racism. Moreover, almost all participants believed Asian Americans were being treated unfairly or discriminated against in the college admissions process. All of them were aware of the treatment of Asian Americans during their own admissions process. A majority of the participants shared they received admissions through early decision; there was even one legacy admit whose father attended Azalea. Interestingly, almost every participant also said if they did not receive admissions to Azalea, they would not attribute it to their race.

Unconditional Support

Three participants, Ahn, Min Jun, and Masie, fell into the category of full support of the policy without any caveats. Ahn said, "For me, I support [race-conscious admissions] just because I think there's still a lot of work to be done. It's like one way where we're trying to have restorative justice." Moreover, three participants had similar racial ideologies and were the only participants who believed race is entwined with everything; they saw inequities in society through the lens of race and did not believe socioeconomic status would help diversify college campuses.

Additionally, these three participants felt a sense of solidarity with other groups of color. Masie shared because of her Cantonese ethnic identity, she understood the oppression and racism other groups of color experience. Because her grandparents swam across the ocean to flee China during the Cultural Revolution, Masie identified with the refugee immigrant experience more so than the stereotypical Chinese immigrant experience of higher education and wealth. She explained:

For my parents, they were looking to just live. But for a lot of people who are

immigrating now, who are usually from Northern China, they already have a higher

education and they already have quite an amount of privilege; they have a pretty

comfortable life and they just want a better life. There's this huge difference between

[those from Southern China and Northern China]. You can't compare and treat them the

same. That's how I explained the Asian and Black relation to my parents, and they were

surprisingly receptive.

Because Masie's parents came to the United States with less wealth and lower education levels,

she feels distinctly different from other Chinese Americans. She even shared examples of her

childhood, in which her Mandarin-speaking friends would look down upon her "farmer's nose"

or attribute her lower grades to her Cantonese ethnicity. Interestingly, she was able to compare

her and her family's experiences of being Cantonese with the racial dynamics between the Asian

American and Black communities. In doing so, she is finding commonality with another group of

color and creating solidarity. Masie also mentioned her family had many interracial marriages

with people from other communities of color.

Min Jun also described a strong sense of solidarity with the Black community. Because

of his major, he took many classes in the Black Studies department and his social circles

comprised mostly Black folks. When I asked him if he would change his race, Min Jun said:

I haven't fully unpacked this, but I do think I wish I was Black oftentimes. I just think

there's a richness to Black culture that—not necessarily that Asians don't have, but

rather, America doesn't acknowledge. I don't think it's a coincidence that the most

formative relationships that I've ever had and the most substantive friendships that I've

ever had were all Black women.

Min Jun articulated feelings of self-loathing toward his Asian American identity. As discussed in the first part of this chapter, Min Jun drew himself as white when he was in elementary school because of how disconnected he was from his racial identity. However, given his close proximity to the Black community, he has a strong sense of solidarity with them.

All three participants also held a strong understanding of white privilege and how removing race-conscious admissions would have negative impacts on all groups of color. Even when describing their knowledge of the Harvard lawsuit, all three mentioned Ed Blum as the reason behind the lawsuit. Masie said, "I know that it's this white guy who's using one case after another to try to change, just make a race-blind admission process. That isn't necessarily a good thing for us, or for any other minority." Not only does Masie blame Ed Blum for the lawsuit, but she also acknowledges the policy would have a negative impact on all groups of color. Min Jun also attributed the entire Harvard lawsuit to Edward Blum:

> I know the impression is students of East and South Asian descent are contesting the use of race-conscious admissions policies at Harvard. However, much of it is being orchestrated from behind these white supremacist organizations or politically perverse white privilege individuals who are seeking to leverage this narrative of oppressed Asians, like dismantling a biased admissions policy in service of not our needs, but of the white polity.

Min Jun's framing of the controversy demonstrates his ability not only to recognize white privilege, but also to speak against it. Ahn's, Masie's, and Min Jun's unwavering support for race-conscious admissions match the systemic transformation component of the multidimensional model of raceclass frames and affirmative action (MMRFAA; Poon et al., 2019).

In summary, the participants who supported the policy unconditionally shared a few key characteristics of racial consciousness, as shown in Figure 4.1. First, in terms of similarities to other groups, this group experienced feelings of inferiority to white norms, believed there was discrimination in the college admissions process, and understood the harms of positive stereotypes for Asian Americans. However, uniquely to this group, they saw their racial identity as political and believed race was an important part of their sense of self. In terms of attitude towards their racial group, the participants felt comfortable around other Asian Americans, but there was also a sense of discomfort as well that was unique to this group, as discussed in the earlier section of this chapter on attitudes about one's racial group. Last, participants in this group held a uniquely different racial ideology; they understood race as entwined with every piece of society and believed the liberation of all communities of color were tied together.

Figure 4.1

Breakdown of Racial Consciousness for Those Who Unconditionally Support
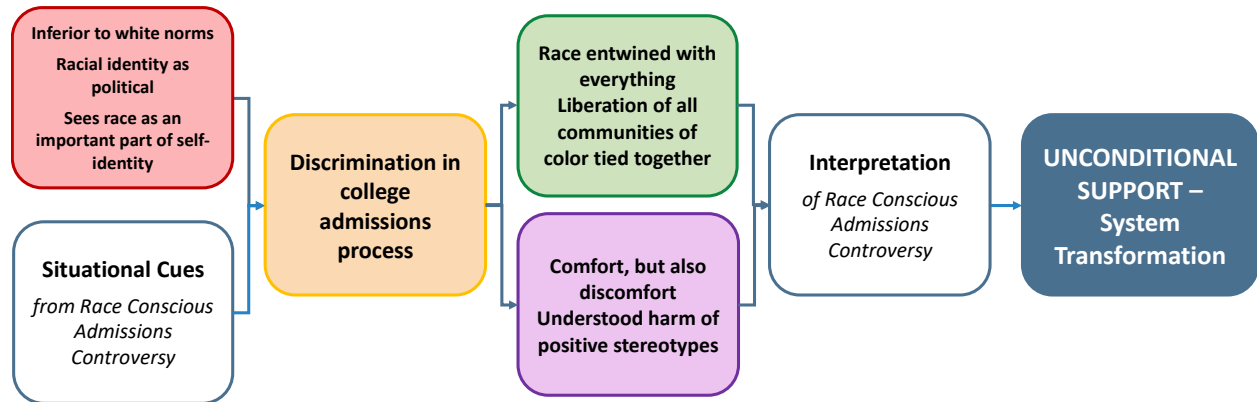
Note. Adapted from "Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity: A Reconceptualization of African American Racial Identity," by R. M. Sellers, M. A. Smith, J. N. Shelton, S. A. J. Rowley, & T. M. Chavous, 1998, *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 2*(1)*,* pp. 18–39. Copyright 1998 by Lawrence Erlbaurn Associates.

Conditional Support

There were eight participants (Nadira, David, Chris, Jordan, Cathy, Isabella, Zachary, and Steven) whose opinion on the controversy fell into the conditionally support category. These participants believed in a race-conscious admissions policy but felt socioeconomic status needed to be taken into greater account. Steven said, "I support it, I don't want to get rid of it. But, my main thing is I think socioeconomic status should be considered way more." Isabella advocated for the inclusion of socioeconomic status and ethnicity to disaggregate the data and better serve certain subpopulations:

> I think the intention of affirmative action is legitimate and I support it. We have to acknowledge the institutional systemic racism that's been built into this country and part of doing so is by giving certain groups more access to education, which is really, really important. But the way that I think it should be done instead by considering both race, and also socioeconomic status, and also ethnicity. Because I think those are all very different categories that should be considered and says a lot about that person's background.

Isabella clearly possessed knowledge and understanding of systemic racism. However, she advocated for the consideration of socioeconomic status and ethnicity along with race. Even though this may help certain Asian American populations and other communities of color, this suggestion is still rooted in the assumption that groups of color who are wealthy have reached a state where their "earned privilege" through socioeconomic status negates the obstacles they face as a person of color.

Although participants in this category stated they supported the policy, it was difficult at times to determine if they truly supported race-conscious admissions or if they believed it was

something they were supposed to say. For example, throughout the interview, Zachary

maintained his support of the policy. However, he also expressed frustration that he had to work

even harder than his Black and Latinx friends because he was Asian American and low-income.

With such a strong connection to his identity as a low-income student, it would not be surprising

if he opposed the policy. However, Zachary also had a strong analysis of race. He understood

Asian Americans did not experience racism the same way that Blacks and Latinxs do, and he

was active in the Korean American political community in his hometown of Los Angeles. As

such, Zachary's experiences with race and socioeconomic status highlight the nuances existing

behind the view of the participants in this category of conditional support.

Participants in this category also gave a caveat relating to their college admissions

process. David and Cathy gave a disclaimer about their support for race-conscious admissions.

Cathy stated:

> I want to say I don't mind affirmative action still and I feel like maybe it's the details of it
>
> that are flawed, but as a whole, I think it's on a very good premise. I also don't know
>
> enough details about it to see exactly what is wrong. But at the same time, I feel like
>
> people should take [my opinion] with a grain of salt because I can say [I support the
>
> policy] because I still ended up at my first-choice school. It's very easy for me to say it
>
> works out for everyone just because it worked out for me, and so sometimes I think about
>
> if I didn't end up here or if I did not end up at my first choice, would I think I had been
>
> gypped[6]? I don't know.

---

[6] This term is often considered offensive because it is an ethnic slur. However, I kept this term in because it is a
direct quote from the participant.

Cathy felt her opinion was contingent on the fact she received admission to her first-choice university. This type of conditional support suggests she could well oppose the policy if she was rejected. As such, her support for the policy was almost noncommittal and grounded in the belief that the policy could have potentially hurt her admissions prospects, indicating a lack of separation between negative action and race-conscious admissions.

David had a similar caveat based on admissions outcomes. He believed because he was admitted into Azalea, he benefited from attending a school with students from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. However, he also believed:

> If I wasn't a student at [Azalea], then I wouldn't be a beneficiary of this diversity. I would be one of the people that was adversely affected by the goal of diversity because fundamentally college admission is a zero-sum game because the number of slots that are available for students is fixed. So, if you're helping someone else, you're probably also hurting someone else. And I think that's a really important point that people don't focus on. It's not like things like economic growth where you can theoretically help everyone. If I wasn't at [Azalea,] I would be one of the people that was traded off so to speak. So I think it'd be fair to say that I wouldn't be as happy with what [Azalea] is doing.

David supports the policy because he benefits from a diverse group of students at Azalea. The MMRFAA defines this type of support as *conscious compromise*, wherein individuals' support for the policy is because they benefit from diversity (Poon et al., 2019). However, David included another layer in his reasoning, in which he assumed a rejection from Azalea meant he would not support the policy because he would feel "traded off." Therefore, David's support for the policy was contingent on his admission to Azalea, his first-choice college. The assumption there is a negative impact on the educational experiences of Asian Americans who do not attend

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their first-choice institution is a commonly used argument. However, literature shows there is no difference in educational outcomes for Asian Americans attending their first-choice school and those who are not (see Nguyen et al., forthcoming).

Overall, when asked directly, participants in this group stated their support for a race-conscious admissions policy. However, they all mentioned a caveat to their support. Most wanted to include socioeconomic status and ethnicity, although, for a few, their support for the policy was contingent on successful admission to their first-choice institution, suggesting self-interest for supporting the policy. Like all groups, participants experienced inferiority to white norms and believed there was discrimination in the college admissions process. They also felt comfort with other Asian Americans and knew the harm positive stereotypes have on Asian Americans. Characteristics of this group that were different than those in the unconditionally support group (see underlined items in Figure 4.2) include a sense of cultural identity in terms of their racial identity. Moreover, that cultural identity played a salient role in sense of self for some but not others. This group felt comfortable around other Asian Americans and, in general, tended to understand the harm of positive stereotypes. They advocated for consideration of socioeconomic status in addition to race because they felt socioeconomic status was a better way to help underrepresented Asian American subpopulations gain access to college. Ultimately, they supported the policy because they felt Asian Americans do not experience racism as badly as other groups of color.

Figure 4.2

Breakdown of Racial Consciousness for Those Who Conditionally Support
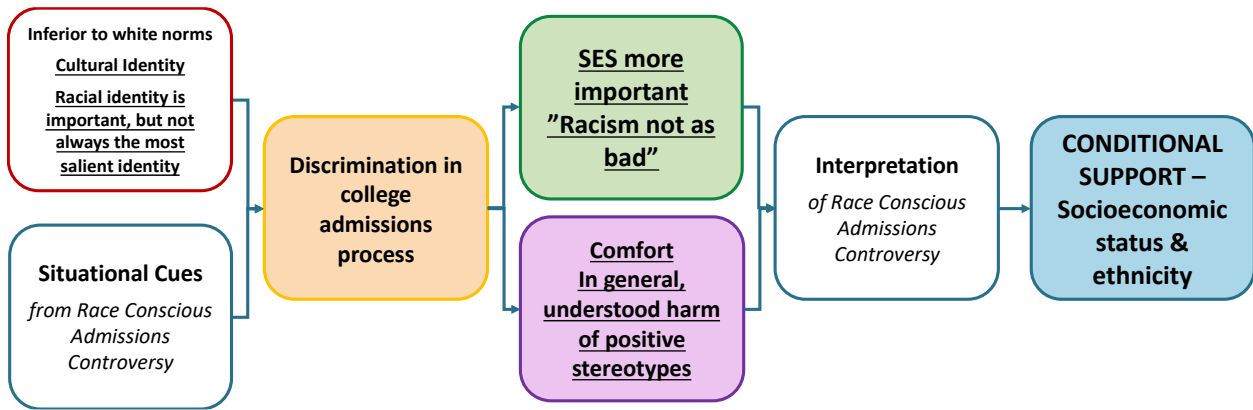
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Neither Support nor Oppose

Five participants (Coco, Hassan, Karen, Jessica, and Morgan) fell into the category of neither supporting nor opposing race-conscious admissions. Participants had a few different reasons for their opinion. Similar to those in the conditional support group, participants mentioned socioeconomic status should be included as well. Participants also supported the policy in theory but not in practice. Coco said:

> I support the idea but not the execution. Also, I feel like socioeconomic status should be weighed more than race or ethnicity. I definitely think there is discrimination against Asian Americans during the admissions process. Because like I said earlier, for Asian Americans, there's just so many different ethnicities and within them there's so many circumstances, and even honestly within the same ethnicity or circumstances, it could be totally different.

Coco did not support the execution of the policy because she felt it discriminated against Asian American applicants. However, Karen did not support the implementation of the policy because she did not believe in a point system:

> I don't think it should be a point system. If you're this race, then you get five extra points. Yeah, I'd rather see more of a dialogue around it through the application process where perhaps applicants are asked to write about how their racial identity has affected them. That's very broad. But yes, I would like to see people be aware of it, but I think that on a policy level it's hard to implement because it is a nuanced issue.

All participants in this group had a strong analysis of race, racism, and white privilege. Morgan shared many examples of microaggressions she faced in the nursing program. Karen talked about the difference between Azalea and a previous institution she attended with a much smaller number of Asian Americans. As a philosophy major, she articulated a strong understanding of the systemic nature of racism. Jessica also demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of race and solidarity with other groups of color:

> Even once you control for socioeconomic background, your racial background can impact your chances in college admissions just for a variety of reasons. So I feel like it should still be considered. They all say it's not a quota system, but the percentages have stayed pretty stable. This is more of my dad's take, and I don't agree with everything he says, but his take is: Don't resent other minorities, go after white people's piece of the pie. Because it has stayed the same size for a long time. He says minorities shouldn't be pitted against each other, but he's also pretty racist against Black and Latino people.

Given the influence of Jessica's dad on her, it would seem as if she should be in support of the policy. However, Jessica stated she neither supported nor opposed the policy because she wanted

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to see more research on the effectiveness of the policy, particularly because its execution can be messy.

Hassan could not make up his mind on whether to support or oppose the policy. On the one hand, Hassan recognized Asian Americans should be counted as a marginalized community because of the historic and continued racism against them. On the other hand, he believed Asian Americans were being discriminated against in the college admissions process. He poignantly said, "I think it is unfair for someone to be discriminated against because of their race while we're trying to correct historical injustices." Hassan astutely alluded to Asian Americans often being left out of policies and practices aiming for racial equity.

In general, this group was distinctly different than those who conditionally supported race-conscious admissions in a few key areas (see underlined items in Figure 4.3). First, they tended to interpret their racial identity as an important and salient part of their self-identity, a similar quality to those who unconditionally supported the policy. They were also not convinced socioeconomic status was the best solution to address racial inequities. The students in this category understood Asian Americans also experience racism and oppression and cared about Asian American issues. However, they did not understand how race-conscious admissions as a policy helps to protect all communities of color, and therefore took the position of neither support nor opposed.

Figure 4.3

Breakdown of Racial Consciousness for Those Who Neither Support nor Oppose
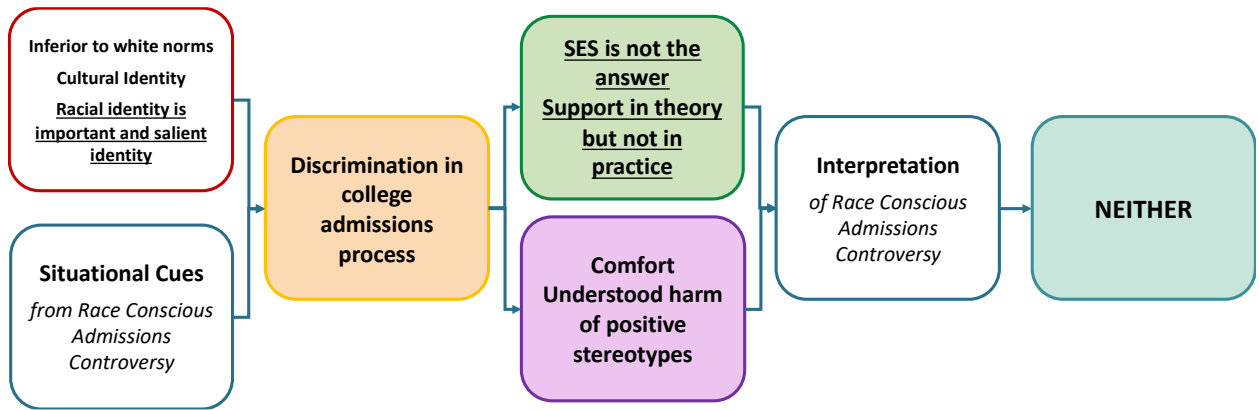
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Oppose

Four participants (Arjun, Angela, Sophia, and Martha) fell into the category of opposition to race-conscious admissions. As discussed, Martha was the only one who had an inaccurate knowledge of the policy and thought quotas still existed. Notably, all four participants showed an awareness of both sides of the controversy when describing their knowledge regarding the policy.

Despite understanding both sides of the controversy, these participants disagreed with the policy because they felt race was not earned; in other words, they had a numeric definition of merit (Guinier, 2003). Angela said:

> I personally don't think race should be a factor. I feel like people should be getting in based on their skills and what they have done. Even if it's just one factor out of many, I feel like it's still something that shouldn't have to be considered.

Angela's emphasis on basing college admissions on "skills and what they have done" shows her belief that college admissions should only be based on numerically quantifiable definitions of merit (e.g., GPA, SAT scores). This mindset interprets the college admissions process as a contest with a set of rules and at which everybody has to work hard to win (Guinier, 2003).

Martha and Arjun also said they were against the race-conscious admissions policy because individuals have no control over their race. Martha added, "How would you quantify racial discrimination? Because if it's like, 'Oh, I get a plus one,' like do African Americans get a plus two? Like who gets a plus four? Is that fair? Do people get minuses?" Although this type of thinking highlights a lack of understanding about the serious impact of systemic racism, Martha's criticism points out the policies are far from perfect. Arjun also added, "I don't want the basis of an admissions process to be solely based on race. So if we have two identical candidates but one is Asian and one is Black, I don't know if I could choose between them." Arjun brought up a common argument policy critics often raise. They pit groups of color against each other to advocate for the removal of race-conscious admissions. However, Arjun and others miss the point that race-conscious admissions protect against white privilege.

In terms of racial identity, all four participants experienced othering or microaggressions due to their race and made connections to their race through their cultural identity. Although Arjun described being tokenized in high school, he added at the end of the interview he has a lot of empathy for conservatives who live in the Midwest and South:

> I just think a lot of them are just misinformed not that they're racist, even though they might say racist things. They're just really ignorant. And honestly, they might have those racist tensions because they're so economically down. I feel like sometimes we demean people from the Midwest and the South but they're good people.

Arjun's empathy for white people reflects a color-evasive ideology (Annamma et al., 2017). A

color evasive ideology avoids discussion and acknowledgment of race. During the interview,

Arjun acknowledged he preferred not to talk about race or specifically call out race because he

believed it made people uncomfortable. Instead, he was more willing to use socioeconomic

inequities to address racial issues. Not only does this imply a superficial link between race and

class, but his unwillingness to address racial inequities, regardless of his good intent, is

damaging because not addressing race ignores the distinctly different experiences of people of

color.

> Additionally, Arjun shared his disdain for legacy admissions:
>
> I also want to address legacy admissions and the entrance of kids of politicians and elites
>
> into top institutions. These ways of admitting students are way more egregiously unfair
>
> than race-based admissions. I, again, feel the institutions around us are almost forcing us
>
> to forget about these unfair and at times corrupt admissions policies and move our focus
>
> to race. The elite love making the masses focus on racial differences when the real
>
> problem is the elites themselves. In my perfect world, race-based admissions wouldn't
>
> exist. But under the system we live in, I would rather have more Black and Brown
>
> students on campus than having children of Joe Biden or Donald Trump.

These two quotes, along with Arjun's strong belief that economic relief is the way to end racism,

highlight a strong association between class and power. In his mind, higher socioeconomic status

means more power and more privilege. Although this is true to an extent, it does not take into

account the role race plays among those with the same socioeconomic status. Taking into

account race and white privilege, people of color can gain wealth through socioeconomic status,

but wealth cannot protect against discrimination and racism.

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In summary, there were a few unique characteristics of the participants who opposed the policy (see underlined items in Figure 4.4). In comparison to all other groups, they had a limited understanding of how positive stereotypes hurt Asian Americans. Also, even though they did experience feelings of inferiority, in general, they did not have many negative experiences with race. Furthermore, these participants held a color evasive mentality in which they preferred not to talk about race because it made them uncomfortable.

Figure 4.4

Breakdown of Racial Consciousness for Those Who Oppose
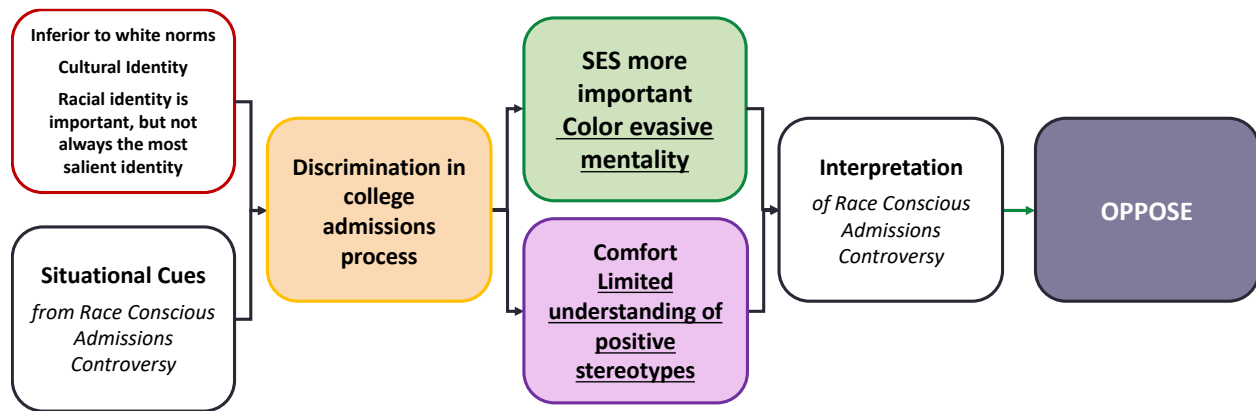
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CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Race-conscious admissions policies have been debated throughout the years. In particular, it has been well-documented that members of the Asian American community have differing opinions on the policy (Poon et al., 2019; Takagi, 1992). Given these differing opinions, the purpose of this study was to understand the connections between identity and racial meaning and their impact on an individual's opinion regarding race-conscious admissions. As such, this dissertation examined the relationship between identity, ideology, and opinion. To examine this relationship, I investigated the four components of racial consciousness defined by Sellers et al.'s (1998) MMRI. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What does racial consciousness look like in Asian American college students?

2. How does racial consciousness inform Asian American college students' positions on race-conscious admissions?

3. What similarities and differences in racial consciousness exist between Asian American college students with different opinions about race-conscious admissions?

To answer the research questions, I employed a qualitative study with a constructivist lens (Bhattacharya, 2016; Creswell, 2012) at an East Coast Ivy League institution, to which I refer with a pseudonym, Azalea University. The majority of this study's data collection took place during a 15-day timeframe at the end of January 2020, which was the start of the university's spring semester. A total of 20 Asian American undergraduate students participated in individual semi-structured interviews about their racial identity and opinion on race-conscious admissions. The sample represented a range of demographic characteristics, including ethnicity, immigration generation, gender, and major, as well as opinions on the policy.

During the data collection process, I also informally spoke with graduate students, staff, and faculty involved in the Asian American community at Azalea. I took field notes on observations I made on my walks from the parking lot to campus. Additionally, I looked up events and facts mentioned by participants, including a student newspaper article on legacy admissions and children of donors attending the institution. To analyze the data, I conducted two rounds of coding; I first conducted in vivo coding and then subsumed the codes into larger categories (Saldaña, 2016). Then, I conducted an additional round of coding to synthesize the codes and categories into themes.

In combination with the theoretical framework of multidimensional model of racial identity (Sellers et al., 1998) and multidimensional model of raceclass frames and affirmative action (Poon et al., 2019), I extracted key findings on how racial consciousness influenced opinion on race-conscious admissions for Asian American undergraduates. In this chapter, I argue the distinctive experience of being Asian American shaped participants' views on race-conscious admissions. Differing forms of racial consciousness resulted in various opinions on race-conscious admissions and I provide a theoretical model that defines these different forms of consciousness. In conclusion, I posit the different forms of racial consciousness provide a more nuanced understanding of racial justice and the future of race-conscious admissions.

Forms of Asian American Racial Consciousness

Racial consciousness can be a unifying factor to advocate for political change. As Chang and Rogers (2005) asserted, "group consciousness has been a key concept for understanding how racial minorities and newcomers to the United States have overcome prejudice, discrimination, and socioeconomic barriers to achieve democratic inclusion" (p. 45). Studies have shown racial discrimination (Aptekar, 2009; Masuoka, 2006), a panethnic racial identity (Lopez & Espiritu,

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1990), racial ideologies (Miller et al., 1981), and differing ways of identifying with racial

identity (Junn & Masuoka, 2008a, 2008b; Miller et al., 1981) are all factors influencing racial

group consciousness. I synthesized these factors and used the MMRI framework (Sellers et al.,

1998) to examine the process by which racial identification transforms into racial consciousness.

Literature points to the difficulty in creating one collective racial consciousness for Asian

Americans due to differences in identification, how recently an individual immigrated,

unconventional forms of political participation, and degrees of racial consciousness (see Chong

& Rogers, 2005 for a synthesis of the literature). However, this qualitative study on Asian

American college students addresses these challenges by uncovering nuances to their racial

identity, racial connectedness, and racial ideology. Although studies have addressed each

component of racial consciousness (discrimination, racial identity, racial ideology, and attitude

regarding own racial group) separately, few studies have examined them in concert. This

dissertation's unique contribution to the literature, as well as to the understanding of why some

Asian Americans oppose policies such as race-conscious admissions, is the articulation of

different forms of racial consciousness.

I uncovered three different forms of racial consciousness among Asian American college

students: race-avoidant consciousness, within-group consciousness, and collective liberation

consciousness (see Figure 5.1). Each type of consciousness is informed by the theoretical

framework of the MMRI (Sellers et al., 1998). Although the theory identifies itself as a theory on

racial identity, I posit the theory defines more than identification; it defines racial consciousness.

The components (discrimination, identity, ideology, and attitude regarding own racial group) of

each type of racial consciousness are drawn directly from the MMRI (racial salience, racial

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centrality, racial ideology, racial regard, respectively), and correspond to the same colors used in

Figures 4.1 to 4.4 in Chapter 4 (orange, red, green, purple, respectively).

In the next section, I describe the key characteristics of each form of racial consciousness,

make connections to existing literature, and identify contributions to higher education literature.

Because all participants had similar beliefs about the unfair treatment of Asian Americans in

college admissions, I will not discuss in detail the component of discrimination, or racial

salience, in the following sections.

Figure 5.1

Forms of Racial Consciousness
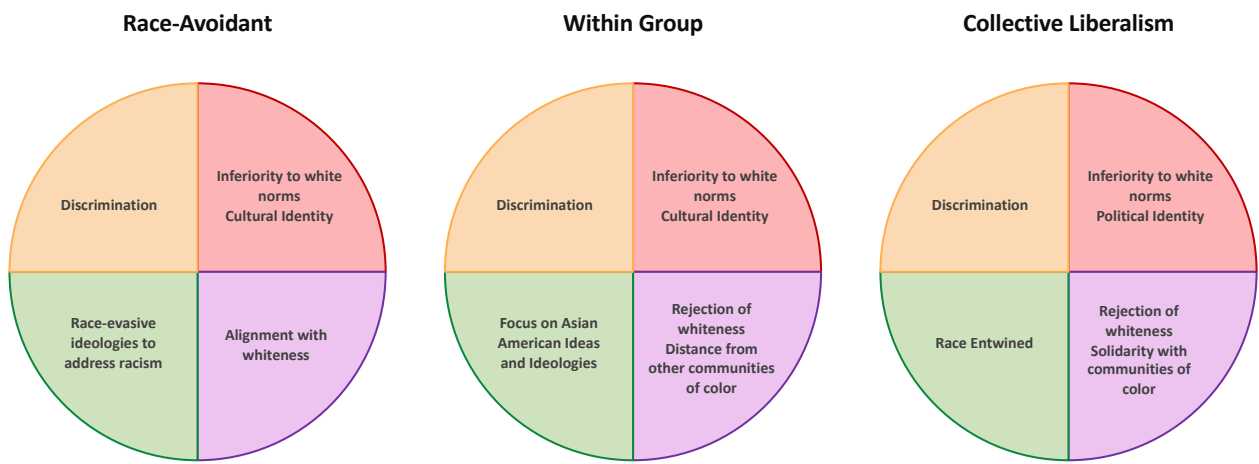
Race-Avoidant Consciousness

There are three key characteristics of race-avoidant consciousness. First, in terms of

racial identity, participants experienced inferiority to white norms but identified in a cultural way

to their racial identity. Second, in terms of ideology, these participants advocated for color-

evasive[7] ideologies to address racism, despite their personal experiences with microaggressions and tokenism. For example, they believed economic relief would help minimize police shootings of unarmed Black men. Third, participants with a race-avoidant consciousness had an alignment with whiteness because of their limited understanding of the harmful effects of positive stereotypes, such as the model minority myth. As such, they had mostly positive experiences with race and not only did they have empathy for racist whites, but they also advocated for numerical definitions of merit as a way to consider admissions.

Separately, each of the components of race-avoidant consciousness connects to other concepts in literature. For example, Johnston-Guerrero (2016) also found that college students make meaning of their racial identity in a cultural manner. As for ideology, using economic means to address racial inequalities is a common argument stemming from a capitalistic point of view (Poon et al., 2019). In particular, the argument to use socioeconomic status instead of race to diversify college campuses is brought up often, though proven not as effective (Cancian, 1998; Park et al., 2013). Furthermore, critical race theorists have demonstrated the problematic outcomes of color-evasive ideologies (Annamma et al., 2017; Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Bonilla-Silva (2018) cautioned against color-evasive racism because, despite the well-meaning facade, the refusal to address race directly is the transformation of overt racism into covert racism. Last, in terms of participants' alignment with whiteness, literature has questioned Asian Americans' proximity to whiteness (Zhou, 2004). Some have described Asian Americans as honorary whites

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[7] Although color-blind racism is well defined by Bonilla-Silva (2018), I use the term color-evasive instead because the term color-blind unintentionally disenfranchises those with differing abilities and therefore reproduces problematic ableism (Annamma et al., 2017).

(Bonilla-Silva, 2004), while others have identified Asian Americans' emphasis on admissions to elite institutions as a misguided attempt to gain status and therefore the privileges of whiteness (Chang, 2019).

Ultimately, any notion of Asian Americans as being honorary whites or in close proximity to whiteness is a reproduction of the model minority myth and racial triangulation theory (Kim, 1999; M. Zhou, 2004). Asian Americans' position of being "close to whites" or "as honorary whites" places Asian Americans in a place of superiority, but only temporarily. The higher status can easily be taken away at any moment, as seen with the Japanese internment camps of World War II and racism towards Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hong, 2020). Therefore, even though participants shared they do not experience racism in similar ways as other people of color, it does not mean they are immune from racist attacks and exclusion.

Instead of characterizing Asian Americans as honorary whites, I argue those with race-avoidant consciousness have internalized oppression (Pyke & Dang, 2003). The internalization of feeling inferior to white norms led participants to shy away from confronting racial issues directly. As a result, the ideologies of participants with race-avoidant consciousness are color-evasive. Participants tended to align themselves with whiteness and oppose certain race-based policies such as affirmative action, especially in college admissions. Instead, these race-avoidant participants advocated for other methods to address racial inequality, namely economic methods because financial wealth is something they can control and work towards. Though ill-advised, race-avoidant participants believe their socioeconomic status will allow them to acquire enough status and capital to protect them from racism.

Unfortunately, this form of consciousness has a short-term impact on racial equity efforts. Although well-meaning, color-evasive strategies to address racial inequities have been proven to be inefficient, including considering socioeconomic status as a way to racially diversify college campuses (Cancian, 1998; Park et al., 2013). Poon et al. (2019) framed Asian Americans' opposition to race-conscious admissions as abstract liberalism in the MMRFAA framework. By combining three different areas of literature (racial identity, racial ideology, and alignment with whiteness), race-avoidant consciousness is defined by an internalized oppression that leads to empathy for whites and color-evasive economic ideologies. This race-avoidant consciousness pinpoints why some Asian Americans oppose policies such as race-conscious admissions.

Within-Group Consciousness

The characteristics of within-group consciousness were expressed among students who conditionally supported race-conscious admissions and those who neither supported nor opposed race-conscious admissions. Because these participants had similar characteristics with regard to their racial consciousness, I collapsed them into within-group consciousness. Participants with within-group consciousness tended to see their racial identity as a salient part of their sense of self, but mostly through a cultural association with food, language, and culture. Johnston-Guerrero (2016) also found cultural connections as a way college students make meaning of race. Additionally, the salience of racial identity varied among participants embodying within-group consciousness. Some participants felt their racial identity was a highly salient aspect of their identity, while others were still exploring their racial identity and did not feel it was as salient as other identities, such as their sexuality, gender, and socioeconomic status.

Second, participants with within-group consciousness had a strong knowledge of Asian American issues, such as the harmful effects of positive stereotypes and the importance of data

disaggregation. For many Asian Americans, learning new information or knowledge of their culture can influence the development of critical consciousness (Osajima, 2007); examples include taking an Asian American studies course or participating in campus programming, student groups, or other activities that center Asian American identity and leadership.

Third, the defining characteristic of within-group consciousness came through students' reasoning for their opinions on race-conscious admissions. All supported the policy in theory, especially because they believed Asian Americans' experiences with racism were not as bad as other communities of color. However, students had concerns about the policy in practice due to the treatment of Asian Americans during the college admissions process. They believed Asian Americans were unfairly treated and certain subpopulations (e.g., low-income Asian Americans and Southeast Asian Americans) were overlooked. As such, they advocated for the inclusion of socioeconomic status and ethnicity as a way for Asian Americans to "count" in institutional definitions of diversity. This advocacy is one way to address differences in socioeconomic status within the Asian American community, which affects outcomes such as college choice processes (Teranishi et al., 2004), racial solidarity (Espiritu & Ong, 1994), and opinions on race-conscious admissions (Takagi, 1992).

Those who supported race-conscious admissions but also advocated for the consideration of socioeconomic status and ethnicity were unintentionally reproducing the model minority stereotype among their own racial group (Chang, 2015). By arguing that certain Asian Americans (e.g., low-income, Southeast Asian) should benefit from the policy, this implies that other Asian Americans (e.g., high-income, Chinese) should not. Ultimately, this could limit Asian Americans' fight in racial justice because it does not fully dismantle the model minority myth (Chang, 2015).

Notably, Asian American students with within-group consciousness were not malicious in their desire for fair college admissions practices that acknowledge the struggles of Asian Americans. Often in media and other literature, Asian Americans who do not unconditionally support race-conscious admissions are depicted as self-interested and short-sighted. However, many participants in this study experienced racism themselves and had a desire for racial equity for all communities of color. Despite this desire, within-group consciousness unintentionally created distance between participants and other communities of color because of certain beliefs (e.g., Asian Americans do not experience racism as badly as other communities of color). Unfortunately, most participants still mistakenly believed discrimination against Asian Americans happens because of race-conscious admissions, despite race-conscious admissions and the removal of negative action can exist simultaneously (Kang, 2005). Therefore, they were often willing to accept unfair treatment of Asian Americans in college admissions and still support race-conscious admissions, especially because they believed Asian Americans did not experience racism as badly as other communities of color and Asian Americans are not underrepresented at universities.

This distance between Asian Americans and other communities of color may seem like Asian Americans are acting as allies to other communities of color. Allyship is traditionally thought of as a member of the dominant group (e.g., male, white, or heterosexual students) who recognizes their unearned privileges and works to help others in the nondominant group (Edwards, 2006). Therefore, it may seem like Asian Americans can be allies to other communities of color, especially given the privileges that some Asian Americans seem to have (e.g., lighter skin, higher SAT scores, higher socioeconomic status). Moreover, Asian Americans' proximity to whiteness has been highlighted in the race-conscious admissions debate

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(Kuo, 2018). However, this status as "honorary whites" is merely another rendition of what racial triangulation theory describes: the positioning of Asian Americans as relatively superior to Blacks as a way for whites to oppress all communities of color (Kim, 1999). Not only does this relative superiority oppress all communities of color, but it is also impossible for Asian Americans to earn their way to being white because of their forever foreign status (Chang, 2019; Kim, 1999; Zhou, 2004).

Unfortunately, describing Asian Americans' relationship to other communities of color, particularly the Black community, as allyship limits Asian Americans' agency in the fight for racial justice. This notion of allyship implies the racism experienced by Blacks and the racism experienced by Asian Americans are separate instead of interconnected. Separately viewing racist attacks weakens the overall fight for racial justice. Even though Asian Americans may experience racism to a lesser degree and with less frequency, they are not immune to racist attacks. For example, because the study's participants may not fear for their lives when stopped by the police, they may see themselves as allies in the Black Lives Matter movement. Participants also recognized Black and Latinx students are not admitted to college at the same rate as Asian American students, which led many of them to support race-conscious admissions. Although this support is well-intentioned and can help Black and Latinx students access higher education, it unintentionally plays into a racial oppression hierarchy that does not foster long-lasting and transformative racial justice (Hurtado et al., 2012).

Despite a few limitations, this form of consciousness is important and valuable to college students' development, especially in terms of understanding oneself and advocating for within-group and Asian American-specific issues. Given the many different ways Asian American college students make meaning of their racial identity (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016), their different

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points of entry to racial consciousness (Accapadi, 2012), and the difficulties in forming a panethnic racial identity (Lopez & Espiritu, 1990), this within-group consciousness is necessary to advocate for important Asian American issues. Although this form of consciousness can stand on its own, it also serves as a building block towards long-term racial equity. Moreover, many participants with this type of consciousness were civically engaged, which refutes previous narratives of Asian American students not engaging in politics and activism (Park et al., 2008). Nadira started a nonpartisan Asian American political group, Hassan supported Andrew Yang, and Zachary desired to be a politician. These examples of students' opinions were shaped by their racial identity, ideologies, and within-group racial consciousness.

Collective Liberation Consciousness

Participants who unconditionally supported race-conscious admissions demonstrated a collective liberation consciousness. Unlike other participants, they saw racial identity as political, or a resistance to white norms and systems. They also saw their racial identity as a salient part of their sense of self. Participants with a collective liberation consciousness also saw race as entwined with all other identities and ideologies, race and socioeconomic status in particular. To these students, socioeconomic relief would not address racial inequalities because socioeconomic status is inherently racialized. Not only did these participants reject white norms and behaviors, but their most unique characteristic was their sense of solidarity with other communities of color.

Each component of collective liberation has been discussed in literature. First, in terms of identity, Johnston-Guerrero (2016) also uncovered that one-way students make meaning of race is through an understanding of race as created and maintained by a history of power and oppression. Second, in terms of ideology, the belief that race is deeply embedded in our society aligns with critical race literature (e.g., Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Harper et al., 2009;

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Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Critical race literature has demonstrated the covert ways race influences policies, practices, structures, and laws and discreetly privileges white culture and norms (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Harris, 1993). Therefore, participants with a collective liberation consciousness understood that without addressing race in college admissions, the goal of racial diversity and providing reparations to communities of color would easily be erased. Furthermore, they understood socioeconomic status as only one part of the equation, and one which does not sufficiently address racial issues because having or lacking financial resources does not protect against racism.

Third, in terms of participants' attitudes about their racial group in relation to other racial groups, participants exhibited solidarity with other communities of color. The concept of solidarity derives from literature on cross-racial interactions and intergroup relations (Glasford & Calcagno, 2012). Traditionally, studies on intergroup relations focused on relationships between whites and minority groups, but some studies investigated the relationship between different minority groups. Glasford and Calcagno (2012) found an emphasis on commonalities blurred the lines between minority groups, which facilitated political solidarity. Participants with a collective liberation consciousness were able to negotiate their simultaneous privileged and devalued statuses in creating a consciousness of solidarity with other communities of color (Lin, 2018).

In this study, intergroup solidarity and cross-racial interactions between Asian Americans and other students of color shaped a specific type of consciousness that understands the liberation of Asian Americans as tied to the liberation of all communities of color. As a result, collective liberation consciousness is strongest in advocating for long-lasting racial equity for all groups of color. This form of consciousness is the only one that does not play into the model minority stereotype or the relative superiority of Asian Americans, both of which continue

to oppress all communities of color. Asian Americans with this form of consciousness see racist attacks against each community of color as interconnected. These Asian Americans see commonalities among the racial oppression of Blacks, Latinxs, Native Americans, and their racial group. For example, they see undocumented immigrant rights, police brutality, and racist COVID-19-related attacks as experiences all people of color experience because of systems of white supremacy. Therefore, this type of consciousness allows Asian Americans to break free of the model minority myth because they do not see themselves in allyship but rather in solidarity with other communities of color to address white supremacy as a united front. Asian Americans with a collective liberation consciousness can build coalitions with other communities and work together towards racial equity. I discuss implications for racial equity work next.

Implications for Racial Equity

As evidenced by the findings of this dissertation, how individuals make meaning of their racial consciousness has a direct impact on their opinions. Because of differences in racial identity, experiences with discrimination, racial ideologies, and attitudes about their racial group, individuals have different forms of racial consciousness. In turn, the three forms of racial consciousness defined by this dissertation help unpack why Asian Americans have such varying opinions on racial issues and, in particular, race-conscious admissions.

Because of the unique racialization of Asian Americans as relatively superior to other communities of color, it is easy for Asian Americans to unintentionally fall into the model minority trap without recognizing their superiority is not only doctored to oppress all communities of color, but is also a temporary status. Racist attacks on Asian Americans are evidence of this temporary status during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hong, 2020). Although Asian Americans do not experience this level of racism as frequently as other communities of color,

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racist incidents remind Asian Americans they are not immune to racist attacks despite their model minority status. What is important is what Asian Americans do in the fight for racial justice after these experiences with racism. Do they shy away from speaking about race because racism is too difficult to address (i.e., race-avoidant consciousness)? Do they turn to a deeper understanding of Asian American-specific issues (i.e., within-group consciousness)? Or do they seek to build coalition with other communities of color in attempts to create long-lasting change (i.e., collective liberation consciousness)? Understanding these different forms of consciousness can be beneficial for racial equity work.

Implications for Policy

The findings of the dissertation inform two important policy-related events. As I write this dissertation, policies on affirmative action are making their way through federal and state courts. On the federal level, anti-affirmative action advocates, such as Edward Blum and Students for Fair Admissions, are pushing a lawsuit against Harvard's use of race-conscious admissions towards the Supreme Court (Fu & Kim, 2020). The federal court ruled Harvard's use of race-conscious admissions as constitutionally sound, yet, Students for Fair Admissions is appealing this ruling. The practice of race-conscious admissions at Harvard, specifically as it relates to Asian American applicants, will come under scrutiny again.

This study showed current Asian American college students at an institution similar to Harvard were in favor of race-conscious admissions. They understand the benefits of race-conscious admissions and do not view it as hurting their chances of being admitted to a desirable college. Even if they felt the admissions process was slightly unfair towards Asian Americans, they did not attribute rejections from schools to racial discrimination, but rather to other criteria such as not having sufficiently high GPAs or SAT scores. Therefore, I argue Edward Blum is

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manipulating the Asian American community to fight against race-conscious admissions, not for ending discrimination for Asian Americans or fighting for merit-based admissions but for a different reason altogether. Possible reasons include an outdated generational view of equity focused on the number of seats allocated to each racial group instead of on the collective liberation of all students of color. Another possible reason for Edward Blum to continue his lawsuit against Harvard is to use the Asian American community to fuel his agenda of avoiding race-specific policies, which, in turn, protects white privilege. Regardless of Edward Blum's reason, this study highlighted there are fewer Asian American college students against race-conscious admissions than those who support the policy. The college-aged generation is well-versed in issues such as racial justice, white privilege, and anti-Blackness, and therefore, choose to support policies such as race-conscious admissions.

On the state level, the California State Assembly and State Senate both passed California Assembly Constitutional Amendment No. 5 (ACA 5), which amends the state's constitution to bring back the consideration of race in government-owned entities, including public colleges and universities such as the University of California system (CBM Newswire, 2020). As a result, this amendment will be included on the November 2020 ballot for California voters to decide the fate of affirmative action in California The University of California's Office of the President has also publicly supported ACA 5.

This study's findings have direct implications for ACA 5 and the voters in California. Because California has a large population of Asian Americans, they will ultimately be the deciding bloc in whether the amendment passes. If Asian Americans in California have a within-group or collective liberation consciousness and are committed to racial justice and the fight for liberation of Asian Americans and other communities of color, they will support ACA 5. If they

have a race-avoidant consciousness or hold anti-Black sentiments, they will oppose the bill. The

nuances found in this study can help advocates argue that racism against all communities of

color is interconnected and therefore, a policy such as affirmative action must be brought back to

the state of California.

Implications for Institutional Practice

Several implications for practice emerged from this study. First, it is clear Asian

American students feel they are treated unfairly in the college admissions process. Instead of

removing race-conscious admissions practices, universities should consider implicit bias training

for college admissions officers as a way to diminish prejudice against Asian American college

students. Given the admissions process is a zero-sum game, removing discriminatory treatment

of Asian Americans in the admissions process should not come at the expense of other applicants

of color. Kang (2005) articulated clearly that fair treatment of Asian American applicants can

occur simultaneously with affirmative action for other applicants of color, especially if

institutions are willing to decrease their number of white applicants. However, only institutions

that are radically committed to dismantling practices that reproduce whiteness would be able to

manifest this into reality.

The treatment of Asian Americans on college campuses leaves much to be desired. One

example is the treatment of Asian American Studies departments. At Azalea, despite Asian

American students being the largest group of students of color, the Asian American Studies

program was the only one of three ethnic studies departments (the others being Black Studies

and Latinx American Studies) that was not a full department. The Asian American Studies

program only offered a minor, whereas the other departments offered majors and graduate

degrees. Although concerning at Azalea, where one fifth of the undergraduate population is

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Asian American, it is alarming that at other universities (e.g., University of California-San Diego, California State University-Dominguez Hills) with a higher proportion of Asian American students, Asian American studies programs are also under-resourced.

The mismatch between high percentages of Asian American students and undervalued Asian American studies programs illustrates the model minority myth. Institutional leaders assume Asian American students do not need or are not interested in academic departments dedicated to Asian American issues and research. Moreover, it is in the university's interest not to have a racially conscious student body (Park & Liu, 2014). However, this study shows the important role Asian American Studies plays in the development of critically conscious students. Throughout the interviews, participants referred to the AARC and the Asian American Studies Program (AASP) as pivotal in their identity development and critical consciousness. I found college students' sense of self, especially their racial identity, was an important factor in how they form political opinions. As such, the importance of resource centers and academic programs specifically geared toward Asian Americans is critical to the development of college students as engaged citizens.

Another implication for practice derives from Asian American college students' not feeling counted as people of color in race-conscious admissions. However, most participants were willing to accept this because Asian Americans as a racial group are not underrepresented on college campuses. One way to address this is to disaggregate college admissions data to serve underrepresented ethnic groups within the Asian American population better. Asian Americans should also be included in diversity conversations once enrolled as students because of the historic and continued racism they experience, as highlighted in this study and others (Museus & Park, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2018). These studies have shown that, despite reaching critical mass

in the composition of undergraduate students, Asian Americans still experience microaggressions and racism similar to other students of color (Nguyen et al., 2018).

Another implication for practice is informed by how Asian American college students see themselves in relation to other communities of color. A majority of participants saw Asian Americans differently than they saw other groups of color; for example, their personal experiences with racism were not as severe compared to other groups. Although students had good intentions, this view resulted in their feeling racial equity was not a fight that belonged to Asian Americans. To counter this attitude, university staff and faculty should focus on ways of building coalitions among all students of color, especially because studies have shown the importance of cross-racial relationships (antonio, 2001; Chang et al., 2004; Denson & Chang, 2009; Gurin et al., 2004). Some examples include facilitating interdepartmental classes and promoting programs across different cultural centers and identity-based student organizations.

Future Research

Given the importance of geography and environmental context in understanding racial identity (Chan, 2017a), and subsequently racial consciousness, future research should examine how racial consciousness influences political opinions in different regions and at different types of institutions. Because this study was situated on the East Coast, it would be interesting to see how students in a different region feel about their racial identity as it relates to the college admissions process. Additionally, Azalea University employs race-conscious admissions practices, but it could be interesting to replicate this study at an institution that does not employ race-conscious admissions practices to see if students have similar experiences with race and similar opinions regarding race-conscious admissions. In particular, a public institution on the West Coast, such as in California or Washington, would make for an interesting study because of

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the large number of Asian American students in this region and these states' bans on race-conscious admissions (i.e., Proposition 209 and Initiative 200, respectively).

I examined Asian American college students, but future research could investigate racial consciousness among other racial groups. In particular, a study on Latinx students would be interesting given similar challenges the Latinx community has with a panethnic racial identity (Lopez & Espiritu, 1990). It would be illuminating to test the three different types of consciousness in a different racial group to uncover similarities and differences.

Furthermore, because I found different types of racial consciousness linked to different opinions on race-conscious admissions, further research should examine how racial consciousness influences political opinions on other issues, such as U.S. presidential candidates, political party affiliation, or rights for undocumented immigrants. Further examination of this connection between consciousness and political opinions, particularly among college students, can enhance our understanding of how and to what extent this and future generations relate to identity- and race-based politics.

Conclusion

I believe that there will ultimately be a clash between the oppressed and those who do the oppressing. I believe that there will be a clash between those who want freedom, justice, and equality for everyone and those who want to continue the system of exploitation. I believe that there will be that kind of clash, but I don't think it will be based on the color of the skin.

—Malcolm X, *Pierre Berton Show*, 1965

Racial consciousness bridges the gap between racial identity and opinion. By defining the different types of racial consciousness for Asian American college students, I elucidated how racial identity, racial ideology, and attitudes about one's racial group influence opinions on race-

conscious admissions policies. Participants in this dissertation highlighted their astute awareness of their racial identity, racism, microaggressions, and systems of power and privilege. They also expressed a strong desire to address social inequalities. However, because of differences in racial identity, attitudes about their racial group in comparison to other racial groups, and racial ideologies, participants held different opinions on how to address racial inequities. Accordingly, three different types of racial consciousness emerged: race-avoidance, within-group, and collective liberation.

One of the foundational missions of college and universities is to educate and develop democratic citizens (Gumport, 2011; Gutmann, 1999). Thus, colleges play a key role in providing the environment and academic rigor for students to gain a critical understanding of themselves and their history. As society continues to move away from the 1960s civil rights movement, it is even more important for college students to build racial consciousness rooted in ethnic studies, critical race studies, and the histories of communities of color. Moreover, in a polarized political environment (Iyengar et al., 2019), Asian Americans play a critical role because of their forced racialization between whites and Blacks (Kim, 1999). Therefore, in the fight for racial equity, Asian Americans hold an important responsibility not to reproduce a relative superiority to Blacks and other communities of color. Otherwise, as seen in the debate over race-conscious admissions, those who want to remove the policy will use Asian Americans as a wedge between communities of color and whites.

Without building critical racial consciousness, differing opinions in the Asian American community can unintentionally detract from important policies, which would have long-lasting and dangerous implications for racial justice. Due to the constant racialization of Asian Americans as honorary whites or in close proximity to whiteness, Asian Americans with

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different types of racial consciousness have different abilities to negotiate their status as undervalued and also positioned as superior to other communities of color. Without a collective liberation consciousness, it is easier for Asian Americans to get swept up in their model minority status and either advocate for color-evasive strategies to address racial inequalities (race-avoidant consciousness) or focus solely on Asian American issues (within-group consciousness). Although each form of consciousness is valid and this model is not meant to be interpreted developmentally, collective liberation consciousness is the strongest in influencing behaviors and opinions that advance the liberation of all communities of color, including unconditional support for race-conscious admissions.

The future of race-conscious admissions is critical to continuous efforts for racial parity. The benefits of race-conscious admissions for Asian Americans, white students, and other communities of color goes beyond the technicalities of securing a spot at a first-choice, elite college. An important purpose of race-conscious admissions is to prevent our universities, which provide opportunities for social change, from continuing racial oppression. Without it, explicit conversations of racial inequities and injustices could easily disappear and erase the progress and change experienced thus far. The continued implementation of race-conscious admissions is the difference between reproducing outdated systems of oppression and advancing social progress.

Appendix A: Demographic Form

Thank you for your interest in this research study. The purpose of this study is to explore how racial identity influences your political opinions.

Please answer the questions below. Your responses will remain confidential. If selected for the study, you will be contacted to schedule a convenient date and time for the interview. If you have any questions, feel free to email Connie Chang, PhD student at UCLA and the primary investigator of this study, at conniechang1@ucla.edu.

1. Name:
2. Email Address:
3. Age:
4. Racial Identity:
5. Ethnic Identity:
6. Do you identify more with your racial identity or ethnic identity?
7. Gender Identity:
8. Sexual Orientation:
9. Religion/Spiritual Background:
10. Socioeconomic Status:
    a. Upper class
    b. Upper middle class
    c. Middle class
    d. Low-income
11. Immigrant Generation Status:
    a. 1st generation (you immigrated to the United States for college)
    b. 1.5 generation (you immigrated to the United States as a child or teenager)
    c. 2nd generation (you were born in the United States and your parents were immigrants)
    d. 3rd generation or higher (you were born in the United States and your grandparents or earlier ancestors were immigrants)
12. Are you the first in your family to attend college in the United States?
13. Where did you graduate high school? (Please list city, state, and country.)
14. In general, do you support or oppose the use of race as a criterion in college admissions review?
    a. Support
    b. Oppose
    c. Neither

15. How would you characterize your political views?
    a. Far left
    b. Liberal
    c. Middle of the road
    d. Conservative
    e. Far right
16. Class Year:
    e. First year
    f. Second year
    g. Third year
    h. Fourth year
    i. Fifth year
17. Academic Major(s):
18. List all the activities or student organizations in which you have ever been involved with since you started college.
19. List all the political activities in which you have ever been involved with since you started college (e.g., voting, attending a rally, boycotting)

As a semi-structured interview, these are guiding questions that could be asked throughout the

interview. Not all questions may be asked, questions may be asked in a different order, and

follow-up questions may emerge during the conversation. A possible second interview will be

conducted if additional follow-up questions are needed.

<u>Warm-Up</u>

1. What is your racial identity? Why do you identify in this way?
2. Tell me your favorite thing about the Asian American culture/community.

<u>Racial Centrality</u>

3. How did you think about race during your childhood?
   - How about now?
4. When was the first time you realized your race?
5. How important is your racial identity to your overall self-identity? Why do you feel the way you do?
6. What kind of influence does your racial identity have on your everyday life?
   - Probe: Do you feel like your everyday life is impacted by your race?
7. In what ways do you feel connected to other people in your racial group (if at all)?
8. In what ways do you not feel connected to other people in your racial group (if at all)?
9. What negative experiences, if any, have you had because of your race?
10. Thinking of your social groups, do you think race plays a role in who you feel comfortable around? Why or why not?

<u>Racial Regard</u>

11. (Private) If you could choose to be a different race, would you choose a different racial group? Why or why not?
12. (Private) If you could describe in one word how you feel about being a part of your racial group, what would that word be? Why did you choose that word?
13. (Public) Do you feel that the actions of others in your racial group reflect others' perceptions of you? Why or why not?
14. (Public) How do you think those who are not in your racial group view the individuals that are in your racial group?

<u>Racial Salience</u>

15. Next, I will be asking you questions about the recent lawsuit at Harvard regarding race-conscious admissions. Can you tell me what you know about the lawsuit?
    - How would you define race-conscious admissions?
    - How would you define affirmative action?

16. On the pre-survey I sent out, you marked (Support, Oppose, Neither). Can you tell me why you chose that option?
17. True or false: Harvard discriminates against Asian American applicants.
    - If true, how does this make you feel? Why do you believe this is true?
    - If false, why do you believe this?
18. Is this your first-choice college? Why or why not?

Racial Ideology

19. Do you think race plays a significant role in today's society? Why or why not?
20. Do you think class plays a significant role in today's society? Why or why not?
21. How do you see either race or class playing a role in your position on the race-conscious admissions controversy?
22. If Asian Americans want to end discrimination against them, how should they go about achieving this goal?
23. Do you believe racism still exists today?
    - If yes, in what ways does it exist? How should we combat it?

Racial Identity to Opinion Link

24. How do you think your racial identity influences your opinion on the race-conscious admissions controversy?
    - On other controversial issues?
    - On your co-curricular activities?
    - On your political activities?

Appendix C: Use of Theory in Interview Questions

Theoretical Framework (MMRI and MMRFAA)	Interview Questions
Centrality Scale: 1. Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself. 2. In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image. 3. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people. 4. Being Black is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am. 5. I have a strong sense of belonging to Black people. 6. I have a strong attachment to other Black people. 7. Being Black is an important reflection of who I am. 8. Being Black is not a major factor in my social relationships.	Racial Centrality 1. How important is your racial identity to your overall self-identity? Why do you feel the way you do? 2. What kind of influence does your racial identity have on your everyday life? a. Probe: Do you feel like your everyday life is impacted by your race? 3. In what ways do you feel connected to other people in your racial group (if at all)? 4. In what ways do you not feel connected to other people in your racial group (if at all)? 5. What negative experiences, if any, have you had because of your race? 6. Thinking of your social groups, do you think race plays a role in who you feel comfortable around? Why or why not?
Regard Scale: Private Regard Subscale: 1. I feel good about Black people. 2. I am happy that I am Black. 3. I feel that Blacks have made major accomplishments and advancements. 4. I often regret that I am Black. 5. I am proud to be Black. 6. I feel that the Black community has made valuable contributions to this society. Public Regard Subscale: 1. Overall, Blacks are considered good by others. 2. In general, others respect Black people. 3. Most people consider Blacks, on the average to be more ineffective than other racial groups. 4. Blacks are not respected by the broader society. 5. In general, other groups view Blacks in a positive manner. 6. Society views Black people as an asset.	Racial Regard 1. (Private) If you could choose to be a different race, would you choose a different racial group? Why or why not? 2. (Private) If you could describe in one word how you feel about being a part of your racial group, what would that word be? Why did you choose that word? 3. (Public) Do you feel that the actions of others in your racial group reflect others' perceptions of you? Why or why not? 4. (Public) How do you think those who are not in your racial group view the individuals that are in your racial group?

Racial Salience:
- Not applicable to this study because it is different for each situation

Racial Salience:
1. Next, I will be asking you questions about the recent lawsuit at Harvard regarding race-conscious admissions. Can you tell me what you know about the lawsuit?
   a. How would you define race-conscious admissions or affirmative action?
2. On the pre-survey I sent out, you marked (Support, Oppose, Neither). Can you tell me why you chose that option?
3. True or false: Harvard discriminates against Asian American applicants.
   a. If true, how does this make you feel? Why do you believe this is true?
4. If false, why do you believe this?

Racial Ideology (MMRFAA):
Pro-Affirmative Action
1. System Transformation – Strong raceclass analysis
2. Conscious Compromise – Maintenance of "diversity bargain"
Anti-Affirmative Action
3. Abstract Liberalism – Class analysis present, race analysis absent
4. Ethnocentric Nationalism – Race and class analysis absent

Racial Ideology
1. Do you think race plays a significant role in today's society? Why or why not?
2. Do you think class plays a significant role in today's society? Why or why not?
3. How do you see either race or class playing a role in your position on the race-conscious admissions controversy?
4. If Asian Americans want to end discrimination against them, how should they go about achieving this goal?
5. Do you believe racism still exists today? If yes, in what ways does it exist? How should we combat it?

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