

Critical Issues Facing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Organizations and Society

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Abstract

The discussion of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) in the context of the West is uniquely complex. AAPIs are often held up as “model minorities,” resulting in exclusion from many equity conversations. The lack of attention focusing on the experiences of AAPI communities in organizations and society suggests a need for us to remedy this. In this special issue, we curated a collection of eight papers that tackle a broad range of issues that advance conversations of AAPI communities and diasporas. We contend that it may be particularly beneficial to take a critical perspective (using Asian Critical Theory or AsianCrit) to bring to light and challenge systemic issues faced by AAPI communities in Western workplaces and societies. We also call for a post-model minority narrative, which has the potential to mitigate the adverse impacts that the notion of a model minority has on both intragroup and intergroup relations and well-being.

Keywords

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Asian Critical Theory, post-model minority, anti-Asian hate and violence

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Introduction

North America research on race and discrimination in organizations has tended to focus on the workplace and career experiences of Blacks and Latino/as. Comparatively, there has been limited attention cast on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs). As a pan-ethnic group, AAPIs make up 5.4% of the U.S. population (16.6 million), which is expected to nearly double to 9.7% by 2050 (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2014). We acknowledge that the discussion of AAPIs in the context of the West is complex and varies by setting. For example, due to different histories and immigration patterns, East Asians are seen as most prototypical of the overarching Asian label in the United States, whereas South Asians are viewed as most archetypal in the United Kingdom (Goh & McCue, 2021; Lee & Ramakrishnan, 2020).

AAPIs are often held up as “model minorities,” resulting in their exclusion from many equity conversations. Furthermore, AAPI is often used as a monolithic categorization to capture the diversity in many organizations and institutions (e.g., higher education), masking underrepresented and underserved communities within this broader grouping—including communities such as Hmong, Burmese, Cambodian, and Nepalese. Indeed, as a community, AAPI are much more diverse than is represented in a single census category and group members may vary in their use of different labels or self-identifications (Yim & Kang, 2024; also see Cheng, 2024, who uses APIDA+ to denote Asian Pacific Islander Desai Americans+). Although shared identity can be a source of solidarity, the monolithic approach to categorizing AAPI in lieu of unique subgroups is not without consequences. Kuo et al. (2020, p. 403) note that, “. . .the overgeneralization of the experiences and characteristics of higher status subgroups and exemplars obscures the most vulnerable among Asian American communities.”

The tensions between the monolithic conceptualizations of AAPIs and more nuanced subgroup conceptualizations may increase within group harm (Lee & Ramakrishnan, 2021). Nadal et al. (2015) highlight *invalidation of interethnic differences* as a prevailing microaggression toward AAPI communities. The microinvalidation of experienced racial discrimination has a negative impact on the psychological well-being of AAPIs. The implications of this growing tension between a monolithic approach to AAPIs and the need to validate interethnic differences, or the *diversity-convergence paradox*, is an ongoing issue that needs further examination (Lee & Ramakrishnan, 2021). To this end, emerging research has begun to illustrate how stereotypes of East Asians and South Asians differ in ways that affect career outcomes (e.g., Lu, 2023).

Within the context of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work in North America, these complex issues within AAPI communities add complications to diversity and equity initiatives and programs, which are often construed as targeting Black, Latino/as, and Indigenous peoples to the exclusion of Asian Americans or Canadians (Xu, 2021). However, in practice, these initiatives will also close equity gaps amongst lower-status and historically underserved AAPI groups. The events of 2020 have further illustrated the need for these difficult intragroup and intergroup conversations. First, there were calls for the examination of anti-Black perspectives within the AAPI

communities after the murder of George Floyd (see Ng & Lam, 2020). In line with this call, research has begun to explore the factors that promote pro-Black allyship among AAPIs (Jun et al., 2023).

At the same time, the global COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 revealed that AAPIs proximity to whiteness could only mitigate harm for so long (see Bates & Ng, 2021). The pandemic also highlighted how AAPIs are still easily “othered,” reinforcing their status as perpetual foreigners (Daley et al., 2022). Indeed, following the prevalent use of the term “China Virus,” there was a rise in Anti-Asian xenophobia and attacks against AAPI communities across the Western world (T. T. Nguyen et al., 2022; Wong-Padoongpatt et al., 2022). This was the case in many North American workplaces, where one in two AAPI workers reported being discriminated against or mistreated due to prejudice related to the COVID pandemic (e.g., Shen et al., 2024). Importantly, emerging research suggests that AAPI allies, including workplace leaders, can play a key role in reducing harm by confronting these behaviors (J. Y. Kim et al., 2024). Many of the AAPI communities have experienced these attacks, further displaying a societal bias toward the monolithic perspective (see <https://stopaapihate.org/>).

The confluence of these two significant events has important implications for the future of diversity, equity, and inclusion in organizations, institutions, and society. The need for intragroup and intergroup solidarity has never been more apparent yet more challenging. Lee and Huang (2021) warned that the trope of Black–Asian conflict can be weaponized with the increase of anti-Asian violence to undermine solidarity efforts between the communities.

Given the general dearth of research focusing on the workplace experiences of the AAPI communities to date, which the current volume seeks to begin to remedy, research tackling a variety of questions from different perspectives is needed. Yet, we contend it may be particularly beneficial to take a critical perspective to bring to light and challenge systemic issues faced by AAPI communities. We articulate one potential approach in the next section.

AsianCrit in Management and Organization Research

Asian Critical Theory (or “AsianCrit”)—a derivation of Critical Race Theory (CRT)—can offer an important lens to explore issues of marginalization and discrimination toward AAPIs, including at work. Broadly, AsianCrit is the application of CRT tenets to examine AAPI experiences. Recently, CRT has gained considerable attention in education, so much so that 18 states have banned or restricted teaching CRT in public institutions (CRT Forward Tracking Project, n.d.). Yet its origins are in the legal field. Derrick Bell, an American lawyer and professor (often left out in the literature), should be credited for the genesis of CRT (see Cobb, 2021). Much of the thinking behind CRT is rooted in his course, “Race, Racism and American Law” at Harvard Law. When Bell was away, no one taught the course. Students organized themselves and invited guest speakers as a substitute. A parallel movement coalesced around critical legal studies, focused on critiquing the legal field in its blindness to issues of race and racism, was flourishing. Kimberlé Crenshaw, along with Richard Delgado, Patricia Williams,

Mari Matsuda, and Alan Freeman, played key roles in the creation and writing of CRT as we know it today (Cobb, 2021).

Several core tenets of CRT have been adapted to AsianCrit (see Museus & Iftikar, 2013): (1) *Asianization*, acknowledges the racialization and othering of AAPIs in white societies; (2) *Transnational Context*, situating AAPI communities within the global context; (3) *(Re)constructive History*, including Asian presence and voice in the narration of shared history; (4) *Strategic (Anti)essentialism*, AAPIs are not monolithic and they exercise agency in their own ways to navigate marginalization and oppression; (5) *Intersectionality*, different forms of oppression intersect with AAPI identities contributing to their multiple struggles; (6) *Story, Theory, and Praxis*, positioning AAPI perspectives as an epistemic alternative to dominant discourse; and (7) *Commitment to Social Justice*, reaffirming the AAPI struggle against marginalization and oppression.

The perception of AAPIs as “foreign” has been problematic for the community who often face the paradox of being model minorities and yet perceived as a threat and perilous (“yellow peril”) to white societies (Wu, 2002). For one, migration from the East (predominantly China) to fill labor shortages in the West were seen as threatening to white supremacy, their values and traditions. The Chinese, seen as dirty, diseased, and unassimilable, were not fit to become citizens. The Chinese Exclusionary Act in the United States and “White Australia/Canada” policies (Liu et al., 2024) were specifically put in place to exclude them. The long history of exclusion and being perceived as foreign, regardless of citizenship, has led Andrew Yang, the 2020 U.S. Presidential Candidate, to call on Asian Americans to “. . . embrace and show our Americanness in ways we never have before . . . We should show without a shadow of a doubt that we are Americans who will do our part for our country in this time of need” during his campaign. Yang’s plea implies conditional citizenship, shifting blame from oppressors to victims, and reinforces the forever foreigner stereotype. It also prompts everyday microaggressions such as, “but where are you really from?” and “your English is very good,” and rhetoric that conflate Chinese Americans, Asian Americans, and the Chinese government. Sissoko et al. (2024) also offered several examples of colorist microaggressions targeted at darker-skinned or Brown Asians. For example, many similarly conflate South Asians with Muslims, who are targeted with Islamophobia, hate, and violence (Love, 2020).

In the West, AAPI men are often emasculated and desexualized for fear that they may “steal” away white women, which could result in undesirable interracial unions and diminish white supremacy (i.e., status threat) (Eng, 2001, cf. Museus & Iftikar, 2013). In the media, Asian men in particular, are often portrayed as villains and malevolent, for example, as in Sax Rohmer’s depiction of the “Fu Manchu” character in his crime novel series. The disgust and deviation from white culture promotes xenophobia and anti-immigration attitudes that persist to the present day. Conversely, Asian women are frequently exoticized and stereotyped as hypersexual submissive objects (Shimizu, 2007). Alt et al. (2024) argued that this may make Asian women, especially vulnerable to sexual harassment in the workplace, which some evidence supports. Highly exaggerated stereotypes of Asians men and women as passive and unassertive

have led to AAPIs to be viewed as lacking in prototypical Western leadership qualities, such that AAPIs are often deemed unsuitable for leadership roles (Lu, 2023; Sy et al., 2010; Zhu, 2023).

It bears noting that when convenient, AAPIs are also labeled as model minorities. Derrick Bell astutely observed that, “[racial] progress has occurred mainly when it aligned with white interests” (cf., Cobb, 2021). White supremacists constructed the model minority narrative as a way to drive a wedge between AAPIs and Blacks and other racialized groups (Cheng, 1997). It represents AAPIs as success stories, who overcame racism through hard work and possessing the right attitudes, and fully assimilated into American society (despite earlier being deemed undesirable and unassimilable). The model minority label was not intended to benefit AAPIs; rather, it is a narrative weaponized by white supremacists to co-opt AAPIs into efforts to resist or suppress affirmative action. The narrative has both helped and hurt AAPIs. Some AAPI groups (e.g., East Asians) have made gains in terms of education and occupational attainment, and thus bought into the ideals of individualism and American meritocracy (Choi, 2022; Xu, 2021). Indeed, in a recent Pew survey of Asian Americans, a significant proportion (70%) felt that race should not be a factor in college admissions (Pew Research Center, 2023). Despite perceptions of “white adjacent,” and “near white,” Asian Americans have not been insulated from intentional and systemic racism and racial discrimination (C. J. Kim, 2023). For example, in a conversation about immigration and the workplace, Steve Bannon, former Chief Strategist to President Trump, falsely asserted that “. . . *two-thirds or three-quarters of the CEOs in Silicon Valley are from South Asia or from Asia. . .*” promoting resentment toward Asian Americans, which leads to hate.

The ease of recurrences of anti-Asian hate and violence requires that we adopt a more critical lens in acknowledging and tackling these issues in a more rigorous way in workplace settings. To our knowledge, there has only been a single study in the management and organizational literature that has been foregrounded in AsianCrit. In that study, Kim and Shang (2022) studied Asian employee responses to racial violence that emanated from the COVID-19 pandemic, and how despite the model minority narrative, they experienced microaggressions directed squarely at Asians and Asian Americans, evoking memories of yellow peril, and casting AAPIs as a threat, untrustworthy, and un-American. The rise of China as a global power and conflating Asian/Chinese Americans with the Chinese government have proved to be harmful to the Asian diasporas and AAPI communities as a whole. In this regard, Ron DeSantis, the Governor of Florida, signed several pieces of legislation to “counteract the malign influence of the Chinese Communist Party in the state of Florida.” In practice, these policies stoke further resentment toward Chinese citizens and other Asians, potentially leading to increased hatred (Zhou, 2023).

We suggest areas to engage AsianCrit in management and organization literature to generate actionable research and draw attention to the protracted system of oppression. These suggestions are fashioned after Museus and Iftikar’s (2013) AsianCrit framework.

Asianization—Change the ingrained stereotype of AAPIs as foreign regardless of their ethnicity, cultural heritage, and linguistic proclivities that is deeply rooted in Western societies. Demonstrate that the contributions of AAPIs are enough and worthy of citizenship in teams and organizations, and at work. D. Nguyen et al. (2024) reported that AAPIs are burdened with extra work on account of positive stereotypes, yet their contributions are invisible. Inaccurate representations and portrayals that are based on exaggerated stereotypes further typecast diverse Asian peoples and cultures as foreign and unattractive. It should not come as a surprise that AAPIs are trusted less and accorded fewer management opportunities and responsibilities (Gee & Peck, 2018).

Transnational Context—Acknowledge that the rise of China and India as superpowers is an inevitability and AAPIs, as a diaspora in the West, should not be scapegoated for transnational conflicts and fights for global dominance. Instead, recognize there is an interest convergence and AAPIs can in fact play a strategic and significant role in providing a counterbalance and advantage to their countries of citizenship in the West. This is particularly true since AAPIs have the added (bi/multi-) language and cultural advantage that can facilitate diplomatic and trade relations.

(Re)Constructive History—Highlight the strengths that are unique to Asian values and cultures (Racho, 2012), including an emphasis on harmony and cooperation (see Snell et al., 2022). Rather than an insistence on assimilation, a pluralistic approach could contribute to more effective forms of management leading to greater organizational success. Furthermore, a more conciliatory and pluralistic leadership style is more conducive to working across cultures and nationalities.

Strategic (Anti)Essentialism—Disrupt the discourse on the model minority label ascribed to AAPIs. The narrative serves as a wedge and subordinates people of color. It valorizes meritocracy that perpetuates systemic discrimination by privileging whites under existing systems of oppression. AAPIs as a pan-ethnic group, have benefited from affirmative action policies and programs with a degree of success (Loh, 2013; Shih, 2023). In this sense, AAPIs ought to play a role in dismantling existing meritocratic structures that favors those who “created the rules” (and are motivated to maintain the status quo) and rebuilding a system that celebrates excellence across different oppressed groups.

Intersectionality—Recognize and unmask the model minority claim, which has colored how AAPIs are positively (and inaccurately) portrayed, and draw attention to the multiple struggles AAPIs face on account of added forms of oppression. Of note, the model minority narrative is based on a highly selective narrow frame of success, focused on education and prestigious occupational attainment (Lee & Zhou, 2015). These frames are not generalizable to diverse AAPI communities who experience other forms of marginalization, including immigrants, sexual minorities, and religious minorities (Mahalingam, 2012; Mahalingam et al., 2008; Poon, 2014; Russell & McCurdy, 2023). It also bears noting as individuals with multiple identities, we may have privilege in some identities, and disadvantages in others (Lo, 2023).

Story, Theory, and Praxis—Imbue AAPI perspectives and offer an alternative or complementary narrative to existing epistemology in management and organizational scholarship. This allows us to interrogate existing power structures that subordinate and undervalue, diminish, or overlook the contributions of AAPIs across different occupations and in different organizations (Lu, 2023). For example, AAPIs are often loaded with extra work because of their model minority status, but these extra efforts are not recognized (see D. Nguyen et al., 2024). The pressure to succeed, in concert with humility, also make AAPIs susceptible to role overload and work-family conflict (Hsu et al., 2024). We need to challenge barriers to AAPI advancement, and more critically assess what makes a good leader in management and organizations.

Commitment to Social Justice—As we center our research and scholarship on Asian voices and experiences to chart our way forward, we should be reminded that, in the United States, it is the Black Civil Rights movement that paved the way in replacing a racist country-of-origin quota that systematically excluded Asians through the enactment of the *Immigration and Nationality Act* of 1965. It bears noting that white supremacy has contributed to the colonization of Indigenous peoples, enslavement of Blacks, incarceration of Japanese Americans (during the Second World War), detention of Latino/a immigrants, and more recently educational racial discrimination (Ho, 2021). In solidarity, we need to use our collective voices and show up for each other's fight against white supremacy and systemic oppression that hold all of us back (Ng & Lam, 2020).

Post-Model Minority

The model minority narrative—in denying remedies to systemic discrimination—is harmful not only to AAPIs but to other marginalized and oppressed groups (and by default, suggests that non-Asians and non-Asian Americans are not model minorities!). The label has been ascribed to AAPIs (East and South Asians in particular) in part because of their education and income attainments. For one, this ascription is problematic since AAPIs register the highest income disparities across racialized groups in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2018). From a postcolonial perspective, the model minority account is viewed as motivated by capitalism, one that requires the subordination of one or more groups (people of color) to serve the interests of white capital owners (Au, 2022). Capitalism necessitates the construction of a system of exploitation that “promises” reward in exchange for hard work; one in which we welcome and embrace today as meritocracy. In this respect, AAPIs are held up as exemplars in reaping these rewards through personal agency, and as a means to deny systemic barriers to performance. The business of capitalism, and resulting system of meritocracy, thus engenders racism insofar that it requires the construction of a racial hierarchy, and highly selective AAPI successes have been hijacked to serve this purpose. In this sense, the “business case” for diversity may be construed as complicit in the production of racism and oppression because it justifies the exploitation of racialized labor in service of white capital owners. This has led some critical management scholars to denounce the business school (training grounds for future managers) as racist (Dar et al., 2021).

Capitalism inevitably requires differentiation (workers and owners), and the model minority narrative acts as a divide and conquer tool to create a racial hierarchy and subordinate people of color in serving the interests of the oppressors. AAPIs who subscribe to the model minority narrative are therefore complicit in the production and abetment of an oppressive system (e.g., in joining with Students for Fair Admissions to oppose race based affirmative action, Dirks, 2023). The model minority label has not shielded AAPIs from racism and violence. The vast number of Asian immigrants and refugees arriving at the shores of Western countries will be left out and excluded should the model minority narrative persists. In order to move beyond the model minority narrative, we need to disrupt how it operates.

CRT, and by extension AsianCrit, has been viewed as a social movement, impractical, and lacking clarity to guide research and advance knowledge (Ng, 2023). In order to move our scholarship on AAPIs forward, we need to adopt a CRT/AsianCrit lens to examine racism and interrogate the social and institutional powers that inhabit management practices and organizations. Racism implies “*one group having the power to carry out systemic discrimination through institutional policies and practices of society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices*” (DRWorks, n.d.). The presence of AAPIs in organizations does not represent equity. We must reject the maintenance of an oppressive system that purports to be color-blind and fair. AsianCrit encourages us to interrogate the performance, networks, and power structures that have been constructed to oppress AAPIs and other people of color. We need to move from being passive and compliant to reclaiming our identities and voices, including enacting collectivism as we fight back anti-Asian racism. Instead of unifying under a singular voice for all Asians, we should showcase the diversity of our representations.

It is worth noting that one aspect underlying the model minority status is true in the Western context: education attainment is correlated with socioeconomic mobility. We should promote educational opportunities, utilizing race conscious policies to ensure that the majority of AAPIs who do not fall under the model minority framing have upward mobility. We should celebrate success outside narrow success frames of elite education and prestigious occupations. By undertaking such actions, we are positioned to critically evaluate and challenge the prevailing scarcity mindsets and overly constrained visions that fundamentally shape our perceptions of success. These perspectives engender an environment characterized by zero-sum competition, within which the concept of model minority status proliferates. This narrative acts as a mechanism to pit different racial groups against one another, fostering a pursuit of individual and intragroup prosperity at the expense of collective well-being and prosperity. By reconceptualizing these limited viewpoints, we have the potential to mitigate the negative impacts that the notion of a model minority has on both intragroup and intergroup relations and well-being.

Articles in This Issue

The vision for this Special Issue is to further our understanding of the histories and experiences of the diverse AAPI communities within organizations and institutions.

The authors tackled a broad range of issues that advance conversations of AAPI communities and diasporas at work.

The Racialized Experience of Asian In/Exclusion in Australia

Liu et al. (2024) provide a comprehensive analysis of the changing circumstances and evolving experiences of Asian Australians within the context of the nation's multicultural policies and practices. The authors introduce the notion of "precarious multiculturalism" to describe the tentative and often superficial nature of racial inclusion for the Asian diaspora in Australia. Critiquing the focus on cultural aspects in state-sanctioned multicultural policies, they emphasize the need to address structural inequities. The authors propose a shift toward "systemic inclusion," advocating for a comprehensive reassessment of policies and social practices that perpetuate white supremacy, and they call for minority communities to play a significant role in defining the terms of inclusion. Drawing on the conceptualization of inclusion from several disciplines and at multiple levels of analysis, the "systemic inclusion" approach seeks to transform major societal systems by accounting for the historical precarity of inclusion. This approach is presented as a more sustainable and equitable method to achieving racial justice and genuine multicultural integration in Australia.

Brown Asian Microaggressions

Sissoko et al. (2024) first highlighted how aggregating Asian Americans as a racial monolithic category overlooks the nuances of each community (e.g., immigration histories, languages, religions, colonial influences, cultural values, traditions, skin colors, and phenotypic appearances). This has led to an absence in the reporting of experiences from darker-skinned Asians. The authors introduce colorist microaggressions and explain how colorism impacts Brown Asians across major life domains, such as education, employment, family relations, body image, and marital prospects. They enumerate five areas of microaggressions experienced by Brown Asians including: (1) invisibility and exclusion, and authenticity; (2) assumptions of beauty and desirability; (3) assumptions of inferior status or intellect; (4) assumptions of deviance and criminality; and (5) internalized microaggressions, and how each of these themes can manifest as an interpersonal microaggression (e.g., a specific instance where one or more persons communicate colorist messages to the target), as well as an environmental microaggression (e.g., media representation reinforcing the idealization of light skin tones or devaluing dark skin tones).

Self-Esteem and Pressure to Succeed

Hsu et al. (2024) found differences in work–family interference between Asian American and White American employees. For Asian Americans, cultural values play a significant role such that they experience more pressure to achieve career success

(than their white counterparts). As a result, they were more prone to experience interference of work with family life when they were highly committed to their work role as compared to White Americans. The difference was more pronounced for Asian Americans with low self-esteem, whereas there was no difference between the two groups when self-esteem is high.

Racially Visible, Contributions Invisible

D. Nguyen et al. (2024) drew attention to microaggressions at work where the targets simply cannot walk away from the aggressor and must instead maintain a working relationship with them. The authors identify two types of microaggressions: *general* (i.e., invalidation of individual differences, unrecognized contributions and undervalued employee, being singled out, and demeaning cultural values and communication styles) and *stereotyped-based* (ascription of subservience, ascription of diligence, and ascription of math competency). Asian and Asian American employees are ascribed as diligent and good at math, and although these stereotypes appear positive, they also result in Asian and Asian American employees working more.

Intersectional Experiences of Asian American Women

Alt et al. (2024) applied the Intersectional Prototypicality Model to review, organize, and explain the unique challenges faced by Asian American women in the workplace. They drew upon prior research that demonstrates Asians are stereotyped as feminine to argue that Asian women are often perceived as hyper-feminine. This may lead to particular challenges for this group in attaining leadership roles, as they are seen as an especially poor fit with a role traditionally conceptualized as masculine. Furthermore, Asian American women may also be more likely to be the target of sexual harassment, as their greater perceived femininity may contribute to objectification.

Witnessing Microaggressions Hurts, But Leaders Can Help

J. Y. Kim et al. (2024) examined the effect of witnessing microaggressions in the workplace. Using a vignette experiment with a multi-ethnic sample recruited from MTurk, the authors found that after participants witness a COVID-related microaggression targeting AAPI employees, AAPI witnesses engage in greater rumination—or dwelling on the negative experience—than do white witnesses, and that they also perceive the aggressor more negatively and reported higher turnover intention than do white witnesses. Significantly, Kim et al. found that leaders play an important role in redressing microaggressions. When leaders chastise the aggressor, witnesses not only view the leader as more trustworthy but they also report higher affect toward the leader and higher judgment of leader effectiveness. This, in turn, reduces the turnover intentions of witnesses. Leader effects were all stronger for AAPI witnesses than for white witnesses.

Complex Considerations Underpinning the Self-Labeling Practices of AAPI Populations

How people label themselves is of deep personal consequence, and as Yim and Kang (2024) explained, the considerations underpinning self-labeling in AAPI populations are complex. Adopting an exploratory approach, the authors collected quantitative and qualitative data about the self-labeling practices of 158 Chinese Canadians. Their quantitative data revealed a variety of self-labeling preferences. The majority of respondents reported the use of bicultural labels: Chinese Canadian, Canadian Chinese, Asian Canadian, Hong Kong Canadian, and the most popular, Canadian-born Chinese. The minority reported monocultural labels, such as Asian or Chinese. Further, greater acculturation predicted the use of bicultural labels relative to monocultural labels. Qualitative data bore this pattern out, with participants explaining that their labeling practices reflected their identifications with China and Canada. Additionally, the qualitative data revealed that the self-labeling practices were fluid as participants reported changing how they referred to themselves depending on the group they were with or the language they were using.

The Dangers of Studying AAPIDA+ Hate and Discrimination

Finally, Cheng (2024) offered critical advice to scholars interested in studying hate against Asian Pacific Islander Desai Americans+ (APIDA+) and against marginalized communities. He first acknowledged challenges associated with defining focal groups. Cheng cautioned that using a cover term to define a target demographic may attract (research) participants to anti-hate study, alienate those who feel the research does not apply to them, or leave them feeling indifferent. Cheng elucidated “hate” and discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in APIDA+ discrimination in the United States. He cautioned future scholars to be mindful of personal consequences in pursuing hate and misinformation scholarship and shared recent evidence of backlash from White Christian Nationalist and other right-wing organizations against scholars in the field. He offered a list of resources available to anti-hate scholars and encouraged others to explore solutions to mitigating discrimination toward APIDA+ and other marginalized individuals.

Conclusion

We see this special issue as beginning to illuminate the diversity, complexity, and fullness of AAPI experiences. We aimed to illustrate the need for, and promise of interdisciplinary and critical perspectives in scholarship, examining AAPI issues in organizations and society. Yet, much remains to be done to highlight and challenge systemic issues faced by AAPI communities globally. Thus, we invite scholars and researchers to continue this essential journey of exploration with us.

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