A Literature Review on East Asian Americans' Cultures and Behaviors: Meeting Students' Cultural Needs in Schools

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate literature on cultures and behaviors of East Asian Americans for the purpose of bringing about understanding towards these specific ethnic groups in schools. In the article, we first describe the cultures of East Asians Americans with an emphasis on the influences of Taoism and Confucianism; second, we describe the behaviors of East Asian Americans including behaviors in the family and at school; third, we analyze acculturation of East Asian Americans; and finally, we describe ways meeting the needs of East Asian Americans with an emphasis on understanding the stereotypes associated with Asian Americans, and how to work with East Asian American students, parents, and families.

Key Words: East Asians, East Asian Americans, cultures and behaviors, multicultural education, culturally responsive pedagogy.

Introduction

The population in many parts of the world is becoming more multicultural and ethnically diverse, mainly as a result of increased immigration. Understanding the cultures and behaviors of people of different backgrounds may help educators appreciate the diversity present in their classroom and use it as a resource for educational purposes.

Asia is a large geographical entity that houses peoples from various cultural backgrounds. The diverse Asians have been categorized into numerous ethnic groups and may or may not share similar cultural and belief systems (Le, 2010b). It would be too ambitious to include the vast diversity of the entire constituency of Asia. Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, we appropriated our focus on East Asian ethnic groups that share similar core traditions and values that originated in ancient Chinese cultures, namely Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, and others who share similar cultural and belief systems. Focusing on these specific ethnic groups allows us to assist the reader in becoming more familiar with East Asian students, parents, and colleagues they may work with. The immigration of Asians to the United States has a long history.

Although the first Asian Americans who settled in the U.S were found to be around 1750 (Le, 2010b), according to Midlarsky, Venkataramani-Kothari, and Plante (2006), the first wave of mass immigration by thousands of Chinese coming to the West Coast to work in labor fields took place from 1849 to 1889. The second wave brought in merchants, diplomats, students, and their dependents from 1882 to 1965 who mostly resided in Chinatowns. The fact of millions of Asian immigrants entering and settling in the United States did not occur until the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act (Le, 2010a; M. Zhou, 1997). Soon after the Chinese had led the way to America, other Asian ethnic groups followed (Le, 2010b). According to the Population Estimates in 2008, the Asian resident community (the vast Asian community), one of the fastest growing racial groups, grew to 5.1% of the national population (US Census Bureau, 2008), with a population over 15 millions.

Additionally, about 4% of all children in the United States aged 0-19 were Asian resident children, a population of approximately three millions. With this rising Asian student population in the school systems, it is essential for educators and administrators to know their history, cultures, and traditions to accomplish educational purposes.

In the following sections of the article, first we describe the cultures of East Asians Americans with an emphasis on the influences of Taoism and Confucianism; second, we describe the behaviors of East Asian Americans including behaviors in the family and at school; third, we analyze acculturation of East Asian Americans; and finally, we describe ways meeting the needs of East Asian Americans with an emphasis on understanding the stereotypes associated with Asian Americans, and how to work with East Asian American students, parents, and families.

The Cultures of East Asians

Cultures serve as the fundamental roots to understanding human behavior. This is still a true path for understanding those who have immigrated to other countries or continents. In this section we discuss two critical components in the East Asian cultures: Taoism and Confucianism, upon which East Asian tradition is fundamentally founded. These two components are included with the understanding that while Taoism is considered to guide East Asians spirituality, Confucianism is regarded to guide East Asians morality and conduct (Wonsuk, 2009).

Taoism

The ideal of Taoism is to reach a mental state that is "to rise above the world of differentiation colored by dichotomy such as good and bad, right and wrong, this and that, being and non-being, life and death and to merge with the undifferentiated Tao" (Shin, 2002, p. 252). Having this mental state, one eliminates oneself from subjective judgment of the external world. And the ultimate goal of reaching a state of no-self and no subjective judgment is to see multitude of things impartially and wisely. To avoid subjectivity and increase capacity for objectivity, Taoists train their minds and cultivate themselves in practices to empty out their minds (Shin, 2002). From the emptiness view, Taoists accept the fact that humans have meager capacity to fight against death and see death as a part of nature and all humans should return and face it with ease (Tai & Lin, 2001).

According to Wonsuk (2009), in classic Chinese, Yijing, the book of change and a source of traditional philosophical thinking, is closely associated with the beliefs of the Taoist school. This classic book describes the repetition of continuity and discontinuity of a subject that creates contrasting forces, such as the contrasting aspects of yin (shady) and yang (sunny). These contrasting forces have impacted the use of language and derived numerous contrasting terms relevant to different situations, such as gaonrou (firmness and softness) and dongjing (movement and rest).

In summary, Taoism is a cultural root that directs East Asians in their spiritual realm, a spirituality that pursues no-self and no subjective judgment of the external world, of which the ultimate goal is to reach the emptiness of a mind state. In order to be undifferentiated to the external world, Taoists are aware of contrasting forces of a situation that create the continuity and discontinuity of a subject, from which originate numerous cultural components, such as elements in language use.

Confucianism

Confucianism was founded by Confucius (551 BC – 479 BC), a Chinese thinker and social philosopher. Confucianism has had profound influence on the political and social ethical development of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Taiwanese, and Vietnamese (Gvosdev, 2000). The influence is portrayed through three salient characteristics of these cultures: *Ren* (compassion), *Yi* (righteousness), and *Li* (rituals).

Ren is one robust character trait in Confucianism (Hutton, 2006). It is equivalent to "benevolence, perfect virtue, goodness, human-heartedness, love, and altruism" (Kashima et al., 2004, p. 128). Confucians believe that one should be consistently and universally compassionate and relate to others' emotions (Kashima, et al., 2004). With this principle in mind, regardless of who one is dealing with and when encountering people in any circumstances, one should act to prevent unjustified suffering and show care toward others (Hutton, 2006; Kashima, et al., 2004). Most importantly, being compassionate requires "treating everyone with concern and respect" (Hutton, 2006, p. 42). Consistent *ren* is the ethical ideal in Confucianism to relate to and treat people with humanity.

Justice in Confucian tradition is understood as *yi*, righteousness, which means the oughtness/equity as opposed to the fairness/equality of a situation (Tai, et al., 2001). In consistent with being compassionate with people, Confucians view justice as judged on situations in the world and is recognized as situationism (Hutton, 2006). In the Analects, Confucius taught his disciples that the virtuous person is not always for or against anything but is on the side of what is moral (Gvosdev, 2000). Justice reveals when righteousness helps fulfill compassion through situational concerns. Acknowledging situational concerns, thus, drives one to emphasize the importance of virtuous character (Hutton, 2006).

Confucians believe that everyone has a unique position in life and has to perform the tasks accompanied with the position. In the same vein, one's language only makes sense when positioned; or one does not find a place to speak (Tai, et al., 2001). Confucius once taught his followers, "let the ruler be ruler, the minister minister, the father father, the son son." This means that one should respect those in positions and that when called for one must fulfill the responsibility accordingly. The Confucian notion of *Li*, ritual, is extensive (Hall, 1998). The constituents of ritual include five relationships: the relationships between ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife, older and younger sibling, and finally friend and friend. These five relationships form the fundamental concept of Confucian society in which rituals are practiced. Ritual practices within the Confucian societal context are supported by all aspects that construct a culture "from manners, to roles, relationships, communications media, and social and political institutions" (p. 115).

Confucians especially stress that rulers, positioned in high ranks, should be virtuous (Hutton, 2006). Analogies are used to exemplify the influence of the ruler to common people. For example, the ruler is like a sundial. Once the sundial is straight, the shadows are straight. Because ordinary citizens are subject to the influence by the rulers, it is crucial that one cultivates one's character prior to running higher positions through self-discipline and education and through focusing on right action and legitimate use of power (Gvosdev, 2000). Most importantly, Confucians believe that virtue is imitated through modeling but not duty-compelled (Gvosdev, 2000). Hence, a proper ruler is considered an expert who sets up ritual and promotes ritual practice so as to transform the people (Hutton, 2006).

Confucians avoid speculating about the spiritual world (Gvosdev, 2000). They believe one's obligation is to serve man, instead of the spirits and one should strive to understand life, rather than death, which results in avoidance of talking about death. Further, while they believe there is a "Great Ultimate" from which everything was bestowed and respect spiritual beings, they avoid speaking about them (Gvosdev, 2000, p. 508). With this attitude of keeping spiritual beings at a distance, Confucianism allows all faiths to enter the public realm and Confucians tend to consider religious activities as rituals instead of as beliefs (Sagara-Rosemeyer & Davies, 2007).

Family is the smallest unit where critical rituals take place. Filial piety, from which family rituals derive, maintains fundamental order and harmony in a family (Yamato, 2006). It defines duties and responsibility between children and parents and extends comprehensive respect to the elderly (Lee & Mjelde-mossey, 2004; Boduroglu, Yoon, Ting, & Park, 2006). Family rituals performed and observed among generations serve as education that plays an important role in leading people along the right track (Zhou, 1996).

Family thus becomes center of all attention. It is family, not self, that each person's life centers around and decision-making in a family is based on collective, rather than individualistic autonomy (Tai, et al., 2001). As a result, one finds a potential to actualize oneself primarily through how s/he behaves in the family rather than through how s/he performs his/her own talents. In a large sense, one finds his/her identity by the extent to which one follows ritual practices (Tai, et al., 2001). Confucians believe that learning environment predicts learning outcome. Accordingly, if you learn from a worthy teacher, you learn what you should learn; if you befriend a creditable friend, you see "conduct that is loyal, trustworthy, respectful, and deferential" (Hutton, 2006, p. 47). On the contrary, "if you live alongside with people who are not good", you hear "trickery, deception, dishonesty, and fraud" and you see "conduct that is dirty, arrogant, perverse, deviant, and greedy" (p. 47). The belief of environment molding a person enables a person to discern that you observe his friends to know your son and their companions to know your peers (Hutton, 2006). To sum up, the influence of Confucianism manifests in three vigorous character traits: compassion (*Ren*), righteousness (*Yi*), and rituals (*Li*). With *Ren*, Confucians pursue consistent and universal compassion towards people in all circumstances. With *Yi*, they emphasize righteousness and oughtness of a situation and strive to judge on situations in the world on the side of moral in harmony with compassion.

With *Li*, Confucians practice rituals in extensive relationships that construct a complex context supported by all elements of a society including manners, roles, communications, and institutions. *Ren*, *Yi*, and *Li* characterize the primary fabrics that network the Confucian society.

Behaviors of East Asian Americans

Behavior mirrors one's belief shaped through cultures. Likewise, East Asian Americans' behaviors may be traced back to cultures. Attributed to the abiding by cultural traditions, East Asian young people have earned a reputation as model minority (Chou, 2008; Midlarsky, et al., 2006). They are inclined to down play individuality, pursue harmony, work hard, and avoid conflict in the society (Ma, Yajia, Edwards, Shive, & Chau, 2004; Pope, 1999). To explore further, the sub-topics below illustrate the behaviors of these specific groups in aspects of family lives, youth behaviors in schools, and acculturation.

East Asians' Behaviors in Family

Despite differences exist in different East Asian ethnic groups, life in an East Asian family generally demonstrates a miniature that features traditional cultural structures and behaviors. A typical traditional family involves multiple relations created through blood and marriage. All the relatives, thus, have names that accompany hierarchical orders and generally live in close proximity (Chu, 1985). Power, then, is distributed based on age, generation, and gender (Lee, et al., 2004, p.498).

The relationships among generations construct rituals in the daily family life. Filial piety, the fundamental root of multiple daily rituals, in the words of Lee, et al. (2004):

> …is a way of life in which the group comes before the self and elders are to be honored, obeyed and cared for. Filial piety is not just about care giving, it is about authority, power, transmission of knowledge and values, and the continuation of the family lineage. Clearly proscribed rules and roles are passed from generation to generation and obedience of children to their parents or parents-in-law is regarded as an expression of filial piety (p.498).

In filial responsibility, East Asian children are instructed to show respect towards parents and obey them, in some cultures even in marriage (Chan & Leong, 1994). In light of filial piety, parents have the absolute authority over children. Extended from this relationship, seniors in generational ranks also obtain the authority over those who are younger (Boduroglu, et al., 2006). Therefore, it is not rare to find Asian parents requiring their children to greet the elderly first among people (Otness, Fletcher, Fialkoff, Hoffert, & Dealy, 1987).

East Asian elders are revered and granted high social and economic status in the larger society (Boduroglu, et al., 2006; Lee, et al., 2004). The elders earn this status throughout their lives observing and participating in rituals and mentoring traditional values to younger generations (Nakasone, 2008; Yamato, 2006). Obtaining an essential position, East Asian elders also tend to control family assets, which grants them control over family decision-making (Lee et al., 2004). Being constant important and authority members in the family, East Asian elders are found to be reserved in expressing themselves and self-conscious about their emotions (Lee et al., 2004).

Unfortunately, social changes in East Asia have transformed people's values towards the elderly (Lee et al., Boduroglu, et al., 2006; 2004; Yamato, 2006). The modernization of the society after World War II, an influence by Euro-American values (Lee, et al., 2004), causing massive changes of demography, occupation and household structures, is considered to have contributed to this transformation of attitudes towards elders (Yamato, 2006). East Asian elders are well aware of this transformation and realize "that they are being marginalized with little social status or defined role in this changing world in which aging tends to be viewed negatively" (Lee, et al., 2004, p. 499). Despite this change, According to the study of Boduroglu, et al.(2006) on age-related stereotypes, Chinese elderly are reported to have positive self view on health, usefulness, attractiveness, mentality, wealth and emotion.

East Asian Students' Behaviors in Schools

East Asian youths demonstrate distinct behaviors that adhere to Asian collective values. For example, East Asians exhibit a tendency of adjusting self to what is perceived appropriate to maintain harmony across social situations. In a study surveying 84 American college students and 123 Korean undergraduates, Suh (2002) reported that Koreans were less consistent in self identity as they prioritized the relational, interdependent aspects over autonomous, independent aspects of the self.

Kashima, et al. (2004) conducted a study with 115 undergraduate participants from Korea, 92 from Japan, 136 from Australia, 71 from UK, and 110 from Germany and found that East Asians, with varied degrees between Koreans and Japanese, perceived themselves as relational in a context. To be true to what is appropriate for the care about others in a context, they tend to create multiple true selves across contexts. Despite the findings that East Asian self-view appears more adaptable across situations, it does not imply that there is an inconsistency between one's past self and present self (Suh, 2002) and all East Asian cultures should not be viewed as equivalent (Kashima, et al., 2004).

Consequently, East Asian youths tend to create an unplanned social reality from a less egocentric, more overarching point of view. In an experimental study in Canada on self perception with 117 White students born in North American and 78 Asian students born in Asia, Cohen and Gunz (2002) found that, while Westerners have a more "inside-out perspective on the world," East Asians take a more "outside-in perspective on the self" (p. 56). The results indicated that East Asians were inclined to view themselves using a third-person and see the emotions and expressions in others through the lens of whether it is appropriate for another person viewing or relating to them, This lack of self consistency, an effective virtue in East Asian cultures, however, may give rise to negative impression of East Asians to people in the western cultures.

Research on ideal affect/emotion points out distinct preferences between East Asian and European American adolescents. Contrasting to White adolescents who favor music that is happy, exciting, and loving (Wells, 1990), East Asian adolescents prefer more relaxing and calm music with slow tempos (Ho, 2004; Tsai, 2007). These findings prompted researchers to suggest a reevaluation of stereotypes of East Asians being unaffected, reserved, and unexpressive (Tsai, 2007).

In another study on emotional reactions to sad films, Chentsova-Dutton, Chu, Tsai, and Rottenberg (2007) compared depressed and non-depressed European Americans (EAs) and East Asian Americans (EAAs). The depressed EAs cried less often and showed smaller increases in reported sadness than did the non-depressed EAs. Conversely, the EAAs cried more often and tended to report larger increases in sadness than did the non-depressed EAAs. The findings imply that deviations from cultural norms contribute to the EAAs' development or maintenance of major depression and that depression reduces EAAs' attention or concern of cultural norms to express their sadness.

In a study on peer exclusion Park, Killen, Crystal, and Watanabe (2003) compared students of 4th, 7th, and 10 grades from Korea (N = 553), Japan (N = 513), and the U.S. (N = 542). The results indicated that generally Korean students were less likely to agree to exclude someone from a group than students from Japan and the U.S. Also, Korean students, in the most traditional culture, the least willing to exclude others, were the most tolerant of cross-gender behavior. This study provided evidence that within-East-Asian cultures, judgments about social exclusion can be significantly different from one another. The findings indicate that "there can be different sets of principles and rules among people from different cultural settings" (Tai, et al., 2001, p. 53).

Two replicated studies with undergraduates in Australia and Singapore were compared to examine the reactions toward group conflict generation and management in the two different cultures (Quaddus & Tung, 2002). The results showed that, as opposed to Australians being more individualistic and masculine, Singaporeans tended to be more feminine and less individualistic. Additionally, as opposed to Australians' perceptions that people were equal and that each person's ideas were important, Singaporeans regarded the views of people on the higher status as superior to their own. As a result, Australians tended to have aggressive behavior and express their views and make their opinions known, which may promote more interpersonal than issue-based conflict. On the contrary, Singaporeans tended to be more reserved in expressing their views openly and exhibit a strong need to maintain harmony within the group. As such they performed more use of avoidance strategies. These behaviors are consistent with the cultural traits of pursuing oughtness, instead of fairness, and treating others with humility. Young East Asian people are apt to be self-critical to exhibit humility, cultivated primarily in childhood as parents tend not to praise their children's strengths and to focus on encouraging them to enhance weaknesses (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In two replicated studies on cultural differences related to positive and negative valence, the researchers surveyed American (N = 195) and Japanese undergraduates (N = 206) respectively measured by general aspects, such as attention to positive/negative information of self and attention to positive/negative information of others (Noguchi, Gohm, Dalsky, & Sakamoto, 2007).

It is reported that, in comparison with the two studies, Japanese were more likely to show self-critical tendency, but not likely to focus on negative information about others. Conversely, a study on self-esteem and self-enhancement showed that Japanese had positive self-attitudes when measured by specific aspects, such as attributes that are important to them (Kobayashi & Brown, 2003). The conflicting findings imply that Japanese may tend to be self-critical when prompted generally because it is more culturally acceptable (Noguchi, et al., 2007).

In a study on dating and sexual attitudes, Lau, Markham, Hua, Flores, and Chacko (2009) reported that Asian-American adolescents engage less in dating and spend less time dating in comparison to their counterparts of other races and ethnicities. A longitudinal study (N = 2354) in 22 schools in New York City indicated less polydrug use among Asian as well as black adolescents than White and Hispanic youth (Epstein, Botvin, Griffin, & Diaz, 1999). The researchers attributed the lower polydrug use to cultural or parenting factors.

With respect to learning, Asian students in North America are "increasingly outperforming their peers in attaining academic excellence at the high school and university levels," a phenomenon that researchers believe is mainly attributed to cultural factors (Dion & Toner, 2001, p. 165). Education has been highly cherished in East Asian cultures since the time of Confucius, who believed that education has the power to advance society and to edify citizenship. For centuries, education has been the keystone of the political, social, economic and cultural life of Asian peoples (Zhou, 1997). This high regard for education in tradition has resulted in East Asian parents' high expectations of children in educational performance. With these expectations, Asian parents tend to initiate interactions with children at home and children are expected to spend long hours on learning. The academic success, hence, mirrors the abidance of two cultural characteristics: "(a) the stress of filial piety and (b) a belief in the efficacy of effort and hard work" (Dion et al., 2001, p. 166).

In a study on narrative skills of elementary grade level children, Meesook (2003) reported that Korean children become attentive listeners and use implicit language while White American children articulate speakers using explicit language and less attentive listeners. However, despite implicit speech may be regarded as a deficiency in learning, the Korean children achieve high in their school subjects. Hence, the researcher contends that expressive language style may not be a good predictor for school achievement for certain racial groups.

Accompanying academic excellence, stress, however, has placed East Asian students under considerable psychological pressure (Dion, et al., 2001). This stress stems from parental and other family pressures to succeed and is exhibited in students' high levels of test anxiety (Dion, et al., 2001). In a study on ethnic differences in test anxiety with a sample of undergraduates representing East Asian and European backgrounds, Dion, et al. (2001) reported that students in the Asian group had higher test anxiety than did students from European ethnic backgrounds.

Social anxiety stems from the discrepancy between one's sense of social self and one's expectations of appropriate and successful social behavior (Hong & Woody, 2007). Studying self-reported social anxiety, Hong, et al. (2007) recruited 251 Korean and 254 Euro-Canadian adults, including undergraduates and members of the broader community, who had lived in Canada for less than four years and were maximally culturally distinct. The study indicated that Korean participants reported more social anxiety than their Western counterparts. Comparatively, foreign-born East Asians reported higher social anxiety than did those born in the U.S. (Okazaki, 2000) and degrees of Western acculturation correlated negatively with self-reported social anxiety (Okazaki, 2002). In other words, those born in the U.S. and those who acculturated deeper experienced less social anxiety.

Lack of creativity in East Asians is deemed as a natural product of a collective culture consisting of elements that become cultural blocks and do not promote creativity. These cultural blocks include obedience, hierarchy, gender inequality, conformity, and suppression of expression (Kim & Margison, 2005). Kim et al contend that creativity does not exist alone, rather it takes "interaction among a person, a field, and a culture" (p. 186).

Acculturation of East Asian Americans

Cultural values of East Asians are changing locally as well as in immigrant settings. Literature on acculturation shows a gradual shift of collective values, attitudes, and behaviors (Lau, et al., 2009) towards Western individualism and self-orientation amongst East Asian parents and students such as those in Taiwan and Hong Kong, (Feldman, Mont-Reynaud, & Rosenthal, 1992). Feldman, et al. (1992) examined the extent to which two generations of Chinese high school youths were acculturated in two Western English-speaking host nations, the U.S. and Australia.

The study displayed evident changes in the directions towards the values of the host country amongst the first and second generations of young East Asians. However, the researchers also reported that although the tradition domain showed a rapid and complete acculturation, East Asian youths still highly respected parental authority and valued "the family as residential unit" (p.165), a result of parental expectation of their children to uphold the traditional Asian values (Lau, et al., 2009). Living in two different cultures, the adolescents, thus, spend effort and time navigating and integrating values from both cultures "to maintain their ethnic identity while also trying to create their own identity and to fit in with peers" (Lau, et al., 2009).

Significant role of immigrant parental involvement has been documented as critical to child outcomes in schools (Ying & Han, 2008). The key contexts of immigrant parental involvement include "at home with regard to education… participation in school… and engagement in the child's extra familial social world" (p. 293). In a study with Southeast Asian American adolescents and parents (N = 491), Ying, et al. (2008) found that the degree of parental acculturation mirrors the degree of their involvement in home education, participating in school and engaging in the child's social world outside the family. Due to lack of participation, parents may have missed the opportunity "to enhance mutual understanding and intimacy in the intergenerational relationship" (p. 293). Other literature also supports that, with limited language skills and cultural knowledge, some East Asian immigrant parents may be compromising participation in school and in child's extra familial social world, although they attempt to uphold parental influence in education (Zhou, 1997).

Varied degrees of acculturation of children and parents may cause tension and conflicts between two generations. Frequent interactions within an ethnic community, however, could help young people develop a sense of identity, which results in effective alleviation of intergenerational conflicts (Zhou, 1997). Evidence is found in Sung's study (1987) on Chinese immigrant children living in New York's Chinatowns. Sung reported that intergenerational conflicts faced by these East Asian adolescents were moderated to a large extent because they mitigated the dilemmas they encountered with other Chinese children who knew and accepted their cultures. Zhou (1997) explains this situation as follows:

> Immigrant children and parents often interact with one another in immigrant communities. If patterns of interaction are contained within a tightly knit ethnic community, these children and parents are likely to share their similar experiences with other children and parents. In this way, the community creates a buffer zone to ease the tension between individual self-fulfillment and family commitment. The community also serves to moderate original cultural patterns, to legitimize reestablished values and norms, and to enforce consistent standards (p.85).

Meeting the Cultural Needs of East Asian Americans in Schools

The K-12 classroom in the U.S. today is becoming increasingly diverse. The United States Department of Education (Statistics, 2010) reports that approximately 45% of students enrolled in U.S. elementary and secondary public schools were minorities from various races or ethnicities. Such diversity brings richness to classrooms and challenges for teachers to culturally respond to the needs of all students. One way to address this challenge is for educators to be equipped with understanding of ethnic stereotypes about their students and culturally responsive approaches towards the cultures and behaviors of targeted ethnic groups. This section, therefore, is to discuss stereotypes towards East Asian Americans and to describe appropriate methods reported in the literature in order to better meet the needs of students and families from these ethnic groups.

Understanding Stereotypes

Lack of understanding or misinterpretation of behaviors inherited in certain cultures may cause stereotypes and difficulty for people to work together. The stereotypes East Asian Americans constantly experience include the following aspects. First, all Asian Americans are assumed to be the same (Le, 2010b). Factually, there are numerous ethnic groups from Asia that may have different cultures and beliefs and speak different languages. Further, all Asian Americans are foreigners. Truly, more than half of Asian Americans were not born in the U.S., but evidences indicate that many others have been here for generations (Midlarsky, et al., 2006). Therefore, this simplified generalization may cause prejudice and discriminations in various forms (Le, 2010b). Additionally, Asian Americans are considered to be self-critical. Nonetheless, according to Noguchi et al. (2007), this self critical behavior intrinsically comes from Confucianism which promotes an interdependent self-view and personally they do not necessarily suffer from self criticism. Further, East Asians are constantly portrayed as unaffected, reserved, and unexpressive.

Tsai (2007), based on her study, argues that East Asians are as affectionate and expressive but they may express culturally in value of less strong affect. Finally, Asian Americans are model minority (Chou, 2008; Midlarsky, et al., 2006); all are good at math and science. Nonetheless, in reality, not all Asian parents have the time and language ability needed to support their children at home for extended learning. This stereotype, therefore, may leave some children who need help without receiving appropriate attention and place unrealistic expectations on such children.

Working with East Asian American Students, Parents and Families

Literature on East Asian Americans reports a plethora of behaviors unique to these ethnic groups. Through understanding of where these behaviors come from, researchers provide useful recommendations that may assist educators in effectively working with students, parents and families from these groups. Influenced by the cultures, students in the Asian group tend to have higher test anxiety (Dion et al., 2001). To help East Asian American students in this situation, Dion et al. provides three recommendations: a) to receive cognitive-behavioral therapies, b) to reach out for peer counseling services for foreign students, or c) for those with language difficulties, to consider taking some English language training.

Experienced in working with Asian students and parents, researchers provide some constructive tips. For example, Hanna and Green (2004) reported that Asian students and parents have a tendency to pay immense respect towards the counselor who shows understanding about their spiritual beliefs and values. Additionally, counseling with Asian clients for years, Pope's advice (1999) works seamlessly well for East Asian parents and families in schools. First, teachers should develop relevant and specific information regarding local communities of the Asian groups. Additionally, it is helpful for teachers not to expect every child who was born and raised in Asia to be the same or use the same definitions for even the same words. Finally, teachers need to assess the levels of acculturation of their East Asian students and identity their development.

Finally, with increasing numbers of students from East Asian ethnic backgrounds coming into classrooms, Lee and Manning (2001) provide recommendations for educators. The recommendations are a list of how-to-do ideas that educators may find helpful in their service:

    a)   Respect both immediate and extended family members.
    b)   Provide opportunities to share differences between U.S. and Asian school systems.
    c)   Understand diversity within Asian ethnic groups.
    d)   Recognize Asian traditions of respect toward teachers.
    e)   Consider Asian parents' English proficiency.
    f)   Understand the importance of nonverbal communication.
    g)   Encourage children to be bicultural and bilingual.
    h)   Eliminate the stereotype that all Asians are automatically smart in academics.
    i)   Prepare education programs for Asian parents. (2001, pp. 39-45)

Conclusion

This review investigates literature on cultures emphasizing on the influences of Taoism and Confucianism and behaviors of East Asian Americans for the purpose of bringing about understanding towards these specific ethnic groups. Through the understanding, this review aims to assist educators in working effectively with and meeting the needs of students and families from these ethnic groups.

Among all minority immigrants that are relatively new to the States, East Asian Americans exhibit unique characteristics. The unique characteristics are influenced by cultures that have been passed down for thousands of years. With cultures that are pursuant of peaceful and caring relationships among people through the beliefs of no self, no subjective judgment, compassion, rituals, and righteousness, East Asian Americans appear to view the world in a different perspective. This world view prompting East Asians to care for a bigger social environment and allow self to be placed in the bottom is found to be a common theme in the literature that penetrates many aspects of East Asian Americans' lives (Boduroglu, et al., 2006; Chentsova-Dutton, et al., 2007; Chu, 1985; M. Y. Lee & Mjelde-mossey, 2004; Yamato, 2006). Daily use of language is one good example. Instead of centering the very location point first, East Asians pronounce an address starting from a bigger entity, such as the country, to a smaller unit, the state, the county, and finally pinpointing the floor or number of a building. These cultural characteristics, according to the literature reviewed, are explicitly exhibited in behaviors of individuals, families, and youth.

First, East Asian Americans tend to pursue low profile, work hard, avoid conflicts, and support collective judgment in the society. Additionally, valuing education highly mirrors the way that East Asian Americans stress about edifying individuals and improving society. These are behaviors reflecting the cultures that underline no self, no subjective judgment, and compassion in order to adapt to situations and maintain a consonant environment.

Second, filial piety, deriving from the culture of respecting rituals, defines the responsibility in a family between parent and child. While family is valued, parents have the absolute authority. Extended from this idea, the elderly are apt to be comprehensively respected. The fundamental values of society, hence, are built upon the respect and practice of rituals starting from the family.

Finally, East Asian youths exhibit some distinct behaviors stemming from the cultural world view of righteousness and oughtness. East Asian students favor relaxing and calm music with slow tempos and exhibit less behavior of excluding peers. They tend to be attentive listeners and use implicit language in class and appear to be reserved in expressing their views openly and avoid conflicts among peers. Additionally, they demonstrate less dating behavior and less polydrug use. These behaviors are also consistent with the beliefs of compassion, no-self, and no subjective judgment.

Reversely, drawbacks are reported resulting from the influence of the East Asian tradition. First of all, East Asians appear to adopt multiple selves considering the appropriateness of situations, which muster the concern of not being consistent. Then, they tend to be self critical explicitly, a way to express their humility, given that they may be confident implicitly. Also, they have a tendency to be confined in collectivism and lack creativity. Finally, they may experience more social and academic anxiety. These behaviors, though considered problems, are evidential and consistent with others influenced by East Asian cultures.

However, degrees of acculturation among East Asian Americans residing in the U.S. for various durations are found to undermine their cultural traditions and reflect in responsive behaviors. With the family stressing the importance of tradition, East Asian young people struggle to navigate and integrate the two values to create their own identity and to fit in with peers. On the other hand, with limited language skills and cultural knowledge, East Asian immigrant parents may be compromising participation in school and in child's social world, although they attempt to uphold parental influence in education. Varied degrees of acculturation of children and parents, consequently, may decrease the influence of East Asian cultures and cause tension and conflicts between two generations.

Similar to other minority groups, East Asian Americans experience stereotypes. To break stereotypes and to work effectively with students, parents, and families from East Asian ethnic groups, educators and administrators are recommended to develop understanding and follow guidelines provided by researchers generated in studies.

A concluding note for this article is that the review is not intended to generalize to all East Asian Americans. This is because, while learning about general behaviors and attitudes of certain groups of people, it is equally important to remember that individuals can be as diverse as cultures. Finally, this study suggests more research needed on cultures and behaviors that are missing in the literature in order to better understand and work with these ethnic groups that are relatively new comers to the States.

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