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# Exploring Racial/Ethnic Identity and Enrollment Status on Noncognitive Outcomes among Asian American and Pacific Islander Men in Community College

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*There is currently a dearth of literature on Asia Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) in post-secondary education. Given this, there is a need for research to counter the stereotypes that cast an invisible barrier to the experiences of this population in higher education. This is particularly true for AAPI men in community college. The purpose of this study is to examine if there are any differences between enrollment status and racial/ethnic identity on noncognitive outcomes—*intrinsic interest, self-efficacy, action control, locus of control, degree utility*—among AAPI men in community college. A total of 551 participants were included in the study. Secondary data were utilized from the Community College Survey of Men. Data analysis was conducted using a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Findings suggested that there was a significant difference in students' racial/ethnic identity for noncognitive outcomes while enrollment status was statistically significant for intrinsic interest. Keywords: Asian American Pacific Islander, community college, men of color*

## Background

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) represent one of the fastest growing populations in the United States (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education [CARE], 2010; Teranishi, 2010). However, research on this population in higher education is minimal. More specifically, the literature on AAPI men in community college is nonexistent compared with their four-year peers. As a result of the void in literature on AAPI men in community college, this study contributes to the void in literature on AAPI

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community college students, specifically on AAPI men. Although over the past decade, literature on men of color (e.g., African Americans, Latino) in community colleges have been increasing, the literature on AAPI men remains static. Most of the literature on men of color have examined factors influencing student success outcomes (Bush & Bush, 2010; Flowers, 2006; Vasquez Urias, 2012; Wood & Harris, 2015) which largely focused on African American and Latino men. Nearly half of AAPI students enroll in community college (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education [CARE], 2010; Pak, Maramba, & Hernandez, 2014; Teranishi, 2010; Assalone & Fann, 2017), yet the lack of knowledge known about this population is problematic. Of the AAPI students who enroll in community college, research suggests that AAPI students are more likely to withdraw from the institution for non-academic reasons (Maramba, 2011). Thus, it is imperative that more attention is given to this population to better understand their experiences and needs in order to advance institutional support for AAPI students in community college.

The purpose of this study is to examine if there are significant differences in non-cognitive outcomes—self-efficacy, locus of control, action control, intrinsic interest, degree utility—of AAPI students’ racial/ethnic identity (i.e., students’ positive perceptions of their own racial/ethnic heritage) and enrollment status (e.g., full-time, part-time), and the interaction of these factors. This study was interested in noncognitive outcomes because research has identified these constructs as having an influence on student success, particularly for underserved populations (Palacios, 2014; Vasquez & Wood, 2014; Wood & Harris, 2013). According to Wood and Harris (2013) noncognitive factors capture the feelings and emotions of students through their educational experiences. With regard to men of color in general, extant research has found that higher non-cognitive outcomes, such as self-efficacy and degree utility, are associated with higher levels of academic success (Wood & Harris, 2013). While this has important implications for college programming and practice, little is known about noncognitive outcomes for AAPI men.

In a special article highlighting the Community College Survey of Men, research focused on the experiences of men of color suggests that positive racial regard (identity) is associated with greater levels of student engagement, use of services, time on task, and student success outcomes (Wood, Harris, & Xiong, 2014). However, the literature base has yet to make a connection between positive racial regard and noncognitive outcomes such as students’ confidence in their academic abilities (self-

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efficacy) and perceptions of the utility of college (degree utility). Recent research on noncognitive outcomes have focused on African American and Latino men in community college. Palacios (2014) utilized a three-way factorial analysis with a sample size of 1,415 from the Community College Survey of Men to determine if there were differences between degree utility, faculty validation, and stressful life events on men of color. Palacios (2014) found that faculty validation placed greater value of degree utility for men. Furthermore, Vasquez and Wood (2015) explored the perceptions of Latino men on school as a feminine domain and noncognitive outcomes using hierarchical multiple regression with a sample of 722 Latino men. Data from the study were from the Community College Survey of Men. Findings suggested that degree utility, locus of control, and intrinsic interest were significant predictors of Latino males' perceptions of school as a feminine domain. However, much of the literature on noncognitive outcomes is limited for AAPI students. The most recent literature related to AAPI men in community college was conducted on a study using data from the Community College Survey of Men that examined help-seeking behaviors on Southeast Asian men ( $n=140$ ) and found that degree utility, intrinsic interest, and self-efficacy were significant predictors on help-seeking behaviors (Xiong & Wood, 2016).

Extant research on college enrollment suggest part-time students experience challenges of persistence and success (O'Toole, Stratton, & Wetzel, 2003; Metzner & Bean, 1987; Laird & Cruce, 2009). Thus, the National Survey of Student Enrollment reported that part-time students tend to be less engaged in academic and cocurricular activities and viewed campus environments as less supportive (2004). In a longitudinal study sample of 5,025 from the restricted data from the Beginning Post-Secondary Survey (BPS 90/94), O'Toole, Stratton, & Wetzel (2003) noted that persistence and graduation rates were substantially low for students who enrolled part-time. Similarly, Horn, & Ethington (2002) conducted a study that examined differences between White ( $n=356$ ), Asian Pacific Islander ( $n=356$ ), African American ( $n=356$ ), and Hispanic ( $n=356$ ) students examined enrollment status and a compiled instrument assessing student gains. Findings from the study suggested statistically significant differences between full-time and part-time students. Results from the study suggested that full-time students had statistically significant higher perceptions of gains than did part-time students (Horn & Ethington, 2002). Although the existing research suggests that part-time students experience college differently from their part-time peers, there remains to be a great absence of literature in understanding the experiences and needs of students who are enrolled part-time. This is particularly important for

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institutions seeking to find resources to foster academic resources to support student success, especially students enrolled part-time.

This study provides critical insight into the experiences of AAPI men in community college challenging the stereotype which assumes that AAPIs are a “group with stellar educational achievement whose students do not have needs or concerns worthy of attention by researchers, policy makers, or practitioners” (Teranishi, 2010, p. 2). This study also challenges the assumption that the majority of AAPIs enroll into prestigious institutions by acknowledging that a high percentage of AAPI students are concentrated in community colleges. In addition, educational researchers have challenged the existence of the pervasive stereotype to illustrate the realities of this population and shed light on the needs of AAPI students (Assalone & Fann, 2017; Teranishi, 2010; Museus, 2009; Poon, Squire, Kodama, Byrd, & Chan, 2015).

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework guiding this study is the socioecological outcomes (SEO) model developed by Harris and Wood (2014). The SEO model suggests that the experiences and characteristics students bring into the college environment shape their student success outcome (e.g., transfer, persistence, achievement, attainment). The model includes three main components: (a) inputs, (b) socio-ecological domains, and (c) outputs. The inputs component includes students’ background/defining factors (e.g., income, age, enrollment status, academic proficiency) and societal factors (e.g., stereotypes, capitol identity projection). The socio-ecological domains include: (a) noncognitive (e.g., intrapersonal, salient identities), (b) academic (e.g., faculty-student interaction, academic service use), (c) environmental (e.g., mediators, commitments, stressful life events), and (d) campus ethos (e.g., sense of belonging, welcomeness to engage, validating agents). This study focused mainly within the noncognitive domain, more specifically examining the intrapersonal variables (e.g., self-efficacy, locus of control, action control, degree utility, intrinsic interest) as the outcome. The outcome desired for the study will be referred to as the noncognitive variables. Within the same noncognitive domain, racial/ethnic identity is one of the main effects used in the study. This effect represents the internal relationship of two constructs within one domain to determine if there are any statistically significant differences between racial/ethnic identity and noncognitive outcomes. The second main effect is enrollment status, a background/defining factor, is utilized to examine if there were any differences on noncognitive outcomes be-

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tween full-time and part-time students. The noncognitive domain is influenced by the academic, environmental, and campus ethos domains and as a result influences student success. Given this, the purpose of this study is to determine whether there are significant differences between students' racial/ethnic identity and enrollment status and the interaction of the factors on noncognitive outcomes among AAPI men in community college.

## Methodology

This study employed a two-way ANOVA using secondary data from the Community College Survey of Men (CCSM). The CCSM is an institutional-level needs-assessment tool focused on factors that influence the success of historically underserved students enrolled in two-year colleges. The CCSM was distributed to randomly selected courses at participating institutions throughout the United States. All data collected were self-reported. For this study, the dataset was delimited to AAPI men ( $n=551$ ). More specifically, Asian American ( $n=216$ ), Southeast Asian ( $n=140$ ), South Asian ( $n=41$ ), Pacific Islander ( $n=34$ ), and Filipino ( $n=120$ ). Of the participants, 54.4% identified between the ages of 18 to 24 years old ( $n=300$ ). The majority of participants reported annual incomes under \$10,000 which represented 46.1% ( $n=254$ ). Just over half of the participants reported their primary education goal was to transfer to a four-year institution, which represented 51.9% ( $n=286$ ), followed by 25% of students had the desire to earn an associate's degree, 8.5% of students enrolled to prepare for a new career ( $n=47$ ), 6% of students wanted to earn a certificate ( $n=33$ ), 3.8% of students wanted to earn a license certificate ( $n=21$ ), 2.4% of the sample enrolled for personal enjoyment/enrichment ( $n=13$ ), and 2.4% of the students' primary goal was to update job skills ( $n=13$ ). Over half of the participants (56.9%) reported a 3.0 grade point average or higher ( $n=343$ ). In addition, 23.6% of students reported having earned a total amount of 30 to 44 credits/units (including current courses at the time of the survey) ( $n=130$ ) followed by 21.6% of students who reported having earned a total of 15 to 29 credits/units (including current courses at the time of the survey) ( $n=119$ ).

## Dependent Variables

The dependent variables for this study were focused on noncognitive outcomes: (a) self-efficacy, (b) locus of control, (c) action control, (d) intrinsic interest, and (e) degree utility. Each variable was a composite of four items on the CCSM measured on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1

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(*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). As described by Wood and Harris (2014) self-efficacy referred to students' confidence in their ability to perform academic tasks. Items measuring self-efficacy on the CCSM had a reliability of .90. Locus of control was the degree to which students feel a sense of control over their academic futures. Items measuring students' locus of control had a Cronbach alpha of .92. Action control assessed to students' directed attention or effort placed on academic matters reported a Cronbach alpha of .91. Intrinsic interest encompassed students' authentic interest in academic learning. The reliability for intrinsic interest, as assessed by Cronbach alpha was .90. Degree utility referred to students' perceptions of the worthwhileness of their collegiate endeavors. The Cronbach alpha for degree utility was .87.

## **Independent Variables**

independent variables were racial/ethnic identity and enrollment status. Racial/ethnic identity consisted of four items with a reliability of .91 according to Cronbach alpha which inquired about the attitudes students held about their racial/ethnic heritage: (a) My race/ethnicity is important to me, (b) I am proud of my racial/ethnic heritage, (c) My race/ethnicity is an essential aspect of who I am, and (d) I have a strong connection to my racial/ethnic community. The items were measured on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The items measuring racial/ethnic identity were computed into a composite score. The composite scores were divided into quartiles representing the 25 and 75 percentiles of the recorded responses ranging from: 1–15 (*low*), 16–18 (*medium*), 19–20 (*high*), and 21–24 (*very high*). The enrollment status variable was determined by the students' current enrollment of: (a) full-time (12 credits/units or more) or part-time (*less than 12 credits/units*). The following null and alternative hypotheses were employed in the study:

*Null Hypotheses: There will be not be any differences between students' racial/ethnic identity and enrollment status on noncognitive outcomes.*

*Alternative Hypotheses: There will be differences between students' racial/ethnic identity and enrollment status on noncognitive outcomes.*

## **Data Analysis**

For this study, an initial MANOVA was employed to analyze the data for this study; however, the Box's Test of Equality was significant for the main effects of enrollment status ( $p < .001$ ) and racial identity ( $p < .001$ ). Thus, data from this study were analyzed using 4 X 2 factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) design (racial identity X enrollment status). Factorial

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ANOVA is a quantitative procedure that allows researchers to determine which variables are related and if the levels of one variable differ from dependent group levels (Mertler & Vannatta, 2010). If the main effects and interaction of the factors were significant, effect sizes and post hoc results were reported. Effect sizes were interpreted using eta squared, with .01, .06, and .14 representing small, medium, and large effect sizes (Green & Salkind, 2009). All variables were tested at a significant value of .05. Due of the lack of literature on AAPI men in community college, the method selected was appropriate to determine if there were any statistically significant differences between the variables for future analysis.

## **Limitations**

A limitation to this study was the aggregated data presented of AAPI students. According to Teranishi (2010) and Maramba (2011), disaggregated data remove the misperceived notion that AAPIs share similar successes in education. Disaggregating data would provide the opportunity to better examine if there is a difference between enrollment status, racial/ethnic identity, and the interaction between the two main effects among specific AAPI groups. The data used in the study are secondary data; another limitation to the study is the inability to identify the geographic location of the students or the institutions included in the data. This is a limitation because the geographic location has an influence on students' defining background characteristics, which impact their perception of postsecondary education. Also, geographic location of institutions may affect the data given the location of the institution (e.g., rural, suburban) or the type of institution (predominately White institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions, historically Black colleges and universities, and predominately Asian American or Native American Pacific Islander institutions). For example, institutions in the western hemisphere may differ from campuses that are located in the eastern hemisphere, which may contribute great differences among the participants in the data. Lastly, another limitation to the study is the lack of information on the length of time by years (e.g., first year, second year, third year) or semesters (e.g., first semester, second semester, third semester) the student has been enrolled in community college. This information could be valuable when examining how institutional factors impact the experiences of students by a specified length of time. The information could also be useful when conducting research between groups (e.g., first year and third year, first semester and second semester).

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## Results

This study examined if there were significantly statistical differences in students' non-cognitive outcomes (e.g., self-efficacy, locus of control, action control, degree utility, intrinsic interest) between students' enrollment status, racial/ethnic identity, and the interaction of these factors.

The first analysis focused on self-efficacy. The main effect for enrollment status on self-efficacy was not statistically significant,  $F=.014$ ,  $p=ns$ . However, there was a statistically significant difference for self-efficacy,  $F=23.89$ ,  $p<.001$ . The partial eta indicated that racial/ethnic identity accounted for 11.7% of the variance in the outcome; this represented a medium to large effect size. As noted, the interaction of enrollment status and racial/ethnic identity on the outcome was not significant,  $F=1.30$ ,  $p=ns$ . The total model, in consideration of the two main effects and interaction effect accounted for 11.7% of the variance in the outcome as indicated by the R squared.

Pairwise comparisons for racial/ethnic identity indicated three significant differences across the factor. Students who had very high racial/ethnic identity reported greater mean scores of self-efficacy than students who had high racial/ethnic identity by 1.65 points ( $p=.001$ ), students who reported medium racial/ethnic identity by 2.26 points ( $p<.001$ ), and students who reported low racial/ethnic identity by 3.71 points ( $p<.001$ ),

Similar to the first analysis, the main effect for enrollment status on locus of control was not statistically significant ( $F=.02$ ,  $p=ns$ ), but the main effect for racial/ethnic identity was significant ( $F=25.01$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The partial eta indicated that racial/ethnic identity accounted for 12.1% of the variance in the outcome; this was a medium to large effect. The interaction of enrollment status and racial/ethnic identity on the outcome was not significant ( $F=.38$ ,  $p=ns$ ). Overall, the total model accounted for 11.6% of the variance in the outcome as indicated by the R squared.

Pairwise comparisons for racial/ethnic identity indicated students who reported very high racial/ethnic identity had greater mean scores of locus of control than students who reported medium racial/ethnic identity by 2.04 points ( $p<.001$ ) and students who reported low racial/ethnic identity by 3.79 points ( $p<.001$ ). Students who indicated high racial/ethnic identity had higher mean scores than students who reported low racial/ethnic identity by 2.82 points ( $p<.001$ ). Students with medium mean scores of racial/ethnic identity had significantly higher scores than students with low attitudes about their racial identity by 1.74 points ( $p=.001$ ).

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Identical to self-efficacy and locus of control, enrollment status for action control was not statistically significant ( $F=.027, p=ns$ ), but racial/ethnic identity was significant ( $F=30.83, p<.001$ ). The partial eta for the main effect racial/ethnic identity accounted for 14.6% of the variance in the outcome; this was a large effect. However, the interaction between the effects was not significant ( $F=2.12, p=ns$ ). The total model accounted for 1 outcome as indicated by the R squared.

Pairwise comparisons about students who had very high attitudes about their racial/ethnic identity had greater mean scores than students who had high, medium, and low attitudes about their racial identity by 1.53 points ( $p<.05$ ), 2.24 points ( $p<.001$ ), and by 4.42 points ( $p<.001$ ), respectively. Students with high attitudes of racial/ethnic identity had significantly higher scores than students with low levels of racial/ethnic identity attitudes by 2.90 points ( $p<.001$ ). However, students who indicated low racial/ethnic identity differed by 1.53 points ( $p<.05$ ) less than students with high racial/ethnic identity. Lastly, students with medium racial identity had significantly higher mean scores than students with low racial identity by 2.18 points ( $p<.001$ ).

Unlike the previous analyses, enrollment status was statistically significant for intrinsic interest ( $F=4.39, p<.05$ ), but accounted for less than 1% of the variance with partial eta of .01. Moreover, racial/ethnic identity was also significant ( $F=18.91, p<.001$ ) and represented a medium approaching large effect size of 9.5% of the variance in the outcome. The interaction of the two effects was not significant ( $F=2.53, p=ns$ ). The total model accounted for 10.8% of the variance in the outcome as indicated by the R squared.

Pairwise comparisons for enrollment status indicated a significant difference between the levels. Part-time students had higher mean scores of intrinsic interest than full-time students by .66 points ( $p<.05$ ). Pairwise on students' with very high racial/ethnic identity had higher points than students with high, medium, and low mean scores attitudes by 1.26 points ( $p<.05$ ), 2.13 points ( $p<.001$ ), and by 3.28 points ( $p<.001$ ), respectively. Students with high attitudes about their racial/ethnic identity indicated higher significant differences than students who had low racial identity by 2.03 points ( $p<.001$ ).

Lastly, the results for enrollment status on degree utility were not statistically significant ( $F=.08, p=ns$ ), whereas the results for racial/ethnic identity were significant ( $F=20.48, p<.001$ ). The partial eta for racial/ethnic identity accounted for 10.2% of the variance in the outcome; this was a medium approaching large effect. The interaction was not significant

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( $F=.79$ ,  $p=ns$ ). The total model, in consideration of the two main effects and interaction effect accounted for 10.2% of the variance in the outcome as indicated by the R squared.

Students who had very high attitudes of racial/ethnic identity reported greater mean scores than students with medium and low attitudes of racial/ethnic identity by 1.90 points ( $p<.001$ ) and 3.44 points ( $p<.001$ ), respectively. Students with high attitudes had higher mean differences of 2.45 points ( $p<.001$ ) than students with low attitudes. Students who indicated medium racial/ethnic identity had higher mean scores of 1.54 points ( $p<.05$ ) than students with low racial/ethnic identity mean scores.

## Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to determine if there were differences between enrollment status, attitudes on racial/ethnic identity, and the interaction between enrollment status on non-cognitive outcomes. Data for this study were delimited from the CCSM to participants who identified as AAPI (e.g., Asian American, Southeast Asian, South Asian, Filipino, Pacific Islander or Hawaiian). Although none of the interactions were statistically significant, findings suggested there were statistically significant differences between racial/ethnic identity and non-cognitive outcomes (e.g., self-efficacy, locus of control, degree utility, intrinsic interest, action control). In contrast, the only statistically significant difference between enrollment status and the noncognitive dependent variables was intrinsic interest.

The results from this study aligned with findings from Wood, Harris, and Xiong (2014) in their report highlighting the CCSM which noted positive racial/ethnic identity led to greater levels of student engagement on campus and student success outcomes. Thus, findings illustrated in this study suggested that students with higher mean scores of racial/ethnic identity mean scores had higher levels of self-efficacy, locus of control, action control, intrinsic interest, and degree utility. As illustrated in the SEO model guiding the study, noncognitive outcomes are influenced by academic, environmental, and campus domains and as a result, the noncognitive domain has a direct relationship with student success. This is important to mention due to the lack of attention concentrated on student noncognitive development as a service to support student development in their academic endeavors. Furthermore, as Xiong and Wood (2016) posited that degree utility, intrinsic interest, and self-efficacy were predictors of help-seeking behaviors, highlighting the importance of the noncognitive domain in fostering student success for men of color.

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Based on the findings from the study, implications for practice include institutional policy requirements for course curriculum to be inclusive of culturally relevant materials across all disciplines. Incorporating culturally relevant materials that is reflective of AAPI backgrounds into the course would allow students to identify with content and narratives similar to their cultural background and identity. This is also important for practice because oftentimes AAPI students are excluded from educational discourse as a result of pervading misconceptions. It is particularly important for AAPIs to be reflected in the curriculum to provide space for students to reflect on their identity as findings suggested there was statistically differences between racial/ethnic identity and noncognitive outcomes. Given the lack of research published on this student population, it is incumbent for faculty to incorporate learning opportunities that allow AAPI students to explore their racial/ethnic identity and culture within different learning environments inside and outside the classroom. Creating spaces and opportunities for AAPIs to explore their identity and how it relates to the dominant community and other communities of color as a result may influence their racial/ethnic identity.

Another implication for practice to support AAPI students in community college is the emphasis of ethnic studies and the impact of culturally relevant material of AAPI populations and its relationship to the dominant culture. This would allow for dialogue about racial/ethnic identity in the academic setting. Along with offering ethnic courses, another implication would be to offer courses that are specific to the experiences of AAPI men. The course would be focused on discussions to dismantle social stereotypes and expectations of AAPI men and understand how structural barriers limit access to educational opportunities.

Interestingly, findings from the current study suggested that part-time students had higher mean scores for intrinsic interest than full-time students. Research on men of color suggest that the academic domain may be a contributing factor that impacts students' intrinsic interest (Wood & Harris, 2013; Harris & Wood, 2014). Based on the SEO model, the academic and campus ethos domain are institutional factors that contribute to students' noncognitive outcomes. Thus, it is possible that there are institutional factors that may contribute to the intrinsic interest of students. According to the SEO model, students who have greater sense of belonging through faculty validation may find a deeper interest in learning in their courses. As results in this study indicated that the part-time students had higher levels of intrinsic interest may be due to their commitment to do well by only enrolling part-time due to external responsibili-

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ties such as working off-campus given that nearly half of the participants (46.1%) reported an annual income of less than \$10,000. This finding also challenged the assumption that part-time students are less likely to be invested in their academics than their full-time peers. Although findings by Laird and Cruce (2009) suggested part-time students had lower estimated levels of faculty-student engagement, limited interactions with faculty, and educational and self-reported gains, the scholars argued the need to reassess part-time enrollment effects and how institutions should pay more attention to part-time students.

Implications for future research should focus on disaggregation of AAPI subpopulations to better understand the specific needs of each group in order to support their academic success within the community college sector and in higher education. Given that the majority of the AAPI populations are concentrated in community college (Assalone & Fann, 2017), research should examine how pre-college and background factors contribute to noncognitive outcomes. This research would provide educators with opportunities to support and foster higher levels of positive noncognitive outcomes for students. Future research should also expand on part-time AAPI students in community college. Research should focus on factors that impact AAPI students' enrollment decision (e.g., full-time, part-time) and how it affects the institution's climate and culture (Laird & Cruce, 2009).

Much of the preconceived assumptions about AAPI students are rooted from the model minority myth assuming that all AAPI students outperform their peers and are not in need of academic support (Teranishi, 2010; Museus, Maramba, & Teranishi, 2013). However, AAPIs contribute a diverse perspective to the higher education context. The exclusion of AAPIs in research, policy, and practice continue to deny accessible resources for AAPI students, thus creating challenges that hinder their access to college, holistic development, and experiences in postsecondary education. Particularly from this study, results suggested there were differences between students' racial/ethnic identity and noncognitive outcomes. More specifically, students who had higher racial/ethnic identity scores were more likely to have greater mean scores across all non-cognitive outcomes. This is important as it is illustrated in the SEO model that the noncognitive domain has a direct relationship with student success outcomes. However, how do colleges support AAPI students' racial/ethnic development if they are constantly assumed to be a successful group excelling through the college yet excluded from the curriculum?

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