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Anti-Asian Racism in Education from the Lens of AsianCrit: Tenets and Practices

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Abstract

The purpose of this Research Roundtable is to analyze racism in Education from the lens of AsianCrit and to discuss teaching practices in various Adult Education sections.

Keywords: AsianCrit, education, Asian Americans, tenets, practices

Although Asian Americans began coming to the US in the 19th century, earlier than many Italians, Hungarians, Jewish and Polish immigrants, (Takaki, 1998, p. 3), they continue to be regarded as “foreigners” and “others” despite the contributions they made to the making of this nation. There are misunderstandings about them from “yellow peril” to the “model minority” and to the “yellow peril” again in the COVID-19 pandemic (Choy, 2022; Wu & Nguyen, 2022), which are different forms of discrimination rooted from racism. One theoretical framework that has been developed to help scholars understand and critic anti-Asian racism is AsianCrit. Grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT), AsianCrit (Chang, 1993) argued that traditional legal scholarship had failed to address the unique experiences and struggles of Asian Americans, and that CRT could provide a better framework for understanding the intersection of race, power and law. While discussions of AsianCrit are blossoming in other areas of education research, adult education has had minimal engagement with these lines of research. The purpose of this paper is to present a review of literature relative to AsianCrit in education and to use this review to theorize about applications of this theory in Adult Education. To achieve this purpose, we will first discuss both the tenets of AsianCrit (Iftikar & Museus, 2018) and how these tenets can be applied to analyze the complex racialization process of Asian Americans in the field of education. We will realize the goal by using literature reviews. Grounded in Critical Race Theory, AsianCrit is used to study racism experienced by the Asian American population—how they suffered from white supremacy throughout the US history. Museus & Iftikar proposed seven tenets for AsianCrit: Asianization; transnational contexts; (re)constructive history; strategic (anti)essentialism; intersectionality; story, theory, and praxis, and commitment to social justice.

Methods

To gain a better understanding of how AsianCrit is being used across various educational fields, we are conducting a scoping review of literature. We did three searches on April 1-5, 2023. The first searched abstracts and titles for the terms (“Asian critical race theory” OR “AsianCrit”) AND history; The second searched abstracts and titles for the terms (“Asian critical race theory” OR “AsianCrit”) AND (learning or education or teaching or training), and the third searched abstracts (“Asian American”) AND AB (“history” AND “Education”), respectively. The first search yielded 14 results, the second 53 results, and the third 101 results. We then read the titles and abstracts to exclude duplicated and irrelevant articles. The criteria of being included are related

to higher education, adult education, or teaching preparation, leadership; happened in the US; at least mentioned AsianCrit even if not using it as framework and must be journal articles. The criteria of being excluded are not related to education, AsianCrit not mentioned, not happened in the US, not journal articles, not book chapters or conference proceedings, etc. After exclusions the three searches yield 12, 26, and 39 results, respectively. The total is 77 articles. This is ongoing research. In the next filtering, we will exclude articles that only mentioned AsianCrit, but not use it as the framework to conduct the research.

Findings

Our findings include themes identified, tenets used as frameworks, and practices conducted in different settings.

Themes

We extracted four themes from the reviewed literature. First, anti-Asian racism exists in different subdivisions of education, such as art-education (Bae-Dimitriadis, 2023; Kang et al, 2022; Ungcok, 2022), music education (Cayari, 2021), and teacher education (An, 2017; Han, 2014; Rodríguez,2018). Second, anti-Asian racism exists in different forms, adult educators should be capable of identifying it with the help of AsianCrit. Third, educating preservice teachers is fundamental to changing the status quo in K-12 (An, 2017). Fourth, adult educators could include Asian American counter story telling in practice which helps reconstruct history (Han, 2018).

Tenets

All the seven tenets have been adopted as theoretical framework in the articles, and there are overlapping of them. The most deployed tenets include using counter storytelling or autoethnography (tenet 6) to reconstruct history (tenet 3) that is different from the dominant voice, with a purpose of achieving social justice (tenet 7). Intersectionality is also often addressed (tenet 5). Other tenets include Asianization (tenet 1), meaning that white supremacy regards all Asians as one group and does not distinguish their unique ethnic history. But the articles we reviewed tackle specific problems faced by a particular ethnic group, for example, Korean teachers (Kim, 2020), Chinese international students (Saito, 2022), or HMOob Americans (Smolarek, 2021). When addressing tenet 2, transnational contexts, Kim (2023) felt that their analysis can “extend the scholarship of AsianCrit” because “the AsianCrit literature is limited to American society and Asian Americans and does not fully address transnational perspectives held by first-generation Asian immigrants and/or newcomers in the United States” (p. 11).

Practices

Practices include classroom practices (An, 2017) and applications in other facilities or institutions, such as museums (Adams, 2020) and health providers (Nguyen-Truong et al., 2021). Practices also go to different fields. Apart from education, psychology and social studies are also covered. Chan (2021), Yoo et al (2022) focused on Asian American psychology in the process of racialization.

Conclusion

The present research uses method of literature review to analyze anti-Asian racism under the framework of AsianCrit. Through discussing tenets, practices and themes, the authors analyzed different forms of anti-Asian racism in the field of education in the US.

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