"They Call Me Bruce, But They Won't Call Me Bruce Jones:" Asian American Naming Preferences and Patterns

Ellen Dionne Wu
Los Angeles, California

The names of Asian Americans are indicative of their individual and collective experiences in the United States. Asian immigrants and their descendants have created, modified, and maintained their names by individual choice and by responding to pressures from the dominant Anglo-American society.

American society's emphasis on conformity has been a major theme in the history of Asian American naming conventions (as it has been for other groups), but racial differences and historical circumstances have forced Asian Americans to develop more fluid and more complex naming strategies as alternatives to simply adopting Anglo names, a common practice among European immigrants, thus challenging the paradigms of European-American assimilation and naming practices.

Donald Duk does not like his name. Donald Duk never liked his name. He hates his name. He is not a duck. He is not a cartoon character. He does not go home to sleep in Disneyland every night....
"Only the Chinese are stupid enough to give a kid a stupid name like Donald Duk," Donald Duk says to himself...

Donald Duk's father's name is King. King Duk. Donald hates his father's name. He hates being introduced with his father. "This is King Duk, and his son Donald Duk."

Mom's name is Daisy. "That's Daisy Duk, and her son Donald...."

His own name is driving him crazy! (Frank Chin, *Donald Duk*, 1-2).

Names 47.1 (March 1999):21-50
ISSN:0027-7738

Names—family names, personal names and nicknames—affect a person's life daily, sometimes for better, and sometimes, as in the case of Frank Chin's fictional character, Donald Duk, for worse. Different names evoke different images and represent different identities. As Eileen H. Tamura said of the Nisei generation in Hawaii: "Calling oneself 'Robert' or 'Mary' created a different self-identity from 'Chotoku' or 'Shizuko'" (1994, 169). Names are symbolic representations of social identities and people can choose to announce their identities through their names. Others can then find clues to gender, ethnicity, and possibly even family status, religious affiliation, and occupation through the bearer's name (Kang 1971, 401).[1]

The names of Asian Americans are indicative of their individual and collective experiences throughout their history in the United States. Trends in the creation, modification, and maintenance of their personal and family names reflect greater issues of identity and assimilation. As immigrants, Asians entered the United States with national affiliations and Asian-language names. Once in America, they and their descendants created, modified, and maintained their names according to individual choice as well as pressures from the dominant Anglo-American society. These adjustments took a number of different forms: some names were transliterated; the syntax and/or length of others were altered; and some (both personal and family names) were changed entirely. These changes reflect larger issues of identity and assimilation—the bearers of the names underwent changes themselves as their identities evolved as a result of attempts to assimilate, or to not assimilate, to the socially dominant Anglo-American culture and practices.[2]

Underlying this investigation into Asian American names are the concerns of identity and assimilation among Asian Americans. Asian immigrants, like all immigrants to the United States, turned to naming strategies as one means of assimilation. A few early Asian immigrants changed their names completely, as did Europeans, but it soon became clear that there were limits to how much freedom—and success—Asians had in this area. Unlike European immigrants, racial differences prevented Asians from assimilating fully to the Anglo-American mainstream, regardless of their having American names. Thus, while Anglo-conformity remained their primary goal, Asian Americans developed more fluid and complex naming strategies as an alternative to adopting Anglo surnames. Scrutiny and analysis of Asian American names is of particular current relevance as the United States is becoming

increasingly multicultural and apparently more willing to embrace ethnic diversity now than in the past.

Due to the scant literature on this topic, the bulk of the information and conclusions in this essay are drawn from interviews which I conducted in 1995 and 1996 with 28 Asian Americans who were either living in or attending school in Indiana, and all of whom had either immigrated to or were born in the United States after 1965. Time constraints combined with the geographical concentration of the interviewees narrowed the scope of the investigation such that second-generation Chinese Americans comprised a disproportionate number of the interviewees. However, these examples do exhibit patterns observable in fragmentary evidence from earlier periods; this study, therefore, is generally representative of the Asian American experience in the United States.

In *Assimilation in American Life* (1964, 60), sociologist Milton M. Gordon posed the question: "What happens 'when peoples meet?'" The assimilation phenomenon is one possible outcome of such social encounters. Assimilation can take several forms and Gordon described three major possibilities: Anglo-conformity, the melting pot, and cultural pluralism. Sociologists Robert Park and Ernest Burgess first defined assimilation as "a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and by sharing their experiences and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life" (quoted in Gordon 1964, 62). Arnold Green later added to the Park/Burgess explanation by differentiating between cultural behavior and social structural participation. In reality, noted Green, "persons and groups...find themselves indefinitely delayed in being 'incorporated with them [the host or core group] in a common cultural life'" (quoted in Gordon 1964, 66, 71). In other words, the extent of the incorporation or assimilation of the "minority," or less culturally dominant group, largely depends on the willingness of the host group to accept new members. Host groups strongly influence the assimilation processes of immigrant groups; successful and total assimilation, which, according to Gordon, is not solely the decision of the newcomers (1964, 60, 62, 66, 71).

Throughout U.S. history, assimilation attempts for Asian Americans have been dictated, to different extents under different circumstances,

by the notion of Anglo-conformity. Historically, immigrant groups, according to the Park/Burgess definition, have attempted to assimilate to the dominant American culture. More specifically, they have been engaged in the cultural behavior of Anglo-conformity. As Gordon (1964, 72) says:

> If there is anything in American life which can be described as an overall American culture which serves as a reference point for immigrants and their children, it can best be described, it seems to us, as the middle class cultural pattern of, largely, White Protestant, Anglo-Saxon origins... With some exceptions, as the immigrants and their children have become Americans, their contributions, as laborers, farmers, doctors, lawyers, scientists, artists, etc., have been made by way of cultural patterns that have taken their major impress from the mould of the overwhelmingly English character of the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture or subculture in America, whose dominion dates from colonial times and whose cultural domination in the United States has never been seriously threatened.

Immigrants did not choose to follow the Anglo-conformity rule without the influence of outside pressures. The dominant Anglo-Americans consistently mandated that immigrants embrace Anglo-American culture (Gordon 1964, 72-73, 90, 91, 94).

American policymakers institutionalized the social pressures for immigrants to conform to the Anglo-American standard. Legislation such as the Naturalization Law of 1790, which limited naturalized citizenship to free white persons, and the Immigration Act of 1924, which halted Asian migration entirely, were the government's attempts to keep America as Anglo, or at least as white, as possible (Takaki 1989).

Because of this intense pressure to conform to American culture, immigrants and their children did their best to fit the Anglo-American ideal. The second generations, in particular, took pains to adopt the English language as well as the Anglo-American lifestyle. One of the first steps towards assimilation was adopting an "American" name or using a variation of the ethnic name. The name changes were perhaps the most significant symbol of the transformations in identity, from that of a foreigner to that of an American (Seller 1977, 222). In the words of Laurence Barrett: "The shortest route to WASPdom, when it was still the new arrival's destination of choice, was the swapping of an ethnic name for an 'American' one" (1993, 79).

Asian Americans' participation in such "ethnic swapping" varied according to the different ethnic groups and the time periods involved, but there were apparently four main possibilities where names were concerned: transliteration, syntax and length, personal name, and family name, with individuals' name changes resulting from an interaction of personal choice and social pressure. Until recently, it seems that for the most part, the more changes Asian Americans made to their names, the more they claimed an assimilated identity.

Transliteration is the one aspect of name change that was necessary for almost all Asian immigrants. In order to have a functional name in American society, all Asian-language components of that name had to be written, usually phonetically, in the English alphabet. In this process of conversion, unfortunately, accurate pronunciation of a name was sometimes sacrificed. For some Asian languages, transliteration could only approximate the correct sounds of the original name—either the English language did not have suitable letter combinations available, or other Americans had difficulty pronouncing the Asian names with the correct sounds, tones, and stresses. But despite keeping their "Asian" names, those Asian Americans who had transliterated their names still conformed to the expectations of American society and they now heard (and even spoke) their own names with an American accent. Yung-Hsing Wu, a second generation Chinese American born in 1966, is typical. She considers her pronunciation of her name to non-Chinese speakers, "Young-sing," instead of the more exact "Young-shing," as partial assimilation. "I've already Anglicized my name when I pronounce it to people," she said (Y. Wu 1996).

Some Asian Americans' transliterated names resulted from the misperceptions of others. Immigration officials and census takers of the nineteenth century, for instance, often recorded "Ah" as a prefix to the names of early Chinese immigrants. The addition of "Ah" before names is a common practice in central and southern China, although the actual word has no particular meaning—it is used to attract the attention of the addressee, for emphasis, or to denote familiarity. Unaware of these functions, however, U.S. government officials transformed many Chinese names to distinctly Chinese American names such as *Ah Yi, A Ping*, and even Anglicized variations like *Ah Frank, Ah George*, and *Ah Charley* (Louie 1985-6, 8).

In general, Asian Americans seemed to prefer transliteration over direct translation of their Asian names. One would be hard pressed, for

example, to find a Korean American who preferred to use "Gold" rather than "Kim," even though *Kim* means 'gold' in Korean. This was due, perhaps, to a common preference for the preservation of the pronunciation of one's name in one's native language rather than the meaning of the name. Translations resulted in a more drastic change—names would be instantly Anglicized, leaving no trace of the bearer's Asian roots, obliterating one's Asian identity, at least on paper. Furthermore, translations could be clumsy or aesthetically unappealing. Second generation Chinese American Iris Tang's parents wanted to give her the English translation of her Chinese personal name, which means 'Orchid'. Instead, they chose Iris because "'Orchid' is not a name, and an Iris is a kind of orchid," Tang explained (1996). In a few rare instances, however, some Asian Americans did use the translated versions of their names. Some Nisei of the early to mid-twentieth century used the English translations of their Japanese names—'Lily' for *Yuriko*, 'Violet' for *Sumire*, 'Victor' for *Katsu* (Takaki 1989, 215). Dr. Mary Stone from China made this unusual decision in the 19th century, directly translating her Chinese surname, Shih, to English. Stone renamed herself for the benefit of her English-speaking classmates, who had difficulty pronouncing her Chinese name (Louie 1985-6, 18).

Syntax is a second possibility for name change for Asian Americans. In countries such as China and Vietnam, the family name is written before the personal name and is thus the opposite of the standard American practice. Asian Americans Yung-hsing Wu and Tuan Anh Hoang would be known as Wu Yung-Hsing and Hoang Anh Tuan in China and Vietnam, respectively. Thus, similar to transliteration, changes in name syntax harbor a "hidden" form of assimilation for Asian Americans—they tailor the order of their personal and family names to the Anglo-American mold to fit in to mainstream customs. Although some early immigrants, such as the Chinese of the nineteenth century, did not rush to reverse the order of their names, all Asian American groups eventually wrote their names in the accepted American fashion. Syntax continued to be a source of confusion, however, well into the twentieth century. California's Department of Social Services published a manual in 1980 which warned: "The order of Vietnamese names is the exact opposite of the American system: The family name is given first and is followed by the middle name and lastly, the first (or personal) name. To complicate the matter further, some refugees adapt their names to the American order, but others do not." (Ellis 1980, 45).

A famous example of the syntax-oriented name changes among Asian Americans is the late Hollywood cinematographer James Wong Howe. Née Wong Jim, one of Howe's schoolteachers substituted "James" for "Jim;" then, his father's given name, How, was Anglicized to Howe and appended to his reversed name to form James Wong Howe. Here, Howe's decision to reverse his name to suit the Anglo-American tradition as well as the additional changes he made were acts of assimilation; these acts, in turn, resulted in the further assimilation of Howe into Anglo-American society (Louie 1985-6, 14-15).

In addition to the reversal of family and given name, some Asian Americans opted to shorten their names by dropping certain components. This was a common practice among early Chinese immigrants. First-generation Chinese American Huie Kin, a New York-based Presbyterian minister in the early twentieth century, dropped "Kin-Kwong" from his name for general convenience (Louie 1985-6, 8). Some Nisei of the early to mid-twentieth century abbreviated—and, in the process, Anglicized—their first names: Makoto became Mac, and Isamu shrank to Sam (Takaki 1989, 215). Hee Jun, a 1.5 generation Korean American who moved to the U.S. in 1981, does not use her middle name on a daily basis, contrary to Korean custom. "I think it makes it easier for people to remember my name because I don't keep a middle name," said Jun. "Maybe that's the American part about it." (1996). Thus, as with Jun and all the other Asian Americans who shortened their names, the missing elements are also the hidden clues to their assimilation attempts; they made adjustments to facilitate their interactions, social and otherwise, with their fellow Americans.

A third aspect of Asian Americans' name changing possibilities primarily concerns personal names. Since transliteration and changes in syntax and length are practically unavoidable and inevitable for almost all Asian Americans, and family names largely depend on lineage and marriage, it is in the realm of personal names that Asian Americans have had the most control. It follows, then, that personal names are the most revealing of all the aspects of name creation, modification, and maintenance, serving as badges of identity and gauges of changes in identity and success in assimilation. In her children's novel, *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*, Bette Bao Lord crafted a humorous tale of Bandit, a young girl, and her selection of an American personal name on the eve of her departure from China to Brooklyn:

> "Grandfather, since I am going to America, I would like an American name."
>
> Some nodded approval. Others shook their heads. An American name! Grandfather stroked his white beard. Then he said, "American name it is." Now everyone nodded approval....
>
> "Any suggestions, my child?" Grandfather asked.
>
> "How about Uncle Sam?" she shouted.
>
> All laughed until some cried.
>
> Bandit felt that her face was as red as a fried lobster. Grandfather came to her rescue. "I, myself, do not care for the sounds of it. How about something more melodious?

Thus, Bandit became Shirley Temple Wong (1984, 17-18).

Those with Anglicized names acquired them by one of two means: they were given the names at birth, or they later replaced their Asian names in favor of more "American" ones, as in the case of Bandit, a.k.a. Shirley Temple Wong. Many Asian Americans of the first group attributed their parents' motivations for giving them Anglo names to a desire for them to have an advantage in the assimilation process. Second-generation Chinese American Amy Fong, born in 1976, said her parents selected an American name for her "because they thought it would be easier for me [in society]," although they themselves did not address Fong by her American name (1996). Second-generation Korean American Christina Kim, also born in 1976, gave a similar reason: "It was probably easier—so we wouldn't have to go through all the trouble of people mispronouncing our [Kim and her brother Dennis'] names" (1996).

As for the criteria, or preference, for selecting particular American names, few seemed to exist; for the most part Asian Americans based their decisions on personal whims and fancies. First generation Chinese American Bobby Wong named her daughter Alice Wong for the title character in *Alice in Wonderland* (1996). Cindy Ma, another second generation Chinese American, was named by her mother after the youngest daughter on the television sitcom, "The Brady Bunch" (S. Ma 1996). The parents of Cambodian American Sota Kong and Vietnamese Americans Alton Hoang and sister Anna chose their names based on birth location—Sota Kong was born in Minnesota, Alton Hoang was born in Altavista, Virginia, and Anna Hoang was born in Indiana (Kong 1996; Hoang 1995). Some parents carried over the Chinese tradition of giving all of the children in one generation the same first or second

character in their Chinese names by picking matching American names, as in the cases of Chinese American siblings Raymond, Edmund, and Gilman Jung and Lillian, Lila, and Lilac Wing (Louie 1985-86, 10). Chinese American Christine Hsu (1995), her sisters, and her first cousins were named in alphabetical order according to their ages: Angela, Bonnie, Christine, Danny, Erica, Flora and Glindy. Sometimes Asian Americans preferred to choose names that sounded close to their Asian names. In Gish Jen's novel, *Typical American*, Shanghainese immigrant Yifeng Chang asked the Foreign Student Affairs secretary at his university to give him an American name; she quickly sifted through her mental index of ex-beaux and settled on "Ralph." Initially delighted with this choice, Ralph later regretted having taken the name:

> "Ralph," said smooth-faced Old Chao [a fellow graduate student].... He looked it up in a book he had. "Means wolf," he said, then looked that up in a dictionary. "A kind of dog," he translated.
>
> A kind of dog, thought Ralph.
>
> For himself, Old Chao had Henry, which turned out to be the name of at least eight kings. "My father picked it for me," he said. It would have been better if Ralph sounded a bit more like Yifeng; in the art of picking English names (which everyone seemed to know except him), that was considered desirable.... (1991, 10-11).

Numerous Asian Americans who were not given American personal names at birth later adopted one or had one imposed upon them. The adoption or imposition of an American personal name among Asian Americans has been a striking and commonplace occurrence throughout their history in the United States. According to Tai S. Kang, "Change of name represents a significant shift of social identity of the name changer." Due to personal choice, pressures from an Anglo-conformist society, or a combination thereof, many Asian Americans changed their Asian names to American ones, viewing the ownership of American personal names and nicknames as a symbol of the American aspect of their identities and an advantageous tool in the assimilation process, one that would underscore their own emphasis on being an American (1971, 411).

Of all Asian Americans, members of immigrant generations seemed to be the least likely to adopt American names, perhaps due to strong allegiances to their home countries, the retention of Asian national identities, or a lack of interest in assimilating to Anglo-American

culture, as well as Anglo America's unwillingness to allow the immigrants opportunities for acculturation and integration. In the United States censuses between 1850 and 1900, for example, only a handful of Chinese immigrants were listed under American first names such as *Samuel, Jenny*, and *Susan*. (Louie 1985-6, 8-9). A century later, the numbers of first generation Vietnamese Americans who had taken American names were similarly scant—in the 1981 Vietnamese Directory and Yellow Pages of California, the overwhelming majority of the names listed were Vietnamese (Vietnamese Directory 1981).

Certainly there were exceptions. In the late nineteenth century, for example, early Japanese immigrant *dekasegi-shosei* 'student-laborers' supported themselves by working as servants in American homes. Their employers often gave them American names to make their own lives easier. Some choices were arbitrary—maybe a "Frank" or a "Joseph," while others, like "Charlie," were condescending (Ichioka 1988, 26).

For subsequent generations, American personal names were much more common. Reasons for the difference were most likely due to their nationality—American—which they claimed from birth, as well as underlying pressures of Anglo-conformity. Chinese Americans who came of age in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s were especially adamant about their American identities and used their first names to identify themselves as such. Consequently, Soo Fei became Fay, Wei Lim changed to William, Teong to Ted, Mei Guen to Mae Gwen, Yim Jun to Jean, Yim Sunn to Shelley, and Yoon to June (Takaki 1989, 258). Seventy-one per cent of the 237 Chinese American men who served in the 407th Air Service Squadron (the Flying Tigers) during World War II had American first names or adopted them at a later date (Lim and Lim 1993, 72-74).

Likewise, Japanese Americans of the same era tended to discard their Japanese names, chose American names instead, and gave their children Christian names or Japanese/American combination names, such as those of Nisei author Kazuo Monica Sone and her brothers Henry Seiichi Sone and Kenji William Sone (Sone 1953). Historian Gary Y. Okihiro recognized these practices as symptoms of "growing up in a society that pressed for conformity to the dominant [Anglo-American] culture—a crippling process given the label of 'Americanization'" (1993, 8). As the United States approached involvement in World War II and mainstream Americans became increasingly suspicious of the "enemy" Japanese, more and more Japanese Americans used their personal names

as a means to prove their patriotism and to reaffirm their American identities. Nisei school teacher-turned-principal Sanae Kanda, for example, was listed in Hawaii school directories from 1925 until 1942 under his Japanese name, but as "Stephen S. Kanda" after 1943. In 1946 61% of the Japanese American graduates from the University of Hawaii had American first names, as opposed to 31% in 1936 and only 19% in 1926 (Tamura 1994, 169).

Although it is difficult to assess the extent to which Japanese Americans made the decision to adopt an American name based solely on personal choice, as in the case of Edythe Yamamoto, who picked her English name while in high school in the early 1920s simply because she "liked it," evidence suggests the contrary—that the majority of early to mid-twentieth century Japanese Americans felt pressured by mainstream American society to revise their Japanese given names or create and maintain American ones. Geography was a factor in their changes—the Nisei generation of Hawaii adopted American names in proportion to the amount of contact they had with the European American community, again with the intent of helping to ease their assimilation (Tamura 1994, 169-170). Toshio Takaki, a Japanese American who emigrated to Hawaii in the early twentieth century, became Harry T. Takaki after moving from Puunene sugar cane plantation to the more urban Honolulu in pursuit of a photography career in the 1920s (1989, 173-174). A number of Nisei schoolchildren were forced outright by their teachers to adopt American names, a blatant example of mainstream America's efforts to impose the notion of Anglo-conformity on Asian Americans. Misako "Elsie" Kiyabu Nishihira, a Nisei whose parents emigrated to Hawaii from Okinawa, was at school one day in the early 1920s when her teacher, who had difficulty pronouncing the names of the Japanese American pupils, declared (in Pidgin English), "'This is it. I'm going [to] name every one of you [with an] English name. Who wants to be Elsie? Raise your hand. Who wants to be Nancy? Raise your hand.'" Nishihira, in turn, returned home and gave all her siblings American names (1995).

Asian Americans of the post-1965 period, who did not find themselves under such unusual and demanding historical circumstances as did the Japanese Americans in the decades preceding World War II, still adopted American personal names in an effort to assimilate into their social surroundings, which continued to be dominated by the ideal of Anglo-conformity. Thao Thi Phuong Bang, a 1.5 generation Vietnamese

American from Indianapolis, used the name "Kim" on her name tag when working at a local department store during the early 1990s. At this time, Bang also considered a legal name change because of the predominantly negative experiences she had had with both her first and last names (1995). Megumi Kei Fujita, a second generation Japanese American, went by "Meg" from third to sixth grade in the early 1980s—a period in her life when she "hated being Asian." But even through college she continued to use "Meg" quite often, although for a different reason. "I think a lot of people are more at ease when they can pronounce your name," said Fujita (1996). Kim Thuc Nguyen, a 1.5 generation Vietnamese American, had her name legally changed from Hoa Thuc Nguyen in 1993, when she was eighteen years old, again because "American people couldn't pronounce [Hoa]" (1995).

Less common among Asian Americans was the adoption of an "American" surname. Maintaining an American surname is the ultimate assimilation tactic, because the surname represents and identifies not only an individual, but implies a particular history and ancestry. The act of relinquishing a foreign surname or altering it beyond recognition signifies a change in identity; the new name serves to inform others of the bearer's "Americanness."

Unlike their Asian counterparts, European immigrants frequently modified their surnames, going to great lengths to assimilate to Anglo-American culture and being largely successful in their attempts (Hook 1982, 324, 339). Although European and Asian immigrants alike wished to assimilate as completely as possible, only the Europeans found success in revising their family names or adopting new Anglo surnames. Most Asians simply did not and could not look like Anglo-Americans. Japanese American Aiji Tashiro noted in "The Rising Son of the Rising Sun" (1934): "The Jablioskis, Idovitches, and Johannsmanns streaming over from Europe [were able] to slip unobstrusively into the clothes of 'dyed-in-the-wool' Americans by the simple expedient of...changing their names to Jones, Brown, or Smith" (221). But for himself and his fellow Issei and Nisei, no amount of American slang, dress, mannerisms, or Anglo surnames could secure acceptance into the mainstream. Tashiro could never pass for a Taylor.

But even for a European American, having an Anglo name did not always guarantee mainstream acceptance. Laurence I. Barrett, whose grandparents emigrated to the United States from Eastern Europe, recounted an experience in the 1950s: "A well-seasoned Irishman in the

New York city hall pressroom eyed with obvious distaste the new boy being introduced around. 'Barrett?' he sneered in lieu of a handshake. 'You're no Barrett.' He was offended that this kid of obviously Semitic stock had the temerity to filch a surname from the old sod" (1993, 79).

Barrett's confrontational encounter underscores an important rule in the game of name changing and assimilation: names can change one's identity up to a point, but if one steps over an invisible line, one might be charged with false advertising. Despite having the same concerns as European immigrants—the desire to make a new start in America and hide their ethnic backgrounds on occasion; in short, to be as Anglo-American as possible—racial differences prevented Asian Americans from being able to assimilate fully. Most could never successfully mask their ethnic roots behind a "Smith" or a "Jones," no matter how they acquired the name—by marriage or adoption, through mixed ancestry, or by a personal decision. Kim Lee Hall, a Korean American who was adopted by an Anglo family in 1977, recalled experiences similar to those of Barrett: "I think there were a lot of instances where people saw my name and don't expect me to be Asian," since "Hall" is a typical Anglo-American surname (1996). A Lee of Chinese or Korean extraction may have been able to appear Anglo on paper, but never in person. Perhaps it was due to this realization (conscious or unconscious) coupled with a respect for history and tradition, that the majority of Asian Americans were satisfied with transliterating, reversing the order, or making other minor adjustments of their family names, but stopping short of any drastic metamorphoses.

The minor adjustments usually served to alter the appearance of a name so that it seemed more American. Often, and especially among second generation Asian Americans, a Moo might have changed her name to Moe, a Lim to Lym, or a Ching to Chinn. The outright creations of new names were the exceptions, but they did occur. Emma Woo Louie noted the handful of early Chinese immigrants who chose American surnames. The first was Lieaou Ah-See who became William Botelho. Lieaou, the first Chinese Protestant convert in the United States and a student at a Connecticut mission school between 1818 and 1828, renamed himself for his patron. Another Christian Chinese adopted the name Charles Jamison. Jee Man Sing of New York City became J.M. Singleton, a fairly close-sounding English version of his Chinese name. Then there are the overlappings between transliterated Asian surnames

and European surnames. Among the seemingly British Chinese surnames are Hall, Luke, Zane, Chew, Gee, Ing, and Lum. The Irish and Chinese share Dwan and Quan; the Scottish and Chinese share Huie and Mar. The Chinese surnames Jung, Lau, and Yung could be mistaken for German. But again, a European-appearing surname did not guarantee its Asian American or even European American bearer automatic and total assimilation into the Anglo-American mainstream (Louie 1985-6, 17-18; 1991, 104).

Unlike personal names, American surnames were rarely imposed upon Asian Americans. The instances which did occur may have resulted from ignorance or merely a lack of creativity. Nineteenth century census takers bestowed such generic American terms on the immigrants as "John Chinese," "Hong Chinese," "John Chinaman," and "Chinawoman" (Louie 1985-6, 16-17). More frequent than the random stroke of the census taker's pen were the name changes of Asian American adoptees whose new parents more often than not gave them American first and last names, both as a symbolic gesture and as an aide to assimilation. Both Tara Cho Lichti and her brother Joshua Tai Lichti were born overseas and moved to the United States in the 1970s to live with their adoptive parents. Lichti's parents changed her name from Hee Ja Cho, her Korean birth name, because they thought that she would be "more easily accepted with [an] American name." Lichti said her parents kept "Cho" as her middle name "so I would have some kind of ethnic identity." Lichti's brother, Joshua Tai Lichti, was also adopted. The Lichtis kept "Tai" as his middle name to symbolize his Japanese ancestry (1996).

Some Asian Americans who realized the impossibility of adopting an Anglo surname with the intent to "hide" behind it instead chose to exchange Asian identities at times when one Asian group was more accepted by the mainstream than another. Actor Goro Suzuki, who played detective Nick Yemana on the 1970s television show "Barney Miller," was born and raised in California and spent two years at Topaz relocation camp during World War II. Upon his release, he moved to Cleveland, Ohio, to work as a barkeeper and singer. In the wake of the anti-Japanese movement, the clubowner advised him to change his name. He not only chose an American first name, Jack, but he also took on a Chinese surname, Soo. To the other employees, he was understood to be a Chinese American from Iowa who could not speak a word of

Chinese (Niiya 1993, 321). Tony Chen, an ethnic-Chinese Vietnamese American, also changed his traditional Vietnamese name, Tri Tran, to something he perceived to be more "mainstream"—an English first name and a Chinese last name. "Life has gotten easier," said Chen in 1994. "It's easier for people to remember my name and I'm not as easy to make fun of" (Wagner 1994).

The particular changes Asian Americans have made in their names—transliteration, syntax and length alteration, and modifications and revisions of personal and family names—have varied from individual to individual and from ethnic group to ethnic group; they have also responded to such factors as personal freedom and societal pressure. Additionally, there have been differences in naming patterns intragenerationally and intergenerationally, demonstrating the diversity of the Asian American identity within families. Tuan Anh Hoang and his older brother Quynh were born in Vietnam and given Vietnamese names by their parents. Their younger brother and sisters were born after the family's move to the United States in 1975 and were named Alton, Anna, and Tina—American names—symbolic of the family's transition and newfound Asian American identity (1995).

Lisa See, a fourth generation Chinese American, documented her family's history in her 1995 book *On Gold Mountain*. The patriarch of the See clan, Fong See, emigrated to California around the year 1871. In a typical immigration mix-up, his American surname was recorded as See, although Fong was his family name. Fong See married Ticie Pruett, a white woman, and fathered five children by her: Milton, Ray, Bennie, Eddy, and Sissee. Later, Fong See married a Chinese woman, Ngon Hung, reverting to the use of "Fong" as his family name in this union. Fong See's second set of children—who were much more Chinese in both a genealogical and cultural sense, all had Chinese names, with the exception of the youngest, Gary. In contrast, the bi-racial children of Fong See and Ticie Pruett were more "(Anglo-) American" in appearance and behavior compared to their half-siblings, and were named accordingly (1995).

In some families, more and more Asian Americans tend to Anglicize their names or be given American names by their parents with each passing generation, suggesting that each generation has become more and more assimilated to the Anglo-American mainstream than the previous one. Factors such as intermarriage with non-Asians, which

increase the chances of bestowing upon the offspring non-Asian or American names, undoubtedly boosted the numbers as well. This trend parallels that of European immigrants. For example, 76% of all third generation Ukranians in Western Pennsylvania had names which had undergone some form of Anglicization (Hook 1982, 324, 339). Even the earliest of Asian American families followed this practice—Tomi Ozawa and her husband Kintaro were among the first group of Japanese immigrants to land in Hawaii in 1868. They named one of their sons Arthur Kenzaburo (Okihiro 1993, 1-2). In 1910 Dung Ho Moy was one of the first Chinese immigrants to settle in Chicago's Chinatown. She and her husband Dong Ho Moy gave their children American names: Anna, Grant, Victor, Calvin, Eugene, and Patricia (Heise 1995, 11). Yonsei Shana Aiko Nishihira's Issei great grandparents had Japanese names. In her grandparents' generation, however, everyone except her grandfather had both Japanese and American names, but among themselves, her grandmother, Misako Elsie, and her siblings all referred to each other by their English names. Nishihira's Sansei father is named Rafael; she herself has a Yiddish name (S. Nishihira 1996). The See family mentioned above also fits this general pattern. All of Fong See's five grandchildren, three of his four great-grandchildren and his two great-great-grandchildren had American names (See 1995).

Specific historical circumstances have been the strongest influences shaping the naming patterns and naming strategies of Asian Americans. With Anglo-conformity as the common theme, events such as the internment of Japanese and the accompanying xenophobia on the part of many non-Japanese Americans have reinforced this notion, which has manifested itself in the names of Asian Americans across ethnic and generational lines. It thus took a significant set of circumstances—the Asian American movement, which began in the late 1960s, coupled with the large influx of Asian immigrants following the Immigration Act of 1965 and the subsequent era of multiculturalism—to recast the mold of Asian American naming patterns.

The Asian American movement was a grassroots, nationwide struggle of Asian Americans seeking liberation from oppression in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The movement's activists were influenced by concurrent campaigns—such as those for civil rights, black power, women's liberation, and peace and social justice—in the United States and throughout the world, and many of their aims were similar (Omatsu

1994, 20-21). The politics of the Asian American movement profoundly changed the personal lives of its participants, as trends in naming preferences reveal. For example, the parents of Malcolm Kao named him for Malcolm X, an influential figure among Asian American activists during the movement. "He was a red diaper baby, born to parents who had committed themselves to the cause of justice and world revolution," explained his mother. "Malcolm's father was intent on naming his son either after Malcolm X or George Jackson—both great American heroes who had emerged in the heat of the black liberation struggle of the 60s" (Malcolm's Mom 1989, 110; Kao 1998). Other movement activists reverted to their Asian names or else chose new Asian names, after having gone by American names for years. Yuri Kochiyama is a well-known example. Née Mary Nakahara, Kochiyama began using her Japanese middle name, "Yuri," after being invited to become a citizen of the Republic of New Afrika, an African American nation/nationalist organization, in 1969. In fact, Kochiyama followed the leads of her children Jimmy, also an activist, who had adopted the Japanese name "Chikara," meaning strength, and Lorrie, who had begun to use her middle name, "Aichi," and had insisted that her mother drop her "slave name." (Liu 1998, 1; Fujino 1997, 173)

At about the same time, increasing numbers of Asians began immigrating to the United States, following passage of the Immigration Act of 1965. With the Act, the government lifted its national-origins quotas, allowing for the entrance of 20,000 people per Eastern hemisphere country annually, in addition to immediate family members of U.S. citizens (Takaki 1989, 419). In 1970, there were 1.5 million Asian Americans in the United States. A decade later, the number jumped to 3.7 million; by 1990, the Asian American population had increased by 99% to 6.9 million (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1993). The huge influx of Asian immigrants was a likely influence on Asian American naming patterns. This growth was only one facet of the change in the ethnic make-up of the greater American population, so that by the 1990s Martha Farnsworth Riche, director of policy studies at Washington's Population Reference Bureau, noted that "[Americans had] left the time when the non-white, non-Western part of our population could be expected to assimilate to the dominant majority." ("America's Immigrant Challenge" 1993, 5) The era of multiculturalism had arrived, and with it, mainstream acceptance, to some degree at least, of ethnic and racial pride among American minority groups.

Changes in Asian American naming conventions during the post-1965 period occurred in different ways. Some decided to keep their Asian names in spite of others' suggestions and pressure to adopt American personal and nicknames. Ngan Nguyen, a 1.5 generation Vietnamese American, was one such individual who decided to retain his Asian given name. In 1994, Nguyen, then a 21 year old student at the University of California, Los Angeles, investigated the implications of using one's "Asian" name professionally in the field of broadcast journalism. Nguyen was the only one of his siblings who did not choose an American name in their youth. "I was saved from changing my name during childhood because I was too young to understand the process and too slow to learn how to spell any name other than my own," he recalled. But at the time, the other Nguyen children made a conscious effort to assimilate to the Anglo-American mainstream. Nguyen remembered their rationale for the decision. "Now that we are here in America, we must try to be more American and pick names that are easier to pronounce," he remembered his oldest brother Minh saying. So the eight Nguyen offspring who entered the local Pizza Hut as Minh, Man, Mau, Manh, Men, Loan, Chi, and Phuong left as Mick, Manny, Milton, Mark, Nick, Kim #1, Kim #2, and Kristine (1994, 2).

Nguyen was again confronted with the option of changing his name during college, when approached by a peer who advised him to adopt an American name for a better chance of success. But to Nguyen, the idea of switching names suddenly at age 21 was "strange." Furthermore, he felt that "it would be difficult to suddenly be referred to by a name with no history, no meaning" (1994, 2).

Nguyen solicited various opinions regarding the implications of his name for his career. Richard Fruto, the 1994 president of the Los Angeles chapter of the Asian American Journalists Association, pointed out the practicality of having an American name to Nguyen. He felt that having an American name made one's life easier, hailing back to the notions of Anglo-conformity: "If you enter journalism in areas other than Los Angeles and San Francisco, you will end up in communities where you will be an oddity," he said. "You most likely will have to work in predominantly white neighborhoods and it is easier for immigrants to fit in if they look, sound, and act like Americans." Furthermore, he said that in order to be accepted by mainstream society, one should not "stick out;" and one way to "stick out" would be to have

an Asian name. Fruto advised Nguyen to spell his name phonetically at least, if he did not wish to adopt an Anglo name (Nguyen 1994, 2).

Ti-Hua Chang, a Chinese American television reporter in New York City, kept both his first and last Asian names despite incidents of racism. In 1974, an interviewer commented to Chang, "Ti-Hua.... Ti-Hua.... I don't like your name very much. How about we change it to Hop-Sing?" referring to a character in a then-popular television show, Bonanza. Although he went by his initials only at one time, Chang never considered adopting an Anglo name. "That's my name. That has always been my name," he stated. In fact, Chang's name did not hinder his career—he considered it an asset. "I think I stand out. It may take three or four months [for others] to pronounce my name [correctly] but once they get it, they always remember it," he told Nguyen. "I had a lot of trouble getting jobs but once I got it, I was recognized and I stood out." (Nguyen 1994, 2).

Tritia Toyota, an news anchor for a Los Angeles station, echoed Chang's feelings: "If you're good, that is what counts," she said. But because she could not think of anyone in broadcasting with an Asian first name, Nguyen inferred the possibility that "having an Asian first name could hinder success" (Nguyen 1994, 2).

Nguyen spoke with California State University, Long Beach broadcast journalism student Tatsume Arakawa, who also found that people had trouble pronouncing his name. Like Nguyen, Arakawa was considering a name change at the time. "I've been told to use my middle name, Todd, and keep my last name. Some people already call me Todd because they can't say Tatsume so it wouldn't be that hard to switch," said Arakawa. "It wouldn't bother me if they ask me to switch my name," he added (Nguyen 1994, 2).

In the end, Nguyen chose to keep his Vietnamese given name, citing several reasons: "It is not so easy for me to switch to a new name. I have always been Ngan...." Additionally, he felt that his name was "the only tangible thing that connects me to my Vietnamese culture. Changing it would be to deny who I am and deny where I have come from." Nguyen believed that the United States in the 1990s was "moving towards more tolerance," with "increasing acceptance of diversity and emphasis on ethnic pride." He was confident that there would be an increase in broadcast journalists with ethnic names. Nguyen did not heed the pressures of Anglo-conformity, to assimilate to the

Anglo-American ideal by changing his name, a decision he probably could not have made with such conviction fifty years before, preceding the Asian American movement and the birth of multiculturalism (Nguyen 1994, 2).

Success stories of Asian Americans with Asian names may justify Nguyen's optimism. Dr. An Wang dismissed the suggestions of others to choose an alternate name for his company, Wang Laboratories, in the 1970s. In fact, Wang Laboratories became one of the dominant companies in the computer industry for two decades. Although he might have been successful in the industry regardless of his company's name, it is clear that using "Wang" did not hinder his company's business (Chen 1996, 72). University of Oregon professor Chang-rae Lee, who in 1995 became the first Korean American to have a novel printed by a major American publisher, kept his given Korean name at the tender age of five, despite the urgings of friends and his parents to choose among Buzz, Rocky, Spee, Tom Seaver, Sigmund, Alfred, Erich, and Rollo (Monaghan 1995, A6). Actress Ming-Na Wen, of "Joy Luck Club," "The Single Guy," and "Mulan" fame, also kept her Chinese name. "I think that in the back of my mind, I kept my name which is Chinese because it was something that my mother gave me and it had a lot of meaning for her," she said. "Because I have a Chinese name, I worry about it constantly.... Should I change it? Should I shorten it? Should I get rid of the hyphen? It just worried me, but apparently it hasn't hindered me. My agents said 'don't change'.... The people in the industry know me as Ming-Na Wen." (Chan 1994, 12; Gatildo 1995,37) So for Wang, Lee, and Wen, as for Nguyen, assimilation and an American identity did not require an American given name—something which probably resulted, at least in part, from the Asian American movement and multiculturalism. Each of them, however, saw the need to justify their choice to others, suggesting that some people still perceived Anglo-conformity as the "right" or "best" path to follow in American society.

Having an Asian name can actually be advantageous in some situations. In 1996 second generation Chinese American Yung-Hsing Wu was preparing to find a job teaching English at the college level. Because of the recent emergence of ethnic studies as academic fields, "universities are scrambling to find people to teach these courses," said Wu. "The ethnicity of my name is worth something right now. It's all

in the atmosphere of multiculturalism." (Wu 1996) Thus, the "marketability" of her name that Wu perceived is a direct result of the Asian American movement's fight for ethnic studies programs. Furthermore, Wu felt that the profession obligates her to "be able to 'talk the talk'" and publish in the field of Asian American literature to be more marketable and enhance her "Asian"ness as suggested by her name. Again, from Wu's perspective, it appears that assimilation and an American identity no longer carry the prerequisite of an American name. To some people, her Asian name conveys the image or idea that she is an embodiment of multiculturalism in the 1990s.

Beyond the professional and occupational areas, segments of post-1965 Asian America have supported the maintenance of Asian names. Writer George Leong questioned the origins of Anglicization in his 1975 poem "On Names:" "You ever wondered where your name/ come from... sister?/Why... don't nobody named Charlene/nor George in Africa nor/Asia..." (E. Kim 1982, 235). A case study of Korean Americans living in the Chicago metropolitan area in the late 1970s showed that one-third of the 283 people surveyed disapproved of changing Korean names to American names (Hurh, Kim and Kim 1979, 12). Un Hui Faith Nam, of Indianapolis, also dislikes the idea. A 1.5 generation Korean American, Nam said, "I don't like it when Korean people have American names because it seems like they're embarrassed of being Korean. But their excuse for going by the American name is that it would be easier for people to pronounce it. My feeling is, 'make them learn it.' Don't change your identity to make it easier for other people. Make them learn who you are. Don't try to conform to who they are." (U. Nam 1996) Again, the attitudes of Leong, the Chicago Korean Americans, and Nam were directly or indirectly influenced by the ideas of the Asian American movement and multiculturalism. It is probable that they would not have expressed the same, or as strong, opinions prior to 1965.

Even more striking was the decision of some Asian Americans to adopt or revert to Asian names, thus reaffirming and celebrating their Asian American identities. The Irish-English father and Japanese American mother of Phil Tajitsu Nash, an attorney and the creator of the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, originally named him Phil Douglas Nash. As he became a prolific writer of articles concerning the Asian American experience, he had his middle name

legally changed to Tajitsu. Nash explained his rationale for this change as well as similar decisions made by some of his colleagues:

> ...people were wondering why a White man was writing about these issues, so I did it for that reason, and partly to honor the spirit of my mom's family. That's the closest I've come to wanting more of an Asian identity, and not having to explain all the time. I notice in some Asian American papers names like Bill Blauvelt or George Johnson—all these people I know who are half Japanese, half European American. Since I started talking to George, he writes his name as George Toshio Johnson. Another friend of mine, Steve Murphy, calls himself Steve Shigematsu Murphy. Another friend of mine, Margaret Cornell, changed her name to Michio Fukaiya to Michio Cornell. It's an ongoing question for a lot of us who are of mixed ancestry (Lee 1991, 216).

Hazuki Carol Chino, a Japanese American, was born in California in 1976. She was known as Hazuki until halfway through kindergarten when she moved with her family to Indiana. She recalled that at that time, her mother taught her how to write "Carol" because "Carol would be more accepted in Indiana." Until her junior year in high school, Chino went by "Carol." But during the eleventh grade, she made the switch back to Hazuki, for several reasons. She "liked it better," found it "more interesting," and it gave others "more of an awareness" of her ethnic background, since Chino is of both Japanese and European ancestry (1996). It is important to note that Nash and Chino reversed their parents' decisions to give them American names. Their actions suggest that for some Asian Americans of the post-1965 period, personal choice became the dominant factor in naming preferences; societal pressures no longer carried the weight that they did in the preceding decades. The emergence of the Asian American movement and multiculturalism undoubtedly influenced their decisions. Nash, for example, chose "Tajitsu" to use specifically when addressing Asian American issues, itself a non-existent subject of discussion prior to the onset of the Asian American movement.

There were even some regrets among Asian Americans who took Anglo-American names during the post-1965 period. Kate Mundy, a Filipino-German American, was born in 1973 to a first generation Filipino father and a German American mother. Née Rana Desiree Sarmiento, she took her adoptive family's surname following the deaths of her biological parents. Mundy kept her first name, Rana, until her

seventh grade year, when she chose the name Kate. At the time, she was living in San Diego and attending a school with a 70% Latino population. *Rana*, 'frog' in Spanish, was a constant source for teasing from other students, so Mundy re-named herself Kate after an older "blond haired, blue eyed, All-American girl" whom she admired. At the age of 23 in 1996, Mundy regretted her decision. She felt that "Rana" is a better name for her professional career (broadcast journalism) because "it's ethnic and unique." This attitude is in direct contrast to her adolescent experience, when she didn't want to "stick out" or have "anything different" from the mainstream, including her name. Although "Rana" would be "more distinctive" than "Kate," Mundy felt it too late to revert to her former name, since she had already begun to establish herself in her field under her current name. What is significant, though, is the fact that Mundy viewed having an Asian name as advantageous in her profession, attesting to the success of the Asian American movement and multiculturalism in America (1996).

Having an Asian name has been such a positive experience for many Asian Americans that many have decided to give their children Asian names as well. Second generation Pakistani American Zulfikar Ali Husain, who was born in 1977, loves his Asian name and plans on giving his children Pakistani names. As a young child, Ali endured the teasing of others and even asked his mother why he did not have an American name. But now, as a college student, he says of his name, "I think it's blessed my life. It makes me more aware of my own ethnicity (1996). Another second generation Pakistani American, Hassan Syed Ali, born in 1974, intends to do the same so that his offspring "don't have an identity crisis" (H. Ali 1996). Second generation Japanese American Megumi Kei Fujita has enjoyed the benefits of a Japanese name that can be shortened to the American name, "Meg." Fujita plans to give her children similar Japanese names (1996). The experiences of Husain, Ali, and Fujita are the opposite of those of earlier Asian Americans such as the Hawaii Nisei and the second generation Chinese Americans of the 1930s and 1940s, revealing once again the influence of the Asian American movement and multiculturalism.

In the spirit of a unique and distinct Asian American identity, writer David Mas Masumoto and his wife, Mary, the daughter of German Wisconsin farmers, created Japanese American names for their daughter Nikiko, born in 1986, and their son Korio, born in 1992. "Our children don't look like a WASP family, but they don't really look Japanese,"

said Masumoto, a Sansei. "The main thing is that they look different. I thought, 'why don't we just go ahead and name them differently as a way to celebrate that difference?' And, actually, they are Japanese American names. These names don't exist in Japan.... We chose the Japanese American names, which is consciously who they are." The names of Nikiko and Korio Masumoto reflect the outcome of the Asian American movement and its creation of an Asian American identity (Engley 1995).

However, despite the emerging pride in the relatively recent establishment of an Asian American identity, the long-standing notions of Anglo-conformity continued to be a reality for many Asian Americans even after 1965. Tai S. Kang found in his 1967 study of 170 Chinese students at the University of Minnesota that there were significant differences between the social lives of students who had changed their Chinese names to American ones ("changers") and those who continued to use their traditional names ("nonchangers"). Kang observed that students with Anglicized names were "likely to belong to the group whose social locations are in motion away from the ethnic group toward the host society" (405). In other words, the changers had become more acculturated into the Anglo-American mainstream. The changers associated significantly more with Americans than nonchangers, including many who had American cohabitants. The changers were more familiar with American publications such as *The New Yorker* and *Harper's* than the nonchangers, and, more significantly, the changers were also "substantially better adapted to the cultural tastes of the host society than the nonchangers" (1971, 405-406). It is important to note that Kang's study took place just before the start of the Asian American movement. The participants, therefore, had not yet been affected by that movement or by multiculturalism.

Among Korean Americans living in the Chicago metropolitan area in the mid-1970s the majority approved of Anglicizing Korean names, offering such reasons as "It would be easier or more convenient for Americans to pronounce or remember" and "It would be proper and convenient to have American names at workplaces." (Hurh, Kim and Kim 1979, 12). A further study conducted by Kyung Soo Choi (1982) of 100 Korean Americans in the St. Louis Area in the early 1980s found that 84% of those interviewed approved of Anglicizing Korean names.

There are numerous accounts of Asian Americans who faced the caustic teasing and insults of their peers because they had Asian names

or the annoyance of others who continually butchered their names. Second generation Korean American Anne Kim captured this agony in a 1990 *Los Angeles Times* article:

> I used to pretend my middle name was 'Susan' instead of 'Suhn,' an unwieldy little Korean syllable that caused me much grief during grade-school roll-calls.
>
> My little brother takes pride in the fact that he can't pronounce his Korean name at all. Years of teasing have squelched any sort of pride, and he refuses to hang around with Asians. Culturally, the boy is mush—a messy mix of MTV and McDonald's (M4, M8).

To avoid such problems, 1.5 generation Cambodian American Chamroeun Kong, born in 1975, uses seven or eight different nicknames when introduced to casual acquaintances. Sometimes, others had their own versions of names for him, such as "Charmin," the brand name of a line of toilet paper. Kong was teased because of his family name and as a result wishes to give his children Asian middle names, but not Asian first names, "because [of] how cruel kids can be" (1996).

Ming Chow, a second generation Chinese American, is even more adamant than Kong about giving his children American names. Chow, an accounting major at Indiana University, believes he is constantly at a disadvantage when it comes to job placement. "When a recruiter sees a[n Asian] name like mine, I just don't think my chances of getting a job are as good as the common American or the Asian American by name only," said Chow. "The business world is dominated by white male corporate America. They're not looking for minorities—they're looking for the John Smith type." Chow has been considering changing his first name to "Mark," but is hesitant to do so since his parents are not pleased with the idea. Regardless of his own decision, Chow is certain that he will give his children American names (1996).[3]

Jun Yasunaga, originally from Japan, also perceives American society's view of Asians as one of perpetual foreigners. Yasunaga currently works in the sports marketing department for the New Jersey Nets basketball team. When he first sent out resumes to 200 different companies in 1994, 85% of his initial inquiries were rejected. After discussing his low rate of success with an advisor, he decided to replace

"Jun" with "John" on his cover letters. Soon afterwards, he began to receive more positive responses. Yasunaga attributed this turnaround to Americans' fears of letting "foreigners" control traditionally American sports, such as baseball and basketball. "They don't want to give up the sports of America to the Japanese" he said. "Maybe my name [Jun] sounds so Japanese...they're not interested in me" (1995).

Thus, Asian Americans since 1965 have been receiving mixed messages: there are those who prefer Asian names and plan to give their children Asian names, and there are others who believe in the necessity of having American names and cannot even think of naming their children anything else. Their beliefs have been shaped by personal choice and societal pressure, just as were the decisions of the thousands of Asian Americans who lived in the century before 1965. Although the extent of the influence of Anglo-American mainstream society on the naming patterns of Asian Americans has lessened since the beginning of the Asian American movement and multiculturalism, a common thread of Anglo-conformity continues to run through the Asian American experience.

Even in the late 1990s the pressures of Anglo-conformity are still formidable. Asian Americans who came of age in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s still experience mispronounciations of their names as well as teasing and even discrimination because of their Asian names. As a result of such negative encounters, some Asian Americans have decided not to give their children Asian names, simply as a preventive measure. Just as their predecessors had done, some Asian Americans changed their names in order to convey the more "American" image they saw as necessary in order to secure employment, avoid potentially embarrassing situations and to gain greater social acceptance.

If one believes that multiculturalism is a positive force and a worthy goal to be achieved, then America has made considerable progress in accepting and embracing diversity. However, as shown by the negative experiences of many Asian Americans, especially those who bear Asian names, Asian Americans in general still do not conform to the ideal of the "typical" or "true" American. More often than not, Asian Americans still feel pressed to conform and to prove their "Americanness," as

witnessed by such measures of conformity as the English-only movement and California's Propositions 187 and 227, with which voters eliminated health and educational benefits for undocumented immigrants and bilingual instruction in the public schools. Thus, it may often be practical and advantageous for Asian Americans (and for African Americans and Latinos as well) to have or use American names. This will likely be the case until the "typical" American becomes truly multicultural.

Notes

I would like to express my appreciation to the Indiana University Honors Division for funding my research. Special thanks to Nick Cullather for serving as my project advisor, Yung-hsing Wu and Steven Stowe for their insightful comments, and Gin Yong Pang for introducing me to the notion of "Anglo-conformity" during her class at UC Berkeley, Summer 1995.

1. First generation Japanese Americans are referred to as "Issei," second generation as "Nisei," third generation as "Sansei," and fourth generation as "Yonsei." "First generation" as used in this essay describes the members of the immigrant cohort; "1.5 generation" refers to people who were born abroad but came of age in the United States. "Second generation" Asian Americans are children of immigrants; they are the first to be born and raised in the United States. Members of the "third generation" are their children and the grandchildren of immigrants, and so forth.

2. The terms "Asian-language names" and "Asian names" as used here refer to the transliterated (Asian-language names written in the English alphabet) versions of personal names of Asian origin. "American," "Anglo," "Anglicized," and "Christian" are used interchangeably to indicate names of Western, or European, origin. Currently "Asian" and "American" names remain distinct. (This distinction does not mean to imply, however, that Asian Americans are not "true" Americans.) The two categories are certainly logical for surnames, and also true for personal names as well (with the exception of transliterated names which have the same spelling as traditionally Anglo names, such as the Indian name *Sheila*, the Pakistani name *Sabrina*, and the Chinese name *May*). Of all the names listed in the dictionary section of George R. Stewart's *American Given Names* (1979), not a single one is of Asian origin. In some Asian cultures, names are written with the family name first, as is the custom of the Chinese and Vietnamese, followed by the personal name.

3. Name changed at the request of the interviewee.

References

"America's Immigrant Challenge." 1993. *Time*. Special Issue, Fall, 5.

Ali, Fozia. 1996. Personal Interview. 23 February.

Ali, Hassan Syed. 1996. Personal Interview. 23 February.

Bang, Thao Thi Phuong. 1995. Personal Interview. 29 November.

Barrett, Laurence I. 1993. "What's in a Name?" *Time*, Special Issue, Fall, 79.

Chan, Melissa. 1994. "June, Revealed." *Transpacific*: April, 12.

Chen, Derrick. 1996. "Whatever Happened to Wang Laboratories?" *A. Magazine*: December/January, 72.

Chino, Hazuki Carol. 1996. Personal Interview. 22 February.

Choi, Kyung Soo. 1982. "The Assimilation of Korean Immigrants in the St. Louis Area." Ph.D. dissertation, St. Louis University.

Chow, Ming. 1996. Personal Interview. 18 May.

Engley, Hollis L. 1995. "Tradition, Life and The Land." *Gannett News Service*. 17 April.

Ellis, Arthur A. 1980. *The Assimilation and Acculturation of Indochinese Children into American Culture*. Los Angeles: State of California Department of Social Services.

Fong, Amy. 1996. Personal Interview. 27 February.

Fujita, Megumi Kei. 1996. Personal Interview. 23 February.

Fujino, Diane C. 1997. "Revolutions from the Heart: The Making of an Asian American Woman Activist, Yuri Kochiyama." *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire*. Ed. Sonia Shah. Boston: South End P, 169-181.

Gatildo, Arnold. 1995. Fall. "Who? What? Where? & Ming-Na Wen!" *Yolk* 2: 37.

Gordon, Milton M. 1964. *Assimilation in American Life*. New York: Oxford UP.

Hall, Kim Lee. 1996. Personal Interview. 8 February.

Heise, Kenan. 1995. "Dung Ho Moy, 105; Among First Immigrant Families in Chinatown." *Chicago Tribune* 13 October. Sec. 3, 11.

Hoang, Tuan A. 1995. Personal Interview. 29 November.

Hook, J.N. 1982. *Family Names: How our Surnames Came to America*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.

Hsu, Christine. 1995. Personal Interview. 29 November.

Hurh, Won Moo, Hei Chu Kim and Kwange Chung Kim. 1979. *Assimilation Patterns of Immigration in the United States: A Study of Korean Immigrants in the Chicago Area.* Washington, D.C.: UP of America.

Husain, Zulfikar Ali. 1996. Personal Interview. 7 March.

Ichioka, Yuji. 1988. *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants 1885-1924.* New York: The Free Press.

Jen, Gish. 1991. *Typical American.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin/Seymour Lawrence.

Jun, Hee. 1996. Personal Interview. 8 February.

Kang, Tai S. 1971. "Name Change and Acculturation: Chinese Students on an American Campus." *Pacific Sociogical Review* 14: 403-412.

Kao, Malcolm Uyematsu. 1998. Personal Interview. 8 August.

Kim, Anne. 1990. "For the Last Time, Darn It, I Am Not a Mail-Order Bride." *Los Angeles Times.* 21 October: M4, M8.

Kim, Christina. 1996. Personal Interview. 7 March.

Kim, Elaine H. 1982. *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context.* Philadelphia: Temple UP.

Kim, Oliver. 1996. Personal Interview. 1 January.

Kong, Chamroeun. 1996. Personal Interview. 22 February.

Lee, Joann Faung Jean. 1991. *Asian American Experiences in the United States.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc.

Lichti, Tara Cho. 1996. Personal Interview. 6 March.

Lim, Christina M. and Sheldon H. 1993. "In the Shadow of the Tiger: The 407th Air Service Squadron, Fourteenth Air Force, CBI, World War II." *Chinese America: History and Perspectives*: 72-75.

Liu, Jeff. 1998. "Back in School." *Rafu Shimpo* 15 May 1993: 1.

Lord, Bette Bao. 1984. *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson.* New York: Harper Trophy.

Louie, Emma Woo. 1985-86. "A New Perspective on Surnames Among Chinese Americans." *Amerasia* 12:1-22.

_____. 1991. "Surnames as Clues to Family History." *Chinese America: History and Perspectives.* 101-108.

Ma, Steve. 1996. Personal Interview. 22 February.

Malcolm's Mom. 1989. "My Son Malcolm." *Amerasia* 15: 110-113.

Monaghan, Peter. 1995. "A Korean-American Novelist's Impressive Debut." *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* 7 April: A6.

Mundy, Katherine Ann. 1996. Personal Interview. 26 February.

Nam, Un Hui Faith. 1996. Personal Interview. 21 February.

Nam, Yoon Kasie. 1996. Personal Interview. 7 March.

Niiya, Brian, ed. 1993. *Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present*. New York: Facts on File.

Nishihira, Misako "Elsie" Kiyabu. 1995. Interview by Shana Nishihira. 26 March. San Diego, California.

Nishihira, Shana. 1996. Personal Interview. 14 March.

Nguyen, Kim Thuc. 1995. Personal Interview. 29 November.

Nguyen, Ngan. 1994. "What's In a Name? Ethnic Identity." *Asian Week* 15 July, 2.

Nozaki, Yvette Masako. 1996. Personal Interview. 23 February.

Okihiro, Gary. 1993. "The Japanese in America." In Niiya, ed., 1-23.

Omatsu, Glenn. 1994. "The 'Four Prisons' and the Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s." *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*. Ed. Karin Aguilar-San Juan. Boston: South End Press, 19-70.

Park, Joon. 1996. Personal Interview. 14 February.

See, Lisa. 1995. *On Gold Mountain: The One-Hundred Year Odyssey of a Chinese American Family*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Seller, Maxine. 1977. *To Seek America: A History of Ethnic Life in the United States*. Englewood, New Jersey: J.S. Ozer.

Spickard, Paul R. 1989. *Mixed Blood: Intermarriage and Ethnic Identity in Twentieth-Century America*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P.

Stewart, George. 1979. *American Given Names*. New York: Oxford UP.

Takaki, Ronald. 1989. *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*. New York: Penguin Books.

Tamura, Eileen H. 1994. *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity: The Nisei Generation in Hawaii*. Urbana: U of Illinois P.

Tang, Iris. 1996. Personal Interview. 15 May.

United States Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census. September 1993. *We the American... Asians*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census.

Wagner, Michael. 1994. "What's in a Name?" *Gannett News Service*. 18 April.Wong, Alice. 1996. Personal Interview. 1 January.

Wu, Anita. 1996. Personal Interview. 27 December.

Wu, Yung-hsing. 1996. Personal Interview. 22 February.

Yasunaga, Jun. 1995. Personal Interview. 29 April.