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## **Overcoming the Model Minority Myth: Experiences of Filipino American Graduate Students**

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### Abstract

Filipino Americans are one of the largest immigrant groups in the United States and the second largest Asian American/Pacific Islander ethnic group. However, there is little research focusing on the unique experiences of this group, particularly in higher education. This paper presents a qualitative exploration of the experiences of Filipino American graduate students utilizing consensual qualitative research methodology. Results were categorized into domains and themes, with an example of a domain being "deficiencies and lack of resources" and an example of a theme being "Filipino Americans as different from Asian Americans." Implications for higher education administrators and researchers are discussed.

## Overcoming the Model Minority Myth: Experiences of Filipino American Graduate Students

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Data from the U.S. Department of Education have revealed that total enrollment in graduate programs has increased by 62% from 1976 to 2004 (U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2006). During this same period, graduate enrollments for students of color increased 254%, with students from Asian/Pacific Islander and Latino backgrounds having the largest growth (NCES, 2006). Concurrently, previous studies have found that 40 to 60% of all students (which include both students of color and Whites) who start doctoral programs do not complete them (Bair & Haworth, 1999;

Golde, 2005). However, because these studies do not focus on unique experiences between students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, the completion and retention rates for specific graduate students of color remains unclear.

Attrition and retention of graduate students has been a topic of much research (e.g., Golde, 1998; Lovitts, 2001; Tinto, 1993). However, these studies that examine graduate student attrition fail to look at differences between certain populations of students, especially in terms of race and ethnicity. A call for further research on specific graduate student populations, including students of color, contends that research on particular populations will allow for the identification of group-specific barriers to student success (Guentzel & Nesheim, 2006). Simply stated, it is important to examine the unique experiences of specific racial/ethnic groups in order to understand the factors that may contribute to their graduate school successes or failures.

Additionally, because higher education studies (especially those for students of color) often focus solely on undergraduate experiences, it becomes important to investigate unique experiences that may occur in graduate school, particularly for those of specific racial/ethnic groups. The purpose of this paper is to explore the experiences of Filipino American

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