

Shih, Chang, Chen Reaction Paper

The Model Minority Myth's Impact on Asian Americans

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The article in question is an excerpt from the Journal of Family Theory & Review, Vol. 11, specifically Issue 3, which is on pages 412-428, it was published in September of 2019. This article mainly focuses on the family culture and "minority myth" stereotype of Asian Americans. The authors intend to show that there is much more nuance to the way which Asian Americans integrate themselves than at first looks. The author argues that Asian Americans are not one monolithic culture that experience the exact same path. The general stereotype is that Asian Americans tend to be very successful when they immigrate to the United States, they will be at the top in terms of education, salary, and other areas. The authors find this to be completely untrue, more specifically that the Asian American immigrant is much more diverse in their experience in the US.

The authors are criticizing is the general view that Asian Americans are in general more successful than other immigrant groups. This has led to a broader general assumption that these immigrants do not face discrimination. This comes from the fact that Asian Americans often seem more likely to rise to the "same" social and economic status as white people living in the US, so the discrimination which other groups see are simply not present for Asian Americans. This is cited as the elite minority myth. The authors counter this by citing the sheer diversity in the Asian American population.

The term Asian American refers to a population of over 30 subgroups, which all together make up 6.4% of the countries population(Shih, et al., 412). The problem with this is that grouping all these people together makes their experiences seem similar. This is obviously not the case, the paper finds that there is as much diversity in Asian American immigration

than in any other group. This is particularly problematic when it comes to research. Or at least it would be, if any research was done. The author states that because of the myth of their success and the general lumping together of all Asian Americans, there is little research done in this group.

This article is very strong when it comes to comparing its new ideas to ideas of the past. Particularly the contrasting of William Petersen's work with modern theory. The Petersen article praises Japanese-Americans for overcoming the "adversity of their World War II incarceration" in 20 years(Shih, et al., 414). This was shown to directly conflict with a report by the Department of Labor in the 1960s, as both articles (Petersen and the DoL) cite the same reasons for Asian American success and African American failure. The authors connect this to the possibility that racism does not exist in America. The authors state that the emphasis on the model minority stereotype was simply constructed by the White Elite. This status as simply an elite minority rather than a true American citizen prevents members of this group from truly feeling like a member of the American population, instead making them feel more a member of a group they had left, more Asian than American.

One idea that runs throughout the paper which is quite strong is the idea of intersectional study. Since the group of Asian Americans composes of so many groups, there are bound to be statistical errors in looking at such a large group. The authors cite a myriad of demographic data which shows the diversity in Asian ethnic groups. The authors use disaggregated data (opposed to aggregated data) to show the different trends for the various subgroups under the umbrella of Asian American. The authors look at higher education, employment, Household income, and Poverty. They find that many stereotypes of the Asian Americans do not apply to all of these subgroups. Taking education for example, when looking at the aggregate (all groups), about 50% percent of Asian Americans have a Bachelor degree. However, looking at the individual groups, they find that over 70% of Taiwanese and Asian Indians have Bachelor's Degrees, while on the lower end, less than 15% of Laotians and Bhutanese have this higher education (Shih et al., 416). The emphasis on a statistical

argument against the model minority myth aids the authors greatly.

An interesting point the author makes in the beginning of the article is that by 2055, Asian Americans are expected to become the largest immigrant group in the US (Shih, et al., 412). This point is not used much beyond its initial statement. I can understand why this would be true, it is surprising that the authors never mention population statistics much more. It seems that with their argument, it would make sense to provide an updated stat. This would possibly show that there would indeed be a large population of a few different Asian Immigrants, but that one group would not dominate completely. This is hardly a weakness and more of a nitpick, but it would still be nice to see.

This article was very interesting, and most definitely kept my attention. Especially the discussions over the particular statistics of groups when it came to gender. I found it interesting that Asian American women made the most money out of any minority group, and even then they only made 83 cents to the white man's dollar (Shih, et al., 417). The authors' argument tended to be very modern. I found the specific examples of Petersen and Moynihan to be helpful in demonstrating why the posing of Asian Americans as an ideal is more harmful than good.

The only time the article really annoyed me is in the discussion about Petersen. It almost romanticizes the hardships of the Japanese Americans, it paints the struggles of these people as if it is some fairy tale which got magically poof-ed away after World War II. As if that was not bad enough, it was used to push a racist agenda that was applied to all Asian Americans, which is simply nonsense. The fact that the same arguments applied to African Americans to a completely opposite effect was almost infuriating. What other concepts could be explained in this way, or rather, what concepts HAVE been explained in this way, to push a racist agenda.

Overall, this article made me think a lot about the culture around minorities in the US. Being a minority in the US is made out to be some sort of label on your person which you could never get rid of, and it forces people to work even harder to achieve the same

status that a white person almost automatically gets. Even if an immigrant experiences these difficulties, which is expected, it is almost guaranteed that this immigrant's child will experience those difficulties as well. To add on top of this, the denial of this struggle on the part of Asian Americans by presenting them as a model minority, it almost begs for a change in the way minorities, especially Asian minorities, are viewed by the US public.