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When "model minorities" become "yellow peril"—Othering and the racialization of Asian Americans in the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

Using the ongoing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic as a case study, this paper engages with debates on the assimilation of Asian Americans into the US mainstream. While a burgeoning scholarship holds that Asians are "entering into the dominant group" or becoming "White," the prevalent practices of othering Asians and surging anti-Asian discrimination since the pandemic outbreak present a challenge to the assimilation thesis. This paper explains how anger against China quickly expands to Asian American population more broadly. Our explanation focuses on different forms of othering practices, deep-seated stereotypes of Asians, and the role of politicians and media in activating or exacerbating anti-Asian hatred. Through this scrutiny, this paper augments the theses that Asian Americans are still treated as "forever foreigners" and race is still a prominent factor in the assimilation of Asians in the United States. This paper also sheds light on the limitations of current measures of assimilation. More broadly, the paper questions the

1. This article focuses on the ongoing treatment America has towards Asian Americans and the rise of anti-Asian hatred with the coronavirus pandemic.
2. The author references the "yellow peril" stereotype where Asians are depicted as "barbaric," and connects it to modern times when Asian Americans are assumed to eat bats or various uncommonly seen food in America.
3. The author concludes that Asian Americans, although seemingly breaking the previous "yellow peril" barrier and rebranding themselves into a "model minority," still faces severe discrimination and are viewed as "unAmerican."



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Original Article | [Full Access](#)

From Yellow Peril to Model Minority: Perceived Threat by Asian Americans in Employment*

Jenny Nguyen , J. Scott Carter, Shannon K. Carter

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<https://doi-org.ezproxy.bu.edu/10.1111/ssqu.12612> | Citations: 3

† The author will share all data and coding for replication purposes.



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Abstract

Objectives

The purpose of this project is to assess (1) presence of anger toward Asian Americans “taking jobs,” and (2) whether stereotypes, feelings of competitive threat, and principles of equality predict increased presence of anger.

Methods

We used an experimental list survey of 416 participants, which reduces social desirability effects compared to traditional surveys.

Results

Findings show feelings of group competition and threat were strong predictors of presence of anger toward Asian Americans taking jobs. This anger was not associated with stereotypes as suggested by past research.

1. The article touches upon the “model minority” stereotype and how it positively and negatively affects the Asian American community, specifically how much the stereotype affects employment competition.
2. The author references the “model minority” and “yellow peril” stereotype and how both relate to one another as well uses the Group Position Theory for the purpose of their study.
3. The author finds an interesting conclusion from the study that the Americans who hold the model minority stereotype compared to the Americans who negatively view Asians are no more likely to express hatred toward them “taking jobs.”

Testing the Model Minority Stereotype: Youth Behaviors across Racial and Ethnic Groups

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Using data from a large nationally representative sample of adolescents attending school, this study tests the stereotype that youth of Asian Pacific Islander ethnicity (API) are the model minority. The results suggest that, except for substance use, API American youth do not report fewer delinquent behaviors than white youth; in fact, API American youth report slightly higher numbers of aggressive offenses than white youth, and female API American youth report greater numbers of nonaggressive offenses than white female youth. Also, API American youth report higher rates of nonaggressive offenses and substance use than do black youth. The mental health and social service needs of API American youth are thus at least as great as those of white youth. The need for such services increases with the length of residency in the United States.

According to the stereotype, Asian Pacific Islander (API) Americans are the “model minority” (Kitano 1969, 257): they work hard, they behave well, and they succeed.¹ In fact, API Americans are often regarded as “whiter than white” (Sue and Kitano 1973, 87). The stereotype also generally presents API Americans as being self-sufficient, in that they take care of their own problems within the family or the community. However, it is questionable whether the model minority stereotype is accurate. There are few empirical studies comparing API Americans’ behaviors with those of other racial and ethnic groups. In those studies that do exist, there is conflicting evidence as to whether API Americans behave better than other racial and ethnic groups.

Some studies confirm positive and healthy outcomes among API

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0037-7961/2006/8003-0003\$10.00

1. This article reports the truth behind the model minority stereotype in a study by comparing API American youth with other racial groups and ethnic groups.
2. The author uses data from “a large nationally representative sample of adolescents attending school” (Add Health study) to examine the model minority stereotype.
3. The author finds through studying the data that the results do not support the model minority stereotype, and that despite the initial findings that API Americans perform less problem behaviors, they do not have “better” behavior than white youth overall.