

TESTING THE “MODEL MINORITY MYTH”

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I. INTRODUCTION

The stereotype of Asian Americans as a “Model Minority” appears frequently in the popular press and in public and scholarly debates about affirmative action, immigration, and education. The model minority stereotype may be summarized as the belief that “Asian Americans, through their hard work, intelligence, and emphasis on education and achievement, have been successful in American society.”¹ As critiqued in the scholarly literature, however, this positive image of Asian Americans as a model minority conceals a more sinister core of beliefs about Asian Americans and other racial minorities in America: a view of Asian Americans as foreign and unpatriotic; a belief that there is little racial discrimination in America; a feeling that racial minorities have themselves to blame for persistent poverty and lags in educational and professional attainment; a hostility to foreigners, immigrants, and immigration; and a hostility to government programs to increase opportunities for Asian Americans and other ethnic minorities.²

It is surely true that some people have positive views of Asian Americans as smart and hard working, and some people have negative views of Asian Americans as foreign and threatening. But is it true that the same people tend to hold both views? It would indeed be worrisome if those who thought Asian Americans were smart and hard working tended to be hostile to people of Asian heritage, immigrants, and other minorities. Does the model minority stereotype really have both a positive and a negative side such that negative views inhere in the positive ones (as in the “Yellow Peril”)? Or, instead, do the same people who think Asian Americans are smart or hard working tend to like Asian Americans, immigrants, and minorities in general, and support programs that benefit them?

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¹ Pat K. Chew, *Asian Americans: The “Reticent” Minority and Their Paradoxes*, 36 WM. & MARY L. REV. 1, 24 (1994).

² See *infra* Part II.

That both negative and positive stereotypes about Asian Americans circulate in American society has been well documented by Asian critical scholars³—a fact we confirm and document here. While we do not question that negative images and depictions of Asian Americans are used in debates about social and political issues, we have wondered just how the negative and positive portrayals are linked in the minds of the public. Are people who express a belief in the positive aspects of the model minority stereotype masking their hostility to Asian Americans? A close analysis of that linkage in the minds of the dominant ethnic group—non-Hispanic white Americans—is the main task of this Essay.

We have treated the two-edged model minority stereotype as a hypothesis and tested it: Do positive views of Asian Americans as smart, hard working, and relatively successful tend to be found with other positive or negative views of Asians, immigrants, and African Americans?⁴ Using data from the General Social Survey, we focused our investigation on several fronts. First, we wanted to know how non-Hispanic white Americans see Asian Americans. Do they view Asian Americans as a group as more intelligent, harder working, and richer than average? If whites see Asian Americans in such superficially positive terms, we wondered whether these seemingly positive beliefs might be accompanied by negative opinions, such as a perception that Asian Americans are unpatriotic, foreign, or inassimilable. Moreover, if the model minority stereotype actually masks white hostility to Asian Americans, we wondered whether people who held model minority views also opposed immigration. We also wanted to probe the ex-

³ By using the word “Asian” together with “critical” we are using the two words most commonly used to refer to a loose and variegated movement of scholars interested in the issues of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, a movement inspired in part by Critical Legal Studies and Critical Race Theory. See, e.g., Elbert Lin, *Identifying Asian America*, 33 SW. U. L. REV. 217, 218, 222 n.10 (2004) (discussing the arguments of “asian Critical scholars” and suggesting that “asian Critical thinking” derives from Critical Race Theory); Deborah Ramirez & Jana Rumminger, *Race, Culture, and the New Diversity in the New Millennium*, 31 CUMB. L. REV. 481, 522, 503 n.90 (2000) (“Critical Asian-American Legal Studies”); Adrienne Katherine Wing, *USA 2050: Identity, Critical Race Theory, and the Asian Century*, 99 MICH. L. REV. 1390, 1390 (2001) (reviewing ROBERT S. CHANG, *DISORIENTED: ASIAN AMERICANS, LAW, AND THE NATION-STATE* (1999)) (describing Chang’s book as “the first book on Asian Critical Race Theory, or AsianCrit”); Gitanjali S. Gutierrez, Note, *Taking Account of Another Race: Reframing Asian-American Challenges to Race-Conscious Admissions in Public Schools*, 86 CORNELL L. REV. 1283, 1289 n.26 (2001) (noting the emergence of “critical Asian legal scholarship”). An alternative term, “Asian American legal scholarship,” is also often used. Although a critical approach is usually intended by those who use that term, it has been used, for example, to include the views of neo-conservative Asian Americans. See Robert S. Chang & Keith Aoki, *Centering the Immigrant in the Inter/National Imagination*, 85 CAL. L. REV. 1395, 1446 (1997) (identifying the movement as “critical Asian American legal scholarship”); Anthony S. Chen, *Beyond Modernism and Postmodernism: Working Notes Towards an Asian American Legal Scholarship*, 4 ASIAN L.J. 97, 133 (1997) (same); Anthony S. Wang, Comment, *Demystifying the Asian American Neo-Conservative: A Strange and New Political Animal?*, 5 ASIAN L.J. 213, 216 (1998) (including “the neo-conservative viewpoint” within “Asian American legal scholarship”).

⁴ We focus on these groups because Asian critical scholars’ claims have primarily related to these groups.

tent to which model minority beliefs engendered hostility toward, or eroded sympathy for, other minority groups. Do model minority beliefs, for example, correlate with certain opinions on affirmative action and government assistance to non-Asian minority groups?

Our findings turned up some surprising results. In very general terms, we found that the model minority stereotype is not correlated with hostility to Asians, immigrants, African Americans, or government programs to increase opportunities for minorities. It is true that substantial numbers of non-Hispanic white Americans hold the superficially positive views associated with the model minority stereotype, and substantial numbers hold the negative views that concern Asian critical scholars. But it is relatively uncommon for an individual to hold positive views about Asian Americans and negative views about most of these other issues. However, the data do strongly support one important part of the Asian critical scholars' critique. Those who hold positive views of Asians as hard working or intelligent are indeed more likely to believe that there is little or no discrimination against Asian Americans in jobs and housing.

The plan for our Essay is as follows: the next Part will map the content of the model minority stereotype as it exists in popular culture. Part III will describe Asian critical scholars' concerns about this stereotype's dangers. Part IV will describe our findings in detail and our analysis of what they show. In Part V, we explore some possible implications of our findings.

II. THE MODEL MINORITY STEREOTYPE IN A NUTSHELL

How have Asian Americans been portrayed as a model minority? It started with two 1966 articles that appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*⁵ and in *U.S. News & World Report*.⁶ Apparently trying to dispel the notions that America was falling apart and the American Dream was a mirage, *U.S. News* proclaimed: "At a time when Americans are awash in worry over the plight of racial minorities—one such minority, the nation's 300,000 Chinese-Americans, is winning wealth and respect by dint of its own hard work."⁷ Chinese Americans were said to believe that "people should depend on their own efforts—not a welfare check—in order to reach America's 'promised land.'"⁸ Success was not easy: "What you find, [in] back of this remarkable group of Americans, is a story of adversity and prejudice that would shock those now complaining about the hardships endured by today's Negroes."⁹ Chinese Americans, according to the article, work hard at any job, even menial ones; value education and would insist

⁵ William Petersen, *Success Story, Japanese-American Style*, N.Y. TIMES MAG., Jan. 9, 1966, at 20.

⁶ *Success Story of One Minority Group in the U.S.*, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REP., Dec. 26, 1966, at 73, reprinted in *ROOTS: AN ASIAN AMERICAN READER* 6, 6 (Amy Tachiki et al. eds., 1971).

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

that their children do well in school. They work together as a community to keep order and keep crime low. They pool resources to help each other get ahead. And they move to suburbs as they get wealthier.¹⁰

The *New York Times Magazine* article contained the same sort of glowing remarks about Japanese Americans and pointed comparisons with African Americans.¹¹ Given the discrimination that Japanese Americans experienced, the article's authors wrote, they might well be one of the "problem minorities."¹² But, "[b]arely more than 20 years after the end of the wartime camps, this is a minority that . . . [b]y . . . any criterion of good citizenship . . . [is] better than any other group in our society, including native-born whites."¹³ Most strikingly, Japanese Americans "have established this remarkable record . . . by their own almost totally unaided effort. Every attempt to hamper their progress resulted only in enhancing their determination to succeed."¹⁴

In the early 1980s, reports of skyrocketing Asian American college enrollment rates sparked another spate of magazine articles with a similar theme: despite severe discrimination in the United States, Asian Americans have been a startlingly successful minority group, and their success was making an indelible mark on American life and culture. A 1985 article in *The New Republic*¹⁵ assumes a tone typical of these articles. After describing how the "Asian-American population is exploding"¹⁶ due to immigration in the late 1960s and 1970s, it argues that the most extraordinary thing about Asian Americans "is the extent to which [they] have become prominent out of all proportion to their share of the population."¹⁷ Most notably, Asian Americans have made a "spectacular . . . entry . . . into the universities."¹⁸ Not only do Asian Americans attend college at a high rate (the article continues), they are also "outstanding" students, outscoring whites on the math portion of the SAT, winning the Westinghouse Science Talent search, and being elected to Phi Beta Kappa in droves.¹⁹ *Fortune* magazine concluded plainly: "Asian Americans are [simply] smarter than the rest of us,"²⁰ and they push their children to excel in school. Rounding out the model minority story, *Fortune* asserted that to the extent that Asian Americans have problems reaching the highest ranks of corporate America, they

¹⁰ *Id.* at 73–76.

¹¹ Petersen, *supra* note 5, at 20–21 (arguing that Japanese Americans have suffered color prejudice as have "Negroes," but are not "problem minorities").

¹² *Id.* at 21.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ David A. Bell, *The Triumph of Asian-Americans*, NEW REPUBLIC, July 15, 1985, at 24.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.* at 26.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ Anthony Ramirez, *America's Super Minority*, FORTUNE, Nov. 24, 1986, at 148, 149.

would solve that problem themselves by being self-starters and adapting to American management culture.²¹

So what does the model minority portrayal boil down to? First, Asian Americans are supposed to be extremely hard working—more hard working than whites. Second, they are said to be intelligent and highly educated, though a large number of them are dismissed as math and science geeks. Third, as a group they are seen as economically successful, especially compared to other ethnic minorities, even though they faced severe discrimination in the past and may encounter some (fairly minor) discrimination now. In other words, a regrettable history of past discrimination has not kept them down—and indeed may have spurred them on. Fourth, Asian Americans are described as “assimilating” into mainstream American life—living in the suburbs and intermarrying with whites²²—well, mostly assimilating, but not entirely: the articles tend to describe (and mirror) a persisting element of foreignness or exoticism. Asian Americans “crowd” the universities, and “crowd” into math and science careers²³—which evokes the teeming streets of an urban Chinatown—and practice exotic medical treatments and cultural traditions.²⁴

Breaking the model minority stereotype into its component parts reveals that the stereotype is not wholly complimentary. Asian critical scholars claim (with some justification) that such back-handed compliments are just the beginning of the problem.

III. WHAT’S SO BAD ABOUT BEING A MODEL MINORITY?

Asian critical scholars look skeptically at these portrayals of Asian American successes, resisting what they call the “model minority myth” for several reasons. First, they argue that the term is at best a gross generalization and at worst, misleading and false. Second, they argue that statistics that purport to prove comparative Asian American economic or educational success are often misleading upon closer examination. Third, they worry that, aside from its misleading factual claims, the model minority stereotype has several bad consequences. This final criticism of the model minority stereotype sparked and formed the main focus of our investigation.

²¹ *Id.* at 152–56. *The New Republic* allowed that some Asian-American groups are not as successful as others, and that Asian-American college students have an unfortunate tendency “to crowd into a small number of careers” (such as math and science). Bell, *supra* note 15, at 31. But the article concluded optimistically that whatever problems Asian Americans currently face would fade as the next generation of American-born Asian Americans comes of age. *Id.* at 30–31. To the extent that “Asian-Americans face undeniable problems of integration,” these problems should not be blown out of proportion: “[I]t takes a very narrow mind not to realize that these problems are the envy of every other American racial minority, and of a good number of white ethnic groups as well.” *Id.* at 31.

²² Bell, *supra* note 15, at 30–31 (describing pattern of integration and intermarriage).

²³ *Id.* at 26, 31.

²⁴ *Id.* at 24, 26 (describing quaint practices of leaving origami figures as calling cards, use of bear parts for medicinal purposes, and traditions of parent-child suicide and marriage-by-capture).

A. The Model Minority Stereotype Denies Asian Americans the Government Attention and Assistance They Need and Deserve

Asian critical scholars contend that the model minority stereotype's line about the socioeconomic success of Asian Americans obscures the plight of many struggling Asian Americans.²⁵ It inappropriately "lumps" together all Asian Americans—"third- or fourth-generation Japanese or Chinese Americans" with recent refugees and immigrants.²⁶ The resulting composite portrait suggests success, but masks the real difficulties facing some Asian Americans.²⁷ Professor Natsu Taylor Saito has pointed out that in 1997 "the overall rate of poverty among Asian Americans was roughly twice that of whites."²⁸ (While Saito's claim used to be true, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that by 2003 the difference in the poverty rates for Asian Americans and non-Hispanic whites had narrowed—11.8% of Asian Americans lived in poverty, compared to 8.62% of non-Hispanic whites.)²⁹ Additionally, generalizations about poverty mask large differences between subgroups, with high poverty rates among Cambodians (29.3%) and the Hmong (37.8%) and low rates among Filipinos (6.3%) and Japanese (9.7%).³⁰

Asian critical scholars argue that, by concealing that there are many Asian Americans who are poor and poorly educated, the stereotype persuades people that Asians need no help in attaining economic and educational success.³¹ If Asian Americans' problems and challenges are acknowledged, it is often in the context of relating how some Asian American has succeeded despite high hurdles to success.³² People simply assume,

²⁵ Professor Frank Wu argues that, ironically indeed, it "is [now] common to refer to an 'Anglo-Asian' overclass in contrast to an African American-Hispanic underclass." See FRANK H. WU, *YELLOW: RACE IN AMERICA BEYOND BLACK AND WHITE* 31 (2002). "Journalist Dan Walters introduced the notion in his 1986 book on the new California . . ." *Id.* at 19.

²⁶ Natsu Taylor Saito, *Model Minority, Yellow Peril: Functions of "Foreignness" in the Construction of Asian American Legal Identity*, 4 *ASIAN L.J.* 71, 90 (1997).

²⁷ HELEN ZIA, *ASIAN AMERICAN DREAMS: THE EMERGENCE OF AN AMERICAN PEOPLE* 118 (2000) (arguing that Asian Americans are depicted as a group that "never [has] problems, like racism or poverty, to contend with and never need[s] assistance from government agencies or anyone else").

²⁸ Saito, *supra* note 26, at 90 (citations omitted).

²⁹ CARMEN DE NAVAS-WALT, BERNADETTE D. PROCTOR & ROBERT J. MILLS, *INCOME, POVERTY, AND HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE IN THE UNITED STATES: 2003*, at 10 (2004), available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/p60-226.pdf>.

³⁰ TERRANCE J. REEVES & CLAUDETTE E. BENNETT, *WE THE PEOPLE: ASIANS IN THE UNITED STATES* 17 (2004), available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/censr-17.pdf> (using 2000 Census data).

³¹ See, e.g., Chew, *supra* note 1, at 7 ("Believing the composite image of the successfully assimilated Asian American, American society tends to ignore Asian Americans' problems and to dismiss their complexity and diversity as people.").

³² ZIA, *supra* note 27, at 207 ("Where poor Asian immigrants have garnered public notice, it is usually to celebrate the exceptional individuals who overcome all odds, such as the refugee or immigrant child who becomes an Intel (formerly Westinghouse) Science Talent Search winner.").

according to Asian critical scholars, that "Asian Americans don't need public assistance or culturally specific programs, don't deserve private foundation support, and don't need educational help."³³

B. The Model Minority Stereotype Blinds Americans to the Persistence of Discrimination Against Asian Americans

Professor Neil Gotanda writes that white Americans are deeply wedded to the idea that "racism directed against Asian Americans is insignificant or *does not exist*."³⁴ Professor Gotanda argues that the model minority stereotype solidifies this belief,³⁵ though there is evidence that discrimination against Asian Americans persists today. For example, Asian Americans make less money than whites with the same educational attainment.³⁶ Moreover, Asian Americans have been the victims of a large number of hate crimes. Some have argued that the incidence of such crimes may be rising, though pinning down the precise nature and extent of the problem is difficult.³⁷ Asian critical scholars argue, however, that the model minority stereotype creates the impression that Asian Americans could not possibly suffer pervasive discrimination, "much less the kind that spawns physical

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ Neil Gotanda, *Asian American Rights and the "Miss Saigon Syndrome,"* in *ASIAN AMERICANS AND THE SUPREME COURT: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY 1087, 1088* (Hyung-Chan Kim ed., 1992); *see also id.* ("[T]he mainstream denial of racism towards Asian Americans is a pervasive and deeply held belief.")

³⁵ *Id.* Professor Pat Chew agrees: "Although there may have been isolated instances of discrimination in the past, society believes that Asian Americans today generally do not experience discrimination." Chew, *supra* note 1, at 6.

³⁶ The Census Bureau reported in 2002 that over the course of a forty-year work-life, an Asian-American individual with a bachelor's degree could expect to earn \$400,000 less than a non-Hispanic white individual with a bachelor's degree. Asian Americans with an "associate's degree," only "some college," or a high school diploma could also expect to earn less over the course of their careers than non-Hispanic whites with the same educational attainment. According to the same report, however, Asian Americans with advanced degrees could expect to earn as much as non-Hispanic whites with advanced degrees. This report does not report work-life income levels for different kinds of advanced degrees. JENNIFER CHESSMAN DAY & ERIC C. NEWBERGER, *THE BIG PAYOFF: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND SYNTHETIC ESTIMATES OF WORK-LIFE EARNINGS* 7, 11-12 (2002), *available at* <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-210.pdf>; *cf., e.g.,* REEVES & BENNETT, *supra* note 30, at 12, 15-17 (showing that, according to the official 2000 U.S. Census report, in 2000, 44.1% of Asians over 25 had a bachelor's degree or more, while only 24.4% of the total population of that age had such degrees; median 1999 female income was \$31,049 for Asians and \$27,194 for all workers; median 1999 male income was \$40,650 for Asians and \$37,057 for all workers; median 1999 family income was \$59,324 for Asians and \$50,046 for all families; and the Asian poverty rate (12.6%) was about the same as that of the total population (12.4%).

³⁷ Aurelio Rojas, *Hate Crimes on Rise Against Asian Americans, Report Says*, S.F. CHRON., Sept. 9, 1997, at A-2 (noting that the number of incidents increased from 1995 to 1996). *But see* NAT'L ASIAN AM. PAC. LEGAL CONSORTIUM, 2002 AUDIT OF VIOLENCE AGAINST ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICANS 11, *available at* <http://www.napalc.org/dcm.asp?id=87&viewdoc=109> (noting that the number of incidents was relatively flat from 1995 through 2001, at 411-534 per year, dropping to 275 in 2002).

violence.”³⁸ Indeed, Asian critical scholars report that Asian Americans’ complaints of discrimination are sometimes met with derision.³⁹

C. The Model Minority Stereotype Reinforces the American Dream and Implicitly Blames Other Minority Groups for Their Problems

“Whites love us because we’re not black,” one Asian critical scholar contends.⁴⁰ Asian critical scholars charge that Asian Americans’ supposed success is used “to demoralize or to anger other minority groups and disadvantaged people.”⁴¹ Professor Chew charges that the model minority stereotype tells other minorities that if they “work hard, have certain values, and are reasonably intelligent” they, too, “can be successful.”⁴² Alternatively, lack of success means that “they are lazy, their values are misplaced,” or they lack “the inherent capabilities to succeed.”⁴³ In other words, “failures are under their control—even perhaps their choice.”⁴⁴ Other racial minorities would succeed if only they would follow the example of Asian Americans and channel the energy they spend complaining into hard work.⁴⁵

³⁸ Note, *Racial Violence Against Asian Americans*, 106 HARV. L. REV. 1926, 1931 (1993). Professor Frank Wu has also argued that “[u]pside down or right side up, the model minority myth white-washes racial discrimination. . . . An Asian American student leader said[,] . . . ‘Some simply didn’t see us as minorities. . . . They think if you’re Asian you’re automatically interning at Merrill Lynch and that you’re never touched by racism.’” WU, *supra* note 25, at 69.

³⁹ Professor Frank Wu relates that “[w]hen the U.S. Civil Rights Commission released a report on civil rights issues facing Asian Americans in 1992, *Fortune* magazine scorned the findings in an article entitled, ‘Up from Inscrutable.’ Aside from playing on a stereotype, the author asks, ‘What’s the problem?’” WU, *supra* note 25, at 69.

⁴⁰ ROBERT G. LEE, *ORIENTALS: ASIAN AMERICANS IN POPULAR CULTURE* 145 (1999) (quoting writer Frank Chin).

⁴¹ Chew, *supra* note 1, at 70–71. William Wei concurs, “[T]he insidious ‘model minority’ stereotype . . . serves a particular social purpose—in this case, to make invidious comparisons with other people of color, blaming them, rather than the economic and sociopolitical barriers in American society, for their problems.” WILLIAM WEI, *THE ASIAN AMERICAN MOVEMENT* 49 (1994).

⁴² Chew, *supra* note 1, at 71.

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ *Id.* Professor Wu concurs, “The myth implies that bigotry has been brought on by the victims, who must defeat it, rather than that it is the responsibility of the perpetrators, who could be compelled to eliminate it.” WU, *supra* note 25, at 69.

⁴⁵ Professor Wu writes:

[Asian Americans] are living proof of the power of the free market and the absence of racial discrimination. Their good fortune flows from individual self-reliance and community self-sufficiency, not civil rights activism or government welfare benefits. They believe that merit and effort pay off handsomely and justly, and so they do. Asian Americans do not whine about racial discrimination; they only try harder. If they are told that they have a weakness that prevents their social acceptance, they quickly agree and earnestly attempt to cure it. If they are subjected to mistreatment by their employer, they quit and found their own company rather than protesting or suing.

WU, *supra* note 25, at 44.

Some scholars point to Thomas Sowell’s work as an example of the (ab)use of the model minority stereotype.⁴⁶ Sowell has indeed often highlighted the success of Asian Americans in his work. He once argued that the educational success of Asian Americans—specifically Chinese and Japanese Americans—demonstrates that *de facto* school segregation does not invariably lead to poorer educational opportunities for minority students.⁴⁷ Asians’ propensity for hard work, he argues, explains their success.⁴⁸

Sowell has also pointed to Asian Americans’ success as demonstrating that discrimination does not bar socioeconomic success. He argues instead that it can *spur* success.⁴⁹ Sowell contends that cultural factors, not genetic differences,⁵⁰ account for much of the difference in economic and educational performance between Asian Americans and other groups: Asian Americans’ commitment to hard work and to their children’s educational success marks the path to success for other minority groups.⁵¹

Asian critical scholars contend that such arguments amount to blaming other minorities for their own troubles. They worry that these arguments erode support for government assistance, early education programs, and affirmative action for African Americans and other minorities. Professor Chew thinks that this is already the case. “[S]tudies suggest,” she says (citing research drawing on General Social Survey data), that “derogatory perceptions” of minority groups erode “societal support for government assistance for minorities, affirmative action, and school integration.”⁵² The

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Lolita K. Buckner Inness, *Bicentennial Man—The New Millennium Assimilationism and the Foreigner Among Us*, 54 RUTGERS L. REV. 1101, 1115–16 (2002).

⁴⁷ “The most casual knowledge of history shows that all-Jewish, all-Chinese, or all-German schools have not been inherently inferior,” he wrote. THOMAS SOWELL, *CIVIL RIGHTS: RHETORIC OR REALITY?* 70 (1984). “Chinese and Japanese school children were at one time segregated both de facto and de jure in California, yet they outperformed white children—and largely still do.” *Id.* at 71.

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 27–28 (“The Chinese have established reputations for working hard and long, in countries around the world, and for not being stopped by the stigma of ‘menial’ work.”).

⁴⁹ Sowell writes: “The history of Japanese Americans is a story of tragedy and triumph. . . . Few [American immigrant groups] met such repeated rebuffs and barriers—including barriers of mass internment camps—or more completely triumphed over it all, across a broad spectrum of economic, social, and political success.” THOMAS SOWELL, *ETHNIC AMERICA* 155 (1981). Sowell argues that the example of Japanese Americans also proves that discrimination will not persist if it is economically irrational. SOWELL, *supra* note 47, at 112–13.

⁵⁰ THOMAS SOWELL, *RACE AND CULTURE: A WORLD VIEW* 182 (1994) (explaining that careful review of the studies on intelligence shows that Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans do not score higher than whites on intelligence tests, though they do get better grades than whites and outperform them on achievement tests like the SAT); see also *id.* (“[W]hat has been claimed, erroneously, for blacks and other low-income minorities in the United States, is in fact true for Asian Americans: Their subsequent academic and job performances exceed what their IQ test scores would predict.”).

⁵¹ SOWELL, *supra* note 49, at 152 (“Today, much of the Chinese prosperity is due to the simple fact that they work more and have more (and usually better) education than others.”).

⁵² Chew, *supra* note 1, at 33 (citing Lawrence Bobo & James R. Kluegel, *Modern American Prejudice: Stereotypes, Social Distance, and Perceptions of Discrimination Toward Blacks, Hispanics, and*

logic is simple—if Asian Americans have succeeded without government help, why help African Americans and other minority groups?⁵³

*D. The Model Minority Stereotype Divides Asian Americans
from Other Minority Groups*

Asian critical scholars are increasingly concerned that the model minority stereotype is designed to divide and conquer racial minority groups. They argue that it sows resentment and jealousy among groups in order to dissipate racial minorities' collective power when America becomes "majority minority."⁵⁴ If, as Professor Wu contends, the fate of America's minority groups depends on their unity and collective efforts,⁵⁵ Asian critical scholars ought to worry if the model minority stereotype "fosters resentment from non-Asian minorities who are impliedly faulted as less than model."⁵⁶

If this charge is true, the model minority stereotype takes on a sinister cast. Asian critical scholars have branded it a "disingenuous stereotype" "created to perpetuate the dominance of white Americans."⁵⁷ The stereo-

Asians 16–17 fig. 3 (Aug. 1991) (unpublished paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Am. Soc. Ass'n); see Tom W. Smith, *Ethnic Images 7–8* (Nat'l Opinion Research Ctr., Univ. of Chicago, Gen. Soc. Surv. Topical Report No. 19, 1990), available at <http://cloud9.norc.uchicago.edu/dlib/t-19.htm>.

⁵³ Cf. Chris Iijima, *The Era of We-Construction: Reclaiming the Politics of Asian Pacific American Identity and Reflections on the Critique of the Black/White Paradigm*, 29 COLUM. HUM. RTS. L. REV. 47, 77 (1997) (stating that "[i]t would be a supreme irony" if the conclusion drawn from the model minority stereotype is that government should do less for other minority groups).

⁵⁴ See, e.g., Chew, *supra* note 1, at 71–72 ("Minorities who accept [the implicit] criticisms [of the model minority stereotype] may be demoralized—questioning whether their efforts actually have been inadequate and their capabilities are inferior. Minorities who reject this reasoning may be angered by the comparisons [and] may direct their animosity toward Asian Americans, resenting their apparent successes."); Howard G. Chua-Eoan, *Strangers in Paradise*, TIME, Apr. 9, 1990, at 32, 35 (quoting Reed Ueda, Professor of History, Tufts University); see also WU, *supra* note 25, at 28 ("There is a real risk . . . that inserting [Asian Americans] into debates over race could make them a wedge group that divides rather than unites [people of color].").

⁵⁵ Frank H. Wu, *From Black to White and Back Again*, 3 ASIAN L.J. 185, 195 (1996) (reviewing IAN FIDENCIO HANEY LOPEZ, *WHITE BY LAW: THE LEGAL CONSTRUCTION OF WHITENESS* (1996)) ("At the political level, it can be done by coalition movements that build bridges among African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos.").

⁵⁶ Note, *supra* note 38, at 1931.

⁵⁷ Harvey Gee, *Asian Americans, the Law, and Illegal Immigration in Post-Civil Rights America: A Review of Three Books*, 77 U. DET. MERCY L. REV. 71, 76 (1999). Along similar lines, Frank Wu argues that the model minority stereotype is robust because

it serves a purpose in reinforcing racial hierarchies. Asian Americans are as much a "middleman minority" as we are a model minority. We are placed in the awkward position of buffer or intermediary, elevated as the preferred racial minority at the expense of denigrating African Americans. . . . DePaul University law professor Sumi Cho has explained that Asian Americans are turned into "racial mascots" giving right-wing causes a novel messenger, camouflaging arguments that would look unconscionably self-interested if made by whites about themselves. University of California at Irvine political scientist Claire Kim has argued that Asian Americans are positioned through "racial triangulation" much as a Machiavellian would engage in political triangulation for maximum advantage. Law professor Mari Matsuda famously declared, "we will not be used" in repudiating the model minority myth.

type does so by "establishing a racial hierarchy that denies the reality of Asian American oppression, while accepting that of other racial minorities and poor whites."⁵⁸ Model minority status is a poisonous prize, because the stereotype will "only be wielded in defense of the racial status quo."⁵⁹ Whites will remain on top, African Americans on the bottom, with Asian Americans sandwiched in between.

Over the last two decades, affirmative action opponents and proponents have used the example of Asian Americans to support their arguments in a way that unmistakably pits Asian Americans' interests against blacks' and Latinos'.⁶⁰ Dana Takagi argues that during the 1980s, "differences in academic achievement between Asian American students and black students were . . . translated into competing interests between the two groups in the admissions process."⁶¹ Moreover, Takagi argues that Asian Americans became scapegoats in the arguments about ethnic diversity on college campuses: Asian Americans caused the diversity crisis by applying to, and enrolling in, college at an extraordinary rate.⁶²

By the late 1980s and into the 1990s, Asian Americans were being used in a different way in the debates. Opponents portrayed them as affirmative action's victims⁶³ because colleges' commitment to affirmative

WU, *supra* note 25, at 58.

⁵⁸ Gee, *supra* note 57, at 77; see also Chris Iijima, *Reparations and the "Model Minority" Ideology of Acquiescence: The Necessity to Refuse the Return to the Original Humiliation*, 40 B.C. L. REV. 385, 425 (1998) (stating that whites use "the carrot of model minority status for Asian Pacific Americans . . . as a sword against other people of color").

⁵⁹ Iijima, *supra* note 58, at 425.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., DANA Y. TAKAGI, *THE RETREAT FROM RACE: ASIAN-AMERICAN ADMISSIONS AND RACIAL POLITICS* 70–74 (1992) (giving examples of such rhetoric).

⁶¹ *Id.* at 148.

⁶² *Id.* at 70–74. Angelo Ancheta has argued that the debates about affirmative action in the 1980s and 1990s portrayed Asian Americans as a universally successful racial group; by doing so, the debates obscured the need to include some Asian American national origin groups in race-based remedial programs. ANGELO N. ANCHETA, *RACE, RIGHTS, AND THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE* 162 (1998).

⁶³ For example, William Bradford Reynolds, President Reagan's Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, "placed the blame for discrimination against Asians at the door of affirmative action" when he said that

Asian American candidates face higher hurdles than academically less qualified candidates of other races whether those candidates be minorities (black, Hispanic, Native American) or white. . . . [T]he phenomenon of a 'ceiling' on Asian American[] admissions is the inevitable result of the 'floor' that has been built for a variety of other favored racial groups.

TAKAGI, *supra* note 60, at 103–04. *Fortune* magazine also portrayed the Asian American admissions flap as another example of the inherent unfairness of "reverse discrimination." Daniel Seligman & Patty de Llosa, *Quotas on Campus: The New Phase*, FORTUNE, Jan. 30, 1989, at 205, 205–08 ("Racial preferences in college admissions, legitimized by the Supreme Court's infamous *Bakke* decision in 1978, [are] now being used against the wrong people [Asian Americans]."). President Reagan's Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights spun the issue this way: "where admissions policies are skewed by a mandate to achieve some sort of proportional representation by race, . . . then, inevitably, there will be pressure to squeeze out Asian Americans to make room for other minorities (or for whites)." See WU, *supra* note 25, at 143 (quoting 135 CONG. REC. S1135, 1144 (1989) (statement of William Bradford Reynolds, As-

action depreciated “merit criteria in admissions” in order to admit more African Americans and Latinos.⁶⁴

During the mid-1990s, Asian Americans’ model minority status again placed them at the heart of the controversy over affirmative action in California. Affirmative action opponents again portrayed Asian Americans as victims of discrimination. University administrators deplored the elimination of affirmative action as the death-knell for racial diversity. Opponents of affirmative action, however, pointed out that without affirmative action larger numbers of Asian Americans would attend California’s elite public universities.⁶⁵ This fact enabled opponents like Stephan Thernstrom to accuse affirmative action proponents of racial insensitivity. As Thernstrom put it, “a fair, open, color-blind process does not greatly disadvantage racial minorities in general . . . [given that] Asians are distinctly better off when judged . . . on the basis of their academic qualifications.”⁶⁶ Asian Americans, in short, enabled affirmative action opponents to claim that the era of white privilege was over, and to make more attractive arguments against affirmative action couched in terms of equal treatment among minority groups, while steering clear of unpopular arguments regarding affirmative action’s purported unfairness to whites.⁶⁷

Asian critical scholars worry that the opponents’ rhetoric worked: “The emergence of a ‘good’ minority—Asians—suffering discrimination as a result of preferences for ‘underrepresented minorities,’” Asian critical scholars contend, eroded support for affirmative action among liberals who had previously favored it.⁶⁸ The model minority stereotype “was an important part of the reason many liberals ultimately moved to get rid of racial preferences or, at best, offered only qualified support for affirmative action.”⁶⁹

sistant Attorney General for Civil Rights), available at <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/F?r101:1:/temp/~r101REHMov:e97997:>).

⁶⁴ DINESH D’SOUZA, *ILLIBERAL EDUCATION: THE POLITICS OF RACE AND SEX ON CAMPUS* 27 (1991).

⁶⁵ Stephan Thernstrom, *Farewell to Preferences?*, PUB. INT., Winter 1998, at 34, 39–41. He especially objected to rhetoric that claimed that universities would now be “lily-white,” arguing that such rhetoric uncomfortably resembled Yellow Peril arguments of the past. *Id.* at 41–44. See also Peter Shaw, *Counting Asians*, NAT’L REV., Sept. 25, 1995, at 50, 50 (arguing that if affirmative action were abolished at the University of California at Berkeley, the percentage of Asians in the student body would increase from 40% to 55%, the percentage of whites from 30% to 35%, while Hispanics would decrease from 15% to 5% and Blacks from more than 6% to below 2%, an “outcome [that] makes clear the extent to which Asian-descended students are currently discriminated against”).

⁶⁶ Thernstrom, *supra* note 65, at 39–41.

⁶⁷ James S. Gibney, *The Berkeley Squeeze*, NEW REPUBLIC, Apr. 11, 1988, at 15, 17; see also TAKAGI, *supra* note 60, at 119–20 (arguing that Asian Americans gave conservatives “an excellent opportunity to energize their vision of individual merit and the free market approach to admissions” based on “individual merit, not race” and that Asian Americans became “ethnic champions with which to disarm liberalism in higher education”).

⁶⁸ TAKAGI, *supra* note 60, at 176.

⁶⁹ *Id.*

E. *The Model Minority Stereotype as the New "Yellow Peril"*

Asian critical scholars have consistently worried that the model minority stereotype is just a modern version of the fear of the "Yellow Peril" that animated the exclusionary and discriminatory laws of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Asian critical scholars argue that the successes that make Asian Americans a model minority also make Asian Americans threatening.⁷⁰ Put simply, the "model minority myth . . . is two-faced. Every attractive trait matches up neatly to its repulsive complement, and the aspects are" easily reversed.⁷¹

First, Asian critical scholars argue, Asian success has made Asian Americans easy scapegoats for a whole host of problems from the Beatles' breakup⁷² to the American auto industry's demise.⁷³ We can find a contemporary version of the "Yellow Peril" in the early-1990s worries about "the threat of Japan, Inc." and the "rise of the East and decline of the West."⁷⁴ According to Asian critical scholars, "if Asian Americans become too 'model,' they become unwelcome threats."⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Mia Tuan has argued that Asian Americans' "material success has . . . hastened greater resentment. . . . Asian-Americans across the country have increasingly become the scapegoats for a range of economic and social ills. Shifting international relations with the Pacific Rim along with renewed Asian immigration have further contributed to a growing perception among Americans from various walks of life of an imminent 'Asian invasion.'" MIA TUAN, *FOREVER FOREIGNERS OR HONORARY WHITES?: THE ASIAN ETHNIC EXPERIENCE TODAY* 41 (1998).

⁷¹ WU, *supra* note 25, at 67.

⁷² It was Yoko Ono's fault. See Keith Aoki, "Foreign-ness" & Asian American Identities: *Yellow-face, World War II Propaganda, and Bifurcated Racial Stereotypes*, 4 *UCLA ASIAN PAC. AM. L.J.* 1, 44-45 (1996).

⁷³ MICHAEL OMI & HOWARD WINANT, *RACIAL FORMATION IN THE UNITED STATES: FROM THE 1960S TO THE 1990S* 115-16 (2d ed. 1994) ("Domestic economic woes are attributed to unfair foreign competition—with Japan receiving an inordinate amount of blame."). Omi and Winant also argue that in response to these worries, opinion polls showed Americans' rising negativity toward Japan, and politicians and labor leaders used "racist clichés redolent of World War II propaganda" in making demands for restrictions on Japanese imports. *Id.* at 116.

⁷⁴ *Id.* at 80 (quoting Frank Wu). Although the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s overshadows the successes of the Japanese economy and "Asian Tigers" in the 1980s and early 1990s, Japanese business methods were extolled not that long ago as an exotic blueprint for success. News weeklies ran article after article about the inability of America to compete and the inevitability that Asians would dominate the United States. Michael Crichton's bestseller, *Rising Sun*, both captured and capitalized on fears of Japanese domination of the United States. Robert Lee observed that "*Rising Sun* is less a detective thriller than a jeremiad against an economic and cultural threat from Japan." LEE, *supra* note 40, at 209.

⁷⁵ Note, *supra* note 38, at 1932 n.43. Frank Wu has put it this way:

To be intelligent is to be calculating and too clever; to be gifted in math and science is to be mechanical and not creative, lacking interpersonal skills and leadership potential. To be polite is to be inscrutable and submissive. To be hard-working is to be an unfair competitor for regular human beings and not a well-rounded, likable individual. To be family oriented is to be clannish and too ethnic. To be law abiding is to be self-righteous and rigidly rule-bound. To be successfully entrepreneurial is to be deviously aggressive and economically intimidating. To revere elders is to be an ancestor-worshipping pagan, and fidelity to tradition is reactionary ignorance.

WU, *supra* note 25, at 68.

Second, Asian critical scholars worry that aspects of the model minority stereotype contribute to anti-immigration sentiment.⁷⁶ Asian critical scholars point to recent anti-immigration initiatives, such as Proposition 187 in California, English-only laws, and restrictions on the receipt of government benefits by legal immigrants, as evidence of growing hostility toward immigration generally, and to Asian immigration particularly.⁷⁷

The characterization of Asian Americans as foreign is at the heart of the model minority stereotype, according to many Asian critical scholars. Professor Frank Wu points out that the 1966 *New York Times* article, "Success Story," explained the success of Japanese Americans "by reference to their foreign roots and non-American culture."⁷⁸ The articles from the 1980s similarly explained Asian students' success in terms of Eastern belief structures. If Asian Americans are perceived as "foreigners," a whole "range of possible [negative] inferences" are possible: "disloyalty, language and accent, dress and demeanor."⁷⁹ Asian critical scholars contend such is precisely the case.

Beyond compliments that American-born Asian Americans receive on their English speaking skills and insistent questions about where an Asian American person is "really" from,⁸⁰ Asian critical scholars point to more serious incidents as evidence that Asian Americans are perceived as not truly American.⁸¹ Foremost among their examples is the Justice Department's detention and investigation of Dr. Wen Ho Lee, the former Los Alamos scientist charged with mishandling classified information,⁸² and the 1996 fund-

⁷⁶ LEE, *supra* note 40, at 208–09 ("The very cultural difference that mark[s] Asian Americans as role models . . . defines Asian Americans as inauthentic and the potential agents of a dreaded de-Westernization of American society. . . . [Cultural conservatives argue] that regardless of the economic advantages that accrue from immigration, non-European immigrants represent a threat to the nation's cultural core.").

⁷⁷ Iijima, *supra* note 58, at 416 ("White fears of declining power are illustrated by the recent voter initiatives in California which curtail benefits to immigrants and eliminate affirmative action.").

⁷⁸ Wu, *supra* note 55, at 212.

⁷⁹ Gotanda, *supra* note 34, at 1098–99.

⁸⁰ "Where are you really from? Often asked of Asian Americans, this question implies that they are strangers in the land, as European Americans seldom accept an American locality as an answer." WEI, *supra* note 41, at 44.

⁸¹ There have also been many less serious incidents: Senator Alphonse D'Amato's tasteless adoption of a mock Asian accent to ridicule Judge Lance Ito during the O.J. Simpson trial (though Judge Ito was no more a foreigner than Senator D'Amato), TUAN, *supra* note 70, at 1, and MSNBC's gaffe headline—"American beats Kwan"—when figure skater Tara Lipinski beat Michelle Kwan in the 1996 Winter Olympics, *id.* at 40.

⁸² The government's harsh treatment of Dr. Lee and the subsequent chastisement of the Justice and Energy Departments by District Judge Parker for holding Dr. Lee without bail led many Asian American activists to charge that Dr. Lee was suspected of spying largely because he was ethnically Chinese. *Cf.* James Sterngold, *Accused Scientist Has Bail Blocked at Last Minute*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 2, 2000, at A1 (reporting that the U.S. Attorney has said that Wen Ho Lee's "confinement, in harsh conditions, is essential because of concerns that he might find a way to spirit nuclear secrets to a hostile country"). *The New York Times* reported, "Judge Parker said the 'top decisionmakers' handling the case 'have not em-

raising scandal involving John Huang and Maria Hsia, which centered on presidential campaign contributions by Asian Americans and Asian immigrants.⁸³

Asian critical scholars point to the inflammatory and racist rhetoric used by some to describe the 1996 political contribution scandal. Political cartoons routinely made use of caricatured depictions of Asians with exaggerated, slanted eyes; sharp eyebrows; and buck teeth.⁸⁴ The *National Review* notoriously featured a cover story called "The Manchurian Candidates." The cover featured caricatures of President Bill Clinton, First Lady Hillary Clinton, and Vice President Al Gore wearing "stereotypical Chinese garments" and having buck teeth and slanted eyes.⁸⁵ The casual use of "yellow-face" was disturbing.

F. *The Two Faces of the Model Minority Stereotype?*

In the next section, we interrogate the model minority stereotype and investigate some of the criticisms of it, and fears about it, expressed by Asian critical scholars. Before we present our findings, though, we want to be clear about what questions we are investigating and what questions and claims we are not addressing.

First, we do not deny that Asian Americans as a group or individual Asian Americans have experienced serious racial discrimination. Nor do we deny that aspects of current American popular culture seem to reflect "Yellow Peril" stereotypes about Asian Americans, as the "yellow-face" *National Review* cover demonstrates. Asian Americans also appear to be the targets of racial hate crimes at a fairly high rate, and some of those are

barrassed me alone. They have embarrassed our entire nation." James Sterngold, *Nuclear Scientist Set Free After Plea in Secrets Case; Judge Attacks U.S. Conduct*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 14, 2000, at A1.

⁸³ Though some of the allegations of illegality were true, see Jeffrey Toobin, *Adventures in Buddhism: What Really Happened at the Hsi Lai Temple?*, NEW YORKER, Sep. 18, 2000, at 76, many Asian-American leaders worried that Asian-American contributors were treated with suspicion, whether or not they were American-born or naturalized citizens. Money from any contributor with an Asian last name was suspect as being from an illegal foreign source, they claimed. Martin F. Manalansan IV, *The Ethnography of Asian America: Notes Toward a Thick Description*, in CULTURAL COMPASS: ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATIONS OF ASIAN AMERICA 1, 1 (Martin F. Manalansan IV ed., 2000); see also WU, *supra* note 25, at 105–06 (arguing that even though some of the allegations of improper foreign campaign contributions were founded, "the allegations were also accompanied by racial stereotyping, as politicians and pundits charged . . . that Asian Americans were by their very nature likely to engage in bribery, or that their behavior implied that all individuals with Asian-sounding surnames should be suspected of illegal conduct").

⁸⁴ Richard Roeper, *China Standoff Reveals Racism's Tenacious Grip*, CHI. SUN-TIMES, Apr. 18, 2001, at 11 (discussing a 2001 cartoon about the Chinese detention of the crew of an American spy plane by political satirist Pat Oliphant that depicted "a buck-toothed waiter dumping cat innards on Uncle Sam and demanding, 'Apologize Lotten Amellican!')"; see John Kang, *Deconstructing the Ideology of White Aesthetics*, 2 MICH. J. RACE & L. 283, 330 (1997) (discussing the results of a San Francisco State University study that showed that in 1992 alone there were ten editorial cartoons of Asians with buck teeth, slanted eyes, and thick glasses).

⁸⁵ WU, *supra* note 25, at 112.

probably motivated by perceptions that Asian Americans are “alien.”⁸⁶ Our study does not question these claims.

We do probe whether the model minority stereotype generally contains within it an aspect of “foreignness” and whether non-Hispanic whites who hold model-minority-like beliefs tend to find Asians frightening or threatening. To that end, we have investigated whether non-Hispanic whites who hold model minority beliefs perceive Asian Americans as less patriotic, whether they perceive Asian Americans to have too much influence on government and politics, and whether they are more or less likely to oppose intermarriage among Asian Americans and whites.

It is certainly true that during the last three decades some politicians and political activists have tried to play on nativist impulses and anti-immigration sentiment to advance their causes. Indeed, the previous sections of this Essay document how prevalent such arguments have been. We are curious, however, whether the model minority stereotype has a relationship to anti-immigration sentiment. To that end, we investigated whether non-Hispanic whites who hold model minority views have a greater fear of immigration and its effects on American life.

Finally, there is no doubt that conservative pundits and politicians have used the model minority stereotype to further their own political agendas—to fan opposition to affirmative action, for example, or to dispel the thought that discrimination continues to suppress the opportunities of racial minorities in the United States. But, we have wondered, are such arguments typical views of persons who hold positive model minority beliefs about Asian Americans? To this end, we have investigated whether model minority beliefs are usually accompanied by increased opposition to affirmative action or government assistance for other minority groups.

For the purpose of our investigation, we devised a testable construct of the effects of the model minority stereotype claimed by Asian critical scholars. We will refer to this construct as the Model Minority Hypothesis. The next Part describes the Model Minority Hypothesis, our investigation’s methodology, and our results.

IV. UNTANGLING THE THREADS OF THE MODEL MINORITY STEREOTYPE

The Model Minority Hypothesis posits that positive views of Asian Americans as intelligent, hard working, and successful are tied to negative views about Asian Americans and to hostility to immigration and programs assisting Asian Americans and African Americans. This is a fascinating

⁸⁶ Accurate statistics on hate crimes are notoriously hard to compile due to varying methods of information gathering and record keeping at the local level and what is undoubtedly substantial underreporting by victims. See NAT’L ASIAN AM. PACIFIC LEGAL CONSORTIUM, *supra* note 37, at 11 (noting that the number of incidents was relatively constant between 1995 and 2001, at 411–534 per year, dropping to 275 in 2002).

hypothesis—that negative stereotypes inhere in positive ones—but is it true? For our study, we modeled two versions of the positive side of the model minority stereotype—one that compares Asian Americans to whites and another that compares them to other minority groups—which we call the “strong form” and the “weak form” of the Hypothesis. Because most descriptions of the stereotype focus on whites’ views, we analyzed the extent to which non-Hispanic whites subscribe to either the strong or the weak form of the stereotype.

The General Social Survey (“GSS”) served as the main basis for our exploration of these questions. The General Social Survey is currently a bi-annual survey of Americans, which has been conducted since 1972. The National Opinion Research Center (“NORC”) at the University of Chicago surveys scientific samples of the noninstitutionalized U.S. adult population that understands English. After the U.S. Census, the GSS is the most used database by sociologists and is among the most used in all of the social sciences. The GSS contains sets of questions grouped around various topics and allows researchers to correlate responses to one question with responses to other questions. The survey data also contain wide demographic information about respondents: race, ethnicity, income, education, political affiliations, marital background, and so on.

In particular, we focused on a set of questions that allows us to test several versions of both the strong and weak forms of the Model Minority Hypothesis—that positive stereotypes of Asian Americans mask and are associated with negative views about Asian Americans, immigrants, and other minorities. Specifically, one module asks respondents several questions about various racial and ethnic groups that we found pertinent to establishing the positive side of the Hypothesis⁸⁷:

1. Do you consider [Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, Whites] to be rich or poor (on a scale of 1 to 7, with rich being 1 and poor being 7)? (GSS variables WLTHASNS, WLTHBLKS, WLTHHSPS, WLTHWHTS)⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Respondents have been asked to rate their perceptions of Asians, Hispanics, Blacks, Whites, Southern Whites, Jews, legal immigrants, and illegal immigrants.

⁸⁸ The exact wording is:

Now I have some questions about different groups in our society. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the characteristics of people in a group can be rated. In the first statement a score of 1 means that you think almost all of the people in that group are "rich." A score of 7 means that you think almost everyone in the group are "poor." A score of 4 means you think that the group is not towards one end or another, and of course you may choose any number in between that comes closest to where you think people in the group stand.

NAT'L OPINION RESEARCH CTR., UNIV. OF CHI., GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY CODEBOOK, <http://webapp.icpsr.umich.edu/GSS/> (follow "Mnemonic" hyperlink; then follow "WLTHASNS" hyperlink) (last visited Oct. 14, 2005) [hereinafter GSS CODEBOOK]. The wording for all GSS variables is available in the *Codebook*. Selecting "Mnemonic" from the left hand column and then selecting any hyperlink under "Variables" will cause a pop-up window with the question wording and responses to appear.

2. Do people in these groups [Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, Whites] tend to be unintelligent or tend to be intelligent? (INTLASNS, INTLBLKS, INTLHSPS, INTLWHTS)⁸⁹
3. Do you perceive (Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, Whites) as a group to be hard working or lazy (on a scale of 1 to 7, with hard working being 1 and 7 being lazy)? (WORKASNS, WORKBLKS, WORKHSPS, WORKWHTS)⁹⁰

We compared the scores on these questions about one group to the scores for other groups. Respondents were not asked to compare one group to another, but rather to rate each group separately, which might explain why many people were willing to ascribe differences to groups despite taboos against stereotyping.

The positive form of the hypotheses can be stated as follows:

Model Minority Hypothesis—Positive Side

Weak Form Test:

1. Asian Americans are more intelligent than other minorities (recodes of GSS variables INTLASNS, INTLBLKS, and INTLHSPS).⁹¹
2. Asian Americans work harder than other minorities (recodes of GSS variables WORKASNS and WORKBLKS, and WORKHSPS).⁹²
3. Asian Americans are richer than other minorities (recodes of GSS variables WLTHASNS, WLTHBLKS, and WLTHHSPS).⁹³

Model Minority Hypothesis—Positive Side

Strong Form Test⁹⁴:

1. Asian Americans are more intelligent than whites (recodes of GSS variables INTLASNS and INTLWHTS).⁹⁵

⁸⁹ This question was, “Do people in these groups tend to be unintelligent or tend to be intelligent?” *Id.*

⁹⁰ The question here read as follows: “The second set of characteristics asks if people in the group tend to be hard-working or if they tend to be lazy.” *Id.* (GSS variables WORKASNS, WORKWHTS, WORKBLKS, WORKHSPS).

⁹¹ GSS CODEBOOK, *supra* note 88.

⁹² *Id.*

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ A common aspect of the stereotype is that Asians are richer than other minorities. While many have said that Asian family incomes are higher than whites’, we have not heard the argument that Asians’ accumulated wealth exceeds that of whites. The GSS questions ask about whether a group is viewed as rich, which we interpret as pointing more to accumulated wealth than to income. Thus, we included wealth as part of the weak form comparison of Asian Americans with other minorities, but not as part of the strong form comparison with whites. We wanted to be cautious to test only claims that were important parts of the model minority stereotype.

⁹⁵ GSS CODEBOOK, *supra* note 88.

2. Asian Americans work harder than whites (recodes of GSS variables WORKASNS and WORKWHTS).⁹⁶

Although not a perfect fit, these questions parallel the core of the positive side of the model minority stereotype, that Asian Americans are hard working, highly educated, and relatively well-off financially. To obtain larger samples, where available we combined data for the 1990, 1994, and 2000 surveys, which were years when respondents were asked to rate Asians and other ethnic groups on components of positive and negative stereotypes.⁹⁷

GSS respondents also answered questions about their opinions on various social issues pertaining to Asians, immigration, discrimination, African Americans, and affirmative action. These questions parallel aspects of what Asian critical scholars have considered the negative side of the Model Minority Hypothesis. Our model of the negative side of the Model Minority Hypothesis has many facets:

Model Minority Hypothesis—Negative Side

Foreignness:

1. Asians are less patriotic than whites (recodes of GSS variables PATRASNS, PATRWHTS).⁹⁸

Hostility to Asians and Programs for Asians:

2. Asians have too much influence in American life and politics (INFLUASNS).
3. In general, how close do you feel to Asians (ASNCLS)?
4. I would oppose a close relative or family member marrying an Asian American (MARASIAN).
5. I would oppose living in a neighborhood where half of my neighbors were Asian American (LIVEASNS dichotomized).
6. Government pays more attention to Asian Americans than they deserve (ASNGOVT).

⁹⁶ *Id.* In this Essay, each of the questions representing the positive side of the Model Minority Hypothesis is dichotomized. Here, for example, the variable measuring whether respondents consider Asians more intelligent than whites is coded as 1 if Asians are rated higher than whites on intelligence and coded as 0 otherwise.

⁹⁷ Because there was no time trend between 1990 and 2000 in the proportion of respondents expressing the positive side of the model minority stereotype, no year variable was used in our analyses. Not all questions were asked each year (in particular, the intelligence questions were not asked in 1994). Adding all five components of the positive side into a single scale, the mean score of these five variables combined is 1.978 in 1990 and an almost identical 1.965 in 2000, meaning that non-Hispanic whites held positive model minority views on about two of five variables in both 1990 and 2000. So, there is no trend in these data from 1990 through 2000. Further, we weighted the GSS sample to adjust for its efficiency compared to a simple random sample, decreasing the number of respondents by a factor of 1.7 (a common adjustment for design effect). Thus, the numbers of respondents reported in Charts 1–8 are effective cell counts after having been reduced by a factor of 1.7.

⁹⁸ GSS CODEBOOK, *supra* note 88.

Failure to See Discrimination Against Asians:

7. Asian Americans are not discriminated against in housing (ASNHOUSE).
8. There is little or no discrimination that hurts the chances of Asian Americans to get good paying jobs (ASNJOBS).

Hostility to Immigrants and Immigration:

9. The U.S. should not let in more immigrants (LETIN).
10. Immigrants should be eligible for welfare (IMMFARE).
11. Immigration increases unemployment (IMMUNEMP).
12. Immigration makes it harder for the country to unite (IMMUNITE).
13. Immigrants are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights (IMMPUSH).
14. Immigrants should overcome bias without help (IMMWRKUP).

Hostility to African Americans and Programs for African Americans:

15. The federal government should provide special college scholarships for black children who maintain good grades (BLKCOL).
16. The federal government should spend more money on the schools in black neighborhoods, especially for preschool and early-education programs (BLKSCHS).
17. The federal government should give business and industry special tax breaks for locating in largely black areas (BLKZONE).
18. I would oppose a close relative or family member marrying a black person (MARBLK).
19. I would oppose living in a neighborhood where half of my neighbors were blacks (LIVEBLK dichotomized).
20. How much discrimination is there that hurts the chances of blacks to get good paying jobs (BLKJOBS)?
21. How much discrimination is there that makes it hard for blacks to buy or rent housing wherever they want (BLKHOUSE)?
22. Are you for or against preferential hiring and promotion for blacks (AFFRMACT dichotomized)?
23. Conditions for blacks have improved (BLKSIMP dichotomized).
24. There should be laws against marriages between African Americans and whites (RACMAR).
25. African Americans have too much influence in American life and politics (INFLUBLK).
26. White people have a right to keep African Americans out of their neighborhoods if they want to, and African Americans should respect that right (RACSEG dichotomized).
27. African Americans shouldn't push themselves where they're not wanted (RACPUSH).
28. Do blacks get more attention from the government than they deserve (BLKGOVT)?

Some of these questions obviously reflect negative views towards minority groups, while others may or may not—one might, for example, feel very positively about African Americans and still oppose affirmative action, or

one could think highly of Asian Americans and Latinos and still oppose immigration. We will generally refer to this aspect of our model as "the negative side of the model minority stereotype" because Asian critical scholars have considered these views as negative in their critique of the model minority stereotype.⁹⁹

The GSS is a particularly appropriate dataset for this project because some Asian critical scholars have relied on GSS data to bolster claims about the perniciousness of the model minority stereotype.¹⁰⁰ Some of the very GSS questions we use are presented by Asian critical scholars as direct support both for the existence of the model minority stereotype and for the claim that the stereotype leads people to hold negative views of Asians, immigrants, and African Americans.¹⁰¹ Indeed, in one of the classic articles in the field, Professor Pat Chew summarizes some of the data from the 1990 GSS in terms almost identical to our construction of the weak form of the Hypothesis: "Asian Americans are more likely to be thought of as wealthier, more hard working, and more intelligent than other minorities."¹⁰² Thus, not only are these data relevant for testing the Hypothesis, but some Asian critical scholars have conceived of the stereotype in terms of the same variables and dataset we use.

Our inquiry is limited somewhat by the questions the GSS asks, and not all of these survey questions perfectly track the issues Asian critical scholars have raised. For example, the GSS asks about perceptions of ethnic groups' patriotism, not perceptions of groups' "foreignness," which is a related but somewhat different concept. (It is fair to say, however, that perceiving a group as foreign would be a major reason why one might suspect a group's patriotism.) On the other hand, other questions, such as those about affirmative action and the proper level of government attention different groups deserve parallel the claimed downsides of the model minority stereotype quite well.

A. *Who Holds Positive Model Minority Beliefs?*

The strong form of the Model Minority Hypothesis involves claims that Asian Americans are superior to whites. The weak form involves claims that Asian Americans are superior to other minorities (chiefly African Americans and Hispanics), but not to whites. When asked to rate vari-

⁹⁹ See *supra* Part III.

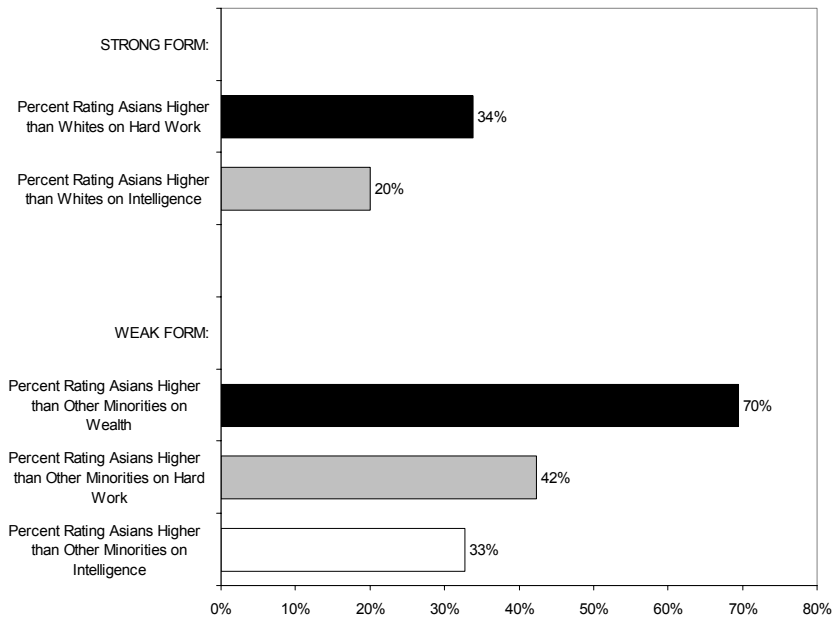
¹⁰⁰ See, e.g., Chew, *supra* note 1, at 33. To support claims that the model minority stereotype has pernicious effects, Chew cites Bobo & Kluegel, *supra* note 52, at 16–17 fig. 3; Smith, *supra* note 52, at 7–8. See also Paula C. Johnson, *The Social Construction of Identity in Criminal Cases: Cinema Verité and the Pedagogy of Vincent Chin*, 1 MICH. J. RACE & L. 347, 390–91 (1996) (discussing articles by Chew, Bobo & Kluegel, and Smith to support the existence of model minority views and their negative effects).

¹⁰¹ See, e.g., Chew, *supra* note 1, at 33.

¹⁰² *Id.* at 32 n.140.

ous groups, 20% of non-Hispanic whites rated Asian Americans as more intelligent than whites; and 34% of non-Hispanic whites rated Asian Americans as harder working than whites. Non-Hispanic whites were generally more likely to rate Asian Americans positively as compared with other minority groups: 70% ranked Asian Americans as wealthier than other minority groups, 42% rated Asian Americans as harder working, and 33% rated Asian Americans as more intelligent.

Chart 1: How Widespread Are Model Minority Views?
 Non-Hispanic Whites Rating Asian Americans Higher than Whites
 or Higher than Other Minorities
 Data Source: 1990, 1994, 2000 General Social Surveys; n=1169-1829



The group of respondents who ranked Asian Americans as harder working than whites or than other minorities is a slightly different group than the respondents who ranked Asian Americans as more intelligent. Believing that Asian Americans *work harder* correlated moderately¹⁰³ with socioeconomic status. Education (highest degree attained), performance on a vocabulary test, individual income, and occupational prestige all correlated positively with believing that Asian Americans work harder than whites and

¹⁰³ All relationships mentioned in this section are statistically significant at $< .05$; most are significant at $< .0005$.

work harder than other minorities.¹⁰⁴ Such respondents were also more likely to live in the twelve largest metropolitan areas and in the Pacific region of the United States. As for those who believe that Asian Americans are *richer* than other minorities, positive predictors are education, parental education, income, performance on a vocabulary test, and living in the Pacific region.

In contrast, ranking Asian Americans as more *intelligent* than whites correlated moderately with only two of these measures of socioeconomic status—highest educational degree and score on a vocabulary test. Similarly, a high score on a vocabulary test correlated with finding Asian Americans smarter than other minorities, but having a very high prestige job made one substantially less likely to believe that Asian Americans are smarter than other minorities. The other predictors were either weak or statistically insignificant.

These patterns suggest that stereotyping the positive work habits and financial success of Asian Americans rises with education and socioeconomic status, but that stereotyping the intelligence of ethnic groups is largely unrelated to socioeconomic status. Moreover, only 33% of non-Hispanic whites responded that Asian Americans were more intelligent than other minority groups and only 20% responded that Asian Americans were more intelligent than whites. Respondents were far less likely to report that Asian Americans were more intelligent than they were to report that Asian Americans were harder working or wealthier. This reluctance to characterize Asian Americans as more intelligent perhaps reflects the greater societal taboo against ascribing inherent personal characteristics to racial groups. Wealth and hard work, in contrast, are characteristics over which an individual theoretically exercises some control.

B. Do Model Minority Beliefs Mask Whites' Fear of the "Yellow Peril"?

Asian critical scholars express concern that perceptions of Asian Americans as a model minority mask more negative, fearful views about Asian Americans and Asian immigrants. Several sets of questions on the General Social Survey allow us to examine whether there is any connection between superficially positive model minority beliefs and these more pernicious attitudes towards Asian Americans and Asian immigrants.

1. Do Model Minority Beliefs Accompany the Belief that Asian Americans Are Alien or Foreign?—

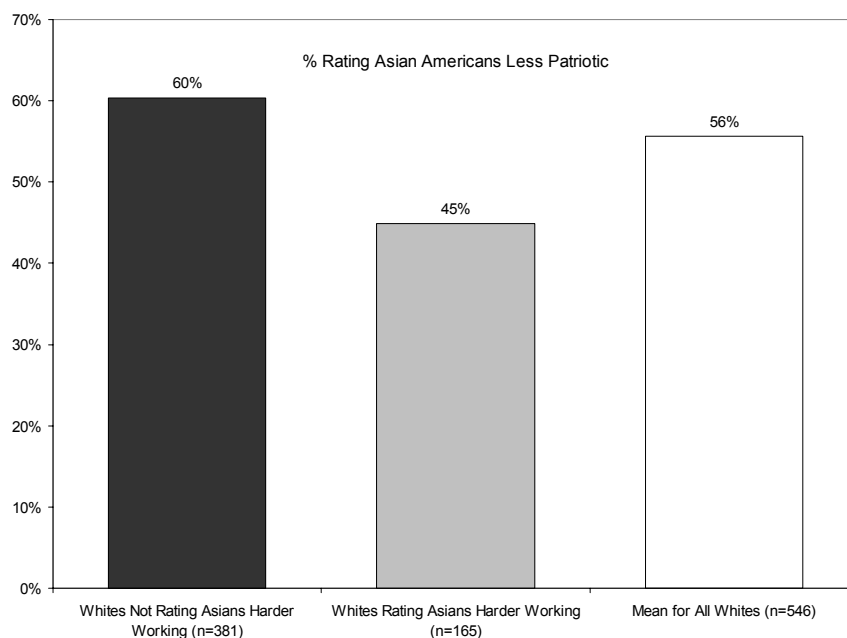
a. Questioning the patriotism of Asian Americans.—First, do those who have positive views of Asian Americans also have negative views of Asian Americans as foreign, cliquish, and unpatriotic? Both from

¹⁰⁴ In addition, for working harder than whites, moderate predictors include socioeconomic index and father's education.

narratives of Asian Americans and from survey data, there is little doubt that Asian Americans, even those Asian Americans born in the United States, are sometimes treated by other Americans as foreigners.¹⁰⁵ The less obvious question is whether those who hold superficially positive views of Asian Americans as hard working or intelligent are more likely than others to hold views of Asian Americans as less patriotic than white Americans.

When asked separately to rate how patriotic Asian Americans and whites are, 55% of non-Hispanic whites rate whites higher than Asian Americans on patriotism. But only 45% of those who consider Asian Americans harder working than whites hold that view, while 60% of the rest consider whites more patriotic (a 15% difference).¹⁰⁶ In other words, those who believe Asian Americans to be more hard working are *less* likely to view Asian Americans as less patriotic than whites. As one of the strongest relationships in this study, it is presented in Chart 2. This, of course, is contrary to what the strong form of the Model Minority Hypothesis would predict.

Chart 2: Those Who Rate Asian Americans as Harder Working than Whites Are Less Likely to View Asians as Less Patriotic than Whites
Data Source: 1990, 2000 General Social Surveys; n=546



¹⁰⁵ See *supra* Part III.E.

¹⁰⁶ $p = .001$ (two-tailed Fisher's exact test).

On the other hand, one of the tests of the weak form of the Hypothesis supported the Hypothesis. For those who believed that Asian Americans were more intelligent than other minorities, 63% rated Asian Americans as less patriotic than whites, compared to 53% of the rest rating Asian Americans less patriotic.¹⁰⁷ For the other three aspects of the Model Minority Hypothesis, there were no significant relationships.

b. Acceptance of Asian Americans.—Three GSS questions investigate respondents' acceptance of Asian Americans. First, the GSS asks, "In general, how close do you feel to Asians?" Second, it asks respondents whether they would be willing to live in a neighborhood that was half Asian American. Third, it asks whether respondents would favor or oppose a close relative's marriage to an Asian American. Results showed either a positive relationship or no relationship between model minority beliefs about Asian Americans and feelings of acceptance of Asian Americans.

(1) *Feelings of closeness to Asian Americans.*—Data on non-Hispanic whites' responses to the question, "In general, how close do you feel to Asians?" ran counter to the Model Minority Hypothesis. The Model Minority Hypothesis would predict that positive views of Asian Americans will accompany fearfulness of Asian Americans or beliefs that Asian Americans are alien or foreign. But the data showed no relationship between non-Hispanic whites' feelings of closeness to Asian Americans and positive characterizations of Asian Americans as wealthier, more intelligent, or harder working.¹⁰⁸

(2) *Living with Asian Americans.*—What about being willing to live in a neighborhood that is half Asian American? Whites who believe that Asian Americans are harder working than whites tend to be more positive (77% to 68%) about living in half-Asian-American neighborhoods,¹⁰⁹ not less positive as the Model Minority Hypothesis would predict. Similarly, those who think that Asian Americans are wealthier than other minorities are also more likely to want to live in a neighborhood that is half Asian American (74% to 67%).¹¹⁰ The other three positive views of Asian Americans—that Asian Americans are smarter than other minorities, that they work harder than other minorities, and that they are more intelligent than whites—are unrelated to the willingness to live in half-Asian-

¹⁰⁷ $p = .035$ (two-tailed Fisher's exact test).

¹⁰⁸ The data actually showed a borderline significant relationship ($p = .075$, two-tailed Fisher's exact test) between the view among non-Hispanic whites that Asian Americans were richer than other minorities and feelings of closeness towards Asian Americans: 48% of those who ranked Asians as richer than other minorities felt close to Asian Americans, while only 37% of those who did not consider Asians richer felt close to Asian Americans. If the difference were significant, it would tend to undercut the Model Minority Hypothesis.

¹⁰⁹ $p = .003$ (two-tailed Fisher's exact test).

¹¹⁰ $p = .023$ (two-tailed Fisher's exact test).

American neighborhoods. Thus, the data on neighborhood preferences provided no support for the Model Minority Hypothesis.

(3) *Marrying an Asian American.*—Among non-Hispanic whites, opinions about a close relative marrying an Asian American show the same pattern as in the neighborhood question. Those who believe that Asian Americans are harder working than whites tend to be more positive about a close relative marrying an Asian American, not less likely as the Model Minority Hypothesis would predict (28% of those who view Asians as hard working would oppose such a marriage versus 37% of those who do not).¹¹¹ Similarly, those who think that Asian Americans are richer than other minorities also tend to be more positive about a close relative marrying an Asian American (30% would oppose such a marriage), compared to those who do not view Asian Americans as richer (38% would oppose the marriage).¹¹² The other three positive views of Asian Americans are unrelated to the willingness to have a close relative marry an Asian American. Thus, the data on intermarriage provided no support for the Model Minority Hypothesis.

2. *Hostility to Immigration.*—

a. *Introduction.*—Three questions address another aspect of “Yellow Peril” fears—that immigration threatens American culture. One question—“How likely is it that more immigrants coming to this country will make it harder to keep the country united?” (IMMUNITE)—investigates whether the respondent perceives immigrants to be so alien that American culture and political life cannot successfully absorb them. Another GSS question probes the economic side of “Yellow Peril” fears: do non-Hispanic whites who hold model minority views believe that immigrants will take jobs away from Americans?¹¹³ Another question, “Do you think the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to the United States to live should be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little, or decreased a lot?” permits us to examine whether the respondent views immigration and immigrants positively.¹¹⁴ Few who favor increasing immigration to the United States would feel threatened by it.

Though these are questions about immigration and immigrants generally, and not about Asian immigrants specifically, we think they are still very instructive. Most immigrants to the United States in the last few decades have been from Asia and from Mexico, Central and South America,

¹¹¹ $p < .01$ (using Spearman’s rho for 5-category variable).

¹¹² $p < .01$ (using Spearman’s rho for 5-category variable).

¹¹³ The question asks, “Is it very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely that more immigrants coming to this country will lead to higher unemployment?” (IMMUNEMP). GSS CODEBOOK, *supra* note 88.

¹¹⁴ GSS variable LETIN. *Id.*

and some of the most highly publicized immigrations have been from Asia (Cambodian "boat people" from the 1970s, Vietnamese refugees, and more recently, illegally "smuggled" Chinese immigrants).

Finally, three questions investigate whether immigrants are seen as parasitic—on balance, do they take more away from American life than they give back? One question asks whether immigrants today should overcome bias without help from the government as earlier immigrants to the United States did (IMMWRKUP).¹¹⁵ This question investigates whether the respondent feels sympathetic toward the difficulties immigrants face, and the extent to which government can and should help them adjust to life in America.

If immigrants are seen as "parasites," we would expect to see a reluctance to expend scarce resources on helping them adjust to American life: "Do you think immigrants who are here legally should be eligible for [government assistance such as Medicaid, food stamps, or welfare] as soon as they come [to the United States], or should they not be eligible?" This variable IMMFARE inquires whether the respondent thinks that immigrants are likely to take advantage of governmental largesse and drain society's scarce resources. Finally, asking whether the respondent agrees or disagrees with the statement "Immigrants are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights" (IMMPUSH) examines whether the respondent is anxious that immigrants are demanding more than their fair share.

b. The results.—On nearly every question, the respondent's perception that Asian Americans work harder than whites correlated with positive views about immigrants, immigration, and the effect immigration has on American life. First, rating Asian Americans as harder working than whites corresponds strongly with a tendency to believe that immigration will not fuel unemployment (62% to 51%).¹¹⁶ The same pattern obtains for those who rate Asian Americans as richer than other minorities (63% to 53%).¹¹⁷ In other words, fear and anxiety about immigrants' effect on employment correlates negatively, not positively, with the perception that Asian Americans are harder workers than whites or richer than other minorities.

Second, the data suggest the perception that Asian Americans are harder working than whites does not mask more pernicious attitudes about immigrants. People who believe that Asian Americans work harder than whites are less likely to agree that immigrants are demanding too many rights (52% to 66%).¹¹⁸ Similarly, there were no significant relationships between positive views toward Asian Americans and beliefs about how

¹¹⁵ *Id.*

¹¹⁶ $p < .01$ (using Spearman's rho for 4-category variable).

¹¹⁷ $p < .05$ (using Spearman's rho for 4-category variable).

¹¹⁸ $p < .01$ (using Spearman's rho for 5-category variable).

likely immigrants are to go on welfare or whether they should work their way up without help.

But there is a somewhat mixed picture on concerns that immigration will weaken national unity. People who believe that Asian Americans work harder than whites or other minorities are not more concerned that immigrants will weaken national unity. Those who perceive Asian Americans as richer than other minorities are also *less* likely to believe that immigrants will weaken national unity (62% to 68%).¹¹⁹ In contrast, those who think Asian Americans are more intelligent than other minorities are *more* likely to think that immigrants will weaken national unity (64% to 52%).¹²⁰ Furthermore, those who view Asians as more intelligent than other minorities are more likely to want to decrease immigration (55% to 43%).¹²¹ We found no relationship, however, between other views about Asians and a desire to decrease immigration.

In short, we found little evidence that model minority beliefs mask more insidious, “Yellow Peril”-like beliefs. For the twenty-two hypothesized relationships between positive views of Asian Americans and negative views of immigrants, only two support the Model Minority Hypothesis (see Tables 1 and 2). And four relationships point significantly in the opposite direction. Those non-Hispanic whites who view Asian Americans as smart, hard working, and successful generally are not hostile to or fearful of immigrants. Indeed, non-Hispanic whites who believe that Asian Americans are harder working than whites are more likely to think immigration benefits the American economy and American life more generally. These findings are important because they suggest that some whites who perceive differences among different racial and ethnic groups do not equate “different” with “bad”; for them “different” can indeed be *better*.

C. Are Model Minority Beliefs Associated with a Lack of Awareness of Problems Faced by Asian Americans?

Asian critical scholars have charged that “model minority” beliefs have blinded Americans to the problems Asian Americans face. Specifically, Asian-American scholars have made two claims. First, scholars have claimed that the Asian-American success story of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese immigrants have given Americans the impression that all Asian Americans have flourished in America and need no help in making a successful transition. Second, they have charged that model minority beliefs blind Americans to the fact that race discrimination against Asian Americans persists.

¹¹⁹ $p < .01$ (using Spearman’s rho for 4-category variable).

¹²⁰ $p < .01$ (using Spearman’s rho for 4-category variable).

¹²¹ $p < .01$ (using Spearman’s rho for 5-category variable).

1. *Support for Increasing Government Attention and Perceptions of Asian Americans’ Influence on American Life and Politics.*—To

explore the first charge, we examined whites’ responses to two GSS questions: “Do Asian Americans get more attention from government than they deserve?”¹²² and “Do Asian Americans have too much influence in American life and politics?”¹²³ Non-Hispanic whites who hold positive views of Asian Americans tend to be no different from others on these two questions—with two important exceptions. Those who view Asian Americans as harder working than whites tend to believe that Asian Americans should have more influence in American life (52% to 40%).¹²⁴ They also tend to think that the government does not pay enough attention to the needs of Asian Americans (32% to 23%).¹²⁵ Both of these findings are contrary to the predictions of the Model Minority Hypothesis.

These results are notable for a few reasons. First, the GSS question asks about proper government attention for Asian Americans generally; the question does not distinguish more recent immigrants from more established Asian Americans or American-born Asian Americans. In other words, the question “lumps” all Asian Americans together. That a sizable proportion of those who responded that Asian Americans get less attention than they deserve also believe that Asian Americans work harder than whites suggests that the reported success of some Asian American groups does not necessarily undermine the claims of other Asian Americans for increased government assistance or blind whites to their needs.

Second, among those who believe that Asians work harder than whites, the perception that Asian Americans need greater government attention does not appear to be based in a notion of desert—that those who work hard should be rewarded by increased government support and those who do not work as hard deserve less government help. For example, generally non-Hispanic whites who believe that Asian Americans work harder than whites are not less sympathetic to *blacks’* need for greater government assistance (see Table 1). Put slightly differently, the belief that some Asian Americans have “pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps” does not necessarily accompany the view that all groups should do the same.

2. *Views About Discrimination Against Asian Americans.*—The Model Minority Hypothesis would predict that those who consider Asians smart, hard working, or wealthy tend to think that Asian Americans are not discriminated against. Significantly, on this issue *the data here strongly support the Model Minority Hypothesis*. Among non-Hispanic whites, the belief in most of the five positive model minority stereotypes correlated

¹²² GSS CODEBOOK, *supra* note 88 (GSS variable ASNGOVT).

¹²³ *Id.* (GSS variable INFLUASN).

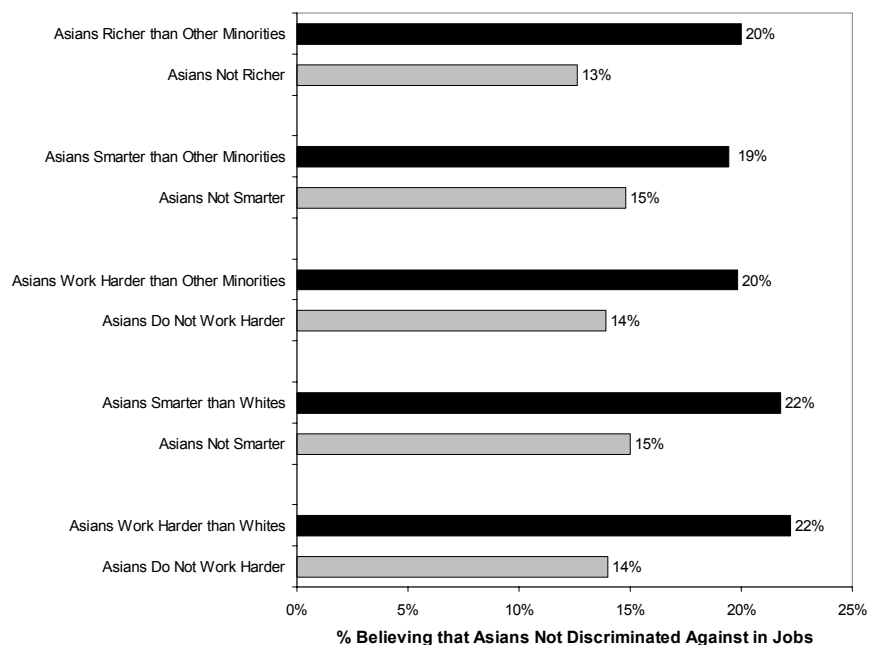
¹²⁴ $p < .05$ (using Spearman’s rho for 3-category variable).

¹²⁵ $p < .01$ (using Spearman’s rho for 3-category variable).

very strongly with the perception that Asian Americans faced little or no discrimination in the job market.¹²⁶ Chart 3 shows this relationship: there are significant 4% to 8% differences in the number of non-Hispanic whites who think that there is no job discrimination against Asian Americans, based on beliefs that Asian Americans are smart, hard working, or wealthy. For example, 22% of those who think that Asian Americans work harder than whites see no job discrimination against Asian Americans, while only 14% of those who do not see Asians as harder working think there is no job discrimination.¹²⁷ Thus, just as the Model Minority Hypothesis would predict, those holding positive views of Asians Americans in comparison to other ethnic groups tend to discount the existence of job discrimination.

Chart 3: Those Who Hold Model Minority Views Are More Likely to Believe That Asian Americans Are Not Discriminated Against at All in Jobs

Data Source: 1990 General Social Survey; n=526-534

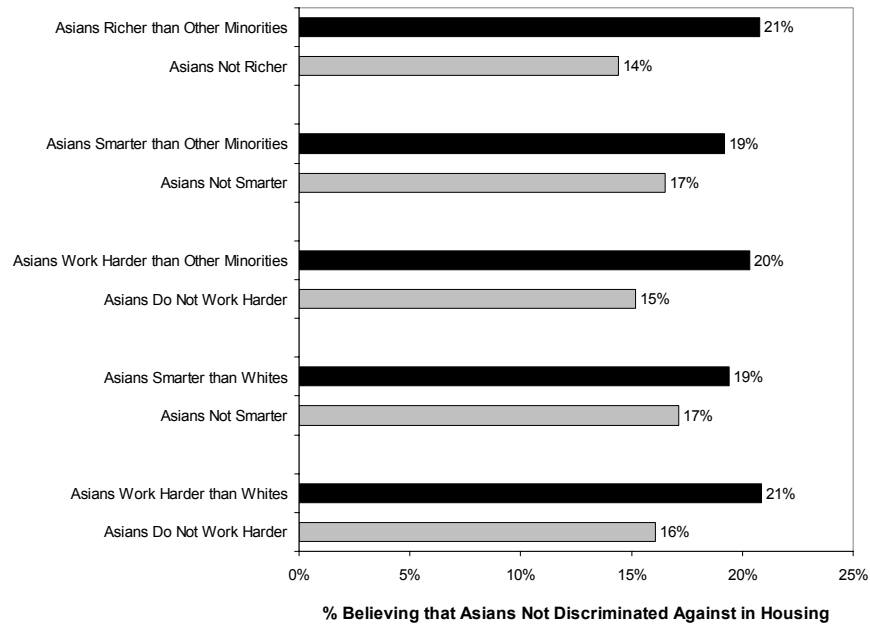


¹²⁶ The question asked specifically, “How much discrimination is there that hurts the chances of Asian Americans to get good paying jobs? Would you say that there’s a lot, some, only a little, or none at all?” GSS CODEBOOK, *supra* note 88 (GSS variable ASNJOBS).

¹²⁷ $p < .05$ (using Spearman’s rho for 4-category variable).

Chart 4: Those Who Hold Model Minority Views Are More Likely to Believe that Asian Americans Are Not Discriminated Against at All in Housing

Data Source: 1990 General Social Survey; n=523-530



Similarly, those non-Hispanic white respondents who believe that Asian Americans are wealthier or harder working than other minorities also tend to be more likely to believe that Asian Americans face little or no housing discrimination.¹²⁸ Again, these results support the Model Minority Hypothesis, and they are statistically significant (see Chart 4).¹²⁹

These are very strong results in support of the Model Minority Hypothesis on the issue of perceptions of discrimination against Asian Americans. Interestingly, however, the perception that Asian Americans face little or no discrimination in jobs and housing does not accompany opposition to increased government aid for Asian Americans.

¹²⁸ The GSS question asked, “How much discrimination is there that makes it hard for Asian Americans to buy or rent housing wherever they want?” GSS CODEBOOK, *supra* note 88 (GSS variable ASNHOUSE).

¹²⁹ The differences in perceptions of housing discrimination among those who viewed Asians as more intelligent than other minorities or as more intelligent or harder working than whites were statistically insignificant.

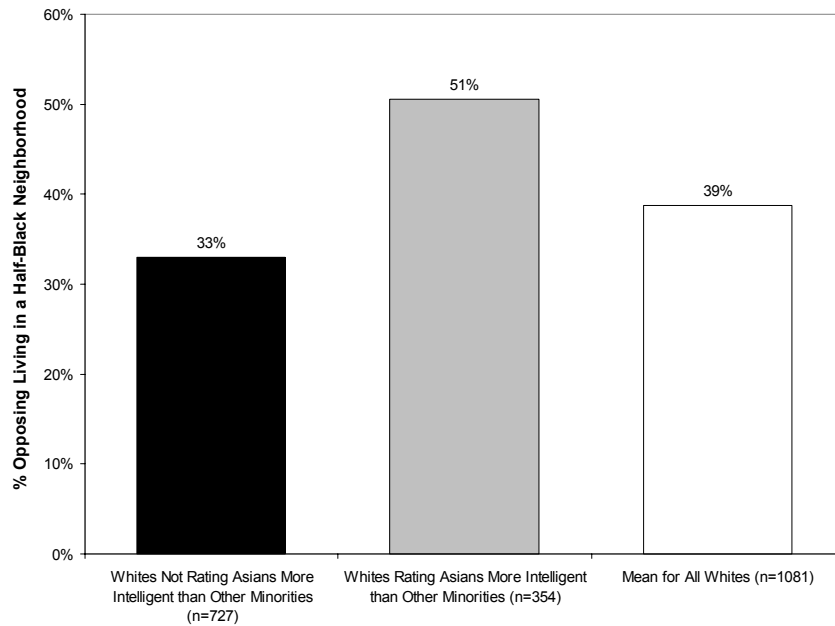
D. Relationship Between Model Minority Beliefs and Attitudes Toward African Americans

Asian critical scholars fear that the model minority stereotype masks hostility to minorities generally and reinforces beliefs in the mythical American Dream—that hard work and talent are equally rewarded in America regardless of one’s race or national origin. Our data show a complicated picture on this issue. On balance, however, the data do not generally support the Model Minority Hypothesis.

The Model Minority Hypothesis would predict that those who think that Asian Americans are smart, hard working, and relatively rich will also have a dim view of other minority groups and will oppose government aid for these groups, particularly African Americans. That is a testable hypothesis; we examined fourteen GSS questions concerning African Americans, with sixty-eight different links between variables tested. Just four of these sixty-eight links support the Model Minority Hypothesis, while eight of the links reject the Hypothesis. The rest do not support the Hypothesis.

Chart 5: Those Who Rate Asian Americans as More Intelligent than Other Minorities Tend to Oppose Living in a Neighborhood That Is Half Black

Data Source: 1990, 2000 General Social Survey; n=1081



We found the strongest evidence for this aspect of the Model Minority Hypothesis in non-Hispanic whites' attitudes toward living in a half-black neighborhood. As Chart 5 shows, 51% of non-Hispanic whites who view Asian Americans as more intelligent than other minorities oppose living in a neighborhood that is half black, while only 33% of those who do not hold this view of Asian Americans would oppose living in such a neighborhood.¹³⁰ A similar pattern supporting the Hypothesis obtains for those who view Asian Americans as harder working than other minorities, 46% of whom oppose living in a half-black neighborhood, compared to 34% of those who do not see Asian Americans as harder working.¹³¹

On the question whether African Americans get too much government attention, one of the three tested relationships bore out the Model Minority Hypothesis: those non-Hispanic whites who view Asian Americans as harder working than other minorities are more likely (58% to 49%) to believe that blacks get too much government attention.¹³² The tests revealed no differences in attitudes among those who perceive Asian Americans to be richer or more intelligent than other minorities (see Tables 1 and 2).

On whether respondents would object to a close relative marrying an African American, the results were mixed. Fifty-five percent of non-Hispanic whites who rate Asians as more intelligent than other minorities would object to such marriages as compared to 47% of whites who do not so rate Asians.¹³³ This is what the Model Minority Hypothesis would predict. On the other hand, those who rate Asians as harder working than whites show the opposite pattern, being less likely to object to such marriages by a 45% to 52% margin.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ $p < .00001$ (two-tailed Fisher's exact test).

¹³¹ $p = .0001$ (two-tailed Fisher's exact test).

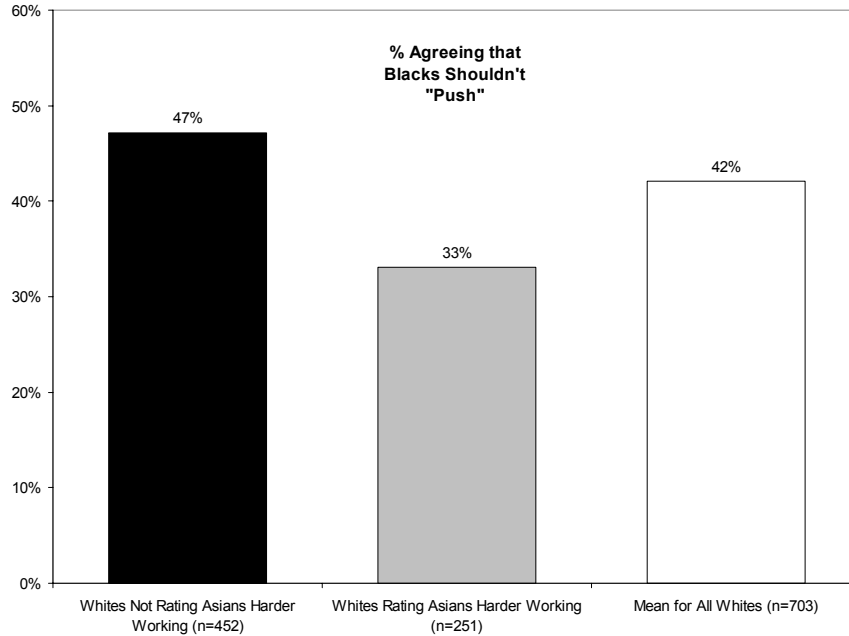
¹³² $p < .05$ (using Spearman's rho for 3-category variable).

¹³³ $p < .01$ (using Spearman's rho for 5-category variable).

¹³⁴ $p < .01$ (using Spearman's rho for 5-category variable).

Chart 6: Those Who Believe that Asian Americans Are Harder Working than Whites Are Less Likely to Agree that Blacks "Shouldn't Push Where They're Not Wanted"

Data Source: 2000 General Social Survey; n=703



Among respondents who rank Asians harder working and more intelligent than whites, we found evidence that undermined the Model Minority Hypothesis. Those who view Asian Americans as harder working than whites do not see blacks as too demanding or pushy (Chart 6), do not favor a right to segregated neighborhoods (Chart 7), and oppose laws against racial intermarriage (Chart 8). These latter two issues involve some of the strongest effect sizes in this study, each rejecting the Model Minority Hypothesis.

Overall, we tested sixty-eight relationships between positive views of Asian Americans and views about African Americans. For eight tests, the significant relationships were opposite to those that would be consistent with the Model Minority Hypothesis: non-Hispanic whites who rated Asian Americans as smart, hard working, or relatively rich tended to have positive views of blacks or government help for blacks. For four tests, the Model Minority Hypothesis was supported (see Tables 1 and 2). For the rest of the fifty-six tests, there were no significant relationships. Overall, there is no relationship between positive views of Asian Americans and negative views of African Americans. Where significant relationships exist, they usually tend to undercut the Model Minority Hypothesis, rather than support it.

On balance, we found no significant support for the concern that those who espouse model-minority-like beliefs are more likely to oppose affirmative action for African Americans in employment or college aid, to believe that blacks have too much government influence, or to believe that we spend too much money on schools in black neighborhoods (see Tables 1 and 2).

Chart 7: Those Who View Asian Americans as Being Harder Working than Whites Oppose the Right of Whites to Segregated Neighborhoods
 Data Source: 1990, 1994 General Social Survey; n=774

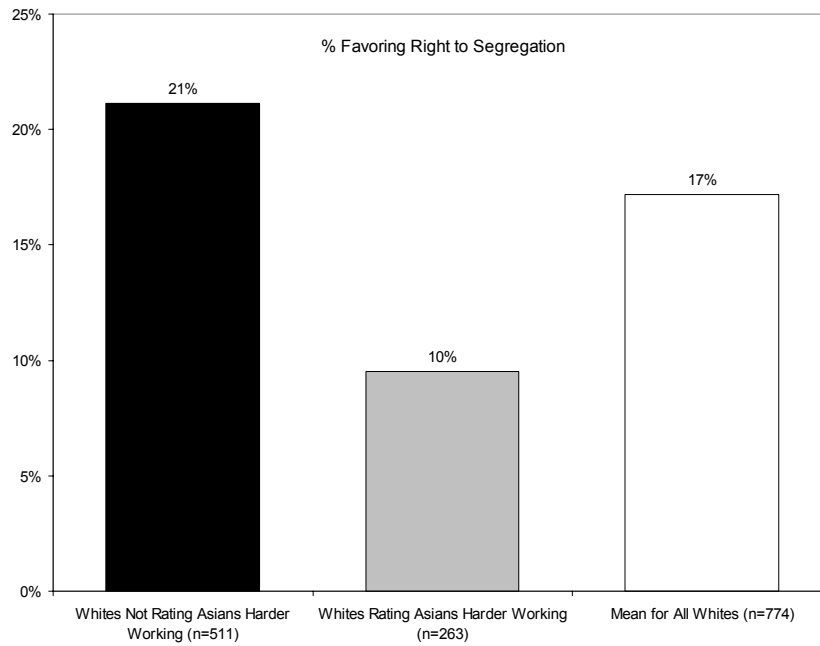
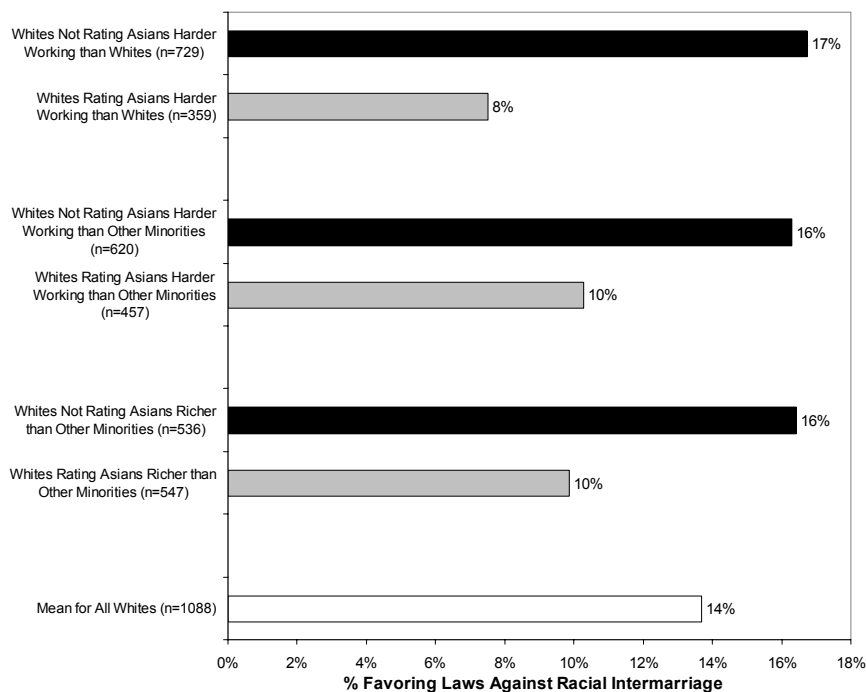


Chart 8: Non-Hispanic Whites Who Rate Asians Favorably Tend to Oppose Laws Against Racial Inter-marriage

Data Source: 1990, 1994, 2000 General Social Surveys; n=1088



E. Summary of Bivariate Tests of the Model Minority Hypothesis

We made 126 tests of the Model Minority Hypothesis to see whether positive views of Asian Americans as intelligent, rich, and hard working tended to be associated with negative views of Asian Americans, immigrants, and other minorities. For nineteen of the tests, we found just the opposite: these positive views of Asian Americans correlated significantly with other positive views about Asian Americans, other minority groups, and immigrants. Thirteen of the 126 tests confirmed the Model Minority Hypothesis, nearly half of which concerned whites' perceptions of discrimination against Asian Americans.

In this one pocket, however—perceptions of job and housing discrimination against Asian Americans—there is strong support for the Model Minority Hypothesis. People who think that Asian Americans are smart, hard working, or rich tend to be less likely to think that Asian Americans face discrimination. Notably, this relative complacency about discrimination does not lead those who believe in positive stereotypes of Asian Americans to believe that African Americans are not discriminated against; nor does it

translate into hostility against Asian Americans, immigrants, or programs to help them. Yet our results solidly support the worry that those whites who hold model-minority-like views also think that Asian Americans face little job and housing discrimination.

If one looks only at the signs (direction) of the 126 relationships, not whether they are significant, fifty-one support the Model Minority Hypothesis and seventy-seven undermine it. The pattern is actually a bit more complex. For one positive view of Asian Americans—that they are harder working than whites—the Model Minority Hypothesis was significantly rejected for nearly half of the variables about Asian Americans, African Americans, and immigrants (see Table 1). In other words, it is particularly those who hold the stereotype of Asian Americans as hard working compared to whites who show intermittent favoritism for immigration, immigrants, Asian Americans, African Americans, and government programs to help them—no “Yellow Peril” here.

In general, the data strongly reject the strong form of the Hypothesis (rating Asian Americans higher than whites) (see Table 1). The weak form of the Hypothesis (rating Asian Americans higher than other minorities) fared somewhat better, as Table 2 shows, though even here there was as much evidence supporting a relationship opposite to what the Model Minority Hypothesis would predict. The data showed no general pattern of correlations between beliefs that Asian Americans are smarter, harder working, or richer than other minorities and hostility to immigrants, Asian Americans, or African Americans.

Table 1: Tests of the Strong Form of the Model Minority Hypothesis⁺

	Asian Americans Work Harder than Whites	Asian Americans Are More Intelligent than Whites
<u>Link Tending Partly to Confirm the Model Minority Hypothesis</u>		
Asians Not Discriminated Against in Jobs	.076 [^]	.113 ^{***}
<u>Link Tending Partly to Reject the Model Minority Hypothesis</u>		
Blacks Demand Too Much	-.158 ^{***}	-.017
Whites Have Right to Segregated Area	-.146 ^{***}	-.019
Whites More Patriotic than Asians	-.143 ^{***}	.044
Favor Law Against Racial Intermarriage	-.126 ^{***}	-.045
Immigrants Demand Too Much	-.120 ^{***}	
Asians Have Too Much Influence	-.112 ^{**}	-.026
Immigrants Will Fuel Unemployment	-.109 ^{***}	
Asians Get Too Much Government Attention	-.108 ^{**}	
Oppose Relative Marrying an Asian	-.092 ^{***}	.009
Oppose Living in Half-Asian Area	-.090 ^{***}	-.052 [^]
Oppose Relative Marrying a Black	-.086 ^{***}	-.001
<u>Links Not Confirming the Model Minority Hypothesis</u>		
Oppose Spending More on Black Schools	-.113 [^]	-.072
Oppose College Aid for Blacks	-.084	-.015
Blacks Not Discriminated Against in Jobs	-.083 [^]	-.036
No Tax Breaks for Black Areas	-.076	-.037
Blacks Have Too Much Influence	-.074 [^]	.055
Does Not Feel Close to Asians	-.060	-.089
Immigrants Will Affect National Unity	-.046	.047
Blacks Not Discriminated Against in Housing	-.041	-.006
Conditions for Blacks Improved	-.035	.003
Oppose Help for Immigrants Facing Bias	-.030	
Blacks Get Too Much Government Attention	-.028	
Let in Fewer Immigrants	-.026	.050
Immigrants Should be Ineligible for Welfare	-.025	
Oppose Living in Half-Black Area	.008	.036
Oppose Preferences in Hiring Blacks	.017	.061
Asians Not Discriminated Against in Housing	.056	.064

⁺ Coefficients are computed using Spearman's rho. Significance is computed using Fisher's Exact Test for 2 category variables and using Spearman's rho for ordinal variables with more than 2 categories.

^{*} Negative values trend against the Model Minority Hypothesis.

[^] p < .10 (borderline significant)

^{**} p < .05

^{***} p < .01

Table 2: Tests of the Weak Form of the Model Minority Hypothesis⁺

	Asians Work Harder than Other Minorities	Asians Are More Intelligent than Other Minorities	Asians Are Richer than Other Minorities
<u>Links Tending Partly to Confirm the Model Minority Hypothesis</u>			
Asians Not Discriminated Against in Jobs	.120***	.106**	.144***
Oppose Living in Half-Black Area	.120***	.169***	.023
Asians Not Discriminated Against in Housing	.093**	.073	.133***
Blacks Get Too Much Government Attention	.083**		-.002
Let in Fewer Immigrants	.029	.120***	-.028
Whites More Patriotic than Asians	.005	.094**	-.067
<u>Links Partly Confirming and Partly Rejecting the Model Minority Hypothesis</u>			
Immigrants Will Affect National Unity	.019	.118***	-.089***
Oppose Relative Marrying a Black	.054 [^]	.080***	-.061**
<u>Links Tending Partly to Reject the Model Minority Hypothesis</u>			
Favor Law Against Racial Inter-marriage	-.086***	-.019	-.097***
Immigrants Will Fuel Unemployment	-.054		-.095**
Blacks Demand Too Much	-.026	.060	-.085**
Oppose Relative Marrying an Asian	.018	.039	-.083***
Oppose Living in Half-Asian Area	.027	.031	-.071**
<u>Links Not Confirming the Model Minority Hypothesis</u>			
No Tax Breaks for Black Areas	-.021	-.053	-.109 [^]
Does Not Feel Close to Asians	-.037	.001	-.108 [^]
Immigrants Demand Too Much	-.019		-.074 [^]
Conditions for Blacks Improved	-.033	.028	-.062 [^]
Whites Have Right to Segregated Area	-.062	.108 [^]	-.057
Oppose Spending More on Black Schools	-.063	-.037	-.057
Oppose Help for Immigrants Facing Bias	.021		-.052
Oppose Preferences in Hiring Blacks	.047	.074	-.046
Oppose College Aid for Blacks	-.031	.034	-.025
Blacks Not Discriminated Against in Jobs	-.036	-.064	-.024
Blacks Have Too Much Influence	-.005	.053	-.022
Blacks Not Discriminated Against in Housing	-.075 [^]	-.062	-.021
Asians Get Too Much Government Attention	.014		.023
Immigrants Should Be Ineligible for Welfare	.054		.028
Asians Have Too Much Influence	-.020	.010	.074 [^]

⁺ Coefficients are computed using Spearman's rho. Significance is computed using Fisher's Exact Test for 2 category variables and using Spearman's rho for ordinal variables with more than 2 categories.

* Negative values trend against the Model Minority Hypothesis.

[^] p < .10 (borderline significant)

** p < .05

*** p < .01

F. Canonical Correlation Analysis

With so many sets of potential predictor (independent) and outcome (dependent) variables being used here, we decided to use a technique that could analyze sets of variables at the same time. The technique we used is called canonical correlation analysis, a multivariate technique that can deal with one set of variables hypothesized as causing, predicting, or related to another set of variables. Here we have several subsets of superficially positive model minority views about the wealth, industriousness, or intelligence of Asians Americans. We also have several other sets of views that are negative (or viewed as negative in this field), ranging from racist views to complacency about the presence of continuing discrimination.

Canonical correlation analysis tests whether a set of variables representing the superficially positive stereotypes is related to a set of variables representing the more negative views. This technique is used in “prediction situations involv[ing] correlating a multivariate set with another essentially multivariate set. The correlation between two multivariate sets is given mathematically by canonical correlation.”¹³⁵ Bruce Thompson explains:

Conventional canonical correlation analysis investigates the degree of relationship between two sets of variables. In effect, the analysis proceeds by initially collapsing each person’s scores on the variables in each variable set into a single composite variable. The simple or bivariate correlation between the two composite scores (one for each of the two variable sets) is a canonical correlation.¹³⁶

Another way of stating it is that one group of variables is collapsed into something akin to a factor, while another group of variables is combined into another factor based on their contribution to optimizing the correlation between the two factors.¹³⁷

In Table 3, we present the results of ten multivariate models, involving many of the larger overlapping sets of available variables. Because the General Social Survey asks different questions of different respondents, most questions are not asked of any one respondent, so we could not put all the relevant variables into a single model.

In Model 1, the first set is composed of the five variables that make up the positive side of the Model Minority Hypothesis (views of Asians as smart, hard working, or rich). The second set of variables is composed of

¹³⁵ René V. Dawis, *Vocational Psychology, Vocational Adjustment, and the Workforce: Some Familiar and Unanticipated Consequences*, 2 PSYCHOL. PUB. POL’Y & L. 229, 235 (1996).

¹³⁶ BRUCE THOMPSON, CANONICAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS: USES AND INTERPRETATION 14 (1984).

¹³⁷ The square of the canonical correlation represents the variance explained by their linear combination. For convenience, we often refer to each of the two functions as “factors” and each of the function coefficients as “factor loadings,” even though it would be more conventional to call the factors “functions.” Further, because Stata does not handle noninteger analytic weights properly, the GSS data in Table 3 are unweighted.

negative views about Asian Americans (opposing living in a neighborhood that is half Asian, opposing a relative marrying an Asian, considering whites as more patriotic than Asians, and thinking that Asians have too much influence). Consistent with the Model Minority Hypothesis, we tested whether the first set of variables reflecting positive views of Asian Americans would predict the second set of variables reflecting negative views of Asian Americans. Canonical correlation analysis did not confirm the Model Minority Hypothesis, as some of the function coefficients are positive and some are negative. For example, in Model 1 the results showed that those who view Asian Americans as smarter than other minorities (+.968) are likely to reject the view of Asian Americans as harder working than whites (-2.387). If the Model Minority Hypothesis were true, both of these coefficients should be positive as they are all supposed to be part of the same stereotype. Yet the sum of these five coefficients is negative, which means that the best predictor of the second factor (the set of four negative views about Asians) is a first factor that on balance treats those who hold positive model minority views as less likely to hold negative model minority views. Model 1 provides no support for the Model Minority Hypothesis.

Models 2 and 3 test the weak and strong forms, respectively, of the Hypothesis. In Model 2, which compares Asian Americans to other minorities, a stereotype of Asian Americans as richer than other minorities (-1.842) loads in the opposite direction from a stereotype of Asian Americans as smarter than other minorities (+1.498). Also, the sum of all three predictor variables in the first set is negative, which means that on balance those who hold the weak form of model minority views are slightly less likely than others to hold the second set of negative stereotypes set out in Model 2.

The pattern in Model 3 (testing the strong form) is similar. The two predictor variables (Asian Americans smarter than whites and Asian Americans harder working than whites) again correlate in opposite directions. Also, their sum is negative, which means that those who buy into the positive side of the strong form of the Model Minority Hypothesis are slightly less likely to believe in the stereotypes that comprise the negative side of the Hypothesis. Models 2 and 3 suggest that, on balance, those who hold views of Asians as model minorities tend to reject racist and other negative views of Asian Americans.

Table 3: Canonical Correlation Analysis

Data Source: 1990, 2000 General Social Surveys, n=501-870

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
“Positive” Model Minority Views										
Asians Richer than Other Minorities	-.327	-1.842***		-.953***	.940***		1.111***	-.637**	-.724**	
Asians Smarter than Other Minorities	.968	1.498***		-.211	.929***		.403	2.309***	1.957***	
Asians Work Harder than Other Minorities	.725	-.323		-.316	.886***		.669**	.542	.474	
Asians Smarter than Whites	.216		1.025**	-.253		-.146	.221	-1.430***		1.794***
Asians Work Harder than Whites	-2.387**		-2.296***	-1.181***		-2.131***	.525	.473		.930
“Negative” Model Minority Views										
Oppose Living in Half-Asian Area	.294	.857	-.100	.772***	-.796***	.561		-.164	-.515	-2.410**
Oppose Relative Marrying an Asian	.303	.347	.446**	-.077	-.107	-.205		-.240	-.080	.110
Whites More Patriotic than Asians	1.447**	1.306**	1.408***	.335	.114	-.666***				
Asians Have Too Much Influence	.597**	-.572	.683**	.241	-.029	.626***				
Oppose Living in Half-Black Area				-.846	1.160***	-.576		1.575***	1.703***	1.896***
Let in Fewer Immigrants				.356**	-.049**	.551***		.074	.187	.327
Oppose Relative Marrying a Black								.262	.004	-.385
Oppose Preferences in Hiring Blacks								.528	.888	1.115
Conditions for Blacks Improved								.245	.304	.330
Immigrants Will Affect National Unity								.380**	.407**	.025
Blacks Have Too Much Influence				-.140	.142	-.286				
Asians Not Discriminated Against in Housing				-.340	.343	-.278				.524***
Blacks Not Discriminated Against in Housing				.310	-.438**	.170				-.449**
Asians Not Discriminated Against in Jobs				-.851***	.841***	-.660***				.941***
Blacks Not Discriminated Against in Jobs				.661***	-.598***	.636***				-.709***
Canonical Correlation Coefficient	.23	.14	.21	.33	.32	.30	.28	.30	.28	.18
n	843	843	856	794	794	802	870	501	501	526
Significance	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0001

Significance: ** < .01; *** < .001

What about views on African Americans? Model 4 uses the same five positive predictors in the first set as Model 1 (testing a combination of the strong and weak forms of the Hypothesis), but also adds seven more questions about African Americans and discrimination against blacks and Asians. If the Model Minority Hypothesis were accurate, the components of both factors should load positively,¹³⁸ but every coefficient in the first factor is negative, while the coefficients in the second factor are inconsistent (some are significantly positive and some are significantly negative). Models 5 and 6 are similar to Model 4 in that they show highly inconsistent loadings in the second set of variables. The first set of variables does not nicely predict the second set of variables. Again, there is no support in Models 4–6 for the Model Minority Hypothesis.

In Model 7, we finally have a model that fits an important part of the Model Minority Hypothesis. Note that all five coefficients in the first set of stereotypes are positive, two of them significantly so (Asians richer than other minorities and Asians harder working than other minorities). If one then looks at the second set of variables (the negative views), one sees that those who adopt positive stereotypes of Asians as rich and hard working tend to think that Asians do not suffer any job or housing discrimination. Model 7 thus confirms one of the major claims of the Asian critical scholars: people who hold positive stereotypes of Asian Americans see little discrimination against them.¹³⁹

Models 8–10 show the same inconsistencies as Models 1–6, with high levels of inconsistency or with significant negative loadings for some function coefficients either in the first set of variables or in the second set of variables.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, only Model 7 provides any meaningful support for a major tenet of the Model Minority Hypothesis—that those who hold superficially positive Model Minority views also see little discrimination against Asian Americans in the job and housing markets.

V. IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Asian critical scholars' critique of the model minority myth is both powerful and evocative. This study confirms some parts of their critique and casts doubt on others. From our analysis of General Social Survey data from 1990, 1994, and 2000, we draw three important conclusions:

¹³⁸ For one of these models to fit the Model Minority Hypothesis, the variables in the first set should generally load in the same direction as the variables in the second set—that is, either they should be nearly all positive in both sets or nearly all negative.

¹³⁹ Yet even here, note that this sanguine view that Asians experience little discrimination does not translate into the same view for African Americans. The coefficients for views of discrimination against African Americans are the opposite of the ones for views of discrimination against Asian Americans.

¹⁴⁰ Some of this instability should be attributed to the collinearity of some of the predictors.

(1) We find evidence tending to confirm one aspect of the Model Minority Hypothesis put forward by Asian critical scholars: those in the general public who hold positive model minority stereotypes of Asian Americans as smarter, harder working, or richer than other minorities¹⁴¹ tend to be complacent about any discrimination that Asian Americans face. On most tests, non-Hispanic whites who view Asians as a model minority are significantly less likely to believe that Asian Americans suffer from job or housing discrimination (see Tables 1 and 2).

(2) We found little evidence to support the Hypothesis's prediction that superficially positive views about Asian Americans mask more troubling views about Asian Americans, immigrants, and other minority groups. In particular:

a. Non-Hispanic whites who think of Asian Americans as smarter or harder working than whites (the *strong form* of the Hypothesis) are no more likely than others to hold negative views of Asian Americans, immigrants, or African Americans. Indeed, on eleven of twenty-eight issues tested there is evidence consistent with the opposite conclusion—that those who hold model minority stereotypes are significantly less likely to hold negative views of Asians, immigrants, or African Americans. Only on the issue of job discrimination against Asians is there any substantial support for the strong form of the Hypothesis (see Table 1).

b. Non-Hispanic whites who think of Asian Americans as smarter, harder working, and richer than other minorities (the *weak form* of the Hypothesis) are also no more likely than others to hold negative views of Asian Americans, immigrants, or African Americans. On six of twenty-eight issues examined, there were significant relationships supporting the weak form of the Hypothesis (including the discrimination issues noted in (1) above), while on another five of the twenty-eight issues, the Hypothesis was rejected, and on two issues there was support for both positions (see Table 2).

(3) Overall, our results do not confirm the Model Minority Hypothesis. Except for perceptions of housing and job discrimination against Asians noted above, our study shows that there is slightly more evidence conflicting with the Hypothesis than confirming it.

¹⁴¹ There is also support for the same pattern of complacency about job discrimination for those who view Asian Americans as more intelligent than whites. See *supra* Tables 1 & 2.

In the 1990, 1994, and 2000 General Social Surveys, there is substantial evidence that some non-Hispanic whites rate Asian Americans higher than whites (the positive side of the strong form of the Model Minority Hypothesis) or rate Asian Americans higher than other minorities (the positive side of the weak form of the Hypothesis). On the other side, we also find strong evidence of varying levels of hostility to Asians, immigrants, and African Americans, and to government support of these groups. What we do not find, however, is that these ideas are linked in the way hypothesized by most Asian critical scholars. Indeed, on balance, there is weak support for the contrary position—those who rate Asian Americans higher than other minorities, or particularly higher than whites, are as likely or *slightly more likely* to hold other *positive views* about Asians, immigration, African Americans, and government programs supporting these groups.

In retrospect, of course, this should not be such a surprising conclusion—that those who view Asian Americans as hard working, for example, might actually be *more likely* to view Asian Americans as patriotic, be willing to have a family member marry one, be willing to live in a half-Asian neighborhood, think that government should pay more attention to Asian Americans, think that immigration does not lead to unemployment, oppose racial segregation, favor racial intermarriage, and so on. Some whites might see Asian Americans in comparatively positive terms because they like them—or like them because they see them in comparatively positive terms.

We also find that non-Hispanic whites who rate Asian Americans higher than other minorities are indeed complacent about continuing job and housing discrimination against Asian Americans, precisely as many Asian critical scholars hypothesize. Even in this one area where the Model Minority Hypothesis is strongly supported, the link suggests a relatively uncomplicated mindset. If one rates Asian Americans higher than other groups, one is less likely to think that there is any job or housing discrimination against them. This complacency does not generally translate into hostility toward government programmatic help for Asian Americans or African Americans.

Even if the model minority stereotype is not related to pernicious beliefs about Asian Americans or other racial minorities, we still deplore it. Frank Wu explains why:

Whatever else might be said about the myth, it cannot be disputed that it is a racial generalization. As such, it contains the premise that people can be arranged by racial group, and, furthermore, that the differences between racial groups are more significant than either the similarities between racial groups or the differences within them. It makes race the main feature of an individual as well as the leading division among people.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Wu, *supra* note 25, at 56.

Even apparently positive stereotypes run counter to the American embrace of liberal-individualist beliefs, which support norms against racial stereotyping. The model minority stereotype ascribes characteristics to an individual that she may not possess in reality and creates expectations about an individual that may not be justified in her particular case. By doing so, the model minority stereotype circumscribes an individual's capacity for self-creation and definition.

We applaud Asian critical scholars' efforts to combat racial stereotypes. At the same time, we recognize that combating stereotypes is a complicated task. Any model or generalization (even a relatively accurate one) contains some of the characteristics of stereotyping—models and generalizations are inevitably reductionist. Yet, generalizations about the world are necessary to build any model and to engage in most forms of scholarship.

The line between pernicious stereotyping and useful generalizations can be an elusive one. Neither of us favors a fully colorblind legal regime. Consequently, we believe that some generalizations about racial and ethnic groups are essential to the formulation of effective public policy. As a practical matter, policymakers cannot be alive to the unique characteristics and circumstances of each individual American, even if we might encourage individuals to have just such an open mind when dealing with other individuals. At the policymaking level, we tend to favor distinguishing among Asian national origin subgroups when groups have different salient experiences and characteristics (in formulating educational policies, for example); and for treating Asian Americans as a group when group distinctions are not as salient (in formulating and enforcing antidiscrimination policies, for example). In research settings, similar considerations apply, but one should also recognize that sample sizes might not be large enough to permit a researcher to draw potentially relevant distinctions between national origin subgroups. In other words, lumping makes sense when lumping makes sense, and splitting makes sense when splitting makes sense (and one has enough data or information to split).

We worry that some of the critics of the model minority stereotype might prefer to replace this stereotype with other generalizations or stereotypes, some of which may suffer from inaccuracies that make them similarly misleading and unhelpful. Some Asian critical scholars, for example, have portrayed Asian Americans as outsiders and in natural solidarity with other people of color, or even as naturally having left-wing political sympathies. As with any stereotyping, these generalizations may (or may not) be true on average, but in any event are not true for many individuals.

Asian critical scholars' work has also effectively highlighted the unique problems, struggles, and challenges of different Asian ethnic groups and cohorts of immigrants in an effort to encourage the creation of public policies that are more responsive to the actual needs of these groups. If they are correct that we need to pay attention to the problems faced by particular Asian national origin subgroups and groups of refugees, efforts to

forge a pan-racial coalition of "people of color"¹⁴³ could divert attention and resources from particular subgroups or mischaracterize cultural or historical problems faced by particular Asian ethnic groups or immigrant cohorts as "racial" problems.

Whatever views one has on this subject, we must all be careful to present our generalizations, not as essences or necessities, but as conclusions that are true only to the extent that they fit the world and untrue to the extent that they do not fit what they claim to capture.

¹⁴³ Moreover, coalitions can only fruitfully exist when groups have actual common interests. Some of the exhortations for pan-people of color coalitions rely on the premise that potential members of such coalitions share a commitment to left-wing political causes. In reality, such a shared commitment to political causes may not exist, and efforts to forge such coalitions may simply substitute the model minority stereotype for a stereotype that all racial minorities face very similar challenges and share the same political commitments.

