Minoritized Yet Excluded: Dismantling the "Model Minority" Myth

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AGENDA

- Introductions
- Learning objectives
- What sparked our interest
- Asian Americans, the hyphenated Americans and perpetual foreigners in the U.S.
- Hidden in the Black/White racial binary
- The Model Minority myth: What’s wrong with the positive stereotype?
- Activity: The myth crusher
- Implications for mental health and education
- Activity: Application to your own occupational/interpersonal settings
- Questions
HELLO!

- name
- racial/ethnic identity
- preferred pronouns
- share about:
  - an experience in which you were over- or underestimated
  - your favorite Asian dish or food
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

◈ Understand history of Asian Americans in the U.S. and the experiences of discrimination and implicit racial biases against Asian Americans.
◈ Recognize and identify how “positive stereotypes” can hurt not only Asian American communities, but all racial/ethnic groups.
◈ Increase confidence in interacting with and advocating for individuals who fall victim to such biases.
What Sparked Our Interest

“Say My Name”
Where's the Outrage? Chinese Name Tags being Ripped Off at Columbia University

Posted on February 19, 2017 by Yu Feng in National, Opinion // 4 Comments

Columbia University has long prided itself on its liberal activism and advocates for racial justice. From Trump’s election victory to his deportation order, from Citibank’s funding of Dakota Pipeline to Israeli U.N. ambassador Danny Danon’s speech, Columbia students were outraged at all these incidents and fervently protested on College Walk. However, all the social justice warriors at Columbia remained relatively silent when an actual racist and xenophobic incident happened on Columbia campus February 1st: door tags of Chinese names were ripped off in Columbia residence halls.
Xenophobia? Or beyond?

What are the experiences of Asian Americans with U.S. nationality?
THE
WHERE ARE YOU FROM?
GAME
DISCUSSION

In your table groups…
What are your reactions to these videos?
Do these resonate with your ideas of Asian Americans? If yes, why? If no, why not?
Asian Americans
the hyphenated Americans and perpetual foreigners in the U.S.

Where are you from? Where were you born? What are you? Your English is very good.
“One indication that Asian Americans continue to be viewed as foreigners (i.e., not Americans) is that attitudes toward Asian Americans are highly influenced by international relations between the United States and Asian countries (Lowe, 1996; Nakayama, 1994; Wu, 2002).”

- Lee, 2005, p.5
HISTORY OF ASIAN AMERICANS IN THE U.S.

- 1850s: Gold Rush
- 1870s: Economic Depression
  - 1871: Mass lynching of 20 Chinese men in Los Angeles, CA
- 1880s: Anti-Chinese sentiment
  - 1882: Chinese Exclusion Act
  - “Yellow peril”

(Tatum, 2017)
HISTORY OF ASIAN AMERICANS IN THE U.S.

- Early 1900s
  - 1906: San Francisco Board of Education
  - “Our children should not be placed in any position where their youthful impressions may be affected by association with pupils of the Mongolian race”
    - San Francisco School Board, 1905
  - 1913: California Alien Land Law
  - 1917: Immigration Act of 1917
  - 1924: Immigration Act of 1924

(Tatum, 2017)
HISTORY OF ASIAN AMERICANS IN THE U.S.

- 1940s: World War II
  - 1941: Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor
  - 1942-1946: Internment of Japanese Americans

(Tatum, 2017)
HISTORY OF ASIAN AMERICANS IN THE U.S.

- 1960s: Civil Rights Movement
  - Immigration Act of 1965
  - 1968: San Francisco State strike
- 1970s: Vietnam War
  - Influx of Southeast Asian refugees (e.g., Vietnamese, Chinese Vietnamese, Cambodians, Lao, Hmong, and Mien)

(Tatum, 2017)
REFLECTION

In small groups:

Consider what the experiences of Asian Americans in modern days are and how history relates to current experiences.
“Maybe you don’t know this, but the insults [“Go back to China”] you hurled at my family get to the heart of the Asian-American experience. It’s this persistent sense of otherness that a lot of us struggle with every day. That no matter what we do, how successful we are, what friends we make, we don’t belong. We’re foreign. We’re not American.”

- Michael Luo, Chinese American deputy Metro editor, and an editor on the Race/Related team at The New York Times

(Luo, 2016)
“One year I wish an American kid could win the spelling bee.”

“Nothing more American than a good spelling bee.. Oh wait all the Caucasians are eliminated!”

“The kids in the spelling bee should only be AMERICAN.”
MICROAGGRESSION AGAINST ASIAN AMERICANS

- Alien in Own Land
  - “Where are you really from?”
  - “You speak good English.”
  - Well-intentioned expression of interest vs. perception that all Asians are foreigners

- Second Class Citizenship
  - Who gets to taste and approve the wine selection?
  - Where in the restaurant are Asian American family seated?

(Sue et al., 2007)
The words Asians hear in 2019...

"How much are they paying you?" he said she asked him, not clarifying who "they" were.

"Did they give you a visa?"
“Did they give your family a visa?”
“Do you make a lot of money?”
“Do you work on Wall Street?”
“Are you on an American visa?"

*This employee only had the two men’s boarding pass
*There were no follow up news coverage on this other than the Buzzfeed article
IMPLICIT BIASES AGAINST ASIAN AMERICANS

What Caused The Mass Panic At Newark Airport? Racism.

Discussion Question
Do you think the employee’s mental health condition would explain the incident?

- If yes: in what context?
- If no: why not and what else is at play?
Hidden in the Black/White racial binary
The mere recognition that “other people of color” exist, without careful attention to their voices, their histories, and their real presence, is merely a reassertion of the Black/White paradigm. If one conceives of race and racism as primarily of concern only to Blacks and Whites, and understands “other people of color” only through some unclear analogy to the “real” races, this just restates the binary paradigm with a slight concession to demographics.

- Parea (1998)
Results of the Black/White Binary

- Ties to slavery is inextricably linked to Blackness in America
  - regardless of country of origin
- Ideas of being multiracial are often connected to being half Black
- Prevalent and visible activism
  - e.g., Black Lives Matter
MODEL MINORITY MYTH

What’s wrong with the positive stereotype?
What is the *Model Minority*?

“According to this analysis, Asian Americans—in contrast to other people of color in America—have survived adversity and advanced because of their emphasis on education and family values, their community cohesion, and other aspects of their cultural heritage.” (Omatsu, 2016)
The Myth Crusher

- Asian American families value education more, so the child is starting off with an advantage.
- All Asian Americans have higher income and lower crime rates.
- Asian Americans are very hard working, and they were able to climb up the social ladder.
- Asian Americans do not experience institutional racism anymore. Other minoritized groups should follow their model.
- Asian Americans go to mental health services less often because of their cultural stigmas against seeking mental health services.
WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNADDRESSSED POSITIVE STEREOTYPE?

- It marginalizes Asians from the discussion of institutional racism and discrimination that they face.
- It undermines the individual effort that goes in (belief in ascribed intelligence).
- By abiding model minority myth, it tries to negate the presence of institutional racism and puts the blame and onus on other racial groups for not achieving social mobility (e.g., seeing others as “bad” minorities).
Work toward anti-racism

- Understand the definition of racism
- Stop Saying “I’m not a racist”
- Identify racial inequalities and disparities
- Confront the racist ideas you’ve held or continue to hold
- Understand how your antiracism need to be intersectional
- Champion anti-racist ideas and policies
In Mental Health and Education

How can we apply Kendi’s 6 points to applications in mental health and education?

- Individual
- Systematic
Application

✿ QUICK WRITE

◆ For 2 minutes, consider how the ideas and strategies discussed could be applied in your workplace and relationships.
Application

◊ DISCUSS
◆ In groups of 2–3, share the ideas you generated.
What are you taking away from this session?
THANKS!

We represent the
UW–Madison Educational Psychology
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REFERENCES


