

## Chapter 20

# The Impact of the Model Minority Culture in Higher Education Institutions: The Cause of Asian Americans' Psychological and Mental Health

**Ben Tran**

*Alliant International University, USA*

### ABSTRACT

*Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are one of the fastest growing ethnic communities in the United States. Often referred to as the model minority, first coined by William Peterson, in 1966, AAPIs in the U.S. number approximately 15 million and represent more than 100 languages and dialects. However, few studies have investigated psychological consequences of internalizing the model minority. The purpose of this chapter is delve into the other side of the model minority façade, the less glamorous side of model minority, one of the causes of Asian Americans' psychological and mental health issues: the history of model minority, the concept of stereotype, and the various psychological and mental health issues, the reputation of the concept of psychological issues, and mental health services. While there is sacred empirical evidence in the support of the claim that direct causality exists between model minority and psychological and mental health issues, validities and correlations can be established, through the shared classification of diagnosed symptoms.*

### INTRODUCTION

There is a popular image of Asian Americans as the model minority (Ho & Jackson, 2001; Wong, Lai, Nagasawa, & Lin, 1998; Yee, 1992). The label suggests that Asian Americans are more academically, economically, occupational (Chun, 1980; Lee, 1996; Suzuki, 1977, 1989, 2002; Wu, 2002), and socially successful than any other racial minority group associated with their supposedly stronger values emphasizing hard work, perseverance, and beliefs in the American meritocracy (Lee, 1996; Wu, 2002).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-0778-9.ch020

Contrary to this popular belief, the overly positive caricature of Asian Americans as the model minority is misleading, and this inaccurate and distorted comparison can lead to adverse effects in the lives of Asian American (Chun, 1995; Inman & Yeh, 2007; Wong & Halgin, 2006). However, few studies have investigated psychological consequences of internalizing the model minority (Yoo, Burrola, & Steger, 2010). The purpose of this chapter is delve into the other side of the model minority façade, the less glamorous side of model minority, one of the causes of Asian Americans' psychological and mental health issues. In so doing, this chapter will cover the history of model minority, the concept of stereotype, and the various psychological and mental health issues derived from the effect of model minority. This chapter will also cover the reputation of the concept of psychological issues and mental health services in the Asian's and the Asian Americans' community. However, the main focus of this chapter will be on the various psychological and mental health issues derived from the effect of model minority.

## **MODEL MINORITY: PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH**

The purpose of this chapter, in conjunct with the purpose of this book, is to discuss and address the model minority stereotype from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. Based on this purpose, this particular chapter covers the history of model minority, the concept of stereotype, and the various psychological and mental health issues derived from the effect of model minority. This chapter will also cover the reputation of the concept of psychological issues and mental health services in the Asian's and the Asian Americans' community. However, the main focus of this chapter will not be on the various psychological and mental health issues derived from the effect of model minority. This chapter, however, does not claim that there is an explicit link between model minority stereotypes and mental health, or that the model minority stereotype is the cause of mental health.

There is an inefficient quantitative and qualitative data that exist to serve as credible evidence to support a direct link between model minority and mental health issues. The persistence of such a lack of empirical evidence to claim such causality is due to three reasons:

1. The concept of model minority is young, especially in the field of psychology, and particularly in the study of psychological and mental health issues in relations to model minority<sup>1</sup>;
2. Cultureserves as a barrier to the contribution of empirical study [i.e. Asians traditionally view psychological and mental health conditions and issues as taboo {lost-of-face or *diu le mian zi* (丟了面子)}]and that they bring shame to the family name, thus, it is common that Asians will deny it and will be reluctant (Lee & Mokuau, 2002; Leong & Lau, 2001; Lin & Cheung, 1999; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: The Office of Minority Health, 2013; Wang, Siy, & Cheryan, 2011) to seek help and participate in related research [i.e. Asians and Asian Americans needing assistance will seldom register with the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) and Asians and Asian American students needing services will seldom request assistance from the Department of Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS) or Accessibility Services (names and terminologies of the department may vary among institutions) within the institutions that they are a student of compared to other ethnicities] (Lee & Mokuau, 2002; Leong & Lau, 2001; Lin & Cheung, 1999; Wang, Siy, & Cheryan, 2011); and
3. Funding [i.e. gendered and sexuality of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LBGT) in developing countries] in the research of model minority and psychological and mental health issues is lacking

40 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-impact-of-the-model-minority-culture-in-higher-education-institutions/162530](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-impact-of-the-model-minority-culture-in-higher-education-institutions/162530)

## Related Content

---

### Digital Learning Management Systems Case Study: Instructors' Perspective

Abdeleh Bassam Al Amoushand Kamaljeet Sandhu (2019). *International Journal of Information Communication Technologies and Human Development* (pp. 42-60).

[www.irma-international.org/article/digital-learning-management-systems-case-study/242902](http://www.irma-international.org/article/digital-learning-management-systems-case-study/242902)

### Intention to Adopt AI-Powered Online Service Among Tourism and Hospitality Companies

Yi-Hui Ho, Syed Shah Alam, Mohammad Masukujjaman, Chieh-Yu Lin, Samiha Susmitand Sumaiya Susmit (2022). *International Journal of Technology and Human Interaction* (pp. 1-19).

[www.irma-international.org/article/intention-to-adopt-ai-powered-online-service-among-tourism-and-hospitality-companies/299357](http://www.irma-international.org/article/intention-to-adopt-ai-powered-online-service-among-tourism-and-hospitality-companies/299357)

### Differentiated Animated Social Stories to Enhance Social Skills Acquisition of Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder

Bee Theng Lauand Ko Min Win (2018). *Handbook of Research on Human Development in the Digital Age* (pp. 300-329).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/differentiated-animated-social-stories-to-enhance-social-skills-acquisition-of-children-with-autism-spectrum-disorder/186222](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/differentiated-animated-social-stories-to-enhance-social-skills-acquisition-of-children-with-autism-spectrum-disorder/186222)

### The Impact of Personal Electronic Communications on Work-Life Balance and Cognitive Absorption

Pruthikrai Mahatanankoon (2010). *International Journal of Information Communication Technologies and Human Development* (pp. 1-17).

[www.irma-international.org/article/impact-personal-electronic-communications-work/41721](http://www.irma-international.org/article/impact-personal-electronic-communications-work/41721)

### Involvement, Elaboration and the Sources of Online Trust

Russell Williamsand Philip J. Kitchen (2009). *International Journal of Technology and Human Interaction* (pp. 1-22).

[www.irma-international.org/article/involvement-elaboration-sources-online-trust/2938](http://www.irma-international.org/article/involvement-elaboration-sources-online-trust/2938)