

The Role of the Model Minority Stereotype
in Asian American Students' College Experiences

Thesis

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By

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Abstract

The purpose of this constructivist narrative study was to examine the role of the model minority stereotype in Asian American students' college experiences. This study addressed the following guiding research questions: (1) How does the model minority stereotype influence Asian American students' psychosocial development?; (2) How do Asian American students view the model minority stereotype?; and (3) How has the model minority stereotype shaped Asian American students' definitions of success? Five Asian American students from Midwestern University participated in this study. Data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews and a follow up via email. In order to study the data, the themes were analyzed within each story and cross-case analysis was utilized in order to analyze the themes across all interviews.

Restories of each participant's stories were presented. Three themes emerged from these restories to highlight their experiences with the model minority stereotype. First, the model minority stereotype's influence on psychosocial development was complex resulting in various answers from the participants. Second, although the stereotype is mostly negative, there are some positive aspects to it. Lastly, all of their definitions of success did not align with what it meant to be successful according to the model minority stereotype.

Dedication

To my parents – thank you for your
unconditional love and support.

To my 2013 HESA cohort – I'm glad we were able to embark
on this two year journey together. We did it!

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I would like to thank my thesis chair, Dr. Tatiana Suspitsyna for her wisdom and valuable feedback, and for guiding me through this thesis process. I am also thankful to the other member of my thesis committee, Dr. Susan R. Jones, whose expertise in qualitative research provided me with great insight on my own research.

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Vita

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The model minority stereotype has been associated with Asian Americans for decades. The model minority stereotype is the belief that “Asian Americans, through their hard work, intelligence, and emphasis on education and achievement, have been successful in American society” (Chew, 1994, p. 24). In addition, it suggests that Asian Americans have successfully acclimated themselves to life in the United States and that they are “somehow immune from cultural conflict and discrimination while experiencing few adjustment difficulties” (Yu, 2006, p. 326).

Asian American actors used to be portrayed in commercials as martial arts experts or shy nerdy individuals, but now, they are portrayed as “the friendly tech guy who swoops in to save a clueless white character” (Hartmann, 2011). Companies are often criticized if they use these types of racist images in their advertisements. However, the stereotype of Asian Americans being technology experts does not seem to raise any red flags. Hartmann (2011) makes it a point to state that the issue is not the fact that Asian Americans are depicted in these roles. The issue is that, despite the fact that Asians only make up six percent of the United States’ population, they are “disproportionately cast as the [person] who can fix your computer, and are less likely to appear as a character who is not into science” (Hartmann, 2011). This is one example of how Asian Americans are viewed as smart and intelligent and further exemplifies that Asian Americans are considered to be the model minority.

Another example, which is probably one of the more prominent depictions of Asian Americans as naturally intelligent and gifted is Kumar Patel as played by Kal Penn in the popular movie, *Harold & Kumar Go To White Castle*. Penn's character Kumar is an Indian American college student whose brother and father are both doctors. Although Kumar has no interest in school, in one of the scenes of the movie, he is able to perform a surgical procedure even though he has not had any medical training.

Although the model minority stereotype may seem harmless, and possibly even positive, there are negative consequences associated with it. Although this stereotype acknowledges that Asian Americans have overcome barriers and hardships in order to achieve success, it also places unnecessary pressure on Asian Americans to succeed. The 1992 report by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights pointed out four ways the model minority stereotype can be harmful to Asian Americans:

First of all, the model minority image diverts from very real and very serious social and economic problems that plague many segments of the Asian American population. Second, it distracts public attention away from continued, often times overt, racial discrimination faced by Asian Americans. Third, the model minority stereotype places undue pressure and anguish on young Asian Americans who think they have to achieve in school. Fourth, the model minority image serves to fuel competition and resentment between groups, particularly among other racial

minorities, who are told if Asian Americans can succeed why can't they? (as cited in Fong, 1998, p. 57).

The model minority stereotype “fosters discord among people of color rather than unity in struggle against racism and for greater equity for all people” (Wing, 2007, p. 481). In addition, Asian Americans still face discrimination especially in the work place, but their complaints are often “dismissed by employers as baseless” (Suzuki, 2002, p. 22). Asian Americans were once not considered a “protected minority group” (Suzuki, 2002, p. 22) under federal affirmative action regulations. Furthermore, government agencies and non-profit organizations did not provide funding to programs that served Asian Americans that needed help because they believed that “the Asian communities had few, if any, problems, were self-sufficient, and ‘took care of their own’” (Suzuki, 2002, p. 22). This stereotype places unrealistic expectations on Asian Americans to do well academically and occupationally. It also places unnecessary pressure on Asian Americans to meet these standards that American society has set for them. Being associated with the model minority stereotype places a label on Asian Americans that they may not want and it can possibly hinder Asian Americans’ ability to view themselves outside of that label.

Kodama, McEwen, Liang, and Lee (2002) suggest that in college, this label can cause Asian American students to internalize the model minority stereotype, and as a result, experience “achievement stress” (Yamagata-Noji as cited in Kodama et al., 2002, p. 51) in an effort to meet the expectations of the stereotype. In addition, Asian Americans who

feel they must meet the expectations of the model minority stereotype may fail to have a full college experience because they will be solely focused on their academics.

Furthermore, educators may think that Asian Americans do not need the same type of support as other minority groups, unaware of the challenges and struggles their students face due to their accomplishments and success in American society. Asian Americans are being “cut off from the resources and services that other minority groups receive” (Wong & Halgin, 2006, p. 46). Asian Americans are not receiving the resources and support that they need because they are “inaccurately perceived” (Wong & Halgin, 2006, p. 46).

According to the 2010 Census Report, the Asian population grew faster than any other race in the United States between 2000 and 2010. The total United States population grew from 281.4 million in 2000 to 308.7 million in 2010. The population that identified as Asian grew more than four times faster than the total U.S. population. The Asian population grew by 43 percent from 10.2 million to 14.7 million. According to the 2009 American Community Survey, 50 percent of single-race Asians age 25 and older had a bachelor’s degree or higher level of education compared to 28 percent for all Americans 25 and older (as cited by the U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The college enrollment rate for Asians in 2012 was 82.2 percent (United States Department of Labor, 2013). However, these numbers fail to show that there are Asian Americans who do not meet the expectations of the model minority stereotype.

From the Census Report, it is evident that the number of Asian Americans who are enrolling into college is increasing. However, Asian American students continue to be excluded from higher education research (Museus & Kiang, 2009).

The omission is evident in the finding that, over the past decade, approximately only one percent of articles published in five of the most widely read peer-reviewed academic journals in the field of higher education have given specific attention to Asian American or Pacific Islander college students (Museus as cited in Museus & Kiang, 2009, p. 5).

With the growing number of Asian Americans in the United States, and more specifically, in higher education, it is imperative that more research is done in order to gain a better understanding of the college experiences of Asian American students, more specifically, their experiences with the model minority stereotype, and what institutions can do to better support this community.

My research is an attempt to take apart the model minority stereotype and undo the belief that Asian Americans do not need the same types of resources and support as other students of color. To examine the positive and negative aspects of the model minority stereotype, the role it has played in Asian American's academic experiences, and how it has influenced students' definitions of success, I conducted a narrative study to understand how the model minority stereotype plays a role in the lives of the students. The purpose of this constructivist narrative study was to explore (1) how the model

minority stereotype influences Asian Americans' psychosocial development, (2) how Asian American students view the model minority stereotype, and (3) how the model minority stereotype has shaped Asian American students' definitions of success. In this chapter, I will elaborate further on the different types of minority groups and why certain groups do better academically than others in order to provide a possible explanation as to why many Asian Americans are academically successful. Then, I will describe my problem statement and explore the significance of the present study.

Where Did the Term “Model Minority” Come From?

Before Asian Americans were viewed as the “model minority,” they were labeled as the “yellow peril.” The term “yellow peril” became popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a result of the fear that Asian Americans would “threaten the domination of the White race” (Kawai, 2006, p. 112). However, the term could have been created as early as fifth century B.C.E. due to the conflict between the Greeks and the Persians or in the 13th century B.C.E. when the Mongols destroyed parts of eastern Europe (Okihiro, 1994). The bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 during World War II further confirmed the yellow peril stereotype in the eyes of White Americans and led to the imprisonment of Japanese Americans in internment camps (Okihiro, 1994).

Since World War II, Asian Americans have gone from being viewed as a threat to being viewed as model citizens (Bhattacharyya, 2001). According to Li (2008), the term

“model minority” was first developed by William Petersen in his 1966 article, *Success Story of One Minority Group in U.S.* In his article, Petersen applauded the Chinese Americans for their achievements and accomplishments despite the racism and other struggles they encountered. Petersen (1966) wrote, “Visit ‘Chinatown U.S.A.’ and you find an important racial minority pulling itself up from hardship and discrimination to become a model of self-respect and achievement in today’s America” (p. 73). When the term, model minority, “was applied to Asian students’ schooling, it was a synonym to the Asian academic success myth which connoted that Asian students were more academically successful than other ethnic minorities” (Li, 2008, p. 215). The term was initially used to describe Chinese Americans and then it was used to describe Japanese Americans and Korean Americans in the 1970s (Hurh & Kim, 1989; Oh-Willeke, 1996, as cited by Li, 2008). Since the 1980s, the term has been used to describe all Asian groups and therefore it, “masks the diversity and differences among the Asian ethnic and cultural groups” (Li, 2008, p. 215).

Types of Minorities

According to Ogbu (1990), minorities can be classified into three types: autonomous, immigrant, and involuntary. Autonomous minorities may be subjected to prejudice, but are not necessarily subjected to the American power structure. They usually have a “cultural frame of reference which demonstrates and encourages academic

success” (p. 46). In the United States, Jews or Mormons would be viewed as autonomous minorities. They are minorities strictly in number (Luciak, 2004). Despite the fact that these minorities may experience prejudice, Ogbu believes they are “not ‘subordinated’ in the social, economic or political system” (Luciak, 2004, p. 360). Immigrant minorities are those who have moved from their native land to another because they believe that the new country will provide them with greater opportunities. Asian Americans are considered immigrant minorities. Involuntary minorities are those who “did not initially choose to become members of a society; rather they were brought into that society through “slavery, conquest, or colonization” (Ogbu, 1990, p. 46). Blacks are considered involuntary minorities. Involuntary minorities do not believe that the new society will provide them with better opportunities. They “resent the loss of their former freedom, regard the past as their ‘golden age,’ and interpret the social, political, and economic barriers erected against them, as undeserved oppression” (p. 47).

Factors for Asian Americans’ Success

Despite what others may believe, Asian Americans are not all naturally gifted with the ability to succeed in college. Larger cultural factors, home dynamics, and the specific institutional approaches all contribute to Asian American academic success in higher education.

Cultural Factors. Asian culture places high value on education, and therefore, Asians are taught to value education and learning (Lee, 1996). Caudill and De Vos

argued that Japanese Americans were academically successful because they possess certain cultural qualities that are valued by the White American culture (as cited in Lee, 1996). Kitano argued that Japanese culture and American culture have similar qualities, which allows Japanese Americans to have an easier time adapting to American culture (as cited in Lee, 1996). Caplan, Choy, and Whitmore conducted a study that examined Southeast Asian refugees and found that, despite the struggles and challenges they experienced in both their home countries and in the United States, their grades and test scores were generally better than those of American students (as cited in Fong, 1998). Caplan et al. attributed this success to Asian cultural values that were rooted in Confucian and Buddhist traditions. They argued that family was a crucial aspect of these traditions and found that the children in the study had a strong sense of “collective obligation” (Fong, 1998, p. 80) to their families.

Home Factors. One possible explanation for Asian Americans’ academic success is their home environments and educational activities (Peng & Wright, 1994). In a study consisting of Asian Americans, Hispanics, Blacks, Native Americans, and Whites,

- (1) Asian American students were more likely than students of the other groups to live in an intact, two-parent family;
- (2) Asian American students’ parents were more likely to have an advanced college degree;
- (3) Asian American students were more likely to spend more time doing homework than all other students;
- (4) Asian American parents’ educational expectations for their children were the

highest among the group; (5) Asian American students attended more lessons outside of regular school (e.g. language, art, music, and dance) and participated in more educational activities (e.g. visiting the public library and going to museums) than other minority students. (Peng & Wright, 1994, p. 350)

This study shows that home environments and educational activities outside of the classroom are important factors to students' academic success. Home environments and educational activities are one of the main reasons Asian Americans are more academically successful than their peers of other minority groups (Peng & Wright, 1994).

Institutional Factors. In Museus's (2011) study, he studied three predominately White institutions (a large research university, a small state university, and a community college) and discovered four common characteristics that contributed to racial and ethnic minority students' success despite the different campus cultures of the three institutions: "strong networking values, a commitment to targeted support, a belief in humanizing the educational experience, and an ethos characterized by an institutional responsibility for student success" (p. 154). Strong networking values consisted of "high levels of communication and collaboration, and formal and informal everyday networking as a norm on campus" (p. 154). This built strong relationships not only across the departments, but also among the employees, both faculty and staff. These strong relationships helped students feel connected which made the transition to college easier. A commitment to targeted support consisted of:

(1) the dedication of substantial resources to help sustain essential targeted support programs for historically underrepresented students, (2) the presence of key administrators and staff who have a profound impact on students of color within those programs, and (3) the integration of those programs into larger support networks on campus. (p. 155)

The three institutions in Museus's (2011) study contributed a great amount of resources in order to create and maintain "targeted support programs for underrepresented students" (p. 155) like a Scholar's Program for transfer students of color and a federally funded TRIO program. In addition, the staff and administration who were involved in these programs provided a strong sense of support for the students of color. Furthermore, the programs helped to connect students of color and campus support networks, and also helped develop stronger relationships between the two.

A belief in humanizing the educational experience exhibited itself in two ways: "(1) the care and commitment with which faculty, administrators, and staff approach their work and (2) the meaningful relationships that those educators cultivate with their students" (Museus, 2011, p. 156). This effort that staff and faculty make to get to know their students allows students to feel that their institution is invested in them and genuinely cares about their success. An ethos characterized by institutional responsibility manifests in two ways: "(1) institutional policies that force students to fulfill certain expectations and (2) faculty, administrators, and staff who assume responsibility for their

students' success" (Museus, 2011, p. 156). At the state university, the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) practices "intrusive advising, in which students are required to meet with their advisors before they register for classes, are evaluated each semester by their instructors, and meet with their academic advisors a minimum of three times per semester" (Museus, 2011, p. 157). These policies help "perpetuate an institutional responsibility Museus's (2011) study is an example of what PWIs can do in order to help students of color succeed in college.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

The model minority stereotype that is associated with Asian Americans gives others the impression that Asian Americans are fully capable of achieving academic success on their own, without any additional support or resources from their college or university. Research has shown that while some Asian American students embrace the model minority stereotype and view it positively, others feel that the stereotype places an unwanted label and expectation on them (Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997). The purpose of this constructivist narrative study was to examine how the model minority stereotype influenced Asian Americans' psychosocial development, how Asian Americans viewed the model minority stereotype, and how the model minority stereotype shaped Asian American students' definitions of success. This study addressed the following guiding research questions: (1) How does the model minority stereotype influence Asian American students' psychosocial development?; (2) How do Asian American students

view the model minority stereotype?; and (3) How has the model minority stereotype shaped Asian American students' definitions of success?

Significance of the Study

As previously stated, there is a lack of research that is focused on Asian Americans. Asian Americans tend not to be the focus of studies and/or publications (Museus as cited in Museus & Kiang, 2009). Furthermore, Asian Americans are rarely included in studies regarding racial segregation (Varma, 2004). This is mainly due to the fact that Asian Americans are viewed as overrepresented in professional occupations while African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans are viewed as underrepresented (Varma, 2004). This study will add to the literature on Asian Americans.

Given the ways the model minority stereotype can be harmful to Asian Americans, it was important to further study how Asian American students view the model minority stereotype and the role the stereotype plays in Asian American students' academic experiences in college. This stereotype has been named as one reason Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (APIs) are missing in higher education research and the lack of research prevents us from learning more about the AAPI community and "helps perpetuate that stereotype, thereby forming a vicious cycle that can perpetuate ignorance and distorted perceptions of the realities that this population of college students faces" (Museus & Kiang, 2009, p. 6). Therefore, more research on the AAPI community is needed in order to educate others about the actual realities this population experiences.

This study furthered understanding about Asian Americans and their experiences with the model minority stereotype. It provided insight on how Asian Americans view the stereotype, the role the stereotype plays in Asian Americans' academic experiences, and how the stereotype can influence Asian Americans' definitions of success. This understanding is important in knowing what resources higher education institutions can provide to help Asian Americans during their college career. Studying the model minority stereotype helped bring awareness to the negative impacts it could have on Asian American students and what educators can do in order to better support them.

Research Design

This study was designed with a constructivist epistemology and narrative inquiry was used as the methodology. I aimed to study Asian American students' view of the model minority stereotype and the role it plays in Asian American students' academic success and in shaping their definitions of success. In order to comprehend the individuals' experiences, their perspective must be the focus of the study. With this in mind, the most applicable approach to the study is constructivism because it focuses on the views of the participants and the individual meanings of their experiences. Both the constructivist framework and narrative inquiry will allow me to focus on the individual, unique realities in the participants' narratives.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- a) How does the model minority stereotype influence Asian American students'

psychosocial development?

b) How do Asian American students view the model minority stereotype?

c) How has the model minority stereotype shaped Asian American students' definitions of success?

The remainder of this thesis is organized as follows. Chapter 2 discusses the relevant theories and scholarship about Asian American college students. Chapter 3 presents the methodology of this study. Chapter 4 reports on the results from the semi-structured interviews and the themes that emerged from these interviews. The thesis concludes with chapter 5, which interprets the results from chapter 4 and discusses the implications, and future recommendations for research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

I begin this chapter with a review of Kodama, McEwen, Liang, and Lee's (2002) proposed model of psychosocial development for Asian American students. Kodama et al. suggested this model because they argued that Chickering and Chickering and Reisser's Theory of Identity Development was not as applicable for Asian Americans. In addition, Kodama et al.'s model included the model minority stereotype and discussed how it can influence Asian American students' psychosocial development. Next, I will briefly examine the gaps that exist within the Asian American population. Then, I will analyze the model minority stereotype, how it became associated with Asian Americans, and its misconceptions. In addition to the model minority stereotype, I will discuss Asian Americans' reactions to the stereotype and non-Asians perceptions of Asians. Besides the specific model minority stereotype, Asian American students face a number of challenges regarding their race and ethnicity. I will end this chapter discussing some of those challenges in an effort to unpack further complex challenges faced by Asian Americans for contextual perspective.

A Psychosocial Model for Asian American Students

Kodama, McEwen, Liang, and Lee (2002) proposed a model of psychosocial development in order to "account more effectively for the experiences and development of Asian American students" (p. 45). Kodama et al. found that although the content areas of Chickering's seven vectors were relevant for Asian Americans, the specific tasks

associated with those vectors were not as applicable to Asian Americans. Kodama et al.'s model is structured around "Western values and racism from U.S. society and Asian values from family and community" (p. 46).

Western values include "individualism, independence, and self-exploration" (p. 46) and the identity of Asian Americans "may have incorporated a variety of stereotypes from society and the media of who they are and what they should be" (p. 46). Asian values include "collectivism, interdependence, placing the needs of the family above the self, interpersonal harmony, and deference to authority, which often contradict those of the dominant Western society" (Kim, Atkinson, and Yang as cited in Kodama et al., 2002, p. 47). These conflicting values may both "constrain and influence" (p. 47) Asian American students' development.

Identity and purpose are fundamental to the model. Kodama et al. speculated that purpose may be crucial to how Asian Americans identify themselves since their reason for attending college is often "pragmatic, goal-oriented, and job-related" (Hune and Chan as cited in Kodama et al., 2002, p. 48). The border between identity and purpose is "semipermeable, suggesting that an Asian American college student's identity may be filtered through the student's educational and vocational purpose" (p. 48). Furthermore, if a change occurs in a student's identity, this may cause a change in the student's purpose as well or vice versa, which may lead to changes in the other content areas. The external influences exerted by "dominant U.S. society and traditional Asian values from family"

(p. 49) are located on opposite ends of an axis, which shows that a student's development can move along the axis, "depending on which domain is exerting a stronger influence at a particular time or on a particular issue" (p. 49). As the student develops an increased sense of awareness between himself and the two external domains, he will develop identity and purpose, which will lead to "change and growth among the other five developmental tasks" (p. 49).

Identity involves "development of an increasingly complex self" (p. 49). According to Kodama et al., "Developing a racial identity provides a foundation for Asian American students' overall identity development because of the primacy of racism on psychosocial development" (p. 49). In addition, racism and stereotypes may affect Asian Americans' identity development.

For many Asian Americans, "purpose is often connected closely with the issue of academic achievement" (Kodama et al., 2002, p. 50) because they desire prestigious jobs (Leung, Ivey, and Suzuki as cited in Kodama et al., 2002) and/or because their families expect them to be academically successful and pursue specific majors and careers. Therefore, Asian Americans may begin their college career with a "clearer sense of purpose in terms of majors and careers but may be less likely to change that original goal despite shifts in academic and personal interests" (p. 50). Another issue Asian Americans face when it comes to developing purpose is "developing an awareness and understanding of various career opportunities" (p. 50). Asian Americans may not be able

to see themselves pursuing other majors or careers due to “stereotyping, lack of role models, and an economic-based definition of success” (p. 50). Therefore,

relevant tasks around purpose for Asian Americans might be developing an understanding of personal interests in terms of career and lifestyle, recognizing that one can change majors and career paths, reconciling individual interests with family expectations, and integrating career goals within the scope of a larger, more meaningful purpose. (Kodama et al., 2002, p. 51)

Competency as developed by Chickering (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993 as cited in Kodama et al., 2002) is a necessary area of development for Asian American students, but the focus is strictly on intellectual competency and does not focus enough, if at all, on other areas of competency, like physical and manual, and interpersonal.

Kodama et al. thought this may be due to the cultural emphasis on education (Hune & Chan; Wong & Mock as cited in Kodama et al., 2002) and also because Asian Americans are constantly pressured to succeed intellectually as a result of the model minority stereotype. The competency areas of interpersonal and physical competency may be a challenge for Asian American students because, as previously mentioned, intellectual competency tends to be emphasized the most (Wong and Mock as cited in Kodama et al., 2002).

The Emotions content area may be an area Asian American students struggle with because Asian cultural values include “emotional discipline, inhibition of strong feelings,

and use of restraint in interactions with others. Guilt and shame are often used as powerful controls” (Lee; Liem; Uba as cited in Kodama et al., 2002, p. 51). Since Asians are known for their collectivistic culture and “plac[ing] others’ feelings above one’s own” (Wong & Mock as cited in Kodama et al., 2002, p. 52), they may not have a lot of experience managing their emotions. As a result,

“exploring” or “understanding” emotions might be more appropriate tasks for Asian American students as they develop an awareness of a range of emotions, the appropriate expression of them, and which emotions are valued in a college environment. (William Ming Liu, personal communication as cited in Kodama et al., 2002, p. 52)

This is not in line with Chickering’s vector of managing emotions, which focuses on students’ learned ability to control their emotions (Chickering & Reisser as cited in Kodama et al., 2002).

Interdependence is an important Asian value. As previously mentioned, since Asian Americans tend to be more collectivistic in nature, their responsibility to their family and the support they receive from them are crucial to their interdependence. Therefore, Asian Americans may need to learn how to see themselves as “individuals outside their family group” (p. 52). This goes against Chickering’s description of students as those who are “looking out primarily for themselves” (Chickering & Reisser as cited in Kodama et al., 2002, p. 52).

Due to the collectivistic culture of Asians, having harmonious relationships is important. The “hierarchical nature of relationships and respect for elders in many Asian cultures” (Kodama et al., 2002, p. 53), makes it difficult for Asian American students to build relationships with those who are in a place of authority (e.g. faculty and staff). As a result, Asian American students may not be as willing to approach faculty and/or staff which may disadvantage Asian American students since the American college classroom stresses the importance of verbal participation and faculty interaction. Kodama et al. suggests that an important task for Asian American students may be building relationships with authority figures that are different from the relationships they have with their family elders.

For Asian Americans, integrity is determined “by how individuals represent their families, respect their ancestors, and uphold the family name” (Kodama et al., 2002, p. 54). According to Chickering (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), “increasing congruence between behavior and values and consistency in applying ethical principles are keys to developing integrity” (as cited in Kodama et al., 2002, p. 54). However, due to the differences between Asian culture and the dominant White culture, it may be difficult for Asian American students “to develop congruence” (p. 54) in the aforementioned ways. Furthermore, because of the importance of interdependence in Asian culture, it may be a challenge to distinguish between the values of the student and the values of his family. As a result, Chickering’s framework may not be as applicable to Asian Americans, “who

may not be trying to separate their own values from others' values as much as to maintain a sense of self within the context of values from family and society" (Kodama et al., 2002, p. 54).

Kodama et al. (2002) developed specific tasks for Chickering's seven content areas that were more relevant to Asian American students' psychosocial development. The three content areas that included the model minority stereotype and/or general stereotypes were Identity, Purpose, and Competency. In the Identity content area, racism and stereotype can influence Asian Americans' identities (Kodama et al., 2002), meaning the model minority stereotype can influence Asian Americans' identities. In the Purpose content area, Asian Americans' sense of purpose is strongly centered on academic success. Although Kodama et al. (2002) did not explicitly discuss the model minority stereotype in this content area, the importance of academic and occupational achievement supports the expectations of the stereotype. Lastly, in the Competency content area, Asian Americans tend to only be focused on intellectual competency, and as a result, they are unable to achieve the other areas of competency (physical and manual, interpersonal and social) (Kodama et al., 2002). Kodama et al. (2002) suggested that Asian Americans may also internalize the model minority stereotype which may prevent them from achieving the other areas of competency.

Educational and Occupational Gaps amongst Asian Americans

Asian Americans are often viewed as all the same (Museus & Kiang, 2009). To the contrary, Asian Americans “incorporate more than 50 groups who differ in their language, religion, culture, history, the duration of their presence in the United States, educational level, economic status, and so forth” (Varma, 2004, p. 296). They are made up of individuals who are wealthy and highly educated, and also those who are poor and illiterate (Fong, 1998). These differences are usually unaccounted for when describing the Asian American population due to “the practice of racializing and oversimplifying” (Museus and Kiang, 2009, p. 7). These differences make it a challenge to accurately represent the Asian group as a whole.

Some Asian groups, such as East Asians, are more successful, both economically and politically, than Southeast Asians (Li & Wang, 2008). According to the 2000 Census, the poverty rate for Asians as a whole was 12.6 percent. Filipinos, Japanese, and Asian Indians had the lowest poverty rates of 6.3 percent, 9.7 percent, and 9.8 percent, respectively. Hmong, Cambodians, and Laotians had the highest poverty rates of 7.8 percent, 29.3 percent, and 18.5 percent, respectively. This data fails to take into account the geographic location of Asian Americans, and whether they live in high-income and high-cost areas or low-income and low-cost areas and it also does not account for the number of wage earners in the family (Varma, 2004). Asian Americans also tend to have more family members living in the same household (Li, 2008). If these additional family

members are employed, they would attribute to the reported high incomes for Asian Americans.

Disparities also existed in their educational attainments. In a study conducted at a California High School, there was a small number of low-achieving Asian students at every grade level and not all Asian students had high GPAs (Wing, 2007). According to the 2000 Census, 44.1 percent of Asians ages 25 and older had earned a Bachelor's degree or more. 63.9 percent of Asian Indians, 54.3 percent of Pakistanis, 48.1 percent of Chinese, 43.8 percent of Koreans, and 41.9 percent of Japanese ages 25 and older had earned a Bachelor's degree or more; whereas, only 9.2 percent of Cambodians, 7.7 percent of Laotians, and 7.5 percent of Hmongs had earned a Bachelor's degree or more. There is also an increasing number of Asian dropout rates (Li, 2008). However, because of the model minority stereotype, some schools admitted to "not having monitored or recorded the dropout rates of Asian Americans" (Walker-Moffat as cited in Li, 2008, p. 217). It is evident that a number of gaps exist amongst the different ethnic groups that make up the Asian American population, and therefore, we cannot generalize and assume that what may be true for one group, or individuals in a group, will be true for others. This also goes for the model minority stereotype. Although there are individuals or groups that are academically and occupationally successful, there are also those who struggle in school and are not as successful.

The Model Minority Stereotype

The term “model minority,” as previously mentioned, was created by sociologist, William Peterson. The center of the model minority stereotype was that “Asian Americans, by virtue of self-improvement and hard work, had successfully overcome racial discrimination against them and had assimilated into mainstream America” (Wang, 2008, p. 23).

Since the 1960s, the model minority stereotype has been attached to the Asian American population because they achieve a higher degree of success and achievement than other minorities. The model minority stereotype is the idea that Asian Americans are able to achieve academic and occupational success that cannot be matched by other racial groups (Museus & Kiang, 2009). The stereotype declares that Asian Americans are able to succeed without any additional support or assistance. All Asian Americans are believed to be “successful and free of problems” (Lee as cited in Ngo and Lee, 2007, p. 416). As a result of this stereotype, Asian Americans are “no longer viewed as a racial minority” (Pang, Kiang, and Pak as cited by Ngo & Lee, 2007, p. 416). This stereotype assumes that Asian Americans as a whole are academically successful. This stereotype mainly concentrates on academic achievement that is measured by grades and degree attainment and fails to focus on their measures of success.

Misconceptions of the Model Minority Stereotype

There are several misconceptions associated with the model minority stereotype. One misconception is that Asian Americans are not really racial and ethnic minorities (Museus and Kiang, 2009).

Both private and public funding agencies often exclude Asian Americans from their definitions of underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities, suggesting that AAPIs do not face challenges similar to those of other minority populations and therefore do not require the attention give to black Latina/o, and Native American groups. (Museus and Kiang, 2009, p. 8)

In addition to not being considered an underrepresented racial/ethnic minority group, Asian Americans are “often not considered an underrepresented minority in higher education research and discourse”, (Museus & Kiang, 2009, p. 8). According to Museus and Kiang (2009), these findings are consistent with Chou and Feagin’s findings (2008) that Asian Americans are viewed as “the new whites” or “almost white” (p. 8) by other groups.

Before the model minority stereotype came about, Asian Americans were viewed as “social pariahs” (Suzuki, 1989, p. 13) and were victims of racism. Asians were portrayed as an “invading ‘yellow peril,’ a horde consisting of depraved, uncivilized heathens who were less than human and threatened to undermine the American way of life” (Suzuki, 1989, p. 13).

Negative images of Asians in the media started in the mid to late 1800s as a result of the large number of Asians that were coming to the United States. The common theme back in the day was of the “‘Yellow Peril,’ or an invasion of faceless and destructive Asiatics, who would eventually overtake the nation and wreak social and economic havoc” (Fong, 1998 p. 174-175). However, since the mid-1960s, media has been portraying Asian Americans more as the model minority (Wong et al. as cited in Zhang, 2010). The media promoted Asians from “being an oppressed racial minority to being a shining example for other racial minorities” (Zhang, 2010, p. 24).

Extolled as “honorary Whites” or as a group “outwhiting the Whites” (Suzuki as cited in Zhang, p. 24), Asians are proclaimed as a model minority for their extraordinary success in education, affluence, strong work ethic, freedom from problems and crime, and family cohesion. (Wong et al. as cited in Zhang, 2010, p. 24)

Another misconception is that Asian Americans do not seek out or need resources and support (Museus and Kiang, 2009). Research shows that Asian American college students do have negative attitudes toward seeking help and are more hesitant to seek help since the act of seeking help conflicts with their cultural values (Kim & Omizo, 2003; Shea & Yeh, 2008). AAPIs are more likely to use “avoidant coping strategies” (Museus and Kiang, 2009, p. 10) in order to manage their person issues (Chang; Jung as cited in Museus & Kiang, 2009). Therefore, if AAPI college students are not utilizing the

support services provided by their institutions, this does not necessarily mean that they do not “require, need, or desire” (p. 10) the support.

Asian American Students’ Reaction to the Model Minority Stereotype

Although the model minority stereotype praises Asian Americans for overcoming racism and achieving various forms of success, the stereotype is not always considered as something positive. Asian American students may buy into the model minority stereotype and as a result, have a desire to maintain the image of an academic achiever. However, students’ failure to maintain their excellent grades and uphold their reputation of being a straight A student, could potentially affect their self esteem (Wong, Lai, Nagasawa, & Lin, 1998). In addition, “the label of ‘model minority’ does not mean that the behavior implied by the stereotype follows” (Wong et al., 1998, p. 113).

One study that demonstrates this is Oyserman and Sakamoto’s (1997) quantitative study which examined the relationship between individualist and collectivist orientations, ethnic identity, and beliefs about stereotypes among Asian Americans. One of their hypotheses was that “Asian American identity...[would] correlate positively with valuation of the model minority label, because individuals who identify as group members may be predisposed to accept the notion that others view them in this way as well” (p. 438).

All of the participants in the study were students at a large Midwestern university and identified their race/ethnicity as Asian or Asian American. Some students viewed the

stereotype positively. Most of the positive responses seemed “tied to a sense of rootedness in tradition and heritage, an interdependent perspective on achievement, and a belief that group identity is important in self-definition” (p. 444). The authors observed that, for these students, the idea that they and other Asian Americans were viewed through the model minority “seemed to flow smoothly from their own pride in their heritage” (p. 445). One participant said, “When we are referred to as a model minority, then it shows that we are not neglected and that people see good in us” (p. 445). Others viewed the label positively because “they hoped it would promote generational continuity of heritage and traditions” (p. 445). Finally, some viewed the stereotype as something positive “because it seemed to provide the promise of positive labeling of the self by others” (p. 445). There were also students who were “ambivalent (p. 445) about the label. For these students, “the label meant that they were kept out of the mainstream; however, they also felt that the label emphasized roots that they should be proud of” (p. 445).

In addition, there were students who did not like the model minority stereotype because “they did not want to be tied to a group or committed to a social identity” (p. 445). These students focused on the “exclusionary” (p. 445). As one Korean American in the study stated, “...regardless of its positive connotations, it is STILL a STEREOTYPE. This means that there are certain expectations of Asians based simply on their appearance” (p. 445).

Wong and Halgin (2006) found that students who were strongly attached to their group, viewed their group identity as part of their own identity and were proud to be perceived as members of the model group. However, students who viewed the label negatively did not like being associated with a group image. They did not like have labels and expectations placed on them, “believing that such labeling marginalizes them from mainstream society and also interferes with their wish to be perceived as individuals” (p. 40).

Others’ Perceptions of Asian Americans

As previously stated, the model minority stereotype became well-known in the 1960s when two articles were written acknowledging and commending the accomplishments of the two largest Asian American groups at that time. One article was written about the Japanese Americans and it “lauded [them] for overcoming harsh racial antagonism and internment to successfully enter into the American mainstream” (Fong, 1998, p. 56). The other article was about Chinese Americans and it “highly commended [them] for their good behavior and economic success” (Fong, 1998, p. 56). Since then, other authors have published articles regarding the success and achievements of Asian Americans.

Because of the way Asian Americans are portrayed in the media, non-Asians tend to shape their views of Asian Americans based on these portrayals. In a quantitative study, Zhang (2010) “applied cultivation theory to examine whether people’s perceptions of

Asian Americans were consistent with media stereotypes and whether the media activated racial-ethnic stereotypes affected people's interaction behaviors with Asians" (p. 20). The author tested four hypotheses. The first hypothesis was that "Asian Americans will be perceived as more likely to achieve academic success than other racial-ethnic groups" (p. 29). The second was that Asian Americans "will be more likely to be perceived as nerds than other racial-ethnic groups" (p. 29). The third hypothesis was that Asian Americans "will be perceived as more likely to be left out by peers than other racial-ethnic groups" (p. 31). The fourth hypothesis was that "people will be less likely to initiate friendship with Asian Americans than other racial-ethnic groups" (p. 31). Four scenarios were designed in order to help test the four hypotheses. The scenarios assessed "academic success, lack of communication and social skills, peer rejection, and the likelihood to initiate friendship" (p. 28).

The authors found that the participants perceived Asians as most likely to achieve academic success, rated them highest in lacking communication and social skills and thus most likely to be perceived as nerds, and perceived them to be most likely to be left out. In addition, participants were least likely to initiate friendship with Asians and Hispanics. Asians received a lower score than Hispanics, but it was a small difference. These results showed that "peoples' perceptions and judgments about Asian Americans are aligned with the media representations and these stereotypes affect people's intent with Asians" (p. 32). The findings indicate that "Asians are perceived as the model minority who excel

academically, the nerds who lack social and communication skills, and the foreigners who are often left out” (p. 32).

Lee (1996) argued that “students’ attitudes toward Asian Americans reflected their respective positions in the school” (p. 92). White students who were “academically and socially successful” (p. 95), and were “secure in their status” (p. 95) viewed Asian Americans in a positive light; however, they were also aware that African American students were not doing well. The White students’ responded to the African American students by “holding Asian Americans up as exemplars of success” (p. 95). These White students claimed “Asian American ‘success’ was proof of equal opportunity” (p. 95).

Another group of White students were hostile toward Asian Americans. These students were mostly working-class Italian Americans from the south side and their negative attitudes toward racial minorities were reflective of the “racial tensions” (p. 96) that existed in their neighborhoods. They referred to Asian Americans as “chinks and gooks” (p. 96) and regularly harassed them as they walked by. Furthermore, they viewed Asian Americans as “foreigners who were invading their school, their neighborhoods, and their country” (p. 97) and felt that they had to prevent Asian Americans from taking over. Lee (1996) makes it a point to mention that these Italian-American students were viewed as “outsiders” (p. 97) because they were not considered to be academically successful.

Moreover, Lee (1996) observed that African American students also stereotyped Asian American students as hardworking and being academically successful. However, they also felt that Asian Americans were “overrepresent[ed] in the academic elite” (p. 99) and were “garnering more than their share of the academic accolades” (p. 99). African Americans shared the same concern as the Italian-American students and feared that Asian Americans were taking over. They also harassed Asian Americans with insults and, like the Italian-Americans, viewed Asian Americans as foreigners and told them to “go back to where [they] came from” (p. 100). Furthermore, African Americans were angry at the “perceived...quick success” (p. 100) of Asian Americans and saw them as another group that “had climbed over African Americans on their road to success” (p. 100).

Challenges Asian American Students Experience Due to Their Race

A misconception many people have is that Asian Americans do not encounter major challenges because of their race (Museus and Kiang, 2009). The example Museus and Kiang (2009) used in their publication was regarding an online article published in 2008. This article was about a newly published book that discussed the racism experienced by Asian Americans (Chou and Feagin as cited in Museus and Kiang, 2009). Several of the readers who commented on the book refused to believe that Asian Americans experienced discrimination or they downplayed the Asian Americans’ struggles and talked about the challenges of low-income White students. This shows that

some do not recognize the challenges AAPI college students face as a result of their race (Museus & Kiang, 2009).

Asian Homogeneity

In addition to the model minority stereotype, Asian American students experience other challenges as a result of their race and ethnicity. One challenge Asian Americans face is Asian homogeneity. Asian American students are often viewed as the same as every other Asian American.

One study that demonstrates this struggle of Asian homogeneity is Kibria's (2000) qualitative study examining "how Asian racial categorization and its dynamics shape informal, everyday social encounters between Asians and non-Asians" (p. 77). Kibria interviewed 64 second-generation Chinese and Korean Americans in the Los Angeles and Boston areas during 1992 and 1997. The participants were between 21 and 40 in age and were born and/or raised in the United States since the age of 12 or earlier. They were asked to talk about "the role and meaning of their racial and ethnic affiliations in such life spheres as work, family, and neighborhood over the life course" (p. 80). Kibria discovered that the "Asian" label influenced participants' informal encounters with non-Asians. The participants were assumed to belong to a "generalized Asian collectivity, bound by shared history, culture, and descent" (p. 81). In addition, they experienced "racialization of ethnic labels" (p. 82) where identities like "Korean" and "Chinese" were

used interchangeably as “generalized and racialized references to those viewed as ‘Asian’” (p. 82). Furthermore, just as the participants experienced “racialization of ethnic labels,” they also experienced “racialization of ethnic cultures” (p. 82). For example, one of the Korean American participants described an incident when she and her family were asked to pose for a picture in the town paper wearing traditional Korean wear. It turned out that the occasion was Chinese New Year. Chinese New Year was viewed as, not a Chinese cultural event, but an Asian event that was celebrated by all Asians. By blending all the Asian ethnicities into one, Asian American students are expected to know everything about every Asian culture. This shows that Asian Americans are viewed as one collective group and how non-Asians fail to see the diversity within.

Being Viewed as a Foreigner

Not only are Asian American students viewed as all the same, but they are also often mistaken as foreigners or international students. They are constantly asked the questions, “Where are you from?” and “Do you speak English?” (Cheryan & Monin, 2005, p. 717). In these situations, Asian Americans are either “compelled...to downplay their distinctive ethnic backgrounds in order to establish themselves as ‘American...’ or cultivate their ethnic background, to simply meet the expectations of others or perhaps to take advantage of the social capital implied by this background” (Kibria, 2000).

In addition, because Asian Americans are viewed as foreigners, they are constantly being reminded that “a core identity of theirs is at best questioned, at worst

denied” (Cheryan & Monin, 2005, p. 717). Cheryan and Monin’s (2005) quantitative study investigated “identity denial, in which an individual is not recognized as a member of an important in-group” (p. 717). The authors found that:

Identity denial is not always a case of complete exclusion of certain members.

Rather, the experience frequently manifests itself in a more subtle way, a type of partial exclusion in which certain members of the in-group are considered less a part of that group than others. (p. 720)

Asian Americans feel they belong in America just as much as White Americans, but they realize that Americans may not view them this way. This may be because the Asian American students in this study have experienced being “mistaken for a foreigner or a non-native English speaker” (p. 723). Being asked where one is from or if one can speak English is a constant reminder to Asian Americans that they do not look “American” and are not viewed as part of the in-group. In Cheryan and Monin’s study, Asian Americans responded to these “threats” by being more aggressive and “tried to dispel th[ese] misperception[s] and to reassert their identity as Americans...” (p. 724).

Furthermore, Asian Americans “used identity assertion techniques in the form of claiming participation in American practices...(e.g. playing American sports, listening to American music)” (p. 726) when they were threatened with identity denial. Asian Americans did not downplay their Asian identity, instead they worked harder to prove that they were American. For Asian Americans, being “American” is an identity that has

to be “purposefully achieved,” (p. 87) according to one of the Chinese American participants in Kibria’s (2000) study.

Private vs. Public Self

Asian Americans are viewed as foreigners, but when they are seen expressing their racial and/or ethnic heritages in public, they are viewed as even more “un-American” (Yogeeswaran, Dasgupta, Adelman, Eccleston, & Parker, 2011). According to Yogeeswaran et al., “In the U.S., Americans generally embrace principles of ethnic diversity but dislike minorities who express strong ethnic identification (p. 908). Yogeeswaran et al. conducted two experiments examining whether and how different types of ethnic identity expressions influence perceivers’ interpretations of White vs. non-White ethnic groups as American citizens. Participants included Whites, Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, Biracial/Multiracial, and individuals who identified as “other.” The first experiment “focused on the ethnic identity of Native-Americans as the target group of interest because as the original inhabitants of the land one cannot doubt that they are truly American” (p. 909). Yet, the researchers expected that Native Americans would be viewed as less American if they expressed their ethnic identity in public in comparison to those who expressed their ethnic identity in private. The second experiment “sought to extend the previous findings by testing whether people hold White and non-White ethnic groups to the same standard regarding the acceptability of public and private ethnic identity expressions” (p. 911).

From these two experiments, the authors found that seeing White and non-White individuals express their ethnic identity in public led perceivers to view their entire ethnic groups as *less* authentically American compared to when perceivers saw these individuals express the same ethnic identity in the privacy of their home. (p. 912)

Consciously, people try to “hold White and non-White ethnic groups to the same standard regarding the acceptability of ethnic identity expressions” (p. 912). However, at an unconscious level, the standards change; when non-White individuals express their ethnic identity in public, their ethnic groups are viewed as less American. However, when White individuals express their ethnic identity in public, they are still viewed as American. The findings of this study suggest that “Americans are accepting of a ‘weak’ form of multiculturalism that limits the free expression and practice of ethnicity to the private domain, and expect assimilation to mainstream cultural practices in the public domain” (p. 913).

Self vs. Group

Not only do Asian Americans have to deal with the issue of being viewed as a foreigner and as “un-American,” (Yogeeswaran et al., 2011) but they also struggle to find balance between their “inner and social selves” (Kuo, 2001, p. 12). Kuo studied “the identity development of Asian American college students, especially in relation to the simultaneous development of individual and group identity” (p. 9). Kuo conducted

interviews with four second-generation Asian American undergraduates at a university in California and found that the students focused on how they saw themselves as the self and the other. Most students found that how they saw themselves as the self and the other “were not compatible and the fluidity between their individual and group identity was not always clearly evident” (p. 12). For one of the Chinese American students in the study, he viewed his Chinese and American culture as separate and because the two had different values, he did not feel like he could unite the two and he felt like “something would have to give” (p. 12-13). However, although he viewed his two identities as separate, he was still able to bring them together in certain situations. “His identity in each setting shifted based on the expectations of others around him (e.g. he could be “more American” at [his university])” (p. 13).

In addition, the students in this study “tried to create a consistent self-image with how they viewed themselves and how they believed society expected them to behave” (Chang as cited in Kuo, 2001, p. 14). For one Korean American, he believed that the views and expectations of society often conflicted with his own. He talked about feeling “patronize[ed]” (p. 15) by White students in his residence hall because they thought they were better than other races and also feeling isolated by other Korean Americans because they expected him to be able to speak Korean, but he could not. There was a discrepancy between “the expectations of others based on his Asian appearance and his own experiences” (p. 15). Asian American students “need to establish their autonomy in

relation to the dominant society as well as to the sub-population group to which they belong (p. 15).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this constructivist narrative study was to examine (1) how the model minority stereotype influenced Asian American students' psychosocial development, (2) how Asian American students viewed the model minority stereotype, and (3) how the model minority stereotype shaped students' definitions of success. This study addressed the following guiding research questions: (a) How does the model minority stereotype influence Asian American students' psychosocial development?; (b) How do Asian American students view the model minority stereotype?; and (c) How has the model minority stereotype shaped Asian American students' definitions of success?

In this chapter, I describe the qualitative approach I used to conduct my study. I hope to achieve the following goals with this chapter: (1) provide an overview of constructivist narrative inquiry to include key concepts important to understanding this methodology; (2) discuss data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation methods; and (3) share who I am as a researcher.

Research Design

I designed this study with a constructivist epistemology and used narrative inquiry as my methodology. According to Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006), "Constructivism seeks to understand individual social action through interpretation or translation" (p. 18). Human beings are able to "interpret and *construct* reality...the world of human perception is not real in an absolute sense, as the sun is real, but is 'made up' and shaped

by cultural and linguistic constructs” (Patton, 2002, p. 96). Constructivists study the “multiple realities constructed by people and the implications of those constructions for their lives and interactions with others” (Patton, 2002, p. 96). Constructivism focuses on how participants make meanings (Crotty, 1998) of their experiences. Constructivists try to understand how the worlds of the [participants] operate “by somehow entering those worlds, describing and analysing the contextualised social phenomena found there” (Greig, Taylor, & MacKay, 2007, p. 48). Since I was trying to understand how Asian American students viewed the model minority stereotype and how they defined success, constructivism seemed to be the best fit because it focused on the individual experiences, the views of the participants, and the individual meanings they made from their experiences. Meaning is “constructed symbolically in interaction with others” (Greig et al., 2007, p. 48) and I attempted to find what those meanings were. Narrative inquiry allowed me to study the individual stories of each participant. I was able to investigate the ways participants made meanings of their experiences through their stories.

According to this approach, stories “imitate life and present an inner reality to the outside world” (Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T. 1998, p. 7). Donald Polkinghorne (1988), a psychologist, viewed narrative as a story, and “recognized that individual stories are embedded in a social context. Narrative is central human experience and existence, providing opportunity to share the nature and order of events at particular times in history” (as cited in Bold, 2012, p. 17). Clandinin and Connelly (2000)

emphasized John Dewey's belief that people are individuals and it is imperative that they are understood as individuals. However, they cannot be understood only as individuals because "they are always in relation, always in a social context" (p. 2). Narrative is central to human experience and existence, providing opportunity to share the nature and order of events at particular times in history" (as cited in Bold, 2012, p. 17). Narrative focuses on a single episode or experience, collects data through individual stories, reports these experiences, and presents these experiences and their significance for the individual (Miller & Salkind, 2002).

Each person will tell a story differently, "depending on what captures their attention and how they make sense of the event in relation to their own experience" (Bold, 2012, p. 18). Narratives tell us about the "meaning of the respondents' lives (i.e., how they interpret their world) and the ways in which they articulate or voice their experiences (i.e., how they tell their stories, from what position, and emphasizing what human qualities)" (Marvasti, 2004, p. 97).

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon.

To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375)

Although the participants may have gone through similar experiences, the meanings they made and the context of those meanings were different. I tried to find similarities and differences in the stories of the participants in order to gain a fuller understanding of the experiences of Asian American students and the role the model minority stereotype played in their academic experiences in college. Every participant had his or her own story and I intended to present each story in a way that highlights the uniqueness of each student's journey.

Setting

This study was conducted at a large, public research university in the Midwest. The university is one of the largest public institutions in the United States with over 64,000 students enrolled. This institution, which was founded in the 17th century, is predominantly White, with the Asian American population comprising less than 10 percent of the student population. The Asian American population in the state itself makes up less than 2 percent of the population. The university has about 30 clubs and organizations that are focused on the Asian American population and/or its culture.

Sampling Criteria

Criteria for sampling included (1) traditional-age Asian American undergraduate college students (ages 17-22) who attended Midwestern University at the time of the

study; (2) variation in age and year in school; (3) ethnicity; (4) geographic location (i.e. where they grew up); and (5) variation in college majors. The rationale behind the first criterion was to include students who identified with their racial identity. One thing I would like to point out is that the term “Asian” sometimes includes international students as well. However, for the purpose of this study, Asian international students were not included because their experiences with the model minority stereotype and in college are very different from those of Asian American students. For the other four criteria, I wanted to gain a comprehensive picture of the experiences of Asian Americans with the model minority stereotype and I believed having participants of different ages, ethnicities, and majors, and having participants who grew up in different parts of the country would allow that.

Participant Selection

Since the purpose of this study was to learn about the role of the model minority stereotype in Asian American students’ academic experiences in college, participants in this study were all students who identified as traditional college Asian American students. For this study, I looked for up to eight participants who were current undergraduate students who identified as Asian American at Northwestern University. In order to identify participants for this study, I emailed the executive board members and advisors of the cultural organizations on campus and asked them to circulate the Recruitment Email (Appendix A) to the rest of their organization. The recruitment email also requested that I

attend an upcoming general board meeting, which is a meeting of all the general body members of the organization, to further explain the study and invite other board members to participate who did not receive the initial email. If more than eight participants were interested in being interviewed for the study, I planned to look at the aforementioned criteria in order to ensure a diverse sample, but I did not have that issue. After I sent out the recruitment email and attended the Asian cultural organization meetings, only five students responded saying that they were interested in being part of the study.

Sample Size and Demographics

Five participants were involved in this study. Although this was a relatively small sample size, “the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected... than with sample size” (Patton, 2002, p. 245). All of the participants were traditional aged students who identified as Asian American. Two participants were studying engineering, one was studying zoology, one was studying urban sustainability, and one was studying fashion retail studies. However, I was unable to achieve the variation in geographic location that I had hoped. This was mainly because most of Midwestern University’s students are not from out of state. Demographically, the sample included two men and three women between the ages of 19 and 22. Two of the participants identified as Indian American, two identified as Taiwanese American, and one identified as Chinese American. All but one participant grew up in the Midwest.

Access and Rapport

The interviews were the first time I met some of the participants. Anticipating this, I knew I had to work to build a rapport with them. In order to develop rapport, I informed them of the purpose and guiding questions of my study and why I felt the topic was significant. I also shared that part of the reason I was studying this topic was to provide university administrators with a better understanding of the issues that Asian American students faced in association with the model minority stereotype. As a token of my appreciation for their willingness to participate, I gave the students a \$5 gift certificate to Chipotle upon their completion of the study (i.e. after member checks were completed). Upon their completion of the study, I set up a time to meet with each of them in order to give them their gift cards.

Protection of Participants

All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and reviewed and signed the Informed Consent Document (Appendix B) before the interviews started. As indicated in the Informed Consent Document, participants were free to leave or terminate their participation in the study at any time.

Methods of Data Collection

Qualitative information was obtained from one individual interview from each participant and a follow up via email. Originally, the plan was to conduct an initial interview and a follow up second interview if needed; the first one being 60-90 minutes

in length and the second one being 30 minutes. However, all of the participants did not feel the need to participate in a follow up interview. Anything they needed to add or change in their interviews was small enough that it was easily done via email. The initial interviews were semi-structured (Appendix C) or as Patton (2002) called it “the general interview guide approach” (p. 342). The general interview guide approach consists of a set of questions that act as a guide for the interviewer rather than a script that has to be followed. These set questions allow the interviewer to maintain the focus of the study while having the flexibility to ask varying questions depending on the responses of the participants. The set questions help ensure that each participant will be asked questions regarding the same topics. Thus, the interviewer “remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined” (Patton, 2002, p. 343). The general interview guide gives interviewers the freedom to “develop questions, sequence those questions, and make decisions about which information to pursue in greater depth” (Patton, 2002, p. 344).

After the initial interview, I conducted member checks with the participants in order to gain their feedback. I emailed each participant his or her transcribed interview so he or she could check for accuracy. After reading their transcripts, participants had the opportunity to participate in a follow up interview lasting no more than 30 minutes or submit their edits via email, if needed. All five participants did not feel they needed to

meet in person to add or change the content of their initial interviews. Whatever changes they wanted to make, they sent them to me via email.

Each interview was recorded on my cell phone after receiving the participants' consent. Afterwards, I uploaded the transcriptions to a third party vendor and they transcribed the interviews. I employed a few strategies in order to ensure that the participants' responses and data remained confidential. First, I invited all participants to choose a pseudonym. Second, I saved all the recordings, transcripts, and other data files under the pseudonyms. I also saved the recordings on both my phone and my laptop, and made sure the phone and laptop were always password protected when I was away.

As a researcher, I wanted to describe the role the model minority stereotype played in Asian American students' academic pursuits and potentially expose the negative effects of this perception. I also wanted to understand how such socializations influenced Asian Americans' definitions of success. The general interview guide approach allowed me to ask each participant the same set of questions, but still gave participants the freedom to share their individual stories. The follow up emails allowed students to share any additional information that they did not get a chance to share in the first interview.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

In the following sections, I describe my method of analysis and interpretation of data collected through interviews. For narrative analysis, there is not one, single method,

but a “spectrum” (Riessman, 1993, p. 25) of methods. The goal of this analysis was to study the content in each individual story and also compare the five stories. In order to do so, I analyzed the themes within each story and utilized cross-case analysis in order to analyze the themes across all interviews.

I began the analysis process by reading and rereading all the interviews. I also made comments in the margins as I read through the interviews. After making my initial notes, I reread the interviews in order to find individual themes. Next, I “restoried” the interviews. “Restorying is the process of reorganizing the stories into some general type of framework” (Creswell, 2007, p. 56). I analyzed each story and mainly organized the stories in the restories in chronological order for each participant, but I also looked at significant events that provided additional context to their stories. Sometimes this resulted in stories being out of order. The narrative for each participant chronologically described their individual experiences with the model minority stereotype with additional statements and experiences that helped connect the experiences and provided a more complete picture. The purpose of restorying the interviews was to present all the interviews as a unique, individual story. “Restorying” interviews “explores individuals’ understandings of their experience in the context of their everyday lives while simultaneously looking to the wider social/cultural resources on which people draw to help them make sense of their lives” (McCormack, 2002, p. 220). In addition, I analyzed the restories utilizing Kodama et al.’s (2002) model of psychosocial development for

Asian American students in order to examine how the model minority stereotype influences Asian American students' psychosocial development. I specifically focused on the Identity, Purpose, and Competency content areas in my analysis because Identity and Competency were the areas Kodama et al. (2002) suggested were influenced by general stereotypes and/or the model minority stereotype, and the focus on academic achievement in the Purpose content area supports the expectations of the model minority stereotype. For the Competency content area, I focused on intellectual competency because the model minority stereotype was able to influence this competency area for some participants.

After the "restorying" process, I engaged in cross-case analysis (Patton, 2002). Cross-case analysis is the process of "grouping together answers from different people to common questions, or analyzing different perspectives on central issues" (Patton, 2002, p. 440). The cross-case analysis allowed me to find the themes that existed across restories. By using the interview guide approach, I was able to group together answers and topics from different interviews. Lastly, I utilized Kodama et al.'s (2002) model again to find the common theme across the five initial analyses.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of a study is crucial to its integrity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified four criteria for ensuring the trustworthiness of a qualitative study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility. The technique I utilized in order to ensure credibility was peer debriefing and member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer debriefing is “a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). The peer debriefer for this study was a current master’s student in my graduate program who was familiar with the literature on college student identity development. In addition, member checking gave participants the opportunity to review the data that was collected and my interpretation of the data in order to determine whether my interpretations were accurate. I provided the participants with transcripts of their interviews so they could make any changes if they needed to.

Transferability. Transferability is being able to connect the findings in a study to another context. Thick description is the technique that is utilized in order to achieve transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick description requires detailed description and in-depth data so that the reader can determine whether or not the results can be transferred to another context. To achieve thick description, I asked my participants to be as detailed as possible when talking about their experiences.

Dependability. Dependability is the ability to account for the changes that are related to the study design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to ensure dependability, I

kept a researcher journal so that I can keep track of my personal thoughts throughout the research process.

Confirmability. Strategies of confirmability ensure that the findings of the study were not a result of my own personal biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Having a peer debriefer helped ensure confirmability. I was also able to reflect on any biases that arose during this study by writing in my researcher journal.

The Researcher

As the researcher, I believe it is important to disclose my personal biases and the reasons for my interest in this study. Both of my parents are Korean and they immigrated to the United States after they graduated from college. I was born in Seoul, South Korea and grew up in southern California. Growing up, I was always the minority and I was definitely viewed through the model minority stereotype. All of my non-Asian friends expected me to be good at math and science and whenever another classmate did better than I did on an exam, everyone made a big deal about it. I was viewed as “smart” and I felt pressured to do well in school and maintain this image of the model minority.

It was not until college that I started to question this stereotype. I realized that being successful was more than just about getting straight A’s. For me, success became about finding my own community through student involvement and being a role model to other students in addition to doing well in classes. Therefore, I became an Orientation

Leader and a Resident Advisor in order to help guide students through college and help them find their own communities where they can thrive.

From my experience, I am aware of the personal challenges that come with being labeled with the model minority stereotype. I believe Asian American students at Midwestern University have gone through similar or different experiences with the stereotype and my hope is that through the participants' stories, Midwestern University can learn what challenges these students are facing, provide better services to assist them during their college career, and help them be successful based on the students' definitions of success.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to tell the stories of five Asian American college students' experiences with the model minority stereotype, their perceptions of the stereotype, and the role this stereotype has played in their lives. These stories are introduced first through the presentation of the restories of each participant. I also introduce how the participants came to view the stereotype in the way they currently do, and how their definitions of success came to be.

To construct these restories, I focused on the moments that were relevant to the participants' experiences with the model minority stereotype. These moments could have been as apparent as others telling them they should be smart because they were Asian or as subtle as asking them why they were not Pre-med. I organized the stories in the restories in chronological order, but as mentioned previously, I also looked at significant events that provided additional context to their stories which resulted in some stories to be out of order. In addition, I provided additional context, like family background, to help connect and understand the significance of the participants' experiences. All names in the stories have been changed to their pseudonyms in order to ensure confidentiality.

The purpose of the five narratives presented in this section is to describe the meanings that each participant made from his/her experiences with the model minority stereotype and how the model minority stereotype influences Asian Americans' psychosocial development. It is important to note that the differences in length or

complexity of the participants' stories do not take away from the significance and richness of each participant's narrative.

Lola Bee

Lola Bee is a second year, majoring in Fashion Retail Studies and double minoring in Business and Popular Culture Studies. She identifies as Taiwanese American and grew up in the western United States. She is the second of three children, and has an older brother and a younger sister. The main themes that appeared in Lola's narrative were (1) her strong association with White Americans, (2) being academically independent, (3) her focus on the content of her classes rather than her grades, (4) the view that the model minority stereotype is neutral, and (5) the importance of doing what she loves.

Lola grew up going to a Chinese church back home and that is where she met most of her Chinese friends. Lola stated she identifies more with Americans and does not hang out with Asians at school. She does not take her studies "that seriously," so in that aspect she is not stereotypically Asian. She will regularly hang out with the White kids and she is very involved in school. Lola cares about her academics, but is more focused on her co-curricular activities. She is currently very involved because, as she put it, "[she] doesn't like to be bored." She is aggressive and will work hard to get what she wants. She describes herself as having a "type A personality" and being very outspoken, but "nothing compared to [her] White peers." Throughout the interview, Lola made similar

comparisons to her White peers. Lola wants to pursue a job in the fashion industry and is also very athletic, which is not a quality people usually associate with Asians. Lola is currently on one of the university's athletic clubs. She has been involved in her sport since she was three years old and she enjoys having a healthy, active lifestyle.

In this section, I will present a restory of Lola's experience with the model minority stereotype. To provide context to her experiences with the stereotype, I will provide restories of other experiences she shared that are related to her experiences with the model minority stereotype.

Academically independent. Growing up, Lola's parents never "pushed grades on [her]." Her parents wanted to make sure she understood what she was learning, but most of the pressure to do well in school came from herself. Lola understands everyone has their own definitions of what "trying" means, but for her, trying is giving it what she thinks is her all and what she thinks is worth it. Throughout her schooling, she remembers her parents did not help her with her projects, unlike White kids, "where their parents w[ould] do the project for them or help edit, or you know, even help on math." If she had any questions, she asked her friends; she typically did not ask her teachers. In her mind, her teachers were not approachable. She remembered one teacher even saying, "Just ask a friend before you ask me." This made her teachers appear to be too busy and that they did not want to help her. She said, "School's just really been up to me. I've been, you know, doing it on my own."

The grades Lola has received in college so far have been phenomenal. She attributes her academic success to her personality and the fact that she wants to do well in school, and not to the outside pressures of others or the expectations they may have of her as an Asian American.

Her first memories of the model minority stereotype. In middle school, Lola recalled people making comments like, “Oh, Asians are so smart,” but these comments never affected her because she mainly associated with White kids when she was younger. As a result, the comments never offended her personally. She would just say, “Okay, ha ha ha” or just ignore it. It was not until she came to college that she realized these comments actually hurt people and as an Asian American, she should probably stand up for them.

She also remembered being divided into Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors classes in high school. “Definitely, [those] classes were like majority Asian...” Although she noticed this split, she was unable to think of a time where the model minority stereotype played some sort of significant role in her life. Lola said this is so because she expected this when it came to her academics.

Study for as long as it is worth it. Lola determined the amount of time she would spend on her studies based on whether or not she thought it was “worth it.” When I asked how she determined that, Lola said it depended on the class and whether or not she would use the knowledge of that class in the future. She gave an example of the earth

science class she is currently enrolled in. While she was studying for an exam, she asked herself, “Is this memorization going to do anything...is it worth it for my future?”

Therefore, for this particular class, instead of memorizing the material over and over, she studied until she felt like she understood the material enough. If it is a subject that she will use in the future and will help her in the long run, she will spend more time studying for that class. In terms of grades, Lola used to stressed over the A- vs. the A. She no longer obsesses over the A and is comfortable getting the A- instead. However, she has only received one B+ and that is the lowest grade she has received in college.

In addition to her own distinction of what is an adequate amount of time to invest in her studies, Lola recalled the first time she received an F on an exam in high school. She was devastated initially and cried. Her teacher at the time told her that the F would not matter since it was only one exam and to simply learn from it. Lola understands the importance of grades, but she does not see the point in stressing out about it.

The model minority stereotype is neutral. Lola does not feel negatively about the model minority stereotype because “it’s not like they’re saying we’re ugly. They’re saying we’re smart. We should take pride in that.” She, herself, has never experienced anything negative as a result of the stereotype, but she knows individuals who have had negative experiences with the stereotype. Nonetheless, she does not believe that any stereotype is positive. With that said, she understands that stereotyping is normal, which is why she concluded that the model minority stereotype is neutral.

It's just how we make sense of the world...If people want to break the stereotype, it's really just about seeing us as an individual people, not as groups. But, I mean, when anyone is trying to get to know someone, they just see that stereotype...

Doing what I love and being able to help others. For Lola, success is doing what she loves and helping others reach their goals. "If I'm doing what I love, then I'll be happy..." Lola said success is not being rich, but she did mention that if she does what she loves, she will spend a lot of time doing it, and she expects the money to follow. Lola credited her definition of success to her mother. She does not come from a very wealthy family or a very poor family. She comes from a middle class family and since her parents are divorced, her mother has been her primary role model. Lola described her mother as someone who is encouraging and supportive and loves what she does. She is able to be at a good job, and come home and be with her kids and laugh. "I don't think my definition of success has ever changed because she's always been the same and I look up to her."

In addition to her mom's influence, Lola has talked to other adults to formulate her definition, so she feels very comfortable with her definition and does not feel that it will change in the future.

Narrative summary. From the very beginning of the interview, it was evident that Lola had achieved one of the various areas of competency: physical competence. This was apparent in her involvement in one of the university's athletic clubs, and she has been involved in her sport since she was three years old. Achieving physical competency

can be viewed as something positive because according to Kodama et al. (2002), physical competency can be a challenge for many Asian Americans since their focus tends to be mainly on intellectual competency. In terms of intellectual competence, Lola has achieved that as well. The lowest grade she has received in college was a B+. Thus, it is clear that she works hard to get outstanding grades and maintain a high GPA. According to Kodama et al. (2002), intellectual competency is the one area of competency most Asian Americans achieve due to reasons like, the cultural value on education and the expectation of the model minority stereotype for Asian Americans to excel in school.

In the Identity content area of Kodama et al.'s model, Kodama et al. (2002) emphasized the importance of developing a racial identity because one's racial identity "provides a foundation for Asian American students' overall identity development because of the primacy of racism on psychosocial development" (p. 49). In her interview, Lola stated that she identified more with Americans, meaning White Americans, than Asians. In middle school she remembered people commenting on how Asians were smart, but that never affected her because of her strong association with her White peers. Since Lola identifies strongly with White Americans, it seems as though her Asian identity is not as strong. One reason the model minority stereotype may not have influenced the way she views herself is because her Asian identity is not as salient as her American identity. In addition, she claims she has not had any negative experiences with the model minority stereotype.

According to Kodama et al. (2002), for many Asian Americans, purpose is deeply associated with academic achievement. In addition, these expectations to succeed academically may come from their families. However, Lola's parents never pushed her to get good grades. Most of that pressure to do well came from herself. In addition, her parents never pushed her toward a particular major or career path. As a result, Lola was able to pick a major that she was passionate about. Due to the family expectations for Asian Americans to pursue a career in the sciences, it is often difficult for Asian American students to go against those expectations and pursue a career they are interested in, thus making it challenging to develop a strong sense of purpose. Fortunately for Lola, she was free to choose her own major which allowed her to develop a clear sense of purpose. Furthermore, her definition of success seemed to not be influenced by the model minority stereotype. As stated above, Lola's definition of success was doing what she loves and helping others reach their goals. She also stressed the importance of her own happiness. Her definition was mainly influenced by her mother who has been her key role model, and also by other adults she had spoken with throughout her life. Lola's definition was well thought out and evidently took time to come up with, which contributes to her strong sense of purpose.

Harper Chu

Harper Chu is a second year, majoring in Electrical Engineering and she is considering a possible minor in creative writing. The main themes that emerged in

Harper's narrative were (1) parental pressure to do well in school, (2) her peers expect her to be smart, (3) making sure the model minority stereotype does not restrain her, (4) the importance of being well-rounded, and (5) the importance of pleasing her parents.

Harper continuously mentioned her family throughout her interview and stated that her family has been the most influential in shaping the person she is today. Harper identifies as Chinese American and said her parents were "stereotypically Asian," except in the fact that they taught her English as her first language. When I asked her what "stereotypically Asian" meant, she said they placed a heavy emphasis on grades. Harper said her parents have gotten better at not pressuring her as much to get good grades. She said, "The expectations are still there, but they just don't say it anymore." In terms of being "stereotypical Asian parents," her parents also put her in Chinese school and had her take piano and violin lessons. Her parents wanted her to meet the expectations of the model minority stereotype. In high school she participated in various academic clubs which she felt was a positive thing because it "reinforce[ed] what [her] parents believed she should be doing with [her] life..." One activity she participated in that she said was "weird" for her parents was softball, since you do not hear of many Asian parents putting their kids in sports. Although Harper's participation in softball was "weird" for her parents, they felt it would help her be a more well-rounded individual.

Being "cognitively gifted."The first time Harper experienced pressure to do well in school was in elementary school. Harper's elementary school had a gifted program

called CG which stood for Cognitively Gifted. Students would take various tests and if they passed, they got in, “and that’s the first thing that set you apart from everyone else.” For Harper, being in CG was the first event that made her think she was smarter than others. The pressure to get into CG came from her parents because Harper’s sisters had also been tested into the CG program. However, once she got in, she experienced pressure from her peers to be smart. She remembered others making comments like, “Oh you’re in CG, you must be really good.” These comments resulted in a mindset amongst the kids in CG that they had to be better than everyone else.

The influence of softball. Softball and her family influences have been the two extremes in Harper’s life and they have been very different. On her softball team, most of the players were White and they were “stereotypically American”: boisterous, loud, fun all the time, and got along with everyone. She described her teammates as having their own skill sets—skills Asians typically would not have. When asked what skill sets she was referring to, she said mainly social skills. She believed Whites to be pretty easy going overall and comfortable in situations where they may not know many people, whereas Asians are known to be more shy. There was a definite culture shock when she first started playing softball. She had to call out the plays and shout encouragements to her teammates, and she just could not do it because she is normally more on the quiet and reserved side. It was hard for her to get used to it, but she believes it made her more

social and outgoing than she would have been otherwise. It also made her more aggressive and willing to take risks.

Harper would not necessarily describe herself as quiet and shy or loud and outgoing. She said it depended on her mood. If she is with people she is close with like her best friends or family, she tends to be more quiet because that is how she was raised. If she is with friends she is not extremely close with, she tends to be more outgoing. Harper views the “softball side” of her as more of how society is around her, and as a result, she believes that is how she should act around people she is not particularly comfortable with. She also made it a point to say that the people she is closer with are primarily Asian except for a few of her friends, so that may be a factor as well. “I just act differently around Asians and non-Asians.”

People expect you to do better. Harper was uniquely the only participant who had not heard of the model minority stereotype. However, she was still able to describe the academic-focused expectations that were placed on her for being Asian and others’ expectations for her to be smart and do well in school. In high school, she remembered how her peers’ expected her to do better in school. High school was also when she was part of the softball team and she was often unable to spend adequate amounts of time on her academics. Her peers made comments like, “Oh you’re Asian, I bet you got a really good grade on this test,” when in reality, she was at a softball game until 9 o’clock at night and did not have the time to study for the test. Her peers also constantly asked her

for help because they were convinced she was really smart, and she was happy to help them if she knew the material. She definitely felt the pressure of being Asian in high school. Her peers thought she was smart and that is what she felt she had to be.

Harper believes the model minority stereotype affects her academic success in a positive way. One way is through her friends. A lot of her friends are Asian and also try and live up to the expectations of the stereotype. This allows her to have a support system and also a group of friends who stress the importance of working hard and getting good grades like she does. In addition, as previously mentioned, her parents want her to meet the expectations of the stereotype, so from a young age, they tried to instill effective study habits in her. They forced her to do her homework and study which has helped her be more disciplined in studying as she got older. She attributes her good grades to the efforts her parents made. Moreover, she was unsure of whether or not she would have been as academically successful if the model minority stereotype was not associated with Asians. She considered herself to be a “naturally lazy person” and therefore, felt that if she did not have the stereotype and the voice of her mom in the back of her head to work hard, she may not have been as successful.

Do not let it restrain you. Harper thought the model minority stereotype was positive in some ways, although it may sound negative because nobody wants to be stereotyped. For Harper, the pressure and expectation to embody the model minority stereotype came from her parents and this helped her be a better student and a better

daughter. The model minority stereotype pushed her to work harder and she was appreciative of that. However, she believes it is crucial to not let the stereotype restrain her in the way it restrained her sisters. Her sisters did not participate in other co-curricular activities like Harper did. They did the “stereotypical Asian” activities like play instruments, go to Chinese school, and study hard. Although she agrees that her sisters were successful the way they were, she felt “there [were] some things...[that] were really valuable from breaking out of that kind of stereotype.”

Success is personal fulfillment which means pleasing my parents. Harper initially defined success as personal fulfillment. For her, personal fulfillment was pleasing her parents and herself, and doing what she felt she was supposed to be doing with her life. Then, she said success was being happy, but at the same time, making her parents happy. Harper believed that what made her parents happy would make her happy.

I think I’m a natural pleaser...kind of in regards to my parents at least. So I feel like if I do the right thing—and if I do what they want—provided the right thing is what they want...I’ll be happy and successful in my own way.

Harper felt that the model minority stereotype significantly influenced her definition of success because her parents wanted her to follow the stereotype, and she wanted to do what they wanted her to do.

Harper was unable to recall exactly what her definition of success was last year. She believed last year, her definition was influenced more by her friends. She measured

her success based on how well she was doing in comparison to her successful friends. Now, she believes she has “come more into [her] own” and “know[s] [her]self a little better.” She understands the importance of separating her values from those of other people’s, and as a result, her definition of success is more “independent” than it was last year. This year, it does not matter whether she is more successful, or just as successful, as her peers. What matters is how she pleases her parents.

Besides the model minority stereotype, another factor that influenced Harper’s definition of success was her high school engineering internship. She was able to work with graduate students who, in her eyes, seemed self-fulfilled and happy with their careers.

They had something that they wanted to do and they went after it and I think that was really appealing. So I think instead of looking at what my parents wanted me to do for a while, I was looking at what I wanted to do, independently of, you know, what they wanted me to do for a little bit, and I think I made my career decision based on that feeling because you know, I just saw these people who I worked with who were so enthusiastic about their jobs.

Harper was “pretty comfortable” with her definition of success. However, since she is only a second year student, she anticipates a couple of changes in the future. Her current focus is graduating from college with her engineering degree and with honors.

She believes that restarting activities she had done in the past may help her add to her definition.

I feel like I have to do, you know, the main thing first before I do others and then I'll be successful. Or if I get the one thing I want first and then be successful, and then add on things to make me even more successful. But I feel like at some point just things will add on.

When I asked Harper to clarify what it meant for her to be “more successful,” she said “more happy with the way [she is]...as a person.” She elaborated and said she used to do a variety of things whereas now she is focused solely on her engineering major which she feels, makes her part of the stereotype. She feels she is departing from who she was before. Before concluding the interview, Harper fixed her previous statement, and said “more successful” means “becoming more well-rounded.” Harper acknowledged that other aspects of her life will contribute to her definition of success, but she strongly believes the core of it will not change.

Narrative summary. Harper’s academic experiences support Kodama et al.’s (2002) belief that Asians tend to be intellectually competent. From the very beginning of the interview, Harper stated that her parents emphasized the importance of good grades. Even though her parents stopped pressuring her as she got older, the expectations still existed. Although Harper was uniquely the only one who had not heard of the model minority stereotype, she had still experienced it. Harper believed the model minority

stereotype motivated her to work hard and get good grades. Harper also stated that her parents wanted her to do well academically. They forced her to do her homework and study hard in order to do well in school. In a way, the model minority stereotype motivated her because her parents bought into it. She was also in a gifted program in elementary so she was set apart at an early age. Harper's intellectual competency was mainly the result of her parents' desires for her to embody the model minority stereotype which caused Harper to want to live up to the expectations of the stereotype. This supports Kodama et al.'s (2002) view that Asian Americans achieve intellectual competency because they often internalize the model minority stereotype. However, Harper was also involved in softball which allowed her to be physically competent as well. From her softball experiences, she learned to be more loud and social, which she called her "softball side." She also learned how to work as part of a team, and therefore, her involvement in softball taught her how to be more socially and interpersonally competent. Her physical competency, and social and interpersonal competency, again, can be viewed positively because Asian Americans often tend to be only intellectually competent. Harper's competence in all three areas demonstrates her well-roundedness and her achievement of the Competency content area.

Harper's definition of success was personal fulfillment which meant pleasing her parents. However, she also stated that her current goal is to graduate from college with her engineering degree and with honors. According to Kodama et al. (2002), Asian

Americans come to college with a clear sense of purpose that is focused on academic achievement. Not only does Harper want to graduate with her engineering degree, but she wants to graduate with honors, which would be an impressive and significant academic accomplishment. Therefore, even though her ultimate purpose is to have a sense of personal fulfillment and be well-rounded, her current purpose is to be academically successful. Thus, Harper's sense of purpose supports Kodama et al.'s (2002) view that Asian American students' sense of purpose focuses on academic achievement. Being academically successful will provide her with a sense of personal fulfillment because it will please her parents if she does well in school.

Raj Shah

Raj Shah is a second year, Indian American, majoring in Food, Agricultural, and Biological Engineering. He currently does not have a minor, but he is Pre-law. The major themes that appeared in Raj's narrative were (1) the importance of sharing his culture, (2) the expectations and pressure from others to be smart, (3) the effort to stay away from the model minority stereotype, (4) the two sides of the model minority stereotype, and (5) the importance of being happy.

Raj describes himself as a friendly, motivating, and outgoing individual. He enjoys meeting new people and talking to people. He is never shy in a situation. In a new environment, he does not hesitate to approach someone and introduce himself to them.

He is interested in getting to know others, learning more about them, and seeing where they connect, but also where they do not. However, this was not always the case.

Growing up, Raj was very shy and never enjoyed talking to people. He was always by himself and never good at making lots of friends because he could not connect with them. Raj attributes his change in personality and his increased self-confidence to his parents and his involvement in crew. He remembers his parents telling him the importance of getting to know his teachers and his classmates because they can all influence where he ends up in life. In addition, Raj was part of the crew team in high school. He was the coxswain, which is the person who sits at the bow or stern of the boat, depending on the type of boat. As a coxswain, he was forced to come out of his comfort zone. He was responsible for navigating the boat, and thus, had to communicate with his teammates and tell them what to do.

Why are you not pre-med? Although Raj is only a second year, he has had multiple experiences where others assumed he was Pre-med because he was Asian, even before he got to college. Since people made these assumptions, for a while, Raj really wanted to be a doctor. In addition, no one in his family was a doctor, and his grandparents and parents really wanted a doctor in the family, so he felt like he should do it for them. He was able to imagine the gratification he would feel if he accomplished that. However, thinking about it in the long term, Raj realized he could not see himself being a doctor. He recalled that it was difficult to tell his parents he wanted to be Pre-law instead

of Pre-med because he felt like he was letting them down. He did not want to upset them. In the end, his parents were very supportive of his decision. “I didn’t really expect them to be, but you know, I think that they themselves were thinking like, where exactly they could see me.” His parents are happy that Raj is figuring out what he wants to do with his life. For Raj, it is important that he does not waste his time. He needs to make sure to keep himself structured and know exactly where he is going. Raj also mentioned that his parents still ask him about his major from time to time and his dad jokes about it. His dad will make comments like, “Are you Pre-med” or “Are you going to go back?” but Raj knows that they are okay with his decision.

Now that he is Pre-law, he has received comments from others like, “You’re not Pre-med? How come you’re not Pre-med? It only makes sense for you to do that.” He admits this is a constant struggle, but he is still happy with the decision he made.

Open about his culture. Aside from the model minority stereotype, Raj felt he had not encountered many stereotypes as an Asian American because he is very open about his culture. When I asked him how he is open about his culture, he gave me an example involving his roommate. His roommate is a White male who grew up in the Midwest and in a small town where there are very few Indian people. Therefore, when his roommate asked him about his culture, Raj told him exactly what his culture was. He was not afraid to tell his roommate what he had learned from his culture and what traditions and holidays they celebrate. Raj embraces these opportunities to educate others

about his culture which he says is “the best part.” He enjoys talking to as many people as he can about it and he is completely comfortable doing so.

I am not Superman. Growing up, Raj did not notice any differences between him and his non-Asian peers in terms of academic expectations. He felt like everyone was on the same playing field and no one expected more from him because of his race and ethnicity. It was not until he started high school that he noticed the distinction. He attributes this to the fact that he went from a public school to a Catholic, private, all male high school, which “[got] rid of a lot of diversity.” There was not much else besides race and intelligence. In high school, he was “always required to be the smartest person in the room.” His classmates expected him to be smart because he was Indian. They assumed he got good grades, did everything well, and expected him to essentially be Superman.

Raj does not consider himself to be the smartest person, as far as grades go. He believes he is intelligent, but more socially than academically. He admits that there were areas in high school where he struggled. He never did well in Chemistry and writing papers was very difficult for him. Moreover, Raj feared having to go get help because he did not want others to know that he needed help. He did not want to “shatter” the expectations others had of him to be on top of everything and do well in everything he did. As a result, Raj did not do as well in high school as he wanted to. “I never really felt like I should need the help because I knew I should be smart.” Fortunately, this is no longer a problem for him because he realizes everyone needs help and “it’s something

that you have to get if you want to succeed.” He goes to the tutoring center to ask questions about his homework, and even goes to office hours to talk to his professors. Raj admits he was apprehensive about receiving help as a first year, but now he feels comfortable letting people know the areas he needs help in. “I’m okay with showing people that I’m not the smartest person. I make sure that I’m still a strong person. I don’t let that set me down.”

Even in college. Although Raj is no longer afraid to seek out the help he needs, he still feels that he is viewed as this really smart person, even in college. He acknowledges that he is smart, but there are still subjects he struggles in, like Physics. Despite these areas where he does not do well, others still expect him to do well and be good at what he does all the time. In Raj’s opinion, Asian students hold these expectations of him more than non-Asian students since Asian students tend to be in the same classes and/or majors as he is. But overall, he feels this is the trend with all students. “No matter who they are, I feel like they still expect [me] to be really good at what [I’m] doing or like, be super smart.”

It can go both ways. In Raj’s opinion, the model minority stereotype is helpful because others view him as intelligent and “people view[ing] me as being this way...doesn’t hurt. Like, it’s better that people think that I’m very smart than, you know, someone who is not very bright at all.” He feels the stereotype “gives [him] a leg up in a

lot of things.” However, in certain situations it is not helpful because in the areas that he is struggling in or not doing well, he is not supposed to be that way.

I’m supposed to do well. I’m supposed to be good. So that area where I feel, like it’s bad. It’s like people just expect too much out of me sometimes and that I have expectations I can’t really reach.

These expectations come mainly from his parents. He believes they set “unreachable” expectations for him because they do not understand and have not been through what he has. Even the Indian community expects a lot from him because many Indians are doctors or engineers, and they are very successful, and they want him to do well also. And when you do not, it becomes a huge deal. Everyone starts talking about it. “...there’s a lot of expectations that come from just being the race that I am.”

I do not want to be defined by the model minority stereotype. Raj is unsure whether or not the model minority stereotype has contributed to his academic success in college, but he thinks staying away from it is helping. Raj has made an active effort to stay away from the model minority stereotype because he does not want it to be something that defines him.

I don’t want it to be something that people are just like, “Oh yeah, he has to be a doctor. He has to be an engineer.” I don’t want that like, stereotyping me. You have to be so smart to be like someone. So I do my best to stay away from it.

Another way Raj has tried to make sure he is not defined by the model minority stereotype is by not associating with a lot of Indian people. He is not in any Indian cultural organizations and he does not have many Indian friends. Raj made it a point to say that he still has respect for his culture and traditions, but he shares that mainly with himself and his close friends, not so much with other Indian students. It is not necessarily that he does not want to associate with other Indian people, but he is afraid that he will be stereotyped if he did. He has Indian friends who do hang out with mostly other Indian students, and they are stereotyped as only hanging out with each other and getting good grades as a result.

I worked hard for my achievements. Since Raj has made the effort to stay away from the model minority stereotype, he does not believe the stereotype has influenced his ability to work hard in school. “I don’t want to be known for just being successful because I’m Indian. I want to be known for being successful because, you know, like, I am intelligent...not because ‘Oh he’s Indian.’” He wants to be known for being successful as a person, because he worked hard for it, not because he was Indian and it came easy for him.

I want to be happy doing what I am doing. In Raj’s words, hard work and determination will bring someone success no matter what. “...I feel like working hard and making sure that you are doing everything that you can to achieve the goals that you want will bring you success.” For him, success is not about being “filthy rich,” but about

being happy doing what he is doing. He talked about how he loves being an engineer even though “[at] times it sucks.”

Overall, it’s something that I will be happy with later on and like, you know, going to law. Like something that I will be happy with later on. So like I guess I define success with the amount of like happiness and like that. And like I don’t think it has to do anything with how much money I make or like how wealthy I become or like where I live or that kind of stuff. I think it’s just, you know, if I am content with what I’m doing and I’ve worked hard to get there, then I think that I would consider that success.

Raj admits that his current definition of success was not always his definition of success. As a high school student, he expected that he was going to do well. He thought success was going to come naturally to him because he saw other Indian people around him and they appeared to be successful. It seemed to come effortlessly for them, so he thought, “That’s exactly what’s going to happen to me too because they’re Indian and I’m Indian. We’re in the same grade. We hang out with the same people.” As an adult, Raj is aware that success is not going to be handed to him. He attributes much of this realization to his parents. He is now able to see and appreciate how hard they worked for their successes. As immigrants from India, he thinks his parents had to work harder than non-immigrants because people in the United States do not always view immigrants as “being of the same caliber.” In addition, Raj feels his parents had to work harder because in the Indian

community, a doctor is the highest profession one can become, and neither of his parents are doctors. They had to work harder so they were not viewed as lesser people.

Narrative summary. Even before Raj got to college, others assumed he was Pre-med or that he was going to be Pre-med because he was Asian. These assumptions led to him actually wanting to be a doctor. In addition, having the chance to be the first doctor in his family also motivated him. This supports Kodama et al.'s (2002) view that Asian Americans come to college with a strong sense of purpose which focuses on academic success. Asian Americans often focus on academic success and choose a major that will lead to a prestigious and/or high paying job. However, Raj knew that he would not be happy being a doctor because it was not what he wanted to do with his life. Once he knew that he wanted to go into law, he was afraid to tell his parents because he did not want to disappoint them. Raj experienced what many other Asian Americans experienced when developing purpose, expectations from his family to pursue a career in the health sciences. Fortunately for Raj, his parents were very supportive of his decision to become Pre-law, and as a result, he was able to develop a sense of purpose that revolved around what he enjoyed and wanted to do with his life. His fear of disappointing his family supports Kodama et al.'s (2002) belief that family expectations may make it difficult for Asian Americans to choose a career path outside of the science and engineering fields. Raj was able to achieve a sense of purpose because he was able to accomplish the relevant tasks associated with this content area list by Kodama et al.: “developing an

understanding of personal interests in terms of career and lifestyle, recognizing that one can change majors and career paths, reconciling individual interests with family expectations...” (Kodama et al., 2002, p. 51).

Raj was very quiet and shy as a child. He spent most of his time by himself and did not enjoy being around others. This supports Kodama et al.’s (2002) belief that Asian Americans tend to lack social and interpersonal competency. However, Raj no longer fears meeting new people; rather, he thrives on meeting new people and getting to know others. One of the reasons for this change is his time in crew. Being a coxswain pushed him to direct and guide his fellow teammates. In this position, he could no longer be quiet and shy; he had to shout directions and communicate effectively. It can be argued that his involvement in crew also allowed him to reach physical competence as well. However, the coxswains do not do any of the rowing. Instead they shout directions to their teammates of what they need to do in order to beat the opposing team. Therefore, it may be argued that his involvement in a sport may make him physically competent, but it can also be argued that he is not physically competent because he did not partake in the actual physical activity of the sport.

According to Kodama et al. (2002), Raj has also achieved intellectual competency, Although Raj admits that he is not the smartest person, he believes he is intelligent and competent. In high school and in his first year in college, he did not seek out the help he needed in order to do well in school. He felt that receiving help would go against their

expectations, and thus he did not do well in school. Raj's failure to seek help resulted in his lack of intellectual competency. Fortunately, in college, he realized everyone needs help if they want to succeed. He has been utilizing the resources on campus as well as going to his professors' office hours in order to get good grades. Once he stopped feeling ashamed of letting others know he needed help, he was able to achieve intellectual competency.

Kodama et al. (2002) highlighted the importance of developing a strong racial identity. Raj made it clear in his interview that he embraces his culture and is proud to share his culture with others. Kodama et al. also pointed out that Asian Americans experience racism and stereotypes that may influence the way students see themselves. The model minority stereotype has definitely influenced how Raj views himself and other Indian Americans. Raj has made an effort to stay away from the model minority stereotype because he does not want it to define him. In addition, he makes it a point not to hang out with other Indian students because he is afraid he will be stereotyped if he does. He views himself as separate from his Indian American peers. This struggle with the model minority stereotype may continue to affect Raj because the stereotype is so strongly associated with Asian Americans and not building relationships with other Indian Americans may prove to be more harmful if he does not have that support network. Although Raj is proud of his culture and proud of his race and ethnicity, these challenges may ultimately influence his identity and how he chooses to view himself.

Amy Chen

Amy Chen is a graduating senior, majoring in Urban Sustainability and minoring in Art. The major themes that emerged in Amy's narratives were (1) her peers' expectations for her to be smart, (2) not being significantly affected by the model minority stereotype, (3) the decreased saliency of the model minority stereotype, (4) the negative aspects of the model minority stereotype, (5) the emphasis on learning rather than grades, (6) going against non-Asians' expectations of her, and (7) the importance of being happy and contributing to society.

She grew up in the Midwest her whole life and that "becomes very apparent when [she] leaves the Midwest." She identifies as Taiwanese American and describes herself as someone who will "purposefully rock the boat" so others do not take advantage of her or other Asians. From the very beginning, it was evident that Amy was not going to censor herself or refrain from speaking her mind. I first met Amy in April 2011 during the first half of Spring quarter. We met at our student union because I had to interview her for a research project I was doing for one of my classes. She greeted me with a smile and a bubbly "Hello," and she looked at me, ready to begin our interview. Both times, my topic was on the Asian American population, and this was a topic that Amy was very passionate about. Her responses were in-depth and reflective which showed that she had thought about her identity as an Asian American and was aware of the stereotypes that were associated with her race. Growing up in the United States, Amy's parents made sure

that she knew she was not just American, that it was not “all of who [she] was.” Her parents made it a point to instill eastern ways of thought, morals, and ideas in her, and as a result, she has had to “reconcile a lot of those eastern versus western ideals...”

Growing up. Amy admitted that she was “really dumb” until she was about 11 years old. She had no idea what was going on and one day “things clicked.” She repeatedly emphasized that throughout her years of schooling, she did not like school, but she enjoyed learning. In high school, she felt like she was “getting gypped [because] they weren’t telling [her] the whole story.” She believed there were certain things she should have learned that her school did not teach her. She provided an example of a time when she was assigned a project about the conflict in the Middle East. Her teacher failed to teach her class “the whole story” about the United States’ involvement in the Middle East, and she remembered her history book missing a whole section and it did not make sense to her. She was taught history in a specific light, but she did not know how to deal with it.

Growing up in the Midwest specifically, it was not uncommon for Amy to be one of the few Asians in her school. In one of her high school math classes, she remembers being the only full Asian in her year in this class; all the other Asians were a year below her. She was the only Asian who was not a year ahead in math. According to Amy, math “wasn’t her thing,” but everyone assumed it was because she was Asian. In addition to academics, Amy talked about her experience in theater. Anytime there was a minority character or a character that no one else fit, she got that role. In one play, she played an

overweight, Black maid. She enjoyed being able to play the fun roles while everyone else had to play the normal, typical roles. However, she received messages that she could not play a certain role because she did not physically fit the role.

Throughout high school, Amy's peers expected her to be very studious and obedient, but she admits that she was probably sleeping in 70% of her classes. She cared about her grades, "but only so much." What was more important to her were the classes.

If I had a good teacher and if the material was challenging, I put a lot of work into it. But if the teacher was unreasonable or didn't put as much effort as I was putting in, then I was not gonna pay them the same respect.

Amy believes it is easier to get pigeonholed in particular categories, especially in the Midwest where there are not many Asians around. However, sometimes "it's also an internal thing." Her parents and the Taiwanese community had certain expectations for her. She had to play an instrument, do well in school, get into a good college, etc. She is aware that some of the pressure to do all of the aforementioned things came from her parents and the Taiwanese community, but it also came from herself. Fortunately, her parents were more understanding than Asian parents are stereotypically known to be. When she was younger, her parents said things like, "You should go to med school" or "It'd be great if you went to law school," but as she grew older, they recognized that their daughter's skills and talents were better suited for a different career and thus, did not

continue to pressure her to pursue medicine or law. Still, within the Taiwanese community, there were expectations that she was expected to live up to.

Life in college. College was a more exciting time for Amy because she enjoyed learning about different subjects. She liked everything so much that she had a hard time picking a major. She ended up choosing the major she did because it allowed her plan of study to be very interdisciplinary. Her program allowed her to pick her own specialization and build her own program of study.

In terms of the stereotypes she received in high school, Amy agrees that those stereotypes still continue on in college, but she receives stereotypes from other Asian students as well, not just non-Asians. International students assume she cannot understand Chinese because she is American and non-Asian students assume she cannot understand English because she is Asian. In one of her math classes, a group of international students was talking about how bad their professor was. They said in Chinese, “If we can’t even understand what he’s saying or what’s going on in the class, then how are the White kids suppose to understand?” Their point was that they had already learned the material, but how would the White kids understand the material if the professor is unable to explain the material well? Since they were speaking in Chinese, they were not speaking quietly, because they did not expect anyone to understand them. Thus, when Amy chuckled, they were mortified. Their comments did not bother Amy

because she agreed with them; their professor was horrible. However, this showed Amy, that in the eyes of the international students, she did not belong in their group.

Being at a predominantly White institution, Amy is part of the minority. Moreover, being part of the School of Agriculture, she is a minority in her college as well. Most of the students in her college are White and from rural areas, and as a result, they have not had a lot of interactions with minorities in general. In Amy's opinion, most of their perceptions of Asians come from the media. These students who come from rural backgrounds are scared to talk to her because "they don't know what to talk about with [her]."

They are aware that like...since they don't know much about racial diversity or just diversity...they can easily...say something "wrong" or do something that isn't...kosher, for lack of a better word. So they don't want to enter that territory because it's kind of treacherous since they don't know if they're gonna say anything offensive or not.

These students are very different from Amy and do not know how to talk to her, and she admits she does not know how to talk to them and have a conversation that is not superficial.

The non-overwhelming model minority stereotype. Amy agrees that the model minority stereotype has played a role in her life, but "not in an overwhelming sense." She has always been more interested in learning than in grades. However, since grades are

one of the main components colleges look at, Amy admits she “played into the system” in order to get good grades. She described her Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors classes as being predominantly Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Indian). There were more Asian students in the AP and Honors tracks than those who were not, so it was “pretty visual.” The AP and Honors classes had a larger proportion of Asian students and that was “kind of accepted.” Although it was the “norm” for Asian students to take the more challenging courses, Amy does not believe this was detrimental to anyone’s psyche. For her, “it was not terribly devastating in any way and [she] does not think anyone took particular pride in [it] either.”

The model minority stereotype and being viewed as a smart student was not something that particularly mattered to Amy because as she said, it was a “false impression.” It annoyed her, but it did not significantly affect her. Her main concern was “being pigeonholed or being thought of as somebody who [she] is not.”

In college, the model minority stereotype has played less of a role than her actual race itself, especially due to the increasing number of international students. There is a lot more xenophobia, which Amy believes has been a bigger problem.

So like, you know, when you’re out on a Saturday night, there are a lot more people that are like, you know, “Go home you f***ing Chinks!” um, and less like, “Oh, why are you doing so well?”

Amy thinks the model minority stereotype is still a latent thought in people's minds, but "people have bigger fish to fry in terms of like sometimes they don't feel safe among their White peers." The issue of feeling unsafe and unwelcomed is a bigger issue than being viewed as smart and intelligent. "It's not that they're like, "Oh, we have to live up to a certain standard," but "Oh, we are not wanted here." Although Amy feels the issue of xenophobia is bigger than the model minority stereotype, she believes they are still interrelated, since a lot of the racist comments that are made toward Asian Americans play off of the model minority stereotype.

The negative side of the model minority stereotype. As previously mentioned, Amy feels that the model minority stereotype did not have a negative effect on her. Although her peers view her through the model minority stereotype, it is not as salient an issue as it used to be. She is aware that there are tons of Asians who are in the science courses and want to go to medical school, but her institution is big enough that she is also able to see Asians who do not do as well in school. Moreover, there are also non-Asian students who are doing well in school.

Nonetheless, she believes the stereotype itself is detrimental because it is viewed as something positive. Even though it has decreased its saliency for Amy, she does not believe this is true on a national level. The model minority stereotype is "still hurting people." Amy views the model minority stereotype as something negative because there are repercussions if those expectations are not met, and those repercussions are different

for each person depending on their family situation, where they are from, etc. In addition, the lack of disaggregation of data hides the struggles of Asian Americans by those who are successful. Amy proceeded to say that the model minority stereotype was crafted. The Immigration law allowed highly skilled Asians to immigrate to the United States, and those that were able to immigrate to the US were the ones who had the money to do so. Because of these immigrants, the Asian refugees and the challenges they face are neglected and sometimes forgotten.

Furthermore, the model minority stereotype credits Asian Americans' successes to some innate quality. Amy attributes her success to her parents because they did well in Taiwan, were able to afford to immigrate to the United States, and made sacrifices in order for her to have a better life. Amy referred to this as "a historical legacy of success." She is aware of her privilege and it frustrates her when other people say, "Oh it's because you're Asian" and credit her success to her race as if it is something inherent. She knows that it is not an inherent quality, but her social background that has helped her be successful, and it upsets her when others "tak[e] my privilege and, you know, project it on other people unfairly." As previously mentioned, Amy loves learning, and she can confidently say that she is no longer a "point slut," which is a term her high school teacher used to describe students who only cared about grades.

But if you're going to tell me that I get A's because I'm Asian and I'm inherently smart then I wanna smack you upside of the head and say, "No, it's because I

enjoy this class and I work hard.” And don’t you dare tell me that, “Oh, and the reason why you work hard is because you’re Asian.” No, that’s not true.

In her words, “the model minority is just an excuse to make generalizations.”

Furthermore, the model minority stereotype affects the support Asian Americans receive because they are often not viewed as minorities. Amy claims that when there are minority scholarships available, Asians are not considered, as opposed to Latinos and African Americans. Amy, herself, has not been particularly hurt by this because her academic performance is good enough that she has been able to find other ways of receiving monetary aid. In addition, she is aware that she comes from a privileged background and therefore, she thinks, “Okay, well, maybe I shouldn’t take money from somebody who needs it more than me...” Moreover, the university is now focused more on international students than Asian American students. “I don’t think they actively reach out to Asian Americans or anything like that, um, because they’re like, ‘Yeah, well, they must do good at school. We have enough of them.’”

I don’t care about what the model minority stereotype expects. The model minority stereotype places expectations on Asian students to study hard and get straight A’s and those who are aware of the stereotype often tend to place these same expectations on Asian students. Amy claims she is less influenced by these expectations than others may be. She works until she does not want to work anymore. “There’s a point of diminishing return in terms of studying... There’s a threshold in which it’s not worth it

for me to study anymore no matter what people think.” She is comfortable going to sleep instead of pulling an all-nighter. She is comfortable getting the A- instead of the A. Her time is precious and she has other things she wants to do so six more hours of studying is not worth getting the A if she can get the A-. She likes to work hard and do good work, but she attributes that as a product of her upbringing and her parents’ expectations of her. She is aware of the expectations of the stereotype and the expectations of others, but they are not as present in her mind when she makes her decisions. For Amy, the model minority stereotype is “always there, but not always in the forefront.”

Rocking the boat. What bothers Amy more than the expectations to do well in school are the expectations that Asians are going to “put their heads down, work hard, and not rock the boat.” In order to counter this expectation, Amy has “purposefully rock[ed] the boat” if she knows she is representing Asians in a particular situation.

If I’m, you know, one of few Asians in this group and they have this idea that I’m gonna like sit down, work hard, be quiet, and like let people take advantage of me, then I work hard to like shut that down in some way or another.

When I asked Amy for a specific example, she talked about her experience in group projects and how her peers sometimes either assumed they can lay back and not do work or tried to take over the group. If she thinks something is a stupid idea, she will say so. “I have never shied away from being critical of people openly in those sorts of situations.”

I’m like, well, you know, if we’re gonna do a group project and my reputation’s

on the line, um, and I think your idea is stupid, or I don't think you're going about this in the right way then, you know, in some cases I have strong-armed the leadership away from people.

She tries to actively call people out and go against the stereotype. She reemphasized that the academia part is less of an issue, but she "rocks the boat" because she does not want others to take advantage of her or of other Asians because they think they can.

Be happy and do good for others. When asked what her definition of success was, Amy said,

If you can be happy...I think if you're doing something that is fulfilling, and doing good for other people, um, and also managing to sustain yourself. Eat live somewhere. I think those are good things to have. As long as I think you're making a contribution to the world in some way and you're happy doing what you're doing I think that's success.

Amy also made it a point to say that she does not think of success in monetary terms or prestige. She states this has always been her definition of success throughout college. She could have taken the route to be a doctor or a lawyer, but she knew she would not have been happy.

...if I'm miserable doing what I'm doing, why would that be success, you know? Maybe in so and so's relative's eyes, that would be success. But like in my eyes, like, if you know, on like a daily level you're not happy then what's the point?

She repeatedly stressed the importance of being happy and also her contribution to society.

...obligation to other people is really important. There is a great inequality in this world and if you're not working against increasing inequality or actively decreasing inequality and making other people's lives better then I guess you can be happy not contributing to the world. I guess you can be successful, but from my eyes, you wouldn't be.

Amy believes the model minority stereotype has always been in the back of Asians' minds and as a result, she has had predetermined ideas of success, whether that is being a doctor or being rich. She understands the hopes parents have for their children to become a doctor or a lawyer, but she has never been inclined towards those types of professions. In addition, her parents allowed her to pick what she wanted to do. They let her take art classes and did not force her to go to SAT classes. "If I was interested in something, they gave me free reign to do it." For her, having that freedom did not restrict her idea of success.

The model minority stereotype has not had much of an influence on Amy's definition of success because "the model minority stereotype, for me, is something that's like being perceived from the outside." What has influenced her definition are her parents and the cultural obligation to take care of them. Although she does not need money in

order to consider herself successful, she needs to be able to make money so she will not be a burden to her parents and so she will be able to take care of them in the future.

So the ultimate goal is not for me to be rich or to have prestige...It's been more

about, so what are you gonna do with the money that you have? It's less about

how others expect me to be and more about what are the choices that I'm making?

Lastly, I asked Amy how comfortable she is with her definition of success. She joked and said that since she is on the cusp of being unemployed, this may not be a great time to ask her that question. She admits she is worried about not being able to sustain herself at the current moment, but she still believes in her definition of success and her ultimate goal is to make sure she achieves that definition.

Narrative summary. From the interview, Amy appeared to have a strong racial/ethnic identity, especially since her parents made sure to instill Chinese values in her as she was growing up. This is very important according to Kodama et al. (2002) because a strong racial identity provides a foundation for Asian Americans' overall identity development. However, Amy mentioned having to "reconcile...eastern [and] western ideals." In addition, Asian international students assume she cannot understand Chinese and non-Asian students assume she cannot understand English. These constant reminders that she is not viewed as part of either group and the need to constantly reconcile her two worlds may prove to be a challenge in her continual identity development. Despite Kodama et al.'s (2002) belief that stereotypes may have an impact

on how Asian American students view themselves, the model minority stereotype seems to not have had a significant influence on Amy's identity development. She is very knowledgeable about the stereotype and its potential effects on the Asian American population. This knowledge may have prevented the stereotype from negatively affecting Amy because she was aware of its implications and may have known how to combat the negative effects. In addition, Amy mentioned that the model minority stereotype is no longer as salient an issue as xenophobia. Although she appeared to be personally unaffected by this issue as she was expressing her concerns during her interview, it is hard to say whether or not she has experienced xenophobia herself, but if she has, this could prove to be an additional challenge to her identity development. Furthermore, this may influence the way she views herself and her identity in the future which would support Kodama et al.'s view that racism also influences the way Asian Americans see themselves.

Amy's sense of purpose is not as closely tied with academic success despite what Kodama et al. (2002) suggested. Part of this is a result of her parents. Amy thought her parents were more understanding than Asian parents stereotypically tend to be. Although they encouraged her to go to medical school or law school, as she grew up, they realized neither medicine nor law would be the best career path for her. Her parents' realization took away unnecessary pressure and allowed Amy to develop a purpose that aligned with her passions and skills. This went against Kodama et al.'s view that most Asian parents

expect their children to major in the sciences and choose a specific career path (i.e. doctor, engineer, etc). Giving Amy the freedom to discover her own interests took away the potential stress that she might have encountered if she had to choose a major that went against her parents' expectations. This helped her develop purpose. Amy loves learning and she expressed this several times throughout her interview, and her major allows her the freedom to pick her own specialization and build her own program of study. She has been able to find a major she enjoys and develop a purpose that is not solely focused on academic achievement, but on what she loves to do. Amy's strong sense of purpose has allowed her to achieve intellectual competence. Amy was the only participant who emphasized the importance of learning versus getting grades. Her focus on learning has allowed her to take classes she enjoys, which has resulted in her working hard in those classes.

Ajay D'Souza

Ajay D'Souza is a junior double majoring in Zoology and Comparative Ethnic and American Studies, and double minoring in Asian American studies and South Asian studies. The major themes that appeared in Ajay's narrative were (1) the focus on academic success before college, (2) commitment to his racial and ethnic identities, (3) commitment to his religious identity, (4) experience with racism and ignorance, and (5) the negative aspects of the model minority stereotype.

Ajay grew up in the Midwest and is the son of Indian immigrants. Both of his parents went to medical school, his father in the United States and his mother in India, and both are doctors. His older sister is also currently in medical school. Ajay grew up in a White society, but he was fortunate to have a decent Indian community. His family was particularly connected with an Indian Christian Fellowship group. Ajay's Christian identity is something he mentioned multiple times throughout his interview. It is a very salient identity and he even made the last name of his pseudonym an Indian Christian last name. Ajay attributes his affinity for the health sciences to his parents and even his extended family because he also has uncles, aunts, and cousins who are doctors and dentists.

A clear consciousness of being Indian American. Ajay started to become conscious of his ethnic and racial identity when he read a book the summer before 10th grade called *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri. It was a “total mind-tripping experience” for him because for the first time, he realized that other people think like he does and have lives like his. As a result, Ajay began to explore other scholarship from Indian American authors and “began this whole ethnic identity crisis in high school.” He asked questions like, “If I’m an Indian, am I American?” and then understood that he was Indian American, and realized there was a whole other Asian American identity. He started following blogs by Asian American authors and began connecting himself with a national network that he did not know existed. He became present to his culture and

ethnic identity. When the time came to choose a college, he really wanted to attend Midwestern University because, from his perspective, it was one of the most diverse schools in the area and it had a large Asian American and Indian American population.

Ajay's racial and ethnic identities were not something his parent pushed on him. Rather, they really pushed academic success. Unlike the stereotypes of Asian parents making their children speak their native language at home, Ajay's parents never taught him and his sister their native language. His mom was more of the "bearers of culture" in the family, whereas his dad wanted them to be like White Americans. However, in high school, Ajay "went the opposite route." Part of the reason was because, around that time, the movie *Slumdog Millionaire* came out so being Indian became "trendy." His White friends started asking him to teach them Bollywood dancing and to take them to Indian restaurants. This helped him develop a love for his culture and for his heritage.

If you're Indian, can you also be Christian? As he entered college, Ajay was very invested in "being Indian," and along with that, he felt that being raised in a Christian environment was not compatible with his Indian identity. Being Christian was part of his culture because everybody in his family. Therefore, although he had grown up in church and with a Christian culture, he "just want[ed] to do the Indian scene." However, during his first week of college, he met an Indian man who was the director of a Christian fellowship group at Midwestern University. Ajay thought it was odd that

someone who was Indian could lead a Christian group, so he spoke with him and ended up getting involved in an Asian American Christian group on campus.

My life was greatly changed, as over the course of the couple months I actually learned and heard what it meant to be a follower of Jesus and that's where I would say my life has changed the most in going to college. Although, at the same time, my life has also changed a lot in my ethnic identity. I think those two, like my journey of faith, my journey of ethnic identity are very tied and kind of like, wondering how that all intersects..."

Ajay made it a point to say he would identify as a follower of Christ versus a Christian because, although in high school he identified as Christian, there is a different dynamic in what his relation is to God now than it was before. For him, the main difference is how the Indian culture "edifies religion" as opposed to how Western culture is "divorced from religion." For example, a White person can be a Buddhist and an Asian person can be a Christian, but those ideas are at conflict with each other in the Indian mindset. This is something Ajay experienced when he first got to college. One time when he told someone that he was Christian, they said, "You can't really be Indian then." This is something Ajay has had to continuously deal with throughout his time in college.

Academics first. As previously mentioned, Ajay grew up with parents who were doctors as well as relatives who were very intellectual. Therefore, he was encouraged to pursue academic success, although he did not enjoy it at the time. This was mainly

because he was putting so much time into his studies. This caused him to excel in his academics better than most of his classmates and this eventually became a part of his identity, despite the fact that he associated a lot of negative feelings towards being pressured to succeed. Ajay described it as a “love-hate relationship.” He would complain about having to study all the time, but he took pride in his academic success and if someone outperformed him, he would be upset at his own performance.

Once he got to college, Ajay said he “mellowed out.” He recognized that there were people who were smarter than he was and that is when he began to have a more relaxed attitude about his academics. He still tries to do his best, but he is now involved in cocurricular activities outside of his academics.

The model minority stereotype. Ajay went to a prestigious, private high school. Students would transfer into the school because of its positive reputation. As a result, there were more people who came into the school that did well academically. Ajay, who was once in the “top of the top” was now no longer the smartest person in his class. If his classmates would beat him on a test, not only would they make comments like, “I outdid Ajay. I got a 98 and Ajay only got a 96,” but they would also make comments like, “You’re Indian. You’re supposed to be able to do math.” However, he did not discourage this kind of talk because when he did outperform everyone else and they asked, “How can you be so smart?” he would say, “It’s in my blood” or something along those lines. This made him feel good about himself because he already felt different and “othered.”

This validated that, even though he was different than everybody else, he was also intrinsically better than everybody else.

After he got to college, he realized that the model minority stereotype was not necessarily a positive thing. By saying things like, “I’m smarter because I’m Indian” may actually be more hurtful in the long run. Since many of the people in Ajay’s family are intelligent and overachieving, his whole life has been developed around the model minority stereotype. Now, he tries to actively reject the stereotype and tries to get others to reject it as well.

The motivation to succeed. Ajay feels he was motivated to succeed academically in high school out of fear of his parents. “What happened if I didn’t get good grades?” He considered studying hard as a way of honoring his parents who made numerous sacrifices for him to attend college and helped shape him to be the individual he is today. They sacrificed their time and energy in order to get him to study and build effective study habits in him. The idea that he needs to do well because he is Indian is no longer on his mind. Now it is more to honor his parents. In addition, since he considers his place in college to be where God has put him, as a student, he believes he should be trying to “excel, glorify Him, and not himself.”

Ignorance and just outright racism. As an Indian American, Ajay has experienced general ignorance about Indians as a whole. One time someone asked him if his family rides elephants. Prior to college he had not experienced discrimination because

of his race and ethnicity. He experienced some harmless stereotypes, but that was about it. The racial slurs started once he got to college which was difficult since he came to college expecting it to be more diverse. Ajay called this an “interesting journey” because, as previously mentioned, he came to college expecting it to be more diverse, but then realized it was actually not really that diverse. Then he witnessed racism against Asian Americans and Asian international students. He has also personally experienced racism in the form of racial slurs. Some of the racist comments that have been directed at him were “Chink” and “terrorist.”

Oversimplification of the truth. The model minority stereotype “denies people of their complexity.” Ajay is aware that many people view the stereotype as something positive, but in reality, “it creates all these expectations that no one can live up to...” Ajay pointed out that, although the majority of Indian Americans have high degrees and earn high wages, this stereotype disguises the more recent Indian immigration and middle to lower middle class populations.

Moreover, the stereotype does not help to change the minds of non-Asians who view Asians as outperforming them. This could definitely cause resentment amongst groups. Ajay recalled an event where he and his Indian church community were going to celebrate Indian Independence Day with the White people at their church. In the past, they had celebrated this day with only other Indians. Ajay’s job was to create a Powerpoint presentation on India and Indian culture in order to educate the White people

who were not as knowledgeable about Indian culture. For part of the presentation he listed the achievements of Indian Americans. His parents told him to take those off because they were worried that people may feel upset as a result of his presentation. They feared that this would cause ill feelings toward the Indian American population.

A Godly definition. Ajay's definition of success is simply a life honoring God. For him, his success will not be separate from that definition, and if it is, then it will not really be success, or it will be, at the most, temporary success. Ajay admits this was not always his definition of success. At the beginning of his first year in college, he was more focused on wanting to make a lot of money. More importantly, he wanted to make more money than his parents. He wanted to be better off than the previous generations and wanted "the grand life in America." His definition started to change after he attended a South Asian conference with his Christian organization. After listening to a talk by the Indian man who was the director of a Christian fellowship group at his college, Ajay realized that he could not serve both God and money.

I was structuring my whole life, my whole college careers, my whole everything around the consumption or like, the gaining of money, and not around what God wants for me. That was not even an idea...I never thought that God would have anything to do with that. It's kind of like, the spiritual realm was over here and the rest of my life was over here, and realizing, no it's all together. I think that's when it made me just be like, well, I actually do want to live a life that's honoring God

and not one that's honoring money.

Narrative summary. It was evident throughout Ajay's interview that his racial and ethnic identities were very salient to him because a strong racial identity provides a foundation for Asian Americans' identity development (Kodama et al., 2002). Although he grew up in a predominately White neighborhood, he was fortunate enough to have an Indian community. Ajay's extensive journey questioning his ability to be both Indian and American, and both Indian and Christian, ultimately resulted in his commitment to his identities. However, Ajay has experienced racism during his time in college due to his racial and ethnic identity, which could possibly influence the way he views himself and their identities (Kodama et al., 2002). Although Ajay appeared to have a strong sense of identity, if he continues to experience racism in the future, this may affect the way he views his identity. This may strengthen his identity as he recognizes that he needs to have a strong sense of identity in order to withstand the racism or it might weaken his identity as the racism proves to be too much for him to endure.

Much like many of the other participants, Ajay achieved intellectual competency. Ajay grew up around family members who were very successful, both academically and occupationally. In addition, Ajay's parents did not push his racial and ethnic identities upon him; rather they pushed academic success. According to Kodama et al. (2002), Ajay achieved intellectual competency because it had been a focus for him since he was a child, and his parents made sure he studied, had good study habits, and got good grades. He

said that his academic success was part of his identity in high school and he took pride in doing well in school. He has become more relaxed about his academics since coming to college and is now involved in co-curricular activities in addition to his academics. Now, although academic success is still important to him, it is no longer as salient as it used to be. Furthermore, his involvement in co-curricular activities has allowed him to achieve social and interpersonal competence. According to Kodama et al. (2002), social and interpersonal competence is an area that Asian Americans struggle in because their main focus tends to be academics. However, Ajay has fortunately achieved this competence area because being involved in co-curricular activities encourages students to interact with their peers and develop relationships.

Ajay considers studying hard as a way of honoring his parents which supports Kodama et al.'s (2002) statement that interdependence is central to Asian cultures and families. However, due to Ajay's strong commitment to God, what is more important to Ajay than his interdependence upon his family is his interdependence upon God. He will not see himself as an individual outside of his relationship with God because as a follower of Christ, there is no life outside of God. Therefore, although he may eventually be able to see himself outside of his family, he will not be able to see himself separate from God as long as he is a follower of Christ. Unfortunately, Kodama et al. (2002) does not account for Asian American's religious beliefs. Ajay's interdependence upon God goes along with Ajay's sense of purpose.

Ajay's definition of success is to live a life honoring God. He admits his original definition of success had a more monetary focus, but he realized that he could not live a life that served both God and money. Thus, he chose God. Ajay's definition was one that he had thought long and hard about, and it was clear from his interview that his definition was not going to change. Again, Kodama et al.'s (2002) model does not take into account Asian American students' religious beliefs, but it is evident that Ajay has a clear sense of purpose, one where God is at the center.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings that emerged from the data analysis in the form of a restory for all five participants. In each restory, I included verbatim quotations from participant interviews to create a restory of how each participant experienced the model minority stereotype in their lives. I presented the restories in a similar structure that comprised of five general sections: (1) an introduction to the participant; (2) experiences with the model minority; (3) their views on the model minority stereotype; (4) their own, personal definitions of success, and (5) an analysis of their restories through Kodama et al.'s (2002) model of psychosocial development for Asian American students. More specifically, I focused on three content areas: Identity, Purpose, and Competency, because the model minority stereotype had a significant influence on Asian American students' development in these areas. In presenting the restories, I hoped to provide a

framework for understanding the individual participants' experiences with the model minority stereotype.

In the next chapter, I will focus on the themes I found throughout the restories and connect them with current literature. The major themes that were found throughout the interviews were (1) the model minority stereotype's influence on psychosocial development was complex resulting in various answers from the participants; (2) although the stereotype is mostly negative, there are some positive aspects to it; and (3) all of their definitions of success did not align with what it meant to be successful according to the model minority stereotype. I will talk more about these themes in chapter 5. I will also present the practical implications of the study and provide areas where further research may be conducted.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this constructivist narrative study was to examine (1) how the model minority stereotype influenced Asian American students' psychosocial development, (2) how Asian Americans viewed the model minority stereotype, and (3) how the model minority stereotype shaped Asian American students' definitions of success. This study addressed the following guiding research questions: (1) How does the model minority stereotype influence Asian American students' psychosocial development?; (2) How do Asian American students view the model minority stereotype?; and (3) How has the model minority stereotype shaped Asian American students' definitions of success?

In this chapter, I identify three themes based on the five participants' restories from chapter four. In addition to this discussion, I provide practical implications for student affairs professionals and recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Themes

After writing the participants' restories, I was able to identify three themes that existed across each restory. The following themes captured the various experiences the participants had with the model minority stereotype.

The Model Minority Stereotype's Influence is Complex

Kodama et al. (2002) spoke about the model minority stereotype in one area of their model: intellectual, physical and interpersonal Competency. In the Competency

content area, Asian Americans tend to focus primarily on intellectual competency and part of that may be due to the model minority stereotype (Kodama et al., 2002). Asian Americans may “internalize” (Kodama et al., 2002, p. 51) the stereotype and try to meet the expectations of the stereotype, which includes being academically successful.

Kodama et al. (2002) also suggested that experience with stereotypes in the Identity content area may influence the way Asian Americans view themselves and their racial identities. Asian Americans must develop a strong racial identity in order to withstand the influences of stereotypes and racism on their psychosocial development.

All of the responses I received from the participants that related to competency, identity and internalization of the stereotype varied. Therefore, I feel the theme of Complex characterizes the lack of an all-encompassing theme.

The model minority stereotype did not have a significant influence on Lola’s achievement of intellectual competency. Lola achieved intellectual competency, but she did not attribute this to the model minority stereotype. She attributed to her own hard work and determination. Lola stated that the pressure to do well in school came from herself and not from the stereotype.

Harper, on the other hand, attributed her academic success and intellectual competence to the model minority stereotype. Harper felt that the stereotype motivated her to work harder and do well in school, which supports Kodama et al.’s (2002) belief that Asian Americans internalize the stereotype in order to achieve intellectual

competence. Harper does not believe she would be as academically successful if it were not for the model minority stereotype.

Raj internalized the model minority stereotype in high school. He felt the pressure to be smart and do well in high school, and he also wanted to live up to those expectations. However, Raj did not achieve intellectual competence until college. The main focus for Raj was intellectual competence, but he did not seek out the resources he needed in order to be academically successful because he felt that as an Asian American he should not need help. It was not until the end of his first year of college that Raj realized that everyone needs help if they want to do well. For Raj, the model minority stereotype did influence his intellectual competency, but not in the same way it influence Harper's intellectual competency. The model minority stereotype made Raj realize that the expectations to be incredibly smart could not be met. Therefore, instead of pressuring Raj to achieve intellectual competency by trying to meet the expectations of the model minority stereotype, the stereotype helped him recognize that the internalization of the stereotype is what was preventing him from seeking help, and thus keeping him from achieving intellectual competency. Raj did not achieve intellectual competency by internalizing the model minority stereotype, but instead realized that he had to stop internalizing the stereotype.

Amy's high school peers expected her to be very studious, but she admits that she slept in most of her classes. Amy's intellectual competency was a result of her love for

learning, which goes against Kodama et al.'s (2002) belief that intellectual competence is a result of the internalization of the model minority stereotype. Amy does not believe she is influenced by the expectations of the stereotype or the expectations of others.

Ajay felt that he grew up with the expectations of the model minority stereotype his whole life, especially because most of his family members were academically and occupationally successful. This is especially apparent in the fact that his parents were more focused on helping him succeed academically than on helping him embrace his racial and ethnic identities. Ajay was encouraged to do well in school to the point that he felt it became part of his identity and he would get upset if performed better than he did. The focus on academic success caused Ajay to achieve intellectual competency which supports Kodama et al.'s (2002) view that Asian Americans often achieve intellectual competency due to the strong focus on academic success.

The fact that all of the participants achieved intellectual competency supports Kodama et al.'s (2002) view that Asian Americans achieve intellectual competency more easily than physical and interpersonal competency. Some of the participants' narratives supported Kodama et al.'s (2002) belief that Asian Americans tend to internalize the stereotype and strive to meet the expectations of the stereotype. However, other narratives did not support this view because they credited their intellectual competence to their own, individual hard work, and not because of the expectations of the stereotype. These narratives show that although the focus of intellectual competence is still relevant

to Asian Americans in college today, the reasons behind their competence may differ from those listed in Kodama et al.'s (2002) model.

Based on the narratives, some of the participants' identities were influenced by the model minority stereotype, but not all of them. For the Identity content area, the model minority stereotype did not appear to have a significant influence on the participants. Kodama et al. (2002) emphasized the importance of developing a strong racial identity, and argued that stereotypes can influence Asian American students' racial identities. For Harper, Raj, and Amy, their racial identities were the product of being taught their Asian culture from their parents. The strength of Harper, Raj, and Amy's racial identities and how they viewed their identities did not change as a result of the stereotype. Part of it may be because they were raised learning about their Asian culture and embracing that part of their identity. For Ajay, his racial identity was the product of his own search. The stereotype did influence Ajay's racial identity in high school, but he is very much committed to his racial identity and is aware of the potential impacts of the model minority stereotype that it no longer influences his identity. In contrast, Lola's racial identity seemed to not be influenced by the model minority stereotype as a result of her strong association with her White peers. It appears as if Lola's racial identity is more closely tied with American identity than her Asian identity. This would explain why Lola's racial identity was not influenced by the model minority stereotype.

From these responses, it is difficult to gauge the specific ways the model minority stereotype influences psychosocial development. There is no one way the stereotype influences psychosocial development and it appears as though the stereotype alone does not influence psychosocial development. Other factors need to work with the stereotype (e.g. pride or lack of pride in racial/ethnic heritage) in order to have a significant impact.

The Model Minority can be Positive but it is Mostly Negative

The second theme is centered on the participants' personal views of the model minority stereotype. All of the participants agreed that there was a negative aspect to the model minority stereotype or just being stereotyped in general. However, they were also able to appreciate the silver lining that came with being viewed as intelligent.

Lola does not feel negatively about the model minority stereotype, but she also does not believe that any stereotype is positive. However, she feels that Asian Americans should take pride in the stereotype because it is essentially a compliment. Others view them as smart and to her that is something to be proud of. Harper also felt that the stereotype was positive in some ways because it pushed her to work harder. On the other hand, she understands that the stereotype may sound negative because nobody wants to be stereotyped. Harper believes that the model minority stereotype is negative only if you let it restrain you. It is negative if it ends up defining you, and you fail to focus and participate in other activities other than academics. Raj's opinion was similar to the other two participants in that he views the model minority stereotype to be helpful because it

does not hurt to be viewed as intelligent and he feels that the stereotype “gives him a leg up” in certain situations. In spite of this, he believes it is not helpful because he is not allowed to struggle in school. Amy had a stronger view of the model minority stereotype. Although she feels that the stereotype did not have a particularly negative effect on her, she believes that the stereotype itself is detrimental because it is viewed in a positive light. To her, the stereotype is negative because it sets up expectations and those who are unable to meet those expectations experience consequences. In addition, the stereotype hides the reality that there are other ethnic groups within the Asian population that are struggling both educationally and occupationally. Moreover, the stereotype attributes Asian Americans’ success to an inherent quality as oppose to their hard work and dedication. Furthermore, the model minority stereotype holds Asian Americans to a higher standard which prevents them from receiving the support they need because they are not viewed as minorities. Ajay’s view was also strong and he believed the model minority stereotype to be strictly negative. He believes the stereotype creates expectations that are unattainable. He also echoes Amy saying that the stereotype disguises the struggles of the Asian populations that are struggling to achieve success. In addition, Ajay believes the model minority stereotype can create resentment from other groups if Asian Americans are constantly perceived as outperforming them.

The theme is consistent with the findings of Oyserman and Sakamoto’s (1997) study that some Asian American students are proud to be viewed through the model

minority stereotype, whereas others feel it places an unwanted label and unnecessary pressure on them. However, from the restories, it is clear that the negative aspects outweigh the positive aspects of the model minority stereotype. The views that the stereotype is negative are consistent with the literature. Programs for Asian Americans failed to receive funding because government agencies believed that Asian Americans were essentially free of problems (Suzuki, 2002). As Amy mentioned, Asian Americans do not receive the same amount of support as other groups due to the model minority stereotype (Museus & Kiang, 2009). It also places unnecessary pressure on them to succeed (Fong, 1998). As Ajay stated, the stereotype causes resentment amongst groups because Asian Americans are viewed as this exemplar minority group that achieved success (Fong, 1998; Wing, 2007). Furthermore, the stereotype fails to recognize the diversity within the Asian American population and the challenges that these individual groups face (Fong, 1998; Li and Wang, 2008; Varma, 2004). Through my research, I was unable to find scholarly work that argued that the stereotype was something positive and beneficial.

Differing Definitions of Success

The last theme focuses on the participants' individual definitions of success. All five participants shared what success meant to them. According to the model minority stereotype, success is focused on academic and/or occupational success. Basically, doing well in school or having a high paying job denotes success. Each participant had their

own definition of success and none of the definitions revolved around getting good grades or a high paying job. This does not go along with Kodama et al.'s (2002) Purpose content area and the idea that Asian Americans' purpose is closely tied with academic success.

Lola's definition of success was doing what she loved and helping others. She said success is not about being rich, but she believes that if she does the work that she loves, the money will follow. Harper's definition of success was personal fulfillment, which meant pleasing herself and her parents, and doing what she felt she was supposed to be doing with her life. She also said success was about being happy and making her parents happy. For Harper, the two are not mutually exclusive because she believes that making her parents happy will ultimately make her happy as well. For Raj, success is being happy doing what he is doing and working hard to make that happen. In addition, Raj, like Lola, affirmed that success was not about being wealthy. Amy's definition was similar to Raj's in that it also emphasized the importance of being happy. Amy's definition also included doing good for other people. Ajay's definition of success was a life honoring God and as long as he is a follower of Christ, that definition will not change. Previously his definition centered on money, but his definition changed when he heard a talk given by an Indian American Christian that made him realize that he could not serve both God and money.

Each definition of success was different from the model minority stereotype which stresses the importance of academic and occupational success (Museus & Kiang, 2009). It is known that many Asian Americans have subscribed to this definition of success (Kodama et al., 2002). This did not support Kodama et al.'s view that Asian Americans struggle to major in something they are interested in due to familial expectations to major in the sciences. Each participant is majoring in something they enjoy. Even for those who are majoring in the sciences or engineering, they are doing it because that is what they are interested in, not because of their families' expectations. As each participant developed their sense of purpose (Kodama et al., 2002), they thought carefully about their individual definitions and what being successful looked like to them. For some of them, their definitions were never in line with the model minority stereotype's expectations, but this was not true for all participants. Raj and Ajay believed that success meant being wealthy in a well-respected profession (e.g. doctor). Despite Kodama et al.'s (2002) belief that Asian Americans' sense of purpose is strongly associated with academic success, all five participants' definitions of success were not about academic achievement or even monetary achievement, but about happiness, doing what they loved, and personal fulfillment.

Kodama et al.'s (2002) Purpose content area is still relevant to many Asian Americans. It just was not very relevant to this particular group of participants. Kodama et al.'s (2002) Purpose content area focused too much on academic achievement and

Asian Americans' struggle to go against their families' expectations. These participants have all found what they want to major in and what career path to take. Kodama et al. (2002) could modify this content area to provide some ways student affairs professionals can support Asian Americans who have already achieved a sense of purpose that does not revolve around academic and monetary success, and/or have made the difficult decision to go against their parents' expectations. In addition, it is necessary for Kodama et al. to address the significance of religion. Although only one participant in this study talked about the importance of his religion in his sense of purpose, this may be relevant for other Asian Americans.

Implications for Practice

After presenting the restories of the five participants and the three overarching themes, I provide two implications for student affairs professionals in order to better understand the experiences of Asian American students and better support them throughout their college experiences. The restories demonstrated that there are a number of expectations for Asian American students to achieve certain results. My implications for practice suggest that more work be done to counter this message and lesson any harmful repercussions that result for the model minority stereotype.

One implication is to be mindful of the different tasks that may be associated with their development as illustrated in Kodama et al.'s (2002) psychosocial model for Asian Americans. Based on the restories, it is imperative that professionals pay careful

attention to their development of purpose, identity, and competency content area. As Kodama et al. pointed out, Asian Americans come to college with a strong sense of academic and occupational purpose because they have grown up expecting to be successful in these areas. Therefore, it may be particularly challenging if students wish to pursue a major or career path that goes against these expectations (e.g. pursuing a career outside of the sciences). Similar to other minority groups, Asian Americans' identities are influenced by stereotypes and racism. Although only one participant described particular incidents where he had dealt with racism, it is still a significant issue that can influence how students view themselves. In addition, stereotypes are almost unavoidable. As the restories have shown, each student has dealt with the model minority stereotype, and this stereotype has been influential in their academic experiences, both in positive and negative ways. In terms of competency, the participants in this study had all achieved areas of competency in addition to intellectual competency. However, often times, intellectual competency is the only area Asian Americans achieve because of the model minority stereotype and the expectations others' have of them to do well in school.

The second implication is to provide more resources for students and recognizing that they are a minority group. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, it is true that some Asian groups have achieved success in the United States. However, they still need the support that is provided to other minority groups. Just because they are viewed as "honorary Whites" or as a group "outwhiting the Whites" (Suzuki as cited in Zhang, p.

24) does not mean they are free of struggles. In a society where they are considered a minority group, Asian Americans need the support of student affairs professionals to empower them and help them overcome the obstacles that exist as a result of their race. In addition, many Asian Americans need resources in order to learn more about their own ethnic culture and the culture of other Asian groups and how to come to terms with their identities and cultural values, especially in a world where their cultural values and may go against those of the majority's. Asian Americans need to be educated about their own culture and other Asian cultures in order develop an understanding of what it means to be Asian for themselves and for their Asian peers. Moreover, they need resources to help guide them through their journey to achieve a strong, positive identity in a White society.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study provided insight on five students' experiences with the model minority stereotype. This study utilized narrative inquiry to highlight their individual experiences and developed practical implications from these stories. Future research is needed to further study Asian American students' experiences with the model minority stereotype. I present three recommendations for future research that will improve upon the current study and add to the current body of literature that exists on Asian Americans' experiences with the model minority stereotype.

This study was conducted at a predominately White institution in the Midwest, in a state that is also predominately White. In order to gain a better understanding of the role

of the model minority stereotype, studies should be conducted with Asian Americans in different parts of the country and Asian Americans at institutions that are not predominately White. This study was only able to account for the experiences of Asian Americans who had grown up being the minority and continued to be the minority in college. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the experiences of those who have grown up being part of the majority or attended an institution where they were the majority. These studies will provide additional insight that will illuminate how the stereotype plays into the lives of students who are not one of the few Asians who are being viewed through and/or held to the standards of the model minority stereotype.

In addition, a long term study that spans the course of students' college careers would be beneficial to understanding the role of the model minority stereotype. I was able to recruit participants of different ages, but I had to rely solely on their personal accounts. It would be helpful to see how students' experiences with the stereotype and their reactions to it change or stay the same during their time in college. It would help explain how the stereotype has a positive and/or negative influence on students' academic experiences and it will show how their views on the stereotype have changed over time.

Furthermore, I focused on three content areas of Kodama et al.'s (2002) model of psychosocial development for Asian American students. In order to gain a comprehensive idea of how the model minority stereotype influences Asian American students' psychosocial development, it is imperative to study all seven content areas. On the other

hand, I would recommend focusing on one content area in order to conduct a more detailed study. Focusing on three content areas was difficult and thus focusing on one will give the researcher the opportunity for better depth and understanding.

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this constructivist narrative study was to examine (1) how the model minority stereotype influenced Asian American students' psychosocial development, (2) how Asian American students viewed the model minority stereotype and (3) how the model minority stereotype shaped Asian American students' definitions of success. The participants' restories provided narratives that demonstrated how the model minority stereotype had influenced their psychosocial development, how they viewed the model minority stereotype, and how the model minority stereotype shaped their definitions of success and what shaped those definitions. These restories provided three themes that captured the participants' individual experiences and views of the stereotype. The participants' narratives demonstrated how the model minority stereotype influenced Asian Americans' psychosocial development, how the Asian Americans viewed the model minority stereotype, and how the model minority stereotype shaped Asian Americans' definitions of success. The participants' reactions to the model minority stereotype showed that although there may be some positive aspects to it, the negative aspects outweigh the positives. The negative aspects that were reiterated the most were the unattainable expectations for them to achieve success and the reality that

the successes of certain Asian groups overshadow the struggles of other Asian groups. Uniquely, all five participants' definitions of success did not support the model minority stereotype's definition of success. To them, success was about personal happiness and fulfillment and doing what they loved. What this meant for each participant was different. Lastly, all five participants were influenced by their parents and/or family in some way. These findings contribute to the growing literature on Asian American students.

The implications for practice included being mindful of the different tasks that may be associated with their development, viewing each Asian ethnic group individually and not as a whole group, and providing more resources for students and recognizing that they are a minority group.

This study provided a look into the lives of five Asian American undergraduate students who had experienced the model minority stereotype in their lives. The restories of the five participants are narratives that illustrated the influence of the stereotype and the potential negative characteristics associated with it. These stories served to shed light on a different side of the model minority stereotype, one that is not portrayed in the media, and one not as well known to those who have experienced the stereotype it.

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Appendix A

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Hello,

My name is Joanne Song and I am a second-year Master's student here at Ohio State studying Higher Education and Student Affairs. For my thesis research I am interested in studying the role of the model minority stereotype in Asian American students' college experiences. More specifically, I want to learn about how Asian American students view the model minority stereotype, the role this stereotype has played in students' academic success, and how it has shaped students' definitions of success. I want to do this through listening to your stories and experiences.

This research can help educators and others who work with Asian American students understand how the model minority stereotype plays out in Asian American students' college experiences, and how to provide them with the support they need. At the same time, I hope our interviews give you a space in which you can also more deeply consider your own identity and experiences.

I am looking for students who meet the following criteria:

- 1) You identify as Asian American
- 2) You are currently an undergraduate student at The Ohio State University

Participation in this project will involve one interview during the spring semester, lasting an hour to one and a half hours. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview as well as my interpretation of your interview, either through email, or a follow-up interview that would last no more than 30 minutes.

The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study include a sense of emotional discomfort as a result of sharing your experiences. However, you may decline to answer any questions and end the personal interview session at any time.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

If you are interested in being a part of this research, I ask that you email me the following information by (INSERT DATE) (joannesong88@gmail.com).

- Name
- Email Address
- Year in School
- Age
- Major; minor if applicable
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Geographical Location

I will review all emails and select participants that represent a diverse demographic group. I will let you know within a couple of weeks if you have or have not been selected.

Please understand that although every effort to protect confidentiality will be made, no guarantee of internet survey/email security can be given as, although unlikely, transmissions can be intercepted and IP addresses can be identified.

For questions, concerns, complaints, or if you feel you have been harmed as a result of study participation, please feel free to e-mail me.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Sincerely,

Joanne Song

*Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law.

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will not identify you, if so desired. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, Dr. Tatiana Suspitsyna and Joanne Song can code the data so your name will not be revealed. In addition, all data will be encrypted and stored in a secure location. Only the principal and co-investigator will have access to this confidential confirmation.

This research is conducted under the direction of Dr. Tatiana Suspitsyna, Associate Professor, Educational Policy and Leadership, Higher Education and Student Affairs.

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: The Model Minority Stereotype is not as Positive as it Sounds

Researcher: Principal Investigator (PI):
Tatiana Suspitsyna, Associate Professor, Educational Policy and Leadership, Higher Education and Student Affairs

Co-Investigator: Joanne Song, Master's Student, Higher Education and Student Affairs

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose:

This study seeks to examine how Asian American students view the model minority stereotype, the role this stereotype has played in students' academic success, and how it has shaped students' definitions of success. I am studying this topic because the Asian American student population is often neglected and it is assumed that they do not need as much help or support as other minority groups because of the model minority stereotype.

Procedures/Tasks:

By agreeing to participate in this study, you will take part in a semi-structured interview lasting no more than 90 minutes with one of the study's investigators. You may be asked to take part in a follow-up interview of approximately 30 minutes in length if additional information is needed. You will be asked about your experiences with the model minority stereotype and the role it has played in your college life.

Duration:

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are

otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

Risks:

The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study include a sense of emotional discomfort as a result of sharing your experiences. However, you may decline to answer any questions and end the personal interview session at any time.

Benefits:

I do not know if you, personally, will benefit from being in this study. However, I hope that, in the future, other people and/or institutions of higher education will benefit from this study because they will understand the implications the model minority stereotype has for Asian American students and thus able to provide appropriate support to Asian American students during their college experience.

Confidentiality:

Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will not identify you, if so desired. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, Dr. Tatiana Suspitsyna and Joanne Song can code the data so your name will not be revealed. In addition, all data will be encrypted and stored in a secure location. Only the principal and co-investigator will have access to this confidential confirmation.

Incentives:

You will not be paid for being in this research study, but as a token of appreciation, the researcher will treat you with a \$5 gift card to Chipotle. Also, if you wish, the researcher will provide you with a copy of the final thesis.

Participant Rights:

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact Tatiana Suspitsyna, Principal Investigator at 614-247-8232 or suspitsyna.1@osu.edu, or Joanne Song at 310-954-6599 or song.494@osu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

If you are injured as a result of participating in this study or for questions about a study-related injury, you may contact Tatiana Suspitsyna, Principal Investigator at 614-247-8232 or suspitsyna.1@osu.edu.

Signing the consent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

Printed name of subject

Signature of subject

Date and time

AM/PM

Printed name of person authorized to consent for subject
(when applicable)

Signature of person authorized to consent for subject
(when applicable)

Relationship to the subject

Date and time

AM/PM

Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

Printed name of person obtaining consent

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date and time

AM/PM

Appendix C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- 1) In the first question, I just want to start getting to know you better as a person, so tell me about yourself. Thinking about your life in general, tell me about the people, or places, or situations, or experiences, etc. that have been most influential in shaping who you are as a person. How would you describe yourself?
- 2) Can you please talk about your academic experiences (elementary school-college)?
- 3) What types of stereotypes have you encountered as an Asian American individual?
 - a) Have you encountered those stereotypes here? By other students? Staff? Faculty?
 - b) If participant names the model minority stereotype or is able to describe it, ask...
 - i) When did you first hear about and/or encounter the stereotype?
 - ii) Do you think you're viewed through this stereotype by non-Asian Americans? By other students? Staff? Faculty? Please provide examples.
- 4) When did you first recognize that the model minority played a role in your life?
- 5) What are your thoughts on the model minority stereotype? Is it negative or positive? Why?
- 6) How has the model minority stereotype affected your academic success? Do you think you would be just as academically successful (or not successful) if the model minority stereotype was not associated with Asian Americans? Why or why not?
- 7) How has the model minority stereotype influenced your ability to work hard in school?
- 8) How has the model minority stereotype affected the support or lack of support you receive from the university?
- 9) How has your experience been being an Asian American at a PWI?
- 10) How do you define success? Is this how you defined success when you first got to college? If not, how has your definition of success changed? If so, why has your definition stayed the same?

11) Has the model minority stereotype influenced your definition of success at all?

12) How comfortable are you with your current definition of success?