

8

ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS

The term “Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders” imposes a label on a variety of groups that in reality have very little in common. These groups differ from each other in language, religion, cuisine, physical appearance, and in countless other ways. The category includes people who trace their origins to countries as diverse as China, Japan, the Philippines, Pakistan, Samoa, Vietnam, India, and scores of others. Some members of the group have American roots going back nearly 200 years, while others are the newest of newcomers.

Even considered as a whole, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are few in number and comprise about 4 percent of the national population. Because of high rates of immigration, however, these groups are growing rapidly, as is their impact on American society, and they are projected to make up 10 percent of the population by 2050.

Of all the groups in this category, Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans have the longest histories in the United States. Immigrants from China began arriving in the early 1800s to fill jobs in the burgeoning economy of the west coast, and immigrants from Japan began arriving in significant numbers at the end of the 1800s. Both groups faced intense, bitter campaigns of discrimination and racism and, as a result, formed ethnic enclaves or separate, largely self-contained subeconomies (for example, Chinatowns). The Narrative Portrait in this chapter provides some insight into the World War II relocation of Japanese Americans, a massive act of discrimination and one of the most serious violations of civil rights in the nation’s history.

Other groups of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders began immigrating in large numbers after the 1965 change in U.S. immigration laws. This immigration stream is extremely diverse and includes highly educated professionals, refugees fleeing warfare or persecution, unskilled laborers, and large numbers of illegal immigrants. Some of these immigrants are attracted by jobs at the highest levels of American society and are medical practitioners, engineers, college faculty, and scientists. Others provide a cheap workforce for the ethnic enclaves and take jobs that are poorly paid, have few if any benefits, and little security. Although Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders can be found at every level of the economy, there is a tendency for these groups to be “bipolar” and occupy positions at the very top and the very bottom of the job market.

One thing that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders do share is the widespread perception that they are successful and well-behaved: a “model minority.” This stereotype is supported by the fact that many Asian American and Pacific Islander groups are at or above national norms on such indicators of success as average income and years of education. The Current Debates section explores the realities of the “model minority” image and some of the reasons for the relative success of some of these groups. Harry Kitano argues that the key to success lies in the value systems Asian immigrants bring with them, while Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou attribute the relative success to the enclave economies. Finally, Ronald Takaki explores some of the not-so-hidden political agendas that underlie the attribution of success to Asian Americans.

306 • UNDERSTANDING DOMINANT-MINORITY RELATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY

Of course, the perception of Asian success is greatly exaggerated and certainly does not apply to many recent immigrants, especially the refugee groups and those who find themselves at the bottom of the ethnic enclave economies. The readings for this chapter, in fact, explore the ugly realities faced by many Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Victor Hwang analyzes hate crimes against the group and explores some of the problems that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders share with other minority groups of color. In the second reading, reporter Salim Jiwa describes the ongoing trade in sexual slaves from South Korea to North America, a trade in human beings that has counterparts linking many more affluent nations with other Asian nations, Eastern Europe, and many other places.

Please visit the accompanying website to Race, Ethnicity, and Gender, second edition for the *Public Sociology Assignments* at <http://www.pineforge.com/das2>.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THIS CHAPTER

1. How can images of a group that seem positive (for example, the “model minority” image often applied to Asian Americans) actually be negative? What stereotypes characterize the relationships between Asian American groups and the larger society? How do these differ from or resemble the images applied to other groups?

2. Are Asian American groups really successful? If you think the answer is yes, how did these racial minorities accomplish this feat? How can this image of

success be maintained in light of massive discrimination both historically (e.g., the relocation camps) and in the present (hate crimes and sex trafficking from Asia)? If you think the answer is no, why is the image of success and good behavior so popular? What political agendas might be at work just under the surface?

3. What gender dimensions can you identify in the issues raised in this chapter? How does gender impact (for example) anti-Asian violence, sexual slavery, and the image of the “model minority”?

NARRATIVE PORTRAIT

THE RELOCATION

Joseph Kurihara was born in Hawaii in 1895. He moved to California at age 20 and served with the U.S. Army in World War I, completed a college education, and was a businessman working within the Japanese American enclave until World War II. He worked actively to promote acculturation and better relations with the larger society during the interwar years. He was sent to the relocation camp at Manzanar, California, in the spring of 1942 and continued to play an active role in the displaced Japanese American community. Although he had never visited Japan and had no interest or connection with the country of his parents’ birth, his experiences in the camp were so bitter that he renounced his American citizenship and expatriated to Japan following the war.

WE WERE JUST JAPS

Joseph Kurihara

[The evacuation] . . . was really cruel and harsh. To pack and evacuate in forty-eight hours was an impossibility. Seeing mothers

completely bewildered with children crying from want and peddlers taking advantage and offering prices next to robbery made me feel

like murdering those responsible without the slightest compunction in my heart.

The parents may be aliens but the children are all American citizens. Did the government of the United States intend to ignore their rights regardless of their citizenship? Those beautiful furnitures (sic) which the parents bought to please their sons and daughters, costing hundreds of dollars were robbed of them at the single command, "Evacuate!" Here my first doubt of American Democracy crept into the far corners of my heart with the sting that I could not forget. Having had absolute confidence in Democracy, I could not believe my very eyes what I had seen that day. America, the standard bearer of Democracy had committed the most heinous crime in its history. . . .

[The camp was in an area that is largely desert] The desert was bad enough. The . . . barracks made it worse. The constant cyclonic storms loaded with sand and dust made it worst. After living in well furnished homes with every modern convenience and suddenly forced to live the life of a dog is something which one can not so readily forget. Down in our hearts we cried and cursed this government every time when we were showered with sand. We slept in the dust; we breathed the dust; and we ate the dust. Such abominable existence one could not forget, no matter how much we tried to be patient, understand the situation, and take it bravely. Why did not the government permit us to remain where we were? Was it because the government was unable to give us the protection? I have my doubt. The government could have easily declared Martial Law to protect us. It was not the question of protection. It was because we were Japs! Yes, Japs!

After corralling us like a bunch of sheep in a hellish country, did the government treat us like citizens? No! We were treated like aliens regardless of our rights. Did the government think we were so without pride to work for \$16.00 a month when people outside were paid \$40.00 to

\$50.00 a week in the defense plants? Responsible government officials further told us to be loyal and that to enjoy our rights as American citizens we must be ready to die for the country. We must show our loyalty. If such is the case, why are the veterans corralled like the rest of us in the camps? Have they not proven their loyalty already? This matter of proving one's loyalty to enjoy the rights of an American citizen was nothing but a hocus-pocus.

My American friends . . . no doubt must have wondered why I renounced my citizenship. This decision was not that of today or yesterday. It dates back the day when General DeWitt (*the office in charge of the evacuation*) ordered evacuation. It was confirmed when he flatly refused to listen even to the voices of the former World War Veterans and it was doubly confirmed when I entered Manzanar. We who already had proven our loyalty by serving in the last World War should have been spared. The veterans asked for special consideration but their requests were denied. They too had to evacuate like the rest of the Japanese people, as if they were aliens.

I did not expect this of the Army. . . . I expected that at least the Nisei would be allowed to remain. But to General DeWitt, we were all alike. "A Jap's a Jap. Once a Jap, always a Jap." . . . I swore to become a Jap 100 percent and never to do another day's work to help this country fight this war. My decision to renounce my citizenship there and then was absolute.

Just before he left for Japan (in 1946), Kurihara wrote:

It is my sincere desire to get over there as soon as possible to help rebuild Japan politically and economically. The American Democracy with which I was infused in my childhood is still unshaken. My life is dedicated to Japan with Democracy my goal.

SOURCE: From *The Spoilage* by Thomas Swaine and Richard S. Nishimoto. Copyright © 1946 University of California Press. Reprinted with permission.

READINGS

Like Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans belong to a racial category within the United States that lumps together many diverse peoples with vastly differing experiences. Yet, unlike Latinos, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders do not share a common language or religion. What this group does have in common is a shared experience of how the dominant group (whites) in the United States perceives them. Their coming together under one pan-ethnic racial rubric is a clear example of how race is a social construction, usually based on the perceptions of those in power. Although their national origins may even make them enemies to each other, Asian Americans face certain common prejudices in the eyes of whites, particularly the “model minority” stereotype, a perception that means that they are not included in some much-needed social programs.

Also, this so-called positive stigma has some severely negative and even deadly consequences, as it has made Asian Americans the target of hate crimes, usually committed by whites who are angry about and envious of their supposed success.

The first reading explores this issue in depth. Victor Hwang discusses two different incidents, each highlighting different aspects of hate crimes and the multiple layers of injury that they cause. In the first incident, a 63-year-old Korean American woman is brutally beaten just because of her race, and Hwang argues that this woman’s injuries are not only physical but emotional as well. The way people react to her after the attack only adds insult to injury in various ways when certain well-meaning individuals assault her humanity. The beating and its aftermath cause a transformation in the victim, who had heretofore internalized the model minority stereotype and developed a false consciousness as a result. She abandons her antagonistic views toward blacks, fueled by this model-minority idea, and for the first time realizes the common experiences they share as racial minorities. In the second incident, swastikas are painted on Asian-owned and Asian-related businesses, signed by the “Sunset White Boys.” Again, the author finds exploring the aftermath of the incident to be just as meaningful as the incident itself. From institutions to individuals, the initial desire to minimize the significance of the racist attacks and the delay in efforts to respond to the crime are clear. Further, although the town seems to give lip service to condemning the actual attacks, the sentiment behind them is shared by many, as evidenced in a town meeting where venting about people of color “taking over” the area becomes more important than expressing concern for the business owners who were attacked. Hwang asks us to consider anti-Asian prejudice not just as isolated violent acts of bigotry but as social products for which we are collectively responsible. In doing so, he takes a decisively different turn than most popular media representations of hate crimes, and ultimately shows us how a seemingly positive stereotype can have severely harmful consequences.

The second reading deals with another pattern that calls the model minority stereotype into question: sex trafficking from Korea to the United States. Young South Korean women are recruited for the American sex industry, often by false promises of legitimate jobs such as domestic workers or nannies, and then forced into a status that closely resembles slavery. South Koreans can enter Canada without a visa and are then smuggled into the United States, where their illegal status helps to keep them powerless and exploitable.

This trade in sex workers is part of a global movement of population from less developed to more developed nations. The movement is enormous and fueled by a complex set of forces including the displacement of rural populations in the third world and the unquenchable thirst for cheap labor in the first world. From the standpoint of the United States, immigrants tend to be seen as threats to the moral and cultural stability of America (see the Current Debates in Chapter 7) or, especially since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as security risks and potential terrorists. Either way, the dominant response to immigration has been to make it more

difficult to cross the border. Given that borders can never be completely secure and that the pressure to enter the United States is intense and unyielding, these efforts force immigrants to enter illegally and fuel an entire industry dedicated to smuggling people over the border. What forces propel these women into international sex trafficking? What is the real problem: the immigrant "others" or our own policies that force them into seeking illegal means to enter the country? What would change for these women if they were seen as people in need of economic and political empowerment rather than as hapless victims or threats to morality or security?¹

THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ANTI-ASIAN VIOLENCE AND ASIAN AMERICA

Victor M. Hwang

The concept of the Asian Pacific American community is unique in the field of American race relations. Our community is neither united by a common experience such as slavery or by a common language such as Spanish. We are individually Vietnamese Amerasians, second generation South Asian Americans, kibeis, third generation Sansei, . . . 1.5 generation Korean Americans, . . . Pilipino seniors, Taiwanese nationalists, and more. . . . Our community encompasses differences in ethnicity, religion, language, culture, class, color, immigration history, politics and even race.

What we obviously do have most in common is the way that we look to those outside our community and the way we are treated in America based upon the way we look. Our commonality begins with a recognition that . . . you are constantly at risk of being killed without warning or provocation based upon the belief that you are a foreign "Jap." Whether you are second generation South Asian American or a fifth generation Chinatown native, we are faced constantly with the implicit and explicit question, "No, really, where are you from?"

Yet, while anti-Asian violence forces individuals to band together at times for physical or political protection, it plays a much greater role in shaping the Asian Pacific American [APA] community than simply acting as the outside threat which drives the flock together. It is not

the action of anti-Asian violence which is so important to the development of our community as much as it is the reaction to the incident. For "Asian America" lives not in the Chinatowns or the Little Tokyos, but in the hearts of those who recognize that incidents of anti-Asian violence are not isolated attacks, but are part of the historical treatment of Asians in America for the past two hundred years.

. . . [T]he pattern of anti-Asian violence dictates the role and character of our community and its relationship to mainstream society. . . . [T]he unspoken policy and history of America has been to erase the experience of Asians in America and to silence the voice of the community. Thus, we have been displaced from our role in American history, from our place in America, and more than two hundred years after the first Asians came to America, we are still being collectively told to go back to where we came from.

It is in our struggle against this pattern of violence and its underlying message of physical, political, and historical exclusion that we find ourselves as Asian Pacific Americans. Not every Asian in America is a member of the Asian Pacific American community. . . . [W]e become Asian Americans as we begin to recognize that we share a common bond and experience with all other Asians in America based upon our history, our treatment and our status as a racial minority in the United States. The formation of

310 • UNDERSTANDING DOMINANT-MINORITY RELATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY

the community begins not when ten Asian families happen to live in the same neighborhood, but when one family has been attacked and the other nine rally to their assistance.

The Asian American community is based on an understanding and appreciation of the fact that we have struggled for nearly two centuries against this violence and exclusion. . . . From the early organizing efforts of the Chinese Six Companies in San Francisco to protect the Chinese workers from nativist attacks to the more recent campaign to bring justice to the killers of Vincent Chin and Kao Kuan Chung, Asian Americans have not always been the silent victims of hate crimes, but have strived to defend and empower our communities in the American tradition.

This paper will discuss the role of anti-Asian violence as a foil and as a catalyst in the development of an Asian American identity and a community. Our community lives in the contradiction, in the friction between competing notions of ethnicity and nationality, in the margins and as a wedge between black and white in American society. It is not a physical community, but one that exists in flashes, in movements, in speeches, in hearts and minds, and in struggle. It is within the heat of the response to these incidents of extreme racial violence that we continue to forge our identity and our sense of community. We build our community in times of crisis by speaking out against the incidents of anti-Asian violence and claiming our piece of history.

However, in times of racial tension, it is sometimes difficult to process the elements of the hate crime to craft a . . . response which serves both the needs of the individual victim as well as empowering the community. In this paper, I will explore two recent incidents of anti-Asian violence as a framework to discussing the crafting and mis-crafting of a progressive community response. I believe we should approach hate crimes in the same way a

doctor would approach a medical problem. Prior to making a diagnosis, we need to understand the nature of the injury as well as who has been hurt. Further, without an understanding of the history of anti-Asian violence, hate crimes, and the community, we can do little for either the protection of the individual or the development of Asian America.

ANTI-ASIAN VIOLENCE AND THE INDIVIDUAL: WHAT IS THE INJURY?

Individual victims of hate crimes and their families often suffer injuries far beyond the physical wounds inflicted upon them. It is both the sticks and stones which break our bones and the accompanying words and hateful intent which hurt us. Like a snake's bite, the venomous injuries of anti-Asian violence go far deeper than the physical injury because they are intended to inject a poison to strike at the core of our being. As advocates, we must recognize the injury to the internal psyche as well as the physical injury in crafting a remedy for the individual and the community. Just as you cannot treat a snake bite with a Band-Aid, you cannot treat the hate crime as either a simple crime or an accident.

The Incident

Sylvia is a 63 year old Korean American who came to the United States as a teenager. She grew up in Washington, D.C., the daughter of a Korean minister and attended an all-white segregated high school. She spent most of her adult years in Arizona . . . where, as she describes it, she never thought she experienced much racism. . . . "Oh, every once in a while, my kids would tell me that someone had called them a Chinaman in school or had tried to put them down on account of their race," she said. "But I always told them just to work harder and prove

to every one else that they were superior. I knew that we were descendants of a proud people with many centuries of culture and civilization. I never worried much about what the other people thought. I knew we were better.”

She never had much contact with African Americans, but says that she always sort of looked down her nose at them since she felt that they tended to complain too much about racism and did not adopt the Asian work ethic to work twice as hard when confronted with racist behavior.

Sylvia moved to California a number of years ago and ironically it was in San Francisco that she experienced her first taste of anti-Asian violence. She was coming out of the Borders Bookstore in Union Square when a 6-foot tall “Timothy McVeigh”-looking Caucasian man ran up to her and said “My mother is not Chinese but yours is.” Sylvia was somewhat taken aback, but tried to ignore him while she passed him.

He repeated the remark from behind her and when she did not react, he picked her up from behind and threw her against a nearby concrete wall, shattering her hip. Her assailant then ran away. As she lay there in shock, she was assaulted again in a much more painful and personal way as two Caucasian tourists walked by and in an attempt to be helpful, asked her if she spoke English.

Sylvia noted afterwards that even in an emergency situation, the first thought that crossed the minds of these Caucasians upon seeing an injured Asian woman was not the injury, but the race. “I was so outraged then, I couldn’t even respond. Here I lay, on the ground, I was beaten, my hip was shattered, and the first thing they asked me was if I spoke English, not if I was ok, if I needed help, or if they should call an ambulance. The first thing they asked me was if I spoke English. . . . I was so shocked, I couldn’t even say anything.”

Sylvia was eventually taken to the hospital and underwent extensive surgery to have her entire hip replaced. But as her physical injuries were treated by the doctors, her psychological injuries remained unattended, festering as she fell into a deep depression. “My co-workers, who were mostly Caucasian, came by to see me and I guess that they were trying to be funny. One of them said something like ‘Well, at least you got a new hip.’ At that moment, I just felt so angry because they couldn’t understand that I was almost killed because of my race. I just didn’t think I could ever see them in the same light again.”

. . . Her friends felt that she was obsessed with the racial nature of the attack and that she should not dwell on the incident. Sylvia, on the other hand, felt like she was unable to talk with them anymore.

The police . . . were unable to develop any substantive leads and, in the opinion of the family, discouraged them from pursuing an active criminal investigation. Time and time again, Sylvia was told by the officer in charge of the investigation it was not worth her while to pursue the assailant, suggesting it was better to forget the incident and simply let old wounds heal. . . .

But as time progressed, Sylvia did not just “get over” the racial attack. Her mental health continued to deteriorate. . . . [Her family was] frustrated over the lack of police response, angry over the racist nature of the attack, and distressed over Sylvia’s deepening depression. . . .

The Response: What Is the Injury?

In treating only her physical injuries, the doctors . . . were able to replace her shattered hip, [but] they were unable to give her a replacement for her shattered frame of reference which had helped her in life to interpret, deflect, and respond to racism. . . . In failing to address the

312 • UNDERSTANDING DOMINANT-MINORITY RELATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY

underlying cause of the injury, the doctors failed to treat the most serious injury of all—the one to her psyche. As such, Sylvia was left feeling confused and powerless, without the ability to either explain or prevent another unprovoked attack.

The isolated hate crime is particularly venomous because of its seemingly random nature and the inability of the victim to rationalize its occurrence. Even as children, we learn to create mental defenses and white lies to guard against the mental attacks from others. Rationalization is an important defense in our logical world and, as thinking beings, it is important for us to believe that the world is controlled by rationality. . . . The inability to explain the incident subjects the victim to further trauma because if you can't explain it, there's nothing you can do to prevent it from happening again. . . .

Victims of burglary may rationalize that they did not take enough safety precautions and install a better alarm system. Someone who is involved in an automobile accident will try to remember to look both ways next time before crossing the street. But there is nothing you can do to hide your race, skin color, gender, or sexual orientation. There is simply no escape or change in behavior possible for victims of hate crimes and they understand that they have to live with the possibility of reoccurrence without warning. In Sylvia's case and in other similar cases, this helplessness may be exacerbated by the fact that the actual perpetrators are rarely caught.

Moreover, this may be compounded by the fact that victims of hate crimes may have never even viewed themselves as representatives of the community, but in the hate crime they are subject to attack, not as individuals, but as symbols. They are stripped of their individuality and reduced to their race. . . . Sylvia was not attacked for anything about her, anything she stood for, but on the basis of her birth. Her "crime" in the eyes of the attacker was . . . the

crime of her ancestors . . . being born "Chinese." The message was direct and terrifying—you are different from me and so you must be hurt.

This is the poison of hate crimes which distinguishes it from other types of victimization. The consistent message of [Anti-Asian] violence . . . is that you . . . do not belong here, you are not an American. This message was one that Sylvia was not prepared to receive. . . . Like many immigrants, Sylvia always believed in the ideal of America as the land of equality and opportunity. If you worked hard, you could get ahead, blend in, and be considered an equal. In the instances where she or her family were confronted with racist attitudes, her external response was to work twice as hard to go around the wall of racism, to work harder to prove her worth as an American.

In coming to America, Asians accept the unspoken racial hierarchy which will allow them to succeed up to the point where they hit the glass ceiling. They do not even carry the expectations of parity with whites. As such, they are identified as the "model minority," willing to accept a second-class standard of living as opposed to the African Americans whose civil rights paradigm has demanded an equal playing field. As in Sylvia's case, it is precisely due to this reason that many immigrants look down upon African Americans, because they themselves have made the difficult choice to swallow their pride and accept their status to provide their children with a better future. Sylvia believed that African Americans chose to complain too much and did not work hard enough to fight their way through the wall of racism.

The attack shook Sylvia to the core not only due to the extreme violence, but because it forced her to confront the fact that . . . the years of work that she put into proving herself . . . offered little protection . . . from either the attacker or the tourists who did not view her as an equal American. In an incident lasting less than a

minute, one man stripped her of her veneer, her status as an honorary white, and reduced her to her race. Despite years of sacrifice and hard work to form a protective layer of class, assimilation, and privilege, she understood now that she was still as vulnerable as the newly-arrived Asian immigrant or the African American. . . . [Y]ou could not just turn your back and try to ignore the racism because it would just follow you and haunt you. The advice that she had given herself and her children for years simply did not work and failed to protect her from the brutal assault.

The attack also undermined Sylvia's second learned form of psychological defense of internally strengthening herself against racist attacks by relying upon her heritage as a Korean immigrant. . . . [I]n America, as a guest or sojourner, she could accept second class citizenship . . . [by] saying, "I don't deserve to be treated like a regular American and I don't need to respond to these demeaning attitudes because I have another home in Korea where they treat me like an equal." This is a standard form of mental gamesmanship that we all engage in to protect our sense of pride when denied a certain goal; we always create a lie that we didn't really want it anyway.

However, [after the attack] . . . she was no longer able to ignore the fact that her rights had been violated and that she was not respected as an equal in the country where she had spent the majority of her life. . . . [S]he was viewed as a foreigner, as an outsider, told physically and orally that she did not belong.

The inability to use her birthplace heritage as a source of comfort was a first step towards establishing an identity as an Asian American. . . . Lost and feeling abandoned, Sylvia fell into a depression over the realization that she was homeless, neither Korean nor American. In this nether world, she could no longer claim the protection of her cultural heritage or the promises of American equality.

Sylvia's Response: Knocking Down Walls

Metaphorically speaking, Sylvia was thrown against the concrete wall of racial reality, which forced her to re-examine her internal and external defenses which were previously erected to deny or mitigate the existence of racism in her life. . . . The life-threatening nature of her injuries forced her to take a second look not only at racism, but her own responses and attitudes in the past.

Sylvia's response . . . was to build an entirely new frame of reference in relating to American society incorporating elements of Asian American and cross-cultural studies. Ironically, at the time that she was subject to this hate violence, Sylvia had been taking a class in cross-cultural studies to become a certified ESL [English as a Second Language] instructor. . . . She tells me that initially she . . . found many of the African American attitudes to be tiresome. "Why couldn't they just work harder?" I thought, "Why do they always complain so much?"

. . . [T]he attack prompted Sylvia to reexamine her beliefs and attitudes towards all of race relations with a particular emphasis on African Americans. By turning to the theories she acquired through cross-racial studies courses, she found a framework for recovery, a new structure for re-evaluating her own life and experiences through the lens of race. After her attack, that which had been theoretical and incomprehensible found form and substance. What had previously existed outside her reality now became her point of view. She read books on Martin Luther King Jr. and other African American leaders, looking to them for answers.

As she began to understand the broader context of racism and race relations in the United States, her incident of hate violence began to seem less a random occurrence. At the same time, it became less painful as she read about

314 • UNDERSTANDING DOMINANT-MINORITY RELATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY

the history of African Americans in the U.S. “I just stopped feeling sorry for myself. After all, it had just happened to me for a few times. But this sort of thing was happening to African Americans all the time.”

Talking with her children and others about her experiences and newfound framework, she eagerly embraced learning about new cultures and ideas. It was as if she were born again at the age of 63. . . .

“In a way, my biggest regret is that this beating I suffered didn’t happen to me 60 years earlier,” she laughs. “I now look back on my life and think how blind I was. I now spend time reflecting on my whole life and I think what I might have done different if only my eyes had been opened sooner to the racism in our society. I wish I had been able to do more; to do something about it.”

Sylvia credits her exploration and increased understanding of the African American struggle with providing her with the strength and context to fight her way out of her pit of depression. “I don’t hate white people. I still don’t know that much about black people, but I know more now about where I fit in than I did before.”

Sylvia has recovered both physically and psychologically and now continues to attend classes in exploring race relations and cultural studies. After the release of the 1996 National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium report on violence against Asian Pacific Americans, Sylvia was profiled widely by the media including an appearance on the Lehrer News Hour. She hopes to be certified as an ESL instructor soon and intends to teach new immigrants not only about English, but about America.

SWASTIKAS IN THE SUNSET: WHO IS THE VICTIM?

The Incident

The Sunset District of San Francisco is an affordable, residential and small business

community located in the western section of the city. . . . It is a culturally diverse and middle-class neighborhood with a long-established Irish, Jewish and Russian community and a rapidly growing Asian American immigrant population. The Asian American population of the Sunset District has doubled in recent years and many now refer to the area as the “New Chinatown.” The area has historically prided itself on its neighborhood “mom and pop” stores and has been highly resistant to the influx of chain stores and fast food franchises.

In 1996, a Chinese American business owner opened a Burger King franchise in the area, which was immediately met with community resistance, both reasoned and racist. While some residents protested the change in the neighborhood character, others posted flyers calling for “Chinks and Burger King Out of the Sunset.” The Burger King was subject to a barrage of vandalism, graffiti, and protests through the following months, continuing to this day.

In February of 1997, . . . the “SWB” or “Sunset White Boys” carved swastikas into the glass storefronts of nearly two dozen Asian American businesses [located in the Sunset District]. The placement and selectivity of the swastikas was particularly ominous in that primarily Asian-owned businesses were targeted and non-Asian businesses were passed over. . . . The clinical precision exercised in the choice of the targets indicated a familiarity with the community, leading people to suspect that this was an “inside” job. There were also the biblical overtones of genocide and divine retribution.

The vandalism ranged from small, red spray-painted swastikas accompanied by the initials “SWB” to three-foot high swastikas carved with some sharp instrument into the glass storefronts of several Asian-owned businesses. . . .

Surprisingly, many of the store owners were immigrants from China and Vietnam who confessed ignorance at the significance of the

swastikas. All they knew was that they were vandalized once again, and due to the indifferent or hostile treatment that they had received at the hands of the police in previous cases . . . , most failed to even report the occurrence. Many did not even realize that other Asian businesses along the street had suffered similar etchings and more than a week went by without any action being taken. During this time, the swastikas remained prominently displayed to the public.

The swastikas were finally brought to the attention of a Chinese American officer in another jurisdiction who decided to look into it on his own. The Asian Law Caucus was notified . . . and immediately responded to the location to document the hate vandalism, interview the targeted merchants and offer assistance. . . .

Even after I spoke with them, some of the store owners indicated that they did not intend to replace the glass panes defaced with swastikas since vandalism was rampant and they would just be hit again after spending the money. . . . In fact, many were surprised that what they viewed as another routine round of vandalism had attracted outside attention. After speaking with the merchants and documenting the incidents, we alerted the mainstream press. Both print and broadcast media ran widespread coverage on the swastikas even though the vandalism had taken place a week earlier. In response to the media coverage and subsequent public outcry, police and elected officials flocked to the community.

The Response: Who Is the Victim?

The response to a hate crime must be carefully tailored to address both the needs and concerns of the primary victim and also that of the community. A directed and strategic response works to counter the hateful message of exclusion and intimidation. However, in many cases it is unclear at the outset who the

primary victim is and towards whom the communal remedy should be directed. Was the true victim of the hate crime the more established Jewish community at large which was forced to confront the painful reminder of the Holocaust? Or was the victim the potential APA . . . store owner, resident, or customer considering coming into the Sunset District but who was then scared away by the prospect of being racially targeted because of his/her ethnicity? Or was it the San Francisco community at large? The responses of various authorities in this case differed depending upon their determinations on the identity of the victim. While all were successful in achieving some measure of combating hate crimes, no one fully addressed the underlying tensions which created the hate-filled environment.

The Police Response

Typically, the police are focused solely on the apprehension of the criminal and exhibit little sympathy or understanding of the needs of the victim or community. Generally, they are reluctant to categorize any case as a hate crime, perhaps out of an unwillingness to invest the extra time into conducting additional investigation, or perhaps due to a resistance to taint their jurisdiction with an insinuation of racism.

In this case, the police responded exceptionally poorly, which was surprising given the fact that San Francisco Police Department Chief Fred Lau is Chinese American and for years the department maintained a separate investigative unit specifically trained and devoted to working on hate crimes. In response to press inquiries, the police captain incredulously countered that these carvings were not hate crimes since swastikas are anti-Semitic in nature and not anti-Asian. While this initial statement was quickly retracted, the captain then adopted the position that these acts of vandalism were the acts of juveniles and therefore, should not be

316 • UNDERSTANDING DOMINANT-MINORITY RELATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY

taken seriously. The acts were dismissed and somehow excused as childish pranks and therefore, not worthy of community discussion and intervention.

Under increasing scrutiny and public pressure, Chief Fred Lau intervened. Several bilingual officers were re-assigned to patrol the Sunset District, the case was turned over to the special hate crimes unit, and general police presence in the area was increased over the short term in an attempt to apprehend the perpetrator(s).

Several juveniles were soon arrested and the newspaper headlines reported that the responsible parties had been found. Conveniently, one of the youths was Pilipino and so the police took the opportunity to declare that this was clearly not a hate crime since one of the suspects was Asian. Weeks later, with smaller fanfare, it was reported that the youths who were arrested—while admitting to general tagging in the neighborhood—did not actually have anything to do with the swastikas. After a few weeks when community and media pressure died down, nothing further was heard from the police regarding their efforts to find the perpetrators.

Asian American Merchants as Victims?

One Asian American San Francisco county supervisor organized a highly successful volunteer clean-up day and recruited elected officials, union labor, community members and donations of materials to clean up all of the graffiti, sweep the streets, and replace the glass at no charge to the merchants. Volunteers turned out from all parts of the city and the media flocked. The event removed the obvious signs of hate and arguably sent a message to the perpetrators and the community that such hate violence would not be tolerated and that San Francisco was united in stamping out the signs of racism. The clean-up day was successful in removing the swastikas from public view, in giving the

community a chance to directly demonstrate its commitment to fighting hate crimes, and bringing together diverse communities for a day to take a joint stand against hate crimes.

However, . . . it is questionable as to how successful [the clean-up day] was in addressing the underlying attitudes that lead to acts of hate. In addressing the problem as one of vandalism, the effort failed to acknowledge that the swastikas were reflective of ideas and beliefs held much closer to heart of the community. The focus upon the physical element of the hate crime overlooked the intangible factors of prejudice and racial tensions which had created an environment conducive to the racist expression of the swastikas.

On the other hand, one may argue the lesson learned in bringing together diverse communities to tackle a common goal was that the volunteer physical labor itself served as a symbol of the community coming together to fight anti-Asian violence. Undoubtedly, a major part of this effort was intended to impart upon the individual merchants that they were a part of the community and to demonstrate that in times of crisis they could rely upon the community to come to their assistance.

The focus upon these individual merchants was perhaps misplaced in that many of them were unaware of the historical and genocidal significance of the swastikas. Given their political naiveté, it is debatable as to whether or not they were truly the victims of a hate crime and whether or not they could appreciate the reasons for the volunteer response. . . .

Certainly, the store owners were economically and physically the victims of vandalism, but can they also be considered the victims of a hate crime if some failed to understand the intended message of the perpetrator(s)? Given that several did not understand the importance of the symbols, was it critical for the people and politicians to rally behind them in a show of community support?

According to the traditional principles of criminal law and specifically the law around hate crimes, these store owners are the victims of a hate crime. Generally, the definition of a hate crime turns on the intent of the perpetrator and not the understanding of the victim. For example, many jurisdictions hold that a man who is attacked because he is perceived to be gay—even if he is not—would be the victim of a hate crime and the perpetrator could be subject to enhanced penalties. On the other hand, a person who fights with a gay person motivated solely by a dispute over a parking space, would not be subject to a hate crime even if the gay person was subjectively afraid that the dispute was over his sexual orientation. This follows the general principles of criminal law that focuses on the intent of the perpetrator.

However, what makes hate crimes punishable above and beyond the physical act of criminality is the recognition that hate violence carries levels of psychological and emotional impact well beyond the simple commission of the crime. The penalties for hate crimes are more severe because we recognize that based upon a history of racial intolerance, the victims are particularly vulnerable and suffer levels of injuries far beyond the physical and objective damages. A cross-burning on an African American lawn is much more than an act of arson or vandalism. It carries with it the clear threat of further escalation of violence when considered in the context of historical precedent. Thus, when the victim does not understand or is unaware of the message of hate, much of the psychological trauma and venom of the crime is not present and from the individual victim's viewpoint, it becomes indistinguishable from a simple act of vandalism. . . .

Therefore, should some of the merchants who did understand the message of intimidation and racial hatred and suffered the psychological consequences be considered hate

violence victims while the other merchants are not? . . . Clearly, the focus on the individual level makes little sense because the bottom line is that property-based hate crimes such as these are clearly an attack upon the community. Common sense dictates that the use of a swastika defines the incident as one of hate violence given its symbolism for racial hatred and violence regardless of the understanding of the owner of the property. But if the merchants were not particularly intimidated by this act, then was the clean-up perhaps for the benefit of the community as opposed to assisting these particular individuals? After all, the older neighborhood is predominantly Jewish and was certainly put on notice . . . once the swastikas were carved into their community stores. A more cynical and jaded viewpoint would be that the clean-up was not directed at helping the Asian American merchants at all but rather at the larger Jewish community which had to be confronted with these symbols every day.

The Neighborhood/Geographic Community as Victim?

A second Asian American county supervisor organized two town hall meetings to facilitate discussions on the placement of swastikas in the community. The events were advertised in several languages to both the Asian merchants and the Sunset community at large. Myself and several other volunteers conducted outreach to the merchants along the Irving corridor in an attempt to encourage their participation in the hearings. A non-Asian leader in hate crimes coalition work was selected to lead the discussions and hate crimes "experts," police, elected officials, media, and community groups were invited to attend.

Nearly two hundred people attended the first town hall meeting, but virtually none of the Asian merchants attended either of the sessions.

318 • UNDERSTANDING DOMINANT-MINORITY RELATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY

The discussions were mostly dominated by a number of neighborhood conservation and watch groups from the Sunset community—many of whom were involved and continued to be involved in the efforts to drive the Burger King out of the Sunset District.

The first forum was opened with statements of support from local elected officials and presentations by the hate crimes experts. However, as the discussions progressed and the floor was opened up to those in attendance, the talk quickly turned to combating vandalism generally in the community and the changing character of the neighborhood. The changing character of the neighborhood, of course, was a euphemism for the rapid growth of the Asian American community in the Sunset district. . . . More neighborhood watch groups and closer cooperation with the police were proposed, a vandalism task force and hotline were discussed, and after the opening few minutes, the discussion of “hate” had been dropped and the audience spoke only of the “crimes.”

In a more disturbing segment of the town hall meeting, audience members testified that the real problem contributing to the rise in crime was the fact that the community had changed so much that they did not feel that this was their community anymore. Some attendees remarked that Asian-language signs dominated the streets and you no longer heard English being spoken. Others commented that these “new” residents packed too many family members in a house, did not try to assimilate, hung out only with their own, did not participate in the civic affairs of the community, and generally did not fit into the Sunset character.

It is important to note that this was as much a case of ethnic conflict as it was a dispute between long time residents and newcomers. Some of those who spoke out against the transformation of the neighborhood included established Japanese Americans who could not read

the Chinese language signs or understand the foreign languages being spoken on the street.

In an ironic twist, several residents complained that the merchants were at fault for not acting quickly to eradicate the swastikas once they appeared. These residents stated that they were offended that the stores did not act responsibly and rapidly to remove these signs of hate once they were carved on their front windowpanes. The residents who appeared at this public forum indicated that the problem was that the Asians did not participate in the neighborhood watches and other civic duties of the “community” and thus, hate crimes and vandalism were allowed to flourish. In a loosely-controlled forum, the audience had come full circle in scape-goating the victims as the perpetrators, and these were the voices and faces heard that night on the eleven o’clock news. . . .

In earlier discussions, the Asian American merchants expressed a general disinterest in attending such a forum and noted that the scheduled times conflicted with their business hours. . . . I think the true reason why many failed to attend was a premonition that their issues, concerns and needs were not going to be addressed in this public setting. Perhaps the merchants thought they would not be able to communicate the depth of their hopes and fears through an interpreter. Many expressed a fear in becoming involved and subjecting themselves to potential future retaliation. And maybe they already knew who their neighbors were and did not want to walk into a hostile trap.

In trying to open up discussions with the community, the officials had allowed the content of the discourse to shift without moderation and granted legitimacy and press to a particular viewpoint of the community. In empowering a certain segment of the community which was hostile to the “Asian invasion,” the town hall meetings served to further divide and separate the community. . . .

All of a sudden, it became clear “who killed Vincent Chin,”¹ these community leaders who had turned out to ostensibly combat hate crimes were in fact perpetuating much of the hate crimes messages in their own homes. No doubt, it was some juvenile that had committed the physical act of vandalism, but the hate was something being taught at home. The town hall meetings ended with the second forum. Nothing ever came of those meetings.

...

The Asian Pacific American Community as Victim?

The swastikas were only a symptom of a more deeply rooted problem. The vandalism was neither a juvenile prank, nor a simple act of vandalism, but rather a powerful symbol of communities in conflict and a visible mark of the underlying tensions around a changing demographic in the Sunset District.

... [T]he intent behind the swastikas was not a childish thought, but one shared by a large segment of the community. Asian Americans in the Sunset district were being told both by symbol and by comments made in community forums that they were threatening the integrity and character of the neighborhood. ... And, in the town hall discussions, while many residents repudiated the specific action taken in this case, no one spoke against the underlying message of racial intolerance and disharmony.

Anti-Asian violence is the friction generated from two communities beginning to rub up against each other where there is no discussion or relationship between the communities. Viewing this situation in a historical context, what happened in the Sunset District was identical to what happened in countless other cities ... where a fast-growing Asian American immigrant population began to threaten the character of an “older” neighborhood. ...

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders • 319

Because we are perceived as new, because we are seen as foreign, we are interpreted as a threat. ... As our community continues to grow, we can only expect to see a greater incidence of hate violence directed against us.

CONCLUSION

... The Asian American identity is based upon an understanding that anti-Asian violence has played an integral part in the history of both America and Asian America and that it has always served to exclude and deny us our rightful place. ... [I]n combating anti-Asian violence, we fight the message that we do not belong. It is a recognition that the attack upon the individual is an attempt to silence us all and therefore, to break our silence, we must speak up for the individual. Thus, while the community may be defined by the isolation and exclusion by the mainstream, it is also created from the response to anti-Asian violence.

But more than exclusion, it is a recognition that Asian America lives in the hearts of those in our community. The history of Asian Americans reflects the struggle for recognition and equality. Our forefathers planted seeds in the cracks of mountains and they planted dynamite high above the railroads, in concentration camps located in the deserts of Wyoming and Arizona, across the oceans on flotsam and refugee boats, parachuted in from modern jets and seared in the fires of Koreatown. The acres of history that we have tilled have not been welcoming or fertile, but we have persevered and out of the desert we have taken seed and we have grown. The promise of America is not happiness or equality, but the pursuit of happiness and the opportunity to advocate for equality. In order for us to be recognized as equals, we must struggle to assert our right to sit at the table.

320 • UNDERSTANDING DOMINANT-MINORITY RELATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY

NOTE

1. “Who killed Vincent Chin?” is a question raised in the documentary by the same name directed by Renee Tajima-Pena and Christine Choy. Vincent Chin was killed by two unemployed autoworkers on June 19, 1982, a week before he was to be wed. The two murderers yelled at Chin “It’s because of motherf**ers like you that we are out of work,” chased him down the street and one held him while the other beat his head in with a baseball bat. His murderers never served a day in jail and were

sentenced to three years probation and a \$3000 fine. The case became a symbol for anti-Asian violence in America and the filmmakers raised in their documentary the question of societal responsibility for Chin’s death. The high level of Japan-bashing and Asian-bashing promulgated by the auto manufacturers, especially in this period, created an environment conducive to violence and anti-Asian American violence.

SOURCE: Originally published in *Chicano-Latino Law Review* 17 (2000). Reprinted with permission.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What role according to Hwang, does violence play in creating an Asian Pacific community? What does he mean when he says that violence is a “foil and catalyst” in the development of community?

2. How does Sylvia illustrate the “false consciousness” of Asian Americans? How does the attack change the way she thinks about herself, her place in American society, and her view of African Americans?

3. How does the image of APA communities presented by Hwang differ from the image of the “model minority”?

4. How did the various responses to the vandalism in the Sunset District illustrate anti-Asian prejudice? Did the strength of the Asian community increase as a result of these attacks? Did the larger society develop a deeper understanding of Asian Americans? Why or why not?

SOUTH KOREAN SEX SLAVES IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Salim Jiwa

For South Korean women looking for a new life, a one-way ticket to Vancouver can be a journey into a sordid world of sexual slavery and indebtedness with no way out.

“There has been a clear increase in people coming over and being enslaved as a result of the fact they don’t need a visa to enter Canada,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Ye-Ting Woo said.

The women are bonded into sex slavery and traded like cattle to brothels in Los Angeles and other U.S. cities, Woo said.

She said Vancouver has become a smuggling capital, with flights arriving daily from Seoul. South Koreans do not need a visa to enter Canada.

“Within the prostitution industry, or these brothels or massage parlors, you will usually find someone who is called an enforcer—and it could be a woman and it could be a man—who will either physically or by coercion cause these women to have to stay,” said Woo, who prosecuted people smuggler Young Pil (Ricky) Choi last month.

Choi was sentenced to three years in prison and three years of supervised release for conspiracy to transport more than 100 aliens to the United States, bringing immigrants to the United States for financial gain and three counts of harbouring illegal aliens.

“The demand is from the sex industry, so you have bars in Los Angeles and outcall services and they need women to work in them and they advertise in Korea for women who want to come over and they look at their pictures and see if they would be suitable and their ages and then bring them over. It’s just horrible, just stunning.”

Assistant U.S. Attorney Tessa Gorman said the women work in bars from Seattle to Los Angeles and as far away as Houston.

“These women work as companions for the evening and when you have one of these girls work with you and stay with you during the evening, the price of your liquor goes up,” Gorman said. “Then you can also have them come home with you.”

Woo said some of the women coming from South Korea are prostitutes, but others are innocent women who were promised other jobs. They are eventually forced into prostitution to pay off their smuggling debt.

“Even after they pay off their smuggling debt, it’s like they apply an interest to the debt so it almost makes it impossible for you pay it off,” Woo said. “That is one way they hold or enslave women.” They also force the women to sign contracts.

Others, she said, are threatened. They are told unless the contract is paid off “something bad will happen to your family.”

“But the family may not even know of the contract back in Korea,” she said.

Authorities say they believe another sex slave ring is in operation after the arrests of 18 Korean women spirited into Idaho from British Columbia.

“To me the fact that all the Koreans we arrested this fiscal year so far are women once again indicates there is sex trafficking going on,” said a border intelligence official in Spokane, Wash., who did not want to be identified.

Since the destruction of Choi’s smuggling network, U.S. authorities say smugglers are moving away from heavy enforcement zones in B.C., such as Blaine, Sumas and Aldergrove and are driving deeper into eastern B.C.

Vancouver resident Sang Yoon Kim, a Canadian citizen of Korean origin, and Bum Suk Kim of Korea were arrested April 3 and accused of smuggling 13 South Koreans across the border.

A tip from Canadian officials led U.S. border patrol agents to stop a recreational vehicle with steamed up windows, well past the border. Inside, lying on the floor and on a side bed, were 13 women. The women will be returned to South Korea once released.

SOURCE: Copyright © 2005 CanWest Interactive, a division of Can West Global Communications Corp. Material is reprinted with the express permission of Montreal Gazette Group, Inc., a CanWest Partnership. All rights reserved.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Since September 11, 2001, the news media has focused mainly on border control as a means of thwarting terrorism, and we rarely hear of sex trafficking as a border control issue. Why do you think the U.S. government has not taken a more vocal, active stance on this problem?

2. One border official in Washington states, “all the Koreans we arrested this fiscal year so far are women.” Why do you think sex trafficking so heavily involves Korean women in particular? Could it be economic factors, sexually charged stereotypes about Asian women, or other factors? Do some

322 • UNDERSTANDING DOMINANT-MINORITY RELATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY

research on sex trafficking to find out what other nations are most often implicated in this migration issue. Are there other Asian nations involved? Are there non-Asians also participating in the export of women for sexual services? What do these other nations and South Korea have in common?

3. Why do you think U.S. men turn to these illegal immigrant prostitutes as opposed to domestic women's services (or do you think they are even aware of the women's legal status)? Are the reasons behind this kind of low-wage exploitation identical to other immigrant work-related concerns (they will work for less than legal immigrants and permanent residents), or are there additional factors unique to women that are important for analyzing this problem?

4. Many scholars and activists studying sex work advocate legalizing prostitution (as Canada has done) to reduce the kind of exploitation that goes on within this currently illegal industry in the United States. Do you think legalizing prostitution in the United States would curb some of this sex trafficking/immigration problem? Why or why not? If not, what additional problems would remain and how could they be addressed?

5. The most lucrative types of jobs often available to illegal immigrants tend to be filled by men—farm and manufacturing labor, restaurant work. Could eliminating or reducing the gender wage gap, even among low-wage work, alleviate some of the sex trafficking in immigrant women? How might this be done?

CURRENT DEBATES

ASIAN AMERICAN “SUCCESS”—WHAT ARE THE DIMENSIONS, CAUSES, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER MINORITY GROUPS?

The following selections continue the discussion of the causes of Asian American success. The first selection, from the writings of sociologist Harry Kitano, is consistent with cultural explanations for the upward mobility of Asian groups. It argues that the success of the Japanese in America is due in part to their culture and in part to their strength of character, resiliency, and flexibility.

In opposition to Kitano's views are two other selections. The first counterargument, by sociologists Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, presents a structural analysis that links the success of Chinese Americans to their enclave economy. Portes and Zhou also draw some provocative comparisons between Chinese Americans and African Americans, suggesting that the “thorough acculturation” of the African American community has weakened its economic vitality.

The second counterargument, by sociologist Ronald Takaki, sharply questions the whole notion of the “model minority” and points out the limits and qualifications that need to be observed when comparing Asian Americans with other groups. Takaki also points to a hidden agenda of those who single out Asian Americans as a “model minority”: the chastisement of other minority groups, particularly African Americans.

THE SUCCESS OF JAPANESE AMERICANS IS CULTURAL

Harry Kitano

Social interaction among Japanese Americans is governed by behavioral norms such as *enryo* and *amae*. These derive from Confucian ideas about human relationships and define the

dimensions of interaction and exchange between superior and inferior members of a social group. Although these forms of behavior were brought over by Issei immigrants, they

still survive in attenuated form among the Nisei and even the Sansei.

Enryo prescribes the way in which a social inferior must show deference and self-abnegation before a superior. Hesitancy to speak out at meetings, the automatic refusal of a second helping, and selecting a less desired object are all manifestations of enryo. . . .

Amae behavior softens a power relationship through the acting out of dependency and weakness, and expresses the need for attention, recognition, acceptance, and nurture. A child displays amae to gain the sympathy and indulgence of a parent. A young, anxious-to-please employee in a business firm will act with exaggerated meekness and confusion to give his superior an opportunity to provide paternal advice and treat him as a protégé. Through the ritual display of weakness and dependency, reciprocal bonds of loyalty, devotion, and trust are formed. In this way amae creates strong emotional ties that strengthen cohesion within the family, business organization, and community.

Japanese Americans inherit an almost reverential attitude toward work. Their ancestors struggled for survival in a crowded island country with limited natural resources and they placed great value on industry and self-discipline. Certain traditional attitudes encourage resilient behavior in the face of setbacks and complement the moral imperative to work hard. Many Japanese Americans are familiar with the common expressions *gaman* and *gambotte* which mean “don’t let it bother you,” “don’t give up.” These dicta, derived from Buddhist teachings, encourage Japanese people to conceal frustration or disappointment and to carry on. A tradition that places great value on work and persistence has helped many Japanese Americans to acquire good jobs and to get ahead.

The submerging of the individual to the interest of the group is another basic Japanese tradition, and one that produces strong social cohesion

and an oblique style of behavior, one manifestation of which is the indirection or allusiveness of much communication between Japanese; another is the polite, consensual behavior expected in all social contacts. Both are common in Japan and visible among Japanese Americans. Today, even third- and fourth-generation Japanese Americans are apt to be seen by others as agreeable, unaggressive, willing to accept subordinate roles, and reluctant to put themselves forward. . . .

The history of the Japanese Americans in the United States is one of both resilience and adaptation. Suffering from discriminatory laws and racial hostility in the first half of the 20th century, Japanese Americans were nonetheless able to create stable ethnic communities and separate, but vital, social organizations. Since the end of World War II, with the disappearance of legal discrimination and the weakening of social restrictions, they have assimilated more readily into American society and shown rapid economic progress. Scholars have searched for the key to their remarkable record of adaptation. Some have pointed to the Japanese family, others to a strong group orientation, and still others to Japanese moral training; all of these theories often tend to overemphasize the degree to which Japanese traditions have been maintained. Japanese Americans have displayed a pragmatic attitude toward American life. [Rather] than rigidly maintaining their traditions, Japanese Americans have woven American values and behavior into the fabric of their culture and have seized new social, cultural, and economic avenues as they have become available, extending the limits of ethnicity by striking a workable balance between ethnic cohesion and accommodation.

SOURCE: Reprinted by permission of the publisher from *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, edited by Stephen Thernstrom, Ann Orlov and Oscar Handlin, pp. 570-571, Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Copyright © 1980 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

THE “SUCCESS” OF CHINESE AMERICANS IS STRUCTURAL

Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou

[What lessons for ethnic poverty can we find in the experiences of Chinese Americans and other groups that have constructed ethnic enclaves?] A tempting option—and one to which many experts have not been averse—is to resort to culturalistic explanations. According to these interpretations, certain groups do better because they possess the “right” kind of values. This view is, of course, not too different from assimilation theory except that, instead of learning the proper values after arrival, immigrants bring them ready made. A moment’s reflection suffices to demonstrate the untenability of this explanation. . . .

The very diversity of [the] groups [which have constructed enclave economies] conspires against explanations that find the roots of economic mobility in the unique values associated with a particular culture. If we had to invoke a particular “ethic” to account for the business achievements of Chinese and Jews, Koreans and Cubans, Lebanese and Dominicans, we would wind up with a very messy theory. In terms of professed religions alone, we would have to identify those unique values leading Confucianists and Buddhists, Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholics into successful business ventures. In addition, culturalistic explanations have little predictive power since they are invoked only after a particular group has demonstrated its economic prowess. . . .

There is no alternative but to search for the relevant causal process in the social structure of the ethnic community. [Several] common aspects in the economic experience of the immigrant communities [are] relevant. . . .

[First is] the “bounded solidarity” created among immigrants by virtue of their foreignness and being treated as [different]. As consumers, immigrants manifest a consistent

preference for items associated with the country of origin, both for their intrinsic utility and as symbolic representations of a distinct identity. As workers, they often prefer to work among “their own,” interacting in their native language even if this means sacrificing some material benefits. As investors, they commonly opt for firms in the country of origin or in the ethnic community rather than trusting their money to impersonal outside organizations.

Bounded solidarity [is accompanied by] “enforceable trust” against malfeasance among prospective ethnic entrepreneurs. Confidence that business associates will not resort to double-dealing is cemented in something more tangible than generalized cultural loyalty since it also relies on the ostracism of violators, cutting them off from sources of credit and opportunity. [Enforceable trust] is the key mechanism underlying the smooth operation of rotating credit associations among Asian immigrant communities.

Bounded solidarity and enforceable trust as sources of social capital do not inhere in the moral convictions of individuals or in the value orientations in which they were socialized. [These benefits] accrue by virtue of [the group’s] minority [status] in the host country and as a result of being subjected to mainstream pressure to accept their low place in the ethnic hierarchy. Such pressures prompt the revalorization of the symbols of a common nationality and the privileging of the ethnic community as the place where the status of underprivileged menial labor can be avoided. . . .

Black Americans, Mexican Americans, and mainland Puerto Ricans today lag significantly behind the immigrant groups in their entrepreneurial orientation. [This] lack of entrepreneurial presence is even more remarkable because of

the large size of these minorities and the significant consumer market that they represent. . . .

We believe that the dearth of entrepreneurship among these groups is related to the dissolution of the structural underpinnings of the social capital resources noted above: bounded solidarity and enforceable trust. A thorough process of acculturation among U.S.-born members of each of these groups has led to a gradual weakening of their sense of community and to a re-orientation towards the values, expectations, and preferences of the cultural mainstream. [Complete] assimilation among domestic minorities leads to identification with the mainstream views, including a disparaging evaluation of their own group. . . .

[Even] groups with a modest level of human capital have managed to create an entrepreneurial presence when the necessary social capital, created by specific historical conditions, was present. This was certainly the case among turn-of-the-century Chinese. [It] was also true of segregated black communities during the same time period. The current desperate conditions in many inner-city neighborhoods have led some black leaders to recall wistfully the period of segregation. [As one black leader said]:

[T]he same kind of business enclave that exists in the Cuban community or in the Jewish community existed in the black community when the consumer base was contained [i.e., segregated from the larger society] and needed goods and services that had to be provided by someone in the neighborhood. Today, blacks will not buy within their neighborhood if they can help it; they want to go to the malls and blend with mainstream consumers.

Hence, thorough acculturation and the formal end of segregation led to the dissipation of the social capital formerly present in restricted black enclaves and the consequent weakening of minority entrepreneurship. As blacks attempted to join the mainstream, they found that lingering discrimination barred or slowed down their progress in the labor market, while consumption of outside goods and services undermined their own community business base.

SOURCE: Originally titled "Gaining the Upper Hand: Economic Mobility Among Immigrant and Domestic Minorities" from *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 15: 513-518. Copyright © 1992. Reprinted with permission of Routledge, Ltd.

THE SUCCESS OF ASIAN AMERICANS HAS BEEN EXAGGERATED, IN PART, TO CRITICIZE OTHER MINORITY GROUPS

Ronald Takaki

African American "failure" has been contrasted with Asian American "success." In 1984, William Raspberry of the Washington Post noted that Asian Americans on the West Coast had "in fact" "outstripped" whites in income. Blacks should stop blaming racism for their plight, he argued, and follow the example of the self-reliant Asian Americans. In 1986, NBC Nightly News and McNeil/Lehrer Report aired special segments on

Asian Americans and their achievements. U.S. News and World Report featured Asian American advances in a cover story, and Newsweek focused a lead article on "Asian Americans: A 'Model Minority'" while Fortune applauded them as "America's super minority."

But in their celebration of this "model minority," these media pundits have exaggerated Asian American "success." Their comparisons of

326 • UNDERSTANDING DOMINANT-MINORITY RELATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY

income between Asians and whites fail to recognize the regional location of the Asian American population. Concentrated in California, Hawaii, and New York, most Asian Americans reside in states with higher incomes but also higher costs of living than the national average. . . .

Asian American families have more persons working per family than white families. Thus, the family incomes of Asian Americans indicate the presence of more workers in each family rather than higher individual incomes. Actually, in terms of personal incomes, Asian Americans have not reached equality.

While many Asian Americans are doing well, others find themselves mired in poverty: They include southeast-Asian refugees such as the Hmong, as well as immigrant workers trapped in Chinatowns. Eighty percent of the people in New York Chinatown, 74% of San Francisco Chinatown, and 88% of Los Angeles Chinatown are foreign born. Like the nineteenth century Chinese immigrants in search of Gold Mountain, they came here to seek a better life. But what they found instead was work in Chinatown's low wage service and garment industries. . . .

The myth of the Asian American "model minority" has been challenged, yet it continues to be widely believed. One reason for this is its instructional value. For whom are Asian Americans supposed to be a "model"? . . .

Asian Americans are being used to discipline blacks. If the failure of blacks on welfare

warns Americans in general how they should not behave, the triumph of Asian Americans affirms the deeply rooted values of the Protestant ethic and self-reliance. Our society needs an Asian American "model minority" in an era anxious about a growing black underclass. If Asian Americans can make it on their own, why can't other groups? . . .

Betraying a certain nervousness over the seeming end of the American dream's boundlessness, praise for this "super minority" has become society's most recent jeremiad—a call for a renewed commitment to the traditional values of hard work, thrift, and industry. After all, it has been argued, the war on poverty and affirmative action were not really necessary. Look at the Asian Americans! They did it by pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. For blacks shut out of the labor market, the Asian American model provides the standards for acceptable behavior: Blacks should not depend on welfare or affirmative action. While congratulating Asian Americans for their family values, hard work, and high incomes, President Ronald Reagan chastised blacks for their dependency on the "spider's web of welfare" and their failure to recognize that the "only barrier" to success was "within" them.

SOURCE: From *A Different Mirror* by Ronald Takaki. Copyright © 1993 by Ronald Takaki. Reprinted by permission of Little, Brown and Company, Inc.

DEBATE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. If Kitano's analysis is correct, what could other minority groups learn from the Japanese experience? If Portes and Zhou are correct, what could other minority groups learn from the Chinese experience? Do Portes and Zhou use cultural factors as part of their explanation? How? Are Portes and Zhou advocating segregation? Pluralism? Assimilation?

2. Why would the United States "need" a "model minority"? How would you answer Takaki's question: "For whom are Asian Americans supposed to be a 'model'?" Whose interests are being served by these comparisons? Do Asian Americans gain anything from these labels and comparisons? Do they lose anything?