Young Elite Asian Americans and the Model Minority Stereotype: The Nativity Effect

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While research on the model minority stereotype has focused on white American attitudes, much less research has considered the ways in which Asian Americans understand this concept and its implications. Utilizing frameworks from social psychology and critical race theory we hypothesize that young foreign-born Asian Americans will more likely accept the model minority stereotype than native-born Asian Americans due to their likely socialization in a context where their ethnic group was dominant. Further we hypothesize that young Asian Americans who accept the model minority stereotype also accept individualistic explanations for black inequality given that the stereotype implicates non-Asian minorities presumed incompetence and lack of effort on lower socioeconomic outcomes. Third, we hypothesize that US-born Asian Americans' exposure to the racialized climate of the US will make their belief in the stereotype more salient in predicting individualistic attitudes toward black inequality. We employ OLS regression techniques using survey data from the first wave of the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen. We find that the mean level of acceptance to the stereotype does not differ by nativity. However that acceptance, regardless of nativity, is positively associated with individualist explanations for African American inequality. Further, foreign-born status is also linked to anti-black individualist sentiment. When we interact nativity status with belief in the stereotype, we find that foreign-born status is moderated in its effect on individualist beliefs toward African American inequality. Thus, we find that while young foreign-born Asian Americans are more individualistic in their views

on racial inequality, native-born acceptance of the stereotype has a more pronounced effect. These findings suggest what we describe as a "choosing sides" logic; acceptance of the model minority stereotype reflects collusion with white dominance at the expense of alienation with other non-white minorities.

Introduction

The contemporary roots of the model minority stereotype date back to William Petersen's use of the term to describe Japanese American upward mobility in the early 1960s.[1] Shortly afterward, immigration laws underwent significant change. Prominent among these was the retraction of the Asian Exclusion Act of 1924 that barred most Asians seeking to migrate to the US.[2] Petersen likely was unaware of the selectivity bias of the "new immigrants" (a term used to describe the post-1965 wave of immigration)[3] from Asia which favored those with greater human, social and cultural capital. These advantages usually resulted in greater likelihood of upward mobility.[4] Meanwhile persistent structural racism, despite the passage of the Civil Rights Act, revealed a significant lag among African Americans in their aims for upward mobility. Thus the impression that Japanese and other Asian Americans reflected superior work ethic, intelligence and

[1] William Petersen, "Success Story: Japanese American Style," *The New York Times Magazine*, January 6, 1960.

[2] Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait, Third Edition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[3] Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants Among Post-1965 Immigrant Youth," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530, no. November (1993): 74–96.

[4] These advantages are also more noticeable in the bifurcation or segmentation of the economy between service and high-tech sectors. Thus as scholars of immigrant incorporation have noted, assimilation is no longer a simple upward trajectory from working class to middle class. Entry into the United States reflects a segmented pattern where new immigrants and their children have different socioeconomic starting points and experience varying trajectories of upward, downward or lateral mobility.

perseverance relative to other minorities persisted over the decades ahead.[5] Since the 1980s, American scholars have repeatedly shown the socioeconomic and migration realities that complicate the stereotype, but such findings have had little resonance in the media.[6]

Over the past two decades, some scholars have investigated the degree to which white Americans accept the model minority stereotype, and their findings conform to what one might expect: white Americans tend to think of Asian Americans as smart and hard-working, but also foreign or different from them.[7] Less well known are the views of Asian Americans themselves regarding this stereotype and its potential relationship to other racial attitudes. In this study we investigate the attitudes of a sample of young elite Asian Americans regarding the model minority stereotype and their beliefs about black inequality. Given the persistent high rate of Asian migration[8] we pay close attention to the role of nativity in this sample and the implicit socialization differences experienced by foreign-born and native-born Asian Americans.

[5] "Asian Americans: The Drive to Excel," *Newsweek on Campus*, April 1984; Anthony Ramirez, "America's Super Minority," *Fortune*, November 24, 1986.

[6] Fong, Timothy P. 2001. *The Contemporary Asian American Experience: Beyond the Model Minority*. Second. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Hurh, Won Moo, and Kwang Chung Kim. 1989. "The 'Success' Image of Asian Americans: Its Validity, and Its Practical and Theoretical Implications." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 12(4):512–38. Sakamoto, Arthur. 2007. "The Socioeconomic Attainments of Second-Generation Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans." *Sociological Inquiry* 77:44–75.

[7] Susan T Fiske et al., "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow from Perceived Status and Competition," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82, no. 6 (June 2002): 878–902, doi:10.1037//0022-3514.82.6.878; Colin Ho and Jay W. Jackson, "Attitudes Towards Asian Americans: Theory and Measurement.," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 31, no. 8 (2001): 1553–1581; Monica H. Lin et al., "Stereotype Content Model Explains Prejudice for an Envied Outgroup: Scale of Anti-Asian American Stereotypes.," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 31, no. 1 (January 2005): 34–47.

[8] Paul Taylor et al., *The Rise of Asian Americans* (Washington DC: Pew Research Center Social and Demographic Trends, 2012).

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Mapping and Measuring the Model Minority Stereotype
What we know about belief in the model minority stereotype largely comes from studies of white survey respondents. In this literature stereotypes of Asian Americans comprise two cognitive dimensions which together form the model minority stereotype. The dimension receiving the most empirical validation is what social psychologist Susan Fiske and colleagues describe as *perceived competence*,[9] and what social theorist Claire Jean Kim termed *relative valorization*.[10] This cognitive axis aligns groups into a status hierarchy where some groups are perceived as more competent or intelligent than others. In several studies of predominantly white respondents, Asian Americans were ranked lower than whites in perceived competence but higher than African Americans and Latinos.[11] The other dimension which forms the cognitive map of stereotypes is described as perceived warmth (using Fiske et al.'s frame), or civic ostracism (using Kim's frame). In both frameworks this dimension is a measure of social distance, the perception of closeness between the ingroup and a particular outgroup. Fiske et al. found that respondents (most of whom were white non-Hispanic) rated Asian Americans as less warm than African Americans and Latinos. From Kim's (1999) model of racial triangulation, Asian Americans are perceived as outsiders or foreigners relative to whites and African Americans. We assert that

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[9] Fiske et al., "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow from Perceived Status and Competition."

[10] Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics and Society* 27, no. 1 (March 1999): 105–138.

[11] Amy J. C. Cuddy, Susan T. Fiske, and Peter Glick, "The BIAS Map: Behaviors From Intergroup Affect and Stereotypes," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 92, no. 4 (2007): 631–648, doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.4.631; Fiske et al., "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow from Perceived Status and Competition"; Frank L. Samson, "Multiple Group Threat and Malleable White Attitudes Towards Academic Merit," *Du Bois Review* 10 (2013): 233–260.

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these two frameworks coincide with one another such that the social perception of coldness of a particular group is associated with racialized ostracism of that same group. In both of these frameworks we see evidence of two dimensions to the model minority stereotype as applied to Asian Americans. Ho and Jackson[12] specifically turned attention to stereotype characteristics associated with Asian Americans and identified similar dimensions of perceived high competence and low warmth or greater ostracism as articulated by both Fiske et al. and Kim. From these we can confirm that stereotypes of perceived competence and greater social distance attributed to Asian Americans maps onto the main characteristics of the model minority stereotype from the perspective of white Americans.

In our study we advance previous research by proposing a more accurate measure of the model minority stereotype: relative perceptions of competence and warmth. In both Ho and Jackson's (2001) study as well as Lin et al (2005), assessments about stereotyped characteristics are based on white respondents' direct impression of Asian Americans.[13] The model minority stereotype however asserts that a minority group is perceived as superior, *relative to other minorities.* That is, the stereotype relies on relationality; a more accurate understanding of model minority perceptions requires knowledge of Asian *and* non-Asian minority stereotypes in relationship to one another. Indeed research on African American-Korean immigrant relations illustrates the need for critically understanding non-white perceptions of racial inequality.[14] This key distinction has not been directly assessed in social science research.

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[12] Ho and Jackson, "Attitudes Towards Asian Americans: Theory and Measurement."

[13] see also William W. Maddux et al., "When Being a Model Minority Is Good...and Bad: Realistic Threat Explains Negativity toward Asian Americans.," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 34, no. 1 (January 2008): 74–89.

[14] Kwang C. Kim, ed., *Koreans in the Hood: Conflict with African Americans* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

Our second contribution changes the study of the model minority stereotype from perceptions of native-born whites to Asian Americans. In historical perspective, Wu's review of the emergence of the model minority stereotype revealed that US-born Asian American leaders during the 1950s and 60s were conflicted over this media-amplified perception. [15] For some, the model minority stereotype served as a means of resisting marginalization during a time when Japanese Americans were recovering from the internment of World War II and where Chinese Americans were viewed with suspicion over their perceived loyalties to the emerging Communist threat in China. For these Asian Americans, the stereotype suggested greater adaptability and greater loyalty even if it was at the expense of implying African Americans' lesser adaptability. [16] However, many other Asian Americans reacted against this stereotype through political galvanization both at the community-level and on college campuses on the west coast. [17]

Decades later, the dual patterns of accepting and rejecting the model minority stereotype resonate among contemporary Asian Americans. Ho's analysis of 22 second-generation (i.e. children of immigrants) [18] Asian American professionals however showed not only awareness of the model minority stereotype but paradoxical acceptance and rejection of it relative to the situation in which their

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[15] Ellen D. Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[16] see also Yuko Kawai, "Stereotyping Asian Americans: The Dialectic of the Model Minority and the Yellow Peril," *The Howard Journal of Communications* 16, no. 2 (June 2005): 109–130.

[17] see also L. Ling-chi Wang, "Myths and Realities of Asian American Success: Reassessing and Redefining the 'Model Minority' Stereotype," in *Model Minority Myth Revisited: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Demystifying Asian American Educational Experiences* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc, 2008), 21–42.

[18] Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants Among Post-1965 Immigrant Youth," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530, (November (1993): 74–96.

Asian-ness was in question. Some used sarcasm to critique the stereotype in conversations with white employers and co-workers, while others unintentionally reinforced this image when reflecting on the role of race in their hiring experience and that of other non-Asian minorities at their place of work.[19] Dhingra's interviews with Asian Indian and Korean American second-generation young adults shows that some Asian Americans recognize the subtle shift between being praised as a model minority and being viewed as an economic threat. [20] Moreover, white perceptions of Asian Americans as foreigners were a similar if not greater concern for many.[21] Park's interviews with college-attending second-generation Asian Americans show similar awareness of the competence dimension connoted with the term Asian American, and some respondents voiced the constraints (presumed higher achievement and limited interest to only math and science) of this stereotype.[22] In sum second-generation Asian American acceptance or rejection of the model minority stereotype is often an individual strategy in response to the felt marginalization they perceive in their social contexts.

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[19] Pensri Ho, "Performing the 'Oriental' Professionals and the Asian Model Minority Myth," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 6, no. 2 (2003): 149–175.

[20] Pawan H. Dhingra, "Being American Between Black and White," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 6, no. 2 (2003): 117–147.

[21] Mia H. Tuan, *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites? The Asian Ethnic Experience Today* (New Brunswick,NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

[22] Jerry Z. Park, "Second-Generation Asian American Pan-Ethnic Identity: Pluralized Meanings of a Racial Label," *Sociological Perspectives* 51 (2008): 541–563; see also Grace Kao, "Group Images and Possible Selves among Adolescents: Linking Stereotypes to Expectations by Race and Ethnicity," *Sociological Forum* 15, no. 3 (September 2000): 407–430; Paul Wong et al., "Asian Americans as a Model Minority: Self-Perceptions and Perceptions by Other Racial Groups," *Sociological Perspectives* 41, no. 1 (spring 1998): 95–118; Rosalind S. Chou and Joe R. Feagin, *The Myth of the Model Minority: Asian Americans Facing Racism* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2008).

Learning White American Racial Hegemony Abroad

We suggest that while there appears to be consensus on Asian American acceptance to the model minority stereotype, many if not most of these findings are based on samples that are exclusively (or nearly so) native-born respondents. We have no known studies that consider whether foreign-born Asian Americans similarly see themselves racially as a group that is superior to yet less warm than non-Asian minorities. We do know however that the racial discourse that produces the US model minority stereotype appears in parts of Asia as well. Kim's comparative study of South Koreans and Korean immigrants' understanding of American racial dynamics suggests that exposure to western media in Asian contexts informs foreign-born Asian Americans of the racial hierarchy which positions whites as the dominant group in American society, and non-whites as subordinate.[23]

Kim further argues however, that South Koreans have long held an ethnocentrist view that they are the hardest working peoples in the world (2006:395). Implicit in this observation is that while many Koreans recognize the white American "white/ non-white" hierarchy, they also have a competing racial sensibility ranking Koreans over and above others. Taken together, some Korean immigrants may readily accept the model minority stereotype as an explanation of their superior status among non-white minorities. In contrast,[24] find that Chinese high school students exhibit different responses to media exposure regarding African Americans. They find that when exposed to Chinese media of African Americans, their stereotypes were positive, whereas exposure to American media led to negative stereotypes of African Americans. The one commonality between Kim and Tan et al.'s study appears to be that western media

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[23] Nadia Y. Kim, "'Seoul-America' on America's 'Soul': South Koreans and Korean Immigrants Navigate Global White Racial Ideology," *Critical Sociology* 32, no. 2–3 (2006): 381–402; Nadia Y. Kim, *Imperial Citizens: Koreans and Race From Seoul to LA* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

[24] Alexis Tan et al., "Stereotypes of African Americans and Media Use Among Chinese High School Students" 20, no. 3 (2009): 260–275.

exposure reinforces antipathy toward African Americans. They differ on whether long-standing ethnocentrism or exposure to national (non-US) media results in antipathy or sympathy towards blacks.

Apart from western media exposure, contemporary foreign-born Asian Americans have also been exposed to a social context in which their ethnic group dominated everyday life as well as all major political and economic structures and social institutions. Much as whites take-for-granted their dominant presence in American culture and institutions, most foreign-born Asian Americans too experienced this for some period in their lives in their country of origin. They observed that leading institutional figures, media representations, and most of their social networks were composed of individuals who resemble them in features that become racialized when they immigrate. Whereas certain eye shapes, skin tones and hair colors are taken as the norm in their country of origin, Asian immigrants to the US observe differences in the norms of racialized appearance in their new social surroundings. As such, ethnocentric beliefs formed prior to migration likely resemble that of whites in the US. And given the continued high migration levels from Asia to the United States at the beginning of the 21st century, a considerable proportion of Asian Americans were likely socialized in contexts outside of the United States.[25]

Native-born Asian Americans in contrast were socialized primarily in the United States where they have always been part of the numerical minority and socially subordinate to whites. Social marginalization is taken-for-granted for many US-born Asian Americans. The repeated valorization of "Asian Americans" may engender a sense of ethnocentrism vis-à-vis the model minority stereotype. However, their socialization was not accompanied by the experience of institutional and cultural dominance like their foreign-born peers. This is particularly important with respect to media exposure in the US which often reflects the predominant stereotypes

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[25] In interviews with Chinese and Korean American young professionals, Pensri Ho (2003) found that the respondents' transpacific experiences in Asia and the US (among other characteristics) paradoxically hindered their ability to effectively embody success and inspired them at the same time.

of high competence and foreignness when portraying Asian Americans. Unlike foreign-born Asian Americans, the native status of US-born Asian Americans presents an identity dilemma where they are continually resisting impressions of foreignness. As shown earlier, the mixed reaction among Asian Americans regarding the model minority stereotype reflects different strategies to utilize this perception in order to overcome marginalization. Put together, ethnocentrism learned overseas, along with western media influence, and awareness of their subordinate position in white-dominated US society, we submit the following hypothesis:

> *H1: Due to primary socialization in same-ethnic-dominant environments, young foreign-born elite-college-attending Asian Americans will more likely accept the model minority stereotype compared to their native-born elite-college-attending Asian American counterparts.*

We limit our hypotheses and the remainder of this argument in light of the kind of data used in this study which we detail below. Our argument refers specifically to young elite-college-attending Asian Americans, both foreign-born and native-born. Given the congruence in attitudes about the model minority stereotype between whites and Asian Americans, we can draw on studies of whites' racial attitudes, specifically the attribution of racial inequalities based on perceived lack of individual effort of non-Asian minorities. Ho and Jackson (2001) showed that in studies of predominantly white respondents who believe in "positive" and "negative" dimensions of the model minority stereotype tend to affix responsibility for black racial inequalities in socioeconomic outcomes to the groups themselves. Assuming that Asian American acceptance of the stereotype does not vary from that of whites (as suggested by Chou and Feagin, 2008)[26] we hypothesize:

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[26] We found one study that disagrees with Ho and Jackson's study; Melody Manchi Chao et al., "The Model Minority as a Shared Reality and Its Implication for Interracial Perceptions," *Asian American Journal of Psychology* 3 (2012): 1–13, doi:10.1037/a0028769. found that while both Asian and white respondents in their study accepted the model minority stereotype, they found that exposure to the stereotype did not change perceived social distance toward African Americans among the Asian American respondents.

H2: Young elite-college-attending Asian American acceptance to the model minority myth will be positively associated with agreement to individualistic explanations for African American inequalities.

Earlier we noted native-born Asian American awareness of marginality. Indeed one might argue that this marginality is so acute that for those who accept to the model minority stereotype, they will more likely affix individual responsibility for racial inequalities. Thus we propose a hypothesis that suggests an interactive effect:

H3: Due to greater exposure to the racialized climate of the US, the effects of acceptance to the model minority stereotype on individualistic beliefs about African Americans will be stronger for young native-born elite-college-attending Asian Americans compared to foreign-born elite-college-attending Asian Americans.

We test these hypotheses using the only known survey with the appropriate questions for addressing these proposed relationships among Asian Americans.

Data and Methods
We utilize the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen (NLSF), a large survey of respondents from 27 prestigious colleges and universities with oversamples of Asian Americans and other minority groups. Given the colleges and universities included in the survey we limit our argument with reference to young elite college freshmen (see Appendix A for a list of the colleges included in the survey and Massey et al. (2002) for further elaboration of the sample and survey). For the purposes of our study on Asian American attitudes we limit our use of the data to the Asian American subsample. The aim of the NLSF was to identify the influencing factors of student achievement among this sample of high-achieving young men and women. It also included a number of questions about social attitudes and behaviors, particularly on group relations prior to and during their years in college. We focus specifically on the first-wave of the study

conducted in the fall of the first year of the respondents. Our findings therefore are more correlational than causal.[27]

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics		
	Mean	**Coding and Range**
Blacks Need to Try Harder	4.163	0 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree
Independent Variables		
Perceived Competence		
Asians		
Work Ethic	5.255	1= Lazy, 7=Hard-Working
Intelligence	5.145	1=Unintelligent, 7=Intelligent
Perseverance	5.268	1=Gives Up Easily, 7=Sticks with Tasks
(A) AsAm scale	15.674	3 to 21
Blacks and Hispanics		
Work Ethic	4.158	1= Lazy, 7=Hard-Working
Intelligence	4.204	1=Unintelligent, 7=Intelligent
Perseverance	4.277	1=Gives Up Easily, 2=Sticks with Tasks
(B) Non-AsAm scale		3 to 21
AsAm Perceived Competence (A-B)	3.022	-8.5 to 13.5, 0= same opinion of Asians, Blacks, Hispanics
Perceived Coldness		
Asians		
Ease of Relatability	4.823	1 = Difficult to Get Along, 7 = Easy to Get Along
Blacks and Hispanics		
Ease of Relatability	4.592	1 = Difficult to Get Along, 7 = Easy to Get Along
AsAm Perceived Warmth	0.235	-4.5 to 4.0, 0= Equal Relatability of Asians, Blacks, Hispanics
Foreign-Born	0.310	0 = Native-Born, 1 = Foreign-Born
Demographic Controls		
Gender (Female)	0.565	1 = Female
Parental Educ. Attainment		
No College Grad.	0.156	1 = No Parent College Graduate
One Parent College Grad.	0.096	1 = One Parent College Grad
Both Parents College Grads.	0.161	1 = Both Parents College Grad.
One Parent Advanced Degree	0.317	1 = One Parent Advanced Degree
Both Parents Advanced Degrees	0.270	1 = Both Parents Adv. Degrees
Household Income	0.577	1 = >$75,000
H.S. Racial Composition		
Percent Black	12.364	0 to 90 Percent
Logged Black	1.951	0=0% Black 4.5= 100% Black
Percent Asian	17.233	0 to 100 Percent

Logged Asian	2.361	0=0% Asian 4.65= 100% Asian
Racial Friendship Composition		
More than 1 Black Friend	0.139	1= More than One Black Friend
More than 1 Asian Friend	0.690	1= More than One Asian Friend

[a] Survey question reads: "Many African Americans have only themselves to blame for not doing better in life. If they tried harder they would do better."

Dependent Variable

Our study revolves around how young elite Asian-Americans perceive black inequality, and in order to determine these attitudes, we examine the respondents' level of agreement with the following statement: "Many African Americans have only themselves to blame for not doing better in life. If they tried harder they would do better." Respondents were provided with an eleven point scale ranging from 0 (Strongly Disagree) to 10 (Strongly Agree). The responses of young elite Asian-Americans to this question have a normal distribution with a mean of 4.16 for this individualist explanation of black inequality, as seen in Table 1.

Independent Variables: Asian American Model Minority Stereotype and Nativity

Our primary variables of interest, the model minority stereotype, is comprised of four questions, three form a scale measuring perceived competence, and the fourth measures perceived warmth. Respondents were asked to rate their perception of several sets of stereotyped characteristics for whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. For example, the following question was asked of every person: "the second set of characteristics asks if people in the group tend to be lazy or they tend to be hardworking." The following three characteristics on the survey are commonly associated with the Asian-American model minority stereotype pertaining to perceived competence: work ethic (1= lazy, 7 = hard-working), perceived intelligence (1= unintelligent, 7 = intelligent), and perseverance (1= give up easily, 7 = sticks to tasks). We created a scale ranging from 3 to 21 using these three characteristics with a Cronbach's of 0.67. The fourth characteristic is utilized to measure the perceived warmth of Asian Americans, which is a scale ranging from 1 (hard to get along with) to 7 (easy to get along with). The model minority stereotype

assumes a greater social distance and perceived foreignness of Asian Americans. Consequently if acceptance of the model minority stereotype is associated with greater acceptance of individualistic explanations of black inequality, then perceived lack of warmth of Asian Americans should be correlated with greater anti-black individualism.

While the perceived competence and warmth of Asian Americans are both revealing in and of themselves, recent racial stratification literature contends that it is necessary to understand the perceptions of racial minorities in relation to each other (Bonilla-Silva 2004). This is particularly important with regard to the model minority myth which asserts valorization and ostracism *relative* to other groups. To this end, we utilized the same measures of competence and warmth for blacks and Latinos and took the mean values of each groups. We then took the differences of scores for perceptions for blacks and Latinos from the perception of Asian Americans in order to determine the perceptions of Asian Americans relative to other minorities, as suggested by the model minority stereotype. Our initial results imply that young elite Asian Americans perceive Asian Americans as more competent than other minorities based on the three previously mentioned characteristics of competence. The resulting scales of competence have a mean of 15.67 for Asian Americans and 12.64 for blacks and Latinos (Cronbach's = 0.67),[28] as seen in Table 1. The differences of these two scales range from -6.5 to 13.0, and it has a mean of 3.02 where a score of 0 indicates that respondents perceive Asians the same as they do blacks and Latinos. Furthermore, a negative score indicates that respondents view blacks and Latinos as more competent than

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[27] The respondents were identified based on the selected colleges and universities that agreed to participate in the survey; however respondents did not matriculate from the same high schools. Thus while some studies using this dataset account for clustering within universities, our use of the sample reflects their experiences just prior to full participation in their higher education institution. The potential effects to exposure to the campus social and academic climate are minimal.

[28] The individual mean of African-Americans is 12.75, while the mean for Hispanics is 12.52.

Asians, while a positive score means that Asians are perceived as more competent than blacks and Latinos.

We constructed a similar scale for perceived warmth to perceived competence by taking the difference of black and Latino warmth from Asian American warmth. Table 1 reveals that the mean perception of Asian American warmth is 4.82, while the mean perception of black and Latino warmth is 4.59.[29] Therefore, this sample of young elite Asian Americans perceive Asian Americans as slightly warmer than black and Latinos. While some Asian Americans view themselves as relatively cold, the majority of view themselves as relatively warmer than other minority groups. This finding illustrates the importance of relative group comparisons. Previous studies tend to focus solely on the perceived warmth of the primary group in question; however, more recent theorizing contends that cognitive mapping of group stereotyping is better understood through relative comparisons. Following Xu and Lee (2013) we find mixed support for perceived competence and warmth as unique characteristics of the model minority stereotype, and we add to their findings by examining the perceptions of Asian Americans themselves.

Since we focus on the perceptions of Asian Americans, we also test whether or not the respondent's nativity impacts their attitudes towards black inequality, and if the model minority stereotype is more salient for respondents based on whether or not they are foreign-born. We measure nativity using a dichotomous variable where 0 = native-born and 1 = foreign-born.

Control Variables

Previous studies contend that social networks are integral in assessing attitudes about racial inequality[30]. We control for racial networks in

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[29] The individual means for perceived difficulty in getting along with Blacks is 4.61 and 4.56 in getting along with Latinos.

[30] Kristin Davies et al., "Cross-Group Friendships and Intergroup Attitudes: A Meta-Analytic Review," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 15, no. 4 (2011): 332–351, doi:10.1177/1088868311411103; Jeffrey C. Dixon and Michael S. Rosenbaum, "Nice to Know You? Testing Contact, Cultural, and Group Threat Theories of Anti-Black and Anti-Hispanic Stereotypes," *Social Science Quarterly* 85 (2004): 257–280; Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, "A Meta-Analytic Test of

two ways: the racial composition of the respondents' high schools, which they attended a few months prior to taking the survey and the racial composition of their friendship networks. The racial compositions of the respondents' high schools come from the respondents self-reporting the percentage of the four major racial groups within their high school. We control for the percentage of Asian Americans and blacks in the respondents' high schools. We log transformed these variables creating a normal distribution since these percentages are positively skewed. Respondents were asked to identify the race of their ten closest friends. The responses to this identification were bifurcated so that 0 = one or no friends of that race, and 1 = at least two friends of that race. Splitting the racial composition of the respondents' friends helps elucidate whether or not the respondents have a network of different-race friends as opposed to no friends or merely a symbolic or token friendship.[31]

We also control for several demographic measures often associated with attitudes towards inequality. These include gender (female = 1), household income (1 = more than $75,000) and the educational attainment level of the respondents' parents. Mother's and father's education are measured separately with an ordinal scale of their highest attainment ranging from 1 (grade school) to 7 (graduate or professional degree). Following Massey and colleagues we created the following series of binary variables from these two measures: neither parent graduated from college, one parent graduated from college, both parents graduated, one parent with an advanced degree, and both parents advanced degrees. [32] In all subsequent analyses "neither parent graduated from college" serves as the contrast group.

Intergroup Contact Theory," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90 (2006): 751–783.

[31] Mary R. Jackman and Marie Crane, "'Some of My Best Friends Are Black...': Interracial Friendship and Whites' Racial Attitudes," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50 (1986): 459–486.

[32] Douglas S. Massey et al., "Black Immigrants and Black Natives Attending Selective Colleges and Universities in the United States," *American Journal of Education* 113, no. 2 (2007): 243–271.

Results

Table 2 provides a preliminary assessment of the relationship between nativity status and holding to the model minority stereotypes and individualistic attitudes about black inequality. Surprisingly, there is no bivariate differences between foreign-born and native-born Asian Americans in adhering to the model minority myth. Thus, we fail to find support for H1. Asian Americans, regardless of nativity are slightly more likely to view Asian Americans as warmer than blacks and Latinos, and they perceive Asian Americans as more competent than blacks and Latinos. While there are no differences in nativity status and ascribing to the model minority myth, foreign-born Asian-Americans are more likely to attribute black inequality to individualistic explanations compared to native-born Asian Americans (see Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison of Means by Foreign-Born Status

	Foreign-Born	Native-Born
Asian American Warmth Scale	0.346	0.187†
Asian American Competency Scale	3.081	3.007
Blacks Need to Try Harder[a]	4.628	3.953***
N	290	645

***p ≤ .001 **p ≤ .01 *p ≤ .05 †p ≤ .10

[a] Survey question reads: "Many African Americans have only themselves to blame for not doing better in life. If they tried harder they would do better."

In Table 3 we present step-wise ordinary least square models predicting Asian American individualist explanations for African American inequality. Model 1 examines the relationship between demographic background and racial composition characteristics with individualistic attitudes for black inequality. Females are less likely to ascribe individualistic explanations for black inequality than males. Similarly, young elite Asian Americans with at least one parent with a graduate degree are less likely to attribute black inequality to individualistic attitudes. Interestingly, Model 1 reveals that the percentage of black students in the high schools of young elite Asian Americans is positively correlated with individualistic explanations for black inequality. In other words, amongst this sample of elite

Asian-Americans, those who attended high school with a large proportion of black students are more likely to believe that black inequality is the result of a lack of effort than those who attended high schools with a smaller black population.

Model 2 retains the same variables in Model 1, and introduces the two measures of the model minority stereotype: perceived warmth and competence. Both of these measures of the model minority stereotype are positively correlated with attributing individualistic explanations to black inequality, and perceived competence is the strongest predictor in the model (beta = 0.158). Both gender and parents' educational attainment remain significant in predicting whether or not young elite Asian Americans believe that blacks need to try to harder to do better. However, once we control for the two elements of the model minority stereotype, the effects of high school composition become non-significant implying that the model minority stereotype mediates the effects of high school black racial composition.[33] Model 2 provides support for H2.

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[33] Reuben M. Baron and David Kenny, "The Moderator-Mediator Variable Distinction in Social Psychological Research: Conceptual, Strategic, and Statistical Considerations," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 51 (1986): 1173–1182.

Table 3: OLS Regression of Blacks Need to Try Harder on the Model Minority Myth and Religious and Demographic Controls for Elite Asian American Freshmen

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	b	Beta	b	Beta	b	Beta	b	Beta
Intercept	4.481***		4.093***		3.862***		3.655***	
Demographic Controls								
Female	-0.643***	-0.116	-0.585**	-0.105	-0.584**	-0.105	-0.575**	-0.104
Household Income	-0.248	-0.045	-0.222	-0.040	-0.165	-0.030	-0.175	-0.031
Parent's Education								
One Parent College Graduate	0.089	0.010	0.103	0.011	0.148	0.016	0.165	0.018
Both Parents College Graduates	0.199	0.027	0.146	0.020	0.150	0.020	0.213	0.029
One Parent Advanced Degree	-0.590*	-0.100	-0.614*	-0.104	-0.571	-0.097	-0.534	-0.091
Both Parents Advanced Degrees	-0.852**	-0.137	-0.853*	-0.136	-0.811*	-0.129	-0.783*	-0.125
High School Racial Composition								
Percent black in H.S.[a]	0.170*	0.070	0.136	0.056	0.144	0.059	0.151	0.062
Percent Asian in H.S.[a]	-0.010	-0.004	-0.010	-0.004	-0.008	-0.003	0.008	0.003
Racial Friendship Composition								
Black Friend	-0.040	-0.005	0.081	0.010	0.040	0.005	0.053	0.007
Asian Friend	0.323	0.055	0.256	0.043	0.260	0.044	0.257	0.043
Model Minority Myth scales								
AsAm Warmth Scale			0.143*	0.065	0.132	0.059	0.090	0.041
AsAm Competency Scale			0.137***	0.158	0.139***	0.160	0.183***	0.210
Foreign-born					0.471*	0.079	0.895**	0.150
Foreign-born * Warmth							0.135	0.038
Foreign-born * Competency							-0.149*	-0.123
r-squared	0.0544		0.0877		0.0944		0.1003	
N	896		880		879		879	

***p≤001 **p≤01 *p≤05
[a] Variable is log transformed
Source: NLSF(1998)

Model 3 includes whether or not the respondent is foreign-born and reveals that foreign-born young elite Asian Americans are more likely to accept individualistic attitudes of black inequality. In this model, perceptions about Asian American relatability are no longer significantly correlated with attitudes towards black inequality. The interaction between nativity and the two components of the model minority myth are presented in Model 4. This model reveals no significant interaction between the perceived warmth of Asian Americans and foreign-born status. However, it does find a significant interaction between foreign-born status and the perceived

competency of Asian Americans. While both ascribing to the competency component of the model minority myth and being foreign-born are positively correlated with individualistic attitudes of black inequality, the effects of the model minority myth are more salient amongst native-born Asian-Americans. This interaction reveals two observations. Foreign-born Asian Americans are more likely to hold individualistic explanations of black inequality overall. Second, native-born Asian Americans who believe that Asian Americans are more competent than blacks and Latinos, are much more likely to ascribe anti-black individualistic explanations than foreign-born Asian Americans. Figure 1 illustrates this interaction effect. Holding to the competency component of the model minority myth is positively correlated with holding individualistic attitudes concerning black inequality for both foreign and native-born Asian-Americans; this effect is stronger for native-born individuals as seen in the steeper slope. The crossover point occurs beyond the first third of the competency scale which indicates that higher commitment to the model minority stereotype among native-born Asian Americans (compared to their foreign-born counterparts) plays a stronger role in their beliefs that lack of effort is the cause of black inequality. We find support for Hypothesis 3.
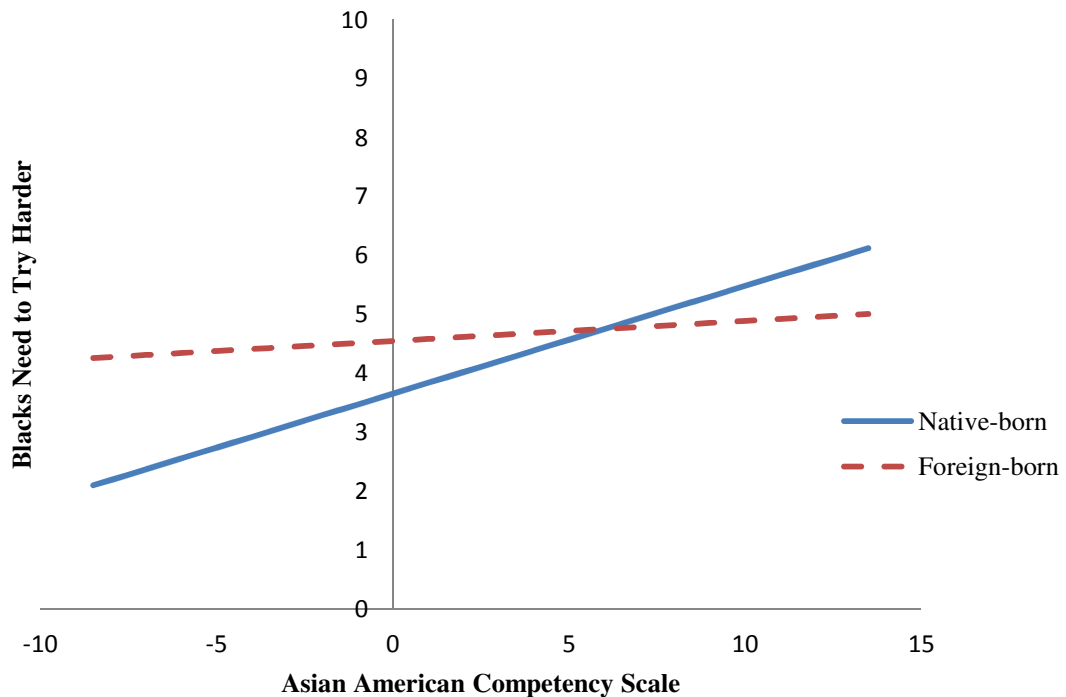
[SPACE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK]

Figure 1: Interaction of Perceived Asian American Competence and Nativity on Anti-Black Individualism

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study we examined the role of nativity, and its relationship with the model minority stereotype among Asian Americans by examining survey responses from a sample of elite college freshmen. We were unable to support the hypothesis that foreign-born Asian Americans have a greater acceptance to the model minority stereotype. Perhaps this suggests that the racialized climate in the US mitigates the potential effects of exposure to a social context in which a respondent's particular ethnic group dominated. Since nativity did not vary the extent to which different Asian Americans accepted the model minority stereotype, we were not surprised that the second hypothesis was confirmed. Young elite Asian Americans on average perceive that Asian Americans are more competent than

non-Asian minorities. In distinction from other studies that examine the views of whites, we find that Asian Americans rate themselves as more warm or "easier to get along with" relative to non-Asian minorities. This stands apart from earlier studies where Asian Americans are usually perceived as more cold relative to other groups. But as mentioned earlier, those studies rely on responses from mainly white samples. In our study, Asian Americans likely view themselves as the ingroup, and thus we should not be surprised that they view themselves more warmly than other minorities. This is an important illustration of the importance of survey sampling of Asian Americans who hold different evaluations of themselves in some respect relative to others. Ingroup solidarity seems to explain greater perceived warmth regardless of the stereotype's emphasis on the foreignness or outsider-ness of Asian Americans.

Most intriguing was the finding regarding our last hypothesis which predicted a possible interactive effect between nativity and acceptance to the model minority stereotype. We found that while our sample of young elite-college-attending foreign-born Asian Americans were more likely to accept anti-black individualistic explanations on African American inequalities, native-born Asian Americans' acceptance of the model minority stereotype had a more pronounced effect on those same explanations toward African Americans. We suggest that this might resemble a "choose-a-side" cognitive strategy. That is, young, elite-college-attending native-born Asian Americans lack the experience of majority and dominant status which may produce less racial animus toward other minorities due to a sense of solidarity with other minorities. But for the few young elite-college-attending native-born Asian Americans who have strong commitment to the stereotype (about 16 percent of our sample), their views toward other minorities mirrors the dominant group. Not only do they believe that Asian Americans are the model minority, they are more likely to denigrate non-Asian American minorities by blaming them for racial inequalities. Native-born Asian Americans are "choosing sides" more extremely (less hostile and more hostile) than the foreign-born. As minorities "in the middle", the Asian American cognitive map suggests a tug-of-war, and it is more keenly experienced by the native-born relative to the foreign-born.

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There are several limitations to this study that call for further investigation. Our sample is limited to a high status group of young adult Asian Americans. We cannot evaluate whether young Asian Americans who are not attending college perceive these differences in the same way. Given the schools surveyed in the NLSF the type of Asian Americans to which our study refers likely does not include refugees, those limited in English fluency, or those from impoverished neighborhoods and schools lacking in the cultural and social capital needed for entrance into these colleges and universities. Future research should consider these and other social and demographic characteristics that may also affect the likelihood of accepting the model minority stereotype and its relationship to attitudes about other racial groups.

Further while secondary school and college environments are often ripe opportunities to establish ties across racial groups, perhaps other opportunities arise for Asian Americans in the workplace and other social contexts (e.g. religious, political and civic groups). [34] Exposure to these other potentially mixed-race environments may increase the likelihood of greater interracial contact with African Americans which in turn might mitigate some of the effect of acceptance to the model minority stereotype. Some research suggests that conservative Protestant ideology emphasizes individualism to such an extent that it too serves to reinforce belief that racial inequalities are a function solely to non-structural conditions (e.g. lack of will, "culture") [35] Future research should also consider identifying conservative Protestant affiliation in conjunction with model minority affiliation.

Of the limited research on the study of Asian American acceptance of the model minority stereotype, persistence of the myth

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[34] Davies et al., "Cross-Group Friendships and Intergroup Attitudes: A Meta-Analytic Review."

[35] Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided By Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Penny Edgell and Eric Tranby, "Religious Influences on Understandings of Racial Inequality in the United States," *Social Problems* 54 (2007): 263–288.

itself into the 21st century is unquestioned. The implications of acceptance to this belief on group relations and prejudicial attitudes toward non-Asian minorities are also evident. We find that young elite Asian Americans, both foreign-born and native-born are not silent observers of racial politics and some fall prey to the very stereotypes that marginalize them. Addressing acceptance of this myth requires not only knowing what white Americans believe about minority groups, but what different minority groups believe about one another and how their own identities are shaped by acceptance and resistance to the stereotypes made about the group(s) they call their own. In so doing, we come to a better understanding not only of racial group relations, but of social identity and the mechanisms that impede greater equality for all.

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Appendix: NLSF Colleges and Universities

Barnard College	Smith College
Bryn Mawr College	Stanford University
Columbia University	Swarthmore College
Denison College	Tufts University
Emory University	Tulane University
Georgetown University	University of California, Berkeley
Howard University	University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
Kenyon College	University of Notre Dame
Miami University	University of Pennsylvania
Northwestern University	Washington University
Oberlin College	Wesleyan University
Penn State University	Williams College
Princeton University	Yale University
Rice University	

HBCU schools excluded from these analyses.