

Model Minority Myth – Asian Americans

According to [Gordon H. Chang](#), the reference to Asian Americans as model minorities has to do with the [work ethic](#), respect for elders, and high valuation of education, family and elders present in their cultures.^[59] The model minority stereotype also comes with an underlying notion of their apoliticality. Such a label one-dimensionalizes Asian Americans as having only traits based around stereotypes and no other human qualities, such as vocal leadership, negative emotions (e.g. anger or sadness), sociopolitical activeness, risk taking, ability to learn from mistakes, desire for creative expression, intolerance towards oppression or being overlooked of their acknowledgements and successes.^[59] Asian Americans are labeled as model minorities because they have not been as much of a "threat" to the U.S. political establishment as blacks, due to a smaller population and less political advocacy.^[59] This label seeks to suppress potential political activism through [euphemistic](#) stereotyping.^[59]

Another effect of the stereotype is that American society may tend to ignore the racism and discrimination Asian Americans still face. Complaints are dismissed with the claim that the racism which occurs to Asian Americans is less important than or not as bad as the racism faced by other minority races, thus establishing a systematic [racial hierarchy](#). Believing that due to their success and that they possess so-called "positive" stereotypes, many^[who?] assume they face no forms of racial discrimination or social issues in the greater American society, and that their community is fine, having "gained" social and economic equality.^{[60][61][62]}

Racial discrimination can take subtle forms such as through [microaggression](#). The stereotyping of Asian Americans as a model minority and perfidious foreigner influences people's perceptions and attitudes towards Asians^[63] and also negatively affects students' academic outcomes, relationships with others, and psychological adjustments. For instance, discrimination and model minority stereotyping are linked to Asian American students' lower valuing of school, lower self-esteem, and higher depressive symptoms.^[64] Furthermore, the psychological distress of failing to meet the model minority image, such as feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, shame, and embarrassment, is exacerbated due to the differential treatment associated with being stereotyped as a model minority and [perpetual foreigner](#).

Furthermore, the model minority image can be a threat to underachieving Asian American students' academic experience and educational advancement. It promotes invisibility and disguises the academic barriers and psychological problems students may encounter. This is problematic because it creates a barrier for educators to better understand and assist struggling students' educational and mental health needs in order to optimize students' academic experience and social emotional development.

Asian Americans may also be commonly stereotyped by the general public as being studious, intelligent, successful, elitist, brand name conscious, yet paradoxically passive. As a result, Asian Americans have felt as though they have higher and unreasonable expectations due to their race.^[65] Also due to the model minority image, Asian American students are viewed as "problem-free" and academically competent students who can succeed with little support and without special services.^[66] This emphasis that Asian Americans are being denied by their racial reality because of the assumption that "Asians are the new Whites"; therefore, they are being dismissed by their intelligence and experiences.^[67] Thus, educators may overlook the instructional needs and psychological concerns of underachieving Asian American students. The model minority stereotype can also contribute to teachers' having a "blaming the victims" perspective. This means that teachers blame students, their culture, or their families for students' poor performance or misbehavior in school. This is problematic because it shifts responsibility away from schools and teachers and misdirects attention away from finding a solution to improve students' learning experience and alleviate the situation. Furthermore, the model minority stereotype has a negative impact on the home environment. Parents' expectations place high pressure on students to achieve, creating a stressful, school-like home environment. Parents' expressed worry and frustration can also place emotional burdens and psychological stress on students.^[66]

Another result of Asian American's regarded as a model minority is limiting the amount of accepted applicants to certain colleges.^[68]

Some educators hold Asian students to a higher standard.^[18] This deprives those students with [learning disabilities](#) from being given attention that they need. The connotations of being a model minority mean Asian students are often labeled with the unpopular "[nerd](#)" or "geek" image.^{[18]:223} Asians have been the target of harassment, [bullying](#), and racism from other races due to the racially divisive model minority stereotype.^{[69]:165} The higher expectations placed on East Asians as a result of the model minority stereotype carries over from academics to the workplace.^[18]

The model minority stereotype is emotionally damaging to many Asian Americans since there are unjustified expectations to live up to stereotypes of high achievement. The pressures from their families to achieve and live up to the model minority image have taken a tremendous mental and psychological toll on young Asian Americans.^{[70][71]} The model minority stereotype also influences Asian American students' psychological outcomes and academic experience. The model minority image can lead underachieving Asian American students to minimize their own difficulties and experience anxiety or psychological distress about their academic difficulties. Asian American students also have more negative attitudes toward seeking academic or

psychological help^[72] due to fear of shattering the high expectations of teachers, parents, and classmates.^[73]

Overall, the model minority stereotype has negative effects on underachieving Asian students in both their home and school settings. It is a threat to Asian American students' academic experience and can disguise students' educational and mental health needs. Psychological distress from model minority stereotyping is related to the stressors associated with the pressure to succeed, differential treatment, and embarrassment or shame to seek help. With this information, a recommendation for schools is to promote a more inclusive and less competitive learning environment, so students will not be ashamed and afraid to ask for help. Administrators can also improve school climate by monitoring incidents of racial harassment and discrimination. Additionally, to better address struggling students' educational and mental health needs, educators can regularly check in with students and engage in culturally responsive teaching, aimed to understand students' unique circumstances and educational needs.

The most highly educated group of Asian immigrants are Taiwanese.^[41] Education rates of Southeast Asians are low, but these numbers can be considered misleading, as a large percent comes from adult immigrants who came to the United States without any college education due to war. For ages 25 to 34, 45% of [Vietnamese Americans](#) have a [bachelor's degree](#) or higher compared to 39% of [Non-Hispanic Whites](#).^[42]

Due to the impacts of the model minority stereotype, unlike other [minority-serving institutions](#), [Asian American Pacific Islander](#)-serving institutions (AAPISI) did not receive federal recognition until 2007, with the passage of the *College Cost Reduction and Access Act*, which federally recognized the existence of AAPISIs, making them eligible for federal funding and designation as minority serving institutions.^[43] According to the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#)'s 2003 report *Crime in the United States*, Asian Americans have the lowest total arrest rates^[44] despite a younger average age, and high family stability.^[45]

The concept of a model minority is heavily associated with [U.S. culture](#), because it is not extensively used outside of the United States. A [common misconception](#) is that the affected communities typically take pride in being [labeled](#) as a model minority. However, the model minority [stereotype](#) is considered detrimental to relevant minority communities because it is used to justify the exclusion of such groups in the distribution of (public and private) assistance programs, and it is also used to understate or slight the achievements of individuals within that minority. Furthermore, the notion of the model minority pits [minority groups](#) against one another through the implication that non-model groups are at fault for falling short of the model

minority level of achievement and assimilation.^[7] The concept has been criticized by outlets such as [NPR](#) and [EU Scream](#) for potentially [homogenizing](#) the experiences of Asian communities on one side and [Hispanics](#) and [African Americans](#) on the other, despite the fact that individual groups experience [racism](#) in different ways.^{[8][9]} Critics also argue that the idea perpetuates the belief that any minority has the capability to economically rise without assistance because it ignores the differences between the [history of Asian Americans](#) and the [history of African Americans](#), as well as [the history of Hispanics](#), in the United States.^[10]