2017

Special Issue Editor's Introduction: 50 Years of Model Minority Stereotype Research

Nicholas Daniel Hartlep

Metropolitan State University, nicholas.hartlep@metrostate.edu

50 Years of Model Minority Stereotype Research

Dr. Nicholas D. Hartlep

Metropolitan State University

Follow this and additional works at: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/jsaaea

Part of the Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons, and the Higher Education Commons

Recommended Citation

DOI: 10.7771/2153-8999.1160
Available at: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/jsaaea/vol12/iss2/5

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
Special Issue Editor’s Introduction

Since 1966, William Petersen’s New York Times Magazine article “Success Story: Japanese American Style” has been cited as the scholarly progenitor of the model minority stereotype.\(^1\) However, as Wu (2016) points out in her book The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of Model Minority, “The field [Asian American Studies] ironically has crafted its own mythology of the model minority by insisting that the stereotype originated as an imposition on Asian Americans by others, particularly a handful of mainline journalists and social scientists” (p. 255). Wu’s historical analysis is informative to my research, and like her, I’ve devoted a considerable amount of my time to studying the model minority stereotype. My understanding is that my book The Model Minority Stereotype: Demystifying Asian American Success is the only published annotated bibliography on the topic, and my website, “The Model Minority Stereotype Project” likewise, is the only dedicated webpage to the subject.

Scholars must read one another’s work for ideas to proliferate, for scholars to coalesce, and for paradigms to shift. The more that I read emergent scholarship on the model minority myth (e.g., see Gin, Ho, Martinez, Murakami, & Wu, 2017; Hsu, 2015; Phruksachart, 2016; Tran & Curtin, 2017), and the more that I reflect upon the existing literature, I am left awestruck in how creative and advanced this scholarship has become. From my perspective, research that challenges the model minority myth is important because it continues to influence future possibilities.

This special issue, intentionally focused on Southeast Asian Americans and the model minority myth, is important because Southeast Asian Americans have been “politically invisible” (Wagner, 2016) and because although “an impressive number of Americans whose ancestors are from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam (“Southeast Asian Americans”) have achieved tremendous success in education, a disproportionate number have found it difficult to succeed academically” (Yang, 2014, p. 51).

In 2015, I co-edited Killing the Model Minority Stereotype: Asian American Counterstories and Complicity with Bradley Porfilio. Part IV of the book highlighted considerations when conducting research on the model minority stereotype. Three chapters in this section of the book stand out in my mind: Grant Morgan and Kari Hodge’s two chapters: “A Primer on Research
Validity for Conducting Quantitative Studies of the Model Minority Stereotype” and “Statistical Procedures for Addressing Research Fallacies Such as the Model Minority Stereotype” and Grant Morgan, Kari Hodge, and my chapter “An Asian American Subgroup Analysis of the Restricted-Use ELS: 2002 Dataset: Mixture Modeling as a Way to Problematize the Asian American ‘Model Minority’ Stereotype.” These chapters, collectively, shared statistical and methodological considerations for combatting the deleterious stereotype, something existing scholarship hadn’t explicitly done. The volume also centered what Wu (2016) mentioned in The Color of Success: that the field can be self-fulfilling in propping up—not problematizing—the stereotype.

Although Petersen was not really the sole progenitor of Asian Americans becoming America’s model minorities, he is treated as such. This special issue commemorates the unofficial 50-year anniversary of the model minority stereotype, as measured by Petersen’s (1966) New York Times Magazine publication. This special issue contains articles that add to model minority stereotype knowledge to be sure, but I also encourage readers of this issue to visit “The Model Minority Stereotype Project” (MMSP) webpage, which I curate, for more resources on the subject.

According to Wu (2016), “For Asian Americans, then, the challenge has become how to live beyond the model minority, how to navigate the world day to day without being constrained by such expectations” (p. 255). I would add, as other scholars have (e.g., see Poon, Squire, Kodama, Byrd, & Chan, 2016), that while “opposing” the model minority stereotype is important, so too is identifying what it means to be an Asian American in a post-truth era marked by President Trump’s incessant use of the term “fake news.” The stakes are high for education in an era of disintegrating truths. It was Trump himself who said that he “loves the poorly educated.”

Asian Americans are not passive people. The model minority stereotype didn’t develop only because journalists made them out to be models or exemplars. Although the model minority stereotype is fake, it’s been useful for those in power and even at times, some wealthier more privileged Asian Americans. The articles in this special issue are important, timely, and original. Collectively, the authors offer the field new material that can be used to propose and crystallize post-model minority futures for Asian Americans and society globally.

In closing, I’d like to publicly say that I am deeply appreciative of Dr. Wayne E. Wright who allowed me to guest edit this issue. Dr. Wright, it took a bit longer than planned, but thank you for your involvement in the process, and the support that it took to close out the project. Thanks go to Sung-ae Kim for typesetting the issue. I also would like to thank the reviewers who helped strengthen the articles. They are:

René Antrop-González, Ph.D.
Metropolitan State University

Paul Spies, Ph.D.
Metropolitan State University

Rachel Endo, Ph.D.
University of Washington Tacoma

Christopher Vang, Ph.D.
California State University, Stanislaus
Vichet Chuuon, Ph.D.
University of Minnesota. Twin Cities

Gilbert Park, Ph.D.
Ball State University

Wayne E. Wright, Ph.D.
Purdue University

Endnotes

1. Searching Google Scholar “Success Story: Japanese American Style” indicates that this New York Times Magazine article has been cited 469 times.
2. The Model Minority Stereotype Project (MMSP) can be accessed at www.nicholashartlep.com
3. See Trump’s Nevada speech here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vpdt7omPoa0

References


Morgan, G. B., & Hodge, K. J. (2015). Statistical procedures for addressing research fallacies such as the model minority stereotype. In N. D. Hartlep & B. J. Porfilio (Eds.), Killing the model minority stereotype: Asian American counterstories and complicity (pp. 311–333). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.


About the Editor

Dr. Hien Duc Do
San Jose State University

Dr. Sophal Ear
Occidental College

Dr. Virak Chan
University of Texas at San Antonio

Dr. Nancy H. Hörnberger
University of Pennsylvania

Dr. Peter Nien-Chu Kiang
University of Massachusetts, Boston

Dr. Ha Lam
Eastern Mennonite University

Dr. Jonathan H. X. Lee
San Francisco State University

Dr. Monirith Ly
Royal University of Phnom Penh

Dr. Bic Ngo
University of Minnesota

Dr. Leakhena Nou
California State University, Long Beach

Dr. Mark Pfeifer
SUNY Institute of Technology

Dr. Loan T. Phan
University of New Hampshire

Dr. Kalyani Rai
University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Dr. Cathy J. Schlund-Vials
University of Connecticut, Storrs

Dr. Nancy J. Smith-Hefner
Boston University

Dr. Yer J. Thao
Portland State University

Dr. Monica M. Trieu
Purdue University

Dr. Silvy Un
Saint Paul Public Schools

Dr. Terrence G. Wiley
Center for Applied Linguistics

Dr. Changming Duan
University of Missouri, Kansas City

Dr. Sothy Eng
Lehigh University

Dr. Zha Blong Xiong
University of Minnesota

Dr. Peter Tan Keo
New York University

Dr. Kevin K. Kumashiro
University of San Francisco

Dr. Ravy Lao
California State University, Los Angeles

Dr. Stacey Lee
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Dr. Sue Needham
California State University, Dominguez Hills

Dr. Max Niedzwiecki
Daylight Consulting Group

Dr. Clara Park
California State University, Northridge

Dr. Giang Pham
University of Massachusetts

Dr. Karen Quintiliani
California State University, Long Beach

Dr. Phala Chea
Lowell Public Schools

Dr. Fay Shin
California State University, Long Beach

Dr. Christine Su
Ohio University

Dr. Alisia Tran
Arizona State University

Dr. Khatharya Um
University of California, Berkeley

Dr. Linda Trinh Vo
University of California, Irvine

Dr. Yang Sao Xiong
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Doctoral Student Editorial Review Board

Anna H. Yang
University of Georgia

Dung Minh Mao
University of Minnesota

Annie BichLoan Duong
San Joaquin County Office of Education

Thien-Huong Ninh
University of Southern California

Hoa Nha Nguyen
Boston College

Krissyvan Truong
Claremont Graduate University

Malaphone Phommasa
Marshall University

Soua Xiong
San Diego State University & Claremont Graduate University

Molly Wiebie
The University of Texas at Austin