2003

Model minority deviance : Asian Americans in juvenile hall

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.fwnw-s8df>
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MODEL MINORITY DEVIANCE:
ASIAN AMERICANS IN JUVENILE HALL

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Elementary Education
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Jane Ann Le

May 2003

UMI Number: 1415720

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ABSTRACT

MODEL MINORITY DEVIANCE: ASIAN AMERICANS IN JUVENILE HALL

By Jane Ann Le

This thesis addresses the topic of model minority deviance. It first examines the historical development of the model minority image, in which Asian Americans are homogenized as economically and academically successful. The study then provides a counter image using the narratives of model minority deviants (i.e., Asian Americans in juvenile hall). The primary focus of this study is to translate the life experiences of Asian Americans in juvenile hall and their perceptions of the model minority stereotype. Twenty-eight (27 boys and 1 girl) Asian Americans in juvenile hall are interviewed.

The interviews reveal five major issues: (1) familial matters, (2) minors' unique educational experiences, (3) ineffective labeling theory, (4) hidden Asian American hierarchy, (5) and gender misconception with regard to school. Their narratives concerning these issues offer model minority deviants a voice beyond the silencing of the model minority stereotype.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is first and foremost dedicated to my cousin. I would like to thank him for inspiring me to conduct my research on model minority deviance. Without his presence, I would have lacked the critical inquiry that made my research possible.

I am also grateful to Robyn Schlice from the Santa Clara County Juvenile Probation Department. She has been invaluable to my research, primarily in her assistance with gaining access to the juvenile hall, but also through her shared enthusiasm in helping troubled youth.

I would also like to thank my professors on my thesis committee, Dr. Alexander Yamato, Dr. Obed Norman, and Dr. Helen Kress. I am grateful for their constant feedback and encouragement throughout the entire thesis process.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends. I am extremely grateful for their continual support in all of my educational endeavors.

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Chapter 1

The Historical Development of the Model Minority

Early Asian Immigration

Although some historians question the claim that Asians were the first group to discover North America (Menzies 2003), most will agree that Asians began immigrating to America in large numbers during the second half of the nineteenth century. By the early decades of the twentieth century, almost a million people from Japan, China, the Philippines, Korea, and India emigrated to the United States and Hawaii. Most of the immigrants came from Japan (400,000), China (370,000), and the Philippines (180,000). Koreans and Asian Indians were clearly the Asian minorities in America with only an estimated 7,000 people per populace. In comparison to the entire American immigrant population, Asians, as a whole, were the obvious racial minority numerically when considering the 35 million European immigrants reported to have entered American soil in the same period (Chan 1991, 3).

Despite their shared minority status, the five groups of Asian immigrants were driven by three different

circumstances. The Chinese, who were the first to arrive, were escaping the political and economic turmoil of China, yet were also attracted by the lure of gold in North America. Initially, these Chinese served as indentured laborers in order to pay for their preceding travel to North America. After they repaid their debts through the wages they earned, many of the Chinese were free to mine for gold. The Japanese, Korean, and the Filipinos, on the other hand, were persuaded by Hawaiian sugar plantation owners to migrate out of Asia. The plantation owners sent recruiters to Asia in order to gather workers by the thousands. The third circumstance of Asian migration involved the Asian Indians. Although the Asian Indians were also seeking work, they were not enticed by either the Hawaiian sugar industry or the North American gold rush. Most of the Asian Indian pioneers were adherents of the Sikh faith and relied on their own social networks for support in America (Chan 1991, 3-4).

These three major trends in early Asian immigration to America would be strictly controlled by restrictive United States immigration policies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Anti-Asian Laws and Sentiment Prior to the Model Minority

Image

Realizing the growing minority population (i.e. those of non-Northwestern European descent) in America, Congress quickly passed the first naturalization law in 1790 limiting citizenship rights to only a "free white person." Later in 1870, after the period of reconstruction following the end of the Civil War, United States' citizenship was extended to "aliens of African nativity and persons of African descent" (Fong and Shinagawa 2000, 15). At this point, Asians in America were still being denied citizenship rights.

Anti-Asian sentiment was gradually on the rise in the larger American society. Stemming from the competition of the gold rush, many Chinese were under attack legally, as well as physically. In 1850, California imposed a Foreign Miners Tax, which required immigrants to pay \$20 a month, but it was enforced primarily on the Chinese. The Chinese were later blamed for the depressed economy of 1870, and resulted in mob violence against the Chinese. Twenty-one Chinese were killed in Los Angeles in 1871, and 28 more in Rock Springs, Wyoming in 1885 (Fong and Shinagawa 2000, 16). It was in this anti-Asian atmosphere that Congress

passed the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which halted all immigration of Chinese laborers.

As the Chinese population declined in America, the Japanese population grew and became more visible. Mostly farmers, the Japanese also faced their own experience of legal attack from the United States government. In 1913, the Alien Land Law prohibited "aliens ineligible to citizenship" from owning or leasing land for more than three years (Weinberg 1997, 53). Although the Japanese were able to bypass this law by purchasing land under the names of their American born children, the law was later revised in 1920 to prevent this circumvention of the anti-Asian law.

In 1917, a provision of Immigration Act banned immigration from the so-called "Asian barred zone," except for the Philippines and Japan. Later in 1924, Congress passed the National Origins Act, which placed a ceiling of 150,000 new immigrants per year. Originally intended to limit the immigration of Eastern and Southern European immigrants, the act later added a provision that ended any immigration of "aliens ineligible for citizenship," meaning virtually all Asians (Espiritu 1997, 15 n.2). This was

considered to be a severe anti-Asian restriction for all Asians, including the Filipinos and the Japanese.

World War II introduced a new kind of anti-Asian sentiment. Previously driven by economic competition, now anti-Asian sentiment was driven by war. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese, Japanese Americans became the target of antagonism. Even though the majority of Japanese Americans were American born and claimed their loyalty to America, suspicions forced mainland Japanese Americans into internment camps, supposedly for their own protection.

At this time, the Chinese Americans were praised at the expense of the Japanese Americans. Comparing the Gallup polls of 1931 and 1942, the Chinese Americans used to be viewed negatively as "superstitious, sly, and conservative" and later seen as "hardworking, honest, and brave." Conversely, the Japanese were seen as "intelligent, industrious, and progressive," but were later viewed as "treacherous, sly, and cruel" (Fong and Shinagawa 2000, 19). From this favoring of non-Japanese Asian Americans, Congress repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 in 1943. In 1945, Congress ratified the War Bride's Act of 1945, which allowed war veterans to bring wives from China

and the Philippines as non-quota immigrants (Fong 2002, 24). This created another shift in Asian immigration.

It would not be until the 1965 Immigration Reform Act that attempts would be made to create a more inclusive United States immigration policy.

Post 1965 Asian Immigration: The Model Minority Seed

The 1965 Immigration Reform Act was a result of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, which brought international attention to racial and economic inequality in the United States. Once enacted, the act significantly increased the quotas to allow the Eastern Hemisphere a maximum of 20,000 per country, and set a ceiling of 170,000 (Hsia and Hirano-Nakanishi 1989, 20). The creators of the 1965 law did not anticipate the dramatic effects of new immigration policy, but it was clear that Asian immigrants took advantage of every feature of the 1965 Immigration Reform Act. For example, the law does not limit the number of visas for immediate relatives of U.S. citizens. Considering Asians have the highest rate of naturalization compared to other immigrants, Asians took advantage of this aspect of the immigration act.

Although the 1965 Immigration Reform Act opened immigration from Asia, it is also important to realize the effects of global restructuring on immigration with regard to the types of people who are immigrating to the United States. As a part of the immigration act, there is a seven-point preference system that serves as a general guideline for immigration officials when issuing visas (Espiritu 1997, 85 n.1).

- (1) Unmarried children of U.S. citizens who are at least 21 years of age
- (2) Spouses and unmarried children of permanent resident aliens
- (3) Members of the professions, scientists, and artists of exceptional ability
- (4) Married children of U.S. citizens
- (5) Brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens who are at least 21 years of age
- (6) Skilled or unskilled workers who are in short supply
- (7) Non-preference applicants

Due to global restructuring, there has been a gradual movement of industrial manufacturing away from developed nations like the United States to less developed nations in Asia and Latin America where labor costs are cheaper. "Among the effects of the global restructuring on the United States is the declining need to import low-skilled

labor because manufacturing jobs are moving abroad. At the same time, there is a great need to import individuals with advanced specialized skills that are in great demand" (Fong and Shinagawa 2000, 24).

Thus, the recent effect of the 1965 Immigration Reform Act has produced an influx of Asian professionals into the United States. Whereas earlier Asian immigration brought thousands of unskilled Asian laborers, the post 1965 immigration has brought the antithesis.

The Birth of the Model Minority

The emergence of Asian Americans as the model minority developed from the publication of two prominent articles in 1966. The articles chronicled the achievements of the two largest Asian American groups at that time, the Japanese and the Chinese. The first article was titled "Success Japanese-American Style" and was written by sociologist William Peterson for the *New York Times Magazine* on January 9, 1966 (Peterson 1966, V1-V20). Peterson praised the Japanese Americans for overcoming the racial antagonism directed toward them during World War II and achieving assimilation into the larger American society.

Later that same year, a second article focused attention on Chinese Americans and their good behavior and economic success. The article, "Success Story of One Minority Group in the United States," was published on December 26, 1966 in the *U.S. News and World Report* (Woo 1999, 5). It was just one of the many articles to follow that focused on the accomplishments of Asian Americans, especially in the terms of educational achievements and phenomenal economic upward mobility.

During the civil rights movement, which brought attention to institutionalized discrimination, these articles were used to demonstrate that the American dream was afforded to all groups of people despite race. Asian Americans were thus employed as a "model" for other minority groups, implying that if Asian Americans can overcome discrimination, they could as well. How would this fare after the arrival of the Southeast Asians from the Vietnam War?

The Vietnam War and the Southeast Asian Refugees

In the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Vietnam War was officially over. The Viet Cong had taken over South Vietnam's capital and proclaimed South Vietnam and North

Vietnam to be one country under communist rule. In an emergency effort to save people who faced genuine political persecution and bodily harm in their home countries after the war, the United States government attempted to resettle Southeast Asian refugees in the United States.

From this resettlement attempt, there were three major waves of Southeast Asian refugee immigration to the United States. The first wave arrived in the United States in 1975, shortly after the end of the Vietnam War. These refugees were primarily white collar or high-level military officials. Accordingly, those belonging to the first wave were highly educated individuals. The second wave, which began arriving in 1977, consisted of refugees either with a blue-collar, a sales/service, or farming background (Glenn and Yap 2000, 294). These second wave refugees were less educated and were either urbanized or from rural roots (Fong 2002, 33). In 1985, the third wave started arriving in the United States. This wave was composed of families from the countryside rather than the cities. Many of them fished, farmed, or kept tiny shops prior to coming to the United States (Long 1996, 59). Thus, these three waves of Southeast Asian refugees not only differed in time frame of migration, but also in their profiles.

Table 1.1 The Three Waves of Southeast Asian Refugees

Wave	Years	Profile
First Wave	1975-1977	White collar workers and high-level military officials who were highly educated
Second Wave	1977-1985	Blue collar workers, sales/service workers, and farmers who were less educated
Third Wave	1985-Present	Country folk (e.g., fishermen, farmers, and tiny shop owners) who were less educated

Despite common belief, it is also important to note here that not all Southeast Asian refugees came from Vietnam. In 1978, Vietnam, with the help of the Soviet Union, invaded Cambodia and drove out the Khmer Rouge. They established a new government for Cambodia under its own control. However, Vietnamese occupation in Cambodia led to famine and further warfare. By 1979, over 600,000 refugees from Cambodia fled the country. Most of them ended up in neighboring Thailand, but some eventually migrated to the United States (Fong 2002, 33).

In Laos, the country was experiencing the same civil war as Vietnam in the fight between democracy and communism. In April 1974, the Pathet Lao successfully

established communist rule throughout the entire country (Fong 2002, 33). Many anti-communist Laotians sought to flee the country and ended up at various refugee camps. They, too, sought the refuge of the United States.

The Hmong people, who lived in the mountains of Laos, Thailand, Burma, and Vietnam, also belonged to the category of Southeast Asian refugees (Trueba, Cheng, and Ima 1993, 27). After communists took control of South Vietnam, the Laotian and Vietnamese communist government began a military campaign against the Hmong hill people. The Hmong were viewed as traitors to the communist revolution ever since the U.S. government recruited them to serve as mercenaries against communist forces (Fong 2002, 34).

Thus, roughly three quarters of all the Southeast Asian refugees were, in fact, from Vietnam, but about a quarter of them were Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong (Fong and Shinagawa 2000, 25). Fifteen years after the Vietnam War, the percentages changed slightly. According to the 1990 United States census, there were a total of 1,001,054 Southeast Asians, which made up 13 percent of the Asian American population. From this Southeast Asian group, the census counted 614,547 Vietnamese, 149,014 Laotians, 147,411 Cambodians, and 90,082 Hmong (Fong 2002, 34).

Today, the Southeast Asian population has changed dramatically. While the Laotian (168,707), Cambodian (171,937) and Hmong (169,428) populations have increased somewhat, the Vietnamese (1,122,528) population nearly doubled by the year 2000 (American Fact Finder 2003).

Unlike earlier Asian immigration, the vast majority of these Southeast Asians were refugees rather than voluntary immigrants. How would this affect the model minority image?

The Inclusion of Southeast Asian Refugees as a Model Minority

In 1986, *NBC Nightly News* and the *McNeil/Lehrer Report* featured several news segments on Asian Americans and their success. A year later, CBS's *60 Minutes* contributed a "glowing report" on Asian American success in the academic arena. Meanwhile, the *U.S. News and World Report* spotlighted Asian American advances in a cover story, and *Time* dedicated a special issue on immigration focusing on Asian Americans entitled "The Changing Face of America." *Newsweek* went on to feature two articles, "Asian-Americans: The Drive to Excel" and "Asian Americans: A 'Model Minority.'" *Fortune* went even further by applauding Asian Americans as "America's Super Minority," while the *New*

Republic referred to "The Triumph of Asian Americans" as "America's greatest success story" (Takaki 1989, 474).

All of these articles began surfacing in 1986, a decade after the first arrival of the Southeast Asian refugees and twenty years after the first two articles were written in 1966 for the *New York Times Magazine* and the *U.S. News and World Report*. According to the content of these reports, the Southeast Asians reinforced the model minority image rather than contradicting it. Despite the differing experiences of the early Asian immigration and the Southeast Asian refugee immigration, both cohorts were similar in achieving success according to the latest articles.

Although both journalistic time frames (i.e., 1966 and 1986) recounted Asian American success, there were two major differences. While the 1966 articles wrote about individual groups of success (i.e., Japanese and Chinese), the more recent articles took on a panethnic view of success. This homogenization incorporated all Asian American groups into the model minority image. The second major difference between the articles involved what type of success was being chronicled. The articles of the sixties focused on both Asian American economic and academic

success, while the articles of the eighties concentrated more on the academic arena. Anna Quindlen, a *New York Times* reporter, wrote "Asian American *students* have a special place in the American consciousness right now. They are perceived as intelligent, diligent, and mature, with a strong sense of responsibility" [emphasis added] (Quindlen 1987, 32-39). A 1987 article written in *Time* magazine entitled "The New Whiz Kids" further reinforced this educational focus on Asian Americans (Brand 1987).

Even though attempts have been made to acknowledge the heterogeneity of the Asian American population, the model minority image has remained a dominating paradigm in the larger American society.

Chapter 2

The Negative Repercussions of the Model Minority Image

The Faulty Assumptions of the Model Minority Paradigm

As we enter the 21st century, the need to rethink current paradigms has become more and more apparent. With the ever-increasing diversity of the Asian American population, monolithic paradigms like the model minority have become increasingly problematic. The results of recent census information reinforce the fallaciousness of the model minority paradigm.

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census for 1993, even though Asian Americans had a higher median family income than any other racial category in America, they experienced poverty rates slightly higher than all Americans. Fourteen percent of Asian American families lived in poverty in 1989 compared to 13 percent for the entire nation (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993). The poverty rates were also dramatically different for the different Asian American groups. For example, whereas Filipinos experienced poverty rates of only 6.4 percent, Hmong

experienced a dramatic 63.6 percent poverty rate (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Poverty Rates for Asian Persons 1989

Ethnic Group	Poverty Rate (percent)
Total Asian	14.0
Hmong	63.6
Cambodian	42.6
Laotian	34.7
Vietnamese	25.7
Chinese	14.0
Korean	13.7
Thai	12.5
Asian Indian	9.7
Japanese	7.0
Filipino	6.4
Other Asian	18.2

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

In addition to the discrepancy in economic success between the model minority image and the actual statistics, there is also the discrepancy in academic success. When looking at the educational attainment of Asian Americans, like the poverty rates, the statistics are misleading. Although the 1999 census revealed that 42 percent of Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders 25 years of age and over had completed at least four years or more of college (see Table 2.2), the figures for the different Asian American groups varied enormously. In 1990, only 17.4 percent of

Vietnamese, 5.7 percent of Cambodians, 5.4 percent of Laotians, and 4.9 percent of Hmong 25 years old and over earned a four-year college degree or more (see Table 2-3). Thus, although, as a whole, Asian Americans surpassed the 28 percent average for non-Hispanic whites, a closer analysis reveals that not all Asian races conformed to the 42 percent average for Asian Americans or Pacific Islander (Fong 2002, 61-62).

Table 2.2 Education by Ethnic Group 1999

Ethnic Group	4+ College (percent)
Non-Hispanic Whites	28.0
Black	15.0
Asian or Pacific Islander	42.0
Hispanic	11.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Table 2.3 Education by Asian American Ethnic Group 1990

Ethnic Group	4+ College (percent)
Chinese	40.7
Filipino	39.3
Japanese	34.5
Asian Indian	58.0
Korean	34.5
Vietnamese	17.4
Cambodian	5.7
Laotian	5.4
Hmong	4.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

The statistics confirm that the dominant American society's perceptions of Asian Americans that homogenize them into the economically successful and educationally high achieving assemblage remains unsubstantiated. The acceptance of the model minority myth denies Asian Americans the opportunity to defend themselves against the homogenization created through stereotypes.

The Negative Repercussions of Model Minority Homogenization

The 1992 report by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights discussed four ways in which the model minority myth was indeed harmful to Asian Americans (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1992, 19).

- (1) ***Masked Asian American Social and Economic Problems:*** The model minority image diverts from real and very serious social and economic problems that plague many segments of the Asian American population.
- (2) ***Racial Discrimination against Asian Americans Overlooked:*** The model minority image distracts public attention away from continued and often overt, racial discrimination faced by Asian Americans.
- (3) ***Excessive Pressure on Asian American Students:*** The model minority image places undue pressure and anguish on

young Asian Americans who think they have to achieve in school.

- (4) ***Racial Tension Between Asian Americans and Other Minority Groups:*** The model minority image serves to fuel competition and resentment between groups, particularly among other racial minorities.

Although the model minority articles were pivotal in recognizing the accomplishment of Asian Americans, it also served as a source of detriment for the Asian American population. Ironically, within the same type of journalism that created the model minority image in the first place, there is evidence of the negative consequences of the stereotype that are found in the U.S. Commission of the on Civil Rights.

1. Masked Asian American Social and Economic Problems

On February 4, 2003, the *New Orleans Times* included a short article called "Violence in New Orleans' Vietnamese Community." The article told of a New Orleans woman, Hien Dinh, who was critically injured by her husband after he allegedly tied her up, poured gasoline on her and set her on fire in the garage of their home. Hien suffered from third-degree burns on more than 80 percent of her body. Her

husband, Don Vo, sustained burns to his hands and neck. The incident between the couple was instigated by a domestic dispute earlier in the morning that left several rooms of the home in disarray (Philbin 2003).

The story described above tells of an unfamiliar image of Asian Americans. Articles recounting Asian American problems, such as this one, receive either little coverage or no coverage at all. The model minority thesis creates an overshadowing image of the "problem free" Asian American (Suzuki 2002, 21). People's acceptance of the image turns their attention away from the inevitable troubles that some Asian Americans do, in fact, experience. Complications arise when the needs of Asian Americans are not met. Bernard Wong, an anthropology professor at San Francisco State University, argues that the model minority stereotype is "being used as an excuse not to give help to Asians when they need it" (Rigdon 1991)

2. Racial Discrimination against Asian Americans Overlooked

In June 1982, Vincent Chin, a 27-year-old Chinese American, was bludgeoned to death by two Caucasian autoworkers outside a McDonald's in Detroit, Michigan. The dispute began at a nightclub along with several of Chin's

friends. After being kicked out of the nightclub, the two men retrieved a baseball bat from the trunk of their car and proceeded to chase after Chin for twenty minutes. Once caught, Chin was pinned to the McDonald's wall by one of the men while the other male hit Chin on the head, chest, and the knees with the baseball bat. Chin died in the hospital four days later (Chan 1991, 177).

The two men had blamed the Japanese for the depressed American auto industry and sought retribution with Chin, who they thought was Japanese. One witness reported hearing one of the men comment in the nightclub that it was people like Chin that he and his fellow employees were losing their jobs (Chan 1991, 177). When the court sentenced the two men to three years' probation and a fine of \$3,780, the lenient sentencing shocked the Asian American community (Fong 2002, 151). After several appeals, both men were eventually acquitted on the civil rights charges that demanded harsher penalties. The outcome of the Vincent Chin case sent a message for many "that Asian Americans are second-class citizens - tolerated as long as they remain quiet and passive model minority, but patronized, or worse, when they attempt to exercise their rights" (Fong 2002, 152).

Driven by racial antagonism, Vincent Chin's death represented the anti-Asian violence growing in America. Unfortunately, it was just one of the many anti-Asian violence cases that are often ignored by the larger American society. In response to public neglect, the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC) began to monitor anti-Asian incidents in an *Audit of Violence Against Asian Pacific Americans* since 1993. A comparison between the 1998 and the 1999 audit revealed an increase of anti-Asian violence incidents from 429 to 486 (Fong 2002, 152). These numbers do not include incidents that go unreported, so the numbers are actually even higher than indicated by NAPALC. The fact of the matter is that the model minority image does not protect Asian Americans against racial antagonism.

3. *Excessive Pressure on Asian American Students*

On July 10, 1991, *The Wall Street Journal* featured an article entitled "Model Minority Myth Seen as Driving Some Youth to Suicide" (Rigdon 1991).

At age 17, Kio T. Konno seemed to fit the stereotype perfectly. Hard-charging, industrious and bright, she was destined for

stardom, like so many of her Asian-American "whiz kid" peers. A senior at [the] prestigious Lowell High School, she pulled a B-plus average, spoke fluent Japanese and snagged national swimming awards. Brown University was actively recruiting her. But last October, a week before her 18th birthday, Miss Konno walked into her closet and hanged herself. Miss Konno's parents decline to comment on their daughter's death. But people familiar with the case, as well as a friend, say Miss Konno was distraught over the pressure to succeed from her parents, from Asian and non-Asian society and even, in a sense, from Asian history.

Konno was a prime example of the model minority pressure placed on Asian American youth to excel as well as its negative consequences. Leland Yee, a San Francisco school board member and a psychologist, remarked, "if you're an Asian who's alive, eating and breathing, you're expected to be a genius. It's not unusual for Asian kids to have nervous breakdowns."

Suicide rates among Asian American teenagers have risen dramatically over the past three decades. In 1989, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services conducted a study that confirmed the rise. The study showed that the suicide rate for Chinese Americans 15 to 24 years old was 36 percent higher than the national average for the same

age group. The percent was even higher for Japanese Americans, whose rate was 54 percent higher than the national average (Rigdon 1991).

The combined pressure from parents and the model minority stereotype has proven unbearable for many Asian American youth. Despite the assumed optimism that the model minority image produces among Asian American students, the stereotype is a burden rather than a benefit. Oftentimes, Asian Americans have resorted to suicide to alleviate the burden.

4. Racial Tension Between Asian Americans and Other Minority Groups

On April 29, 1992, the chaos of the Los Angeles riots lasted for four days. News stations and newspapers were overrun with updates from the L.A. riots, as well as the aftermath. One of the major issues that manifested from this historical event was the questioning of the relationship between Asian Americans and other racial minority groups. In the midst of the racial tension that caused the riots, Korean Americans were particularly hard hit with combined property losses that reached nearly half of the city's total damage cost of one billion dollars

(Abelmann and Lie 1995). Japantown was also hit with losses that exceeded three million dollars (Okihiro 1994).

Although the news focused on the African Americans, the attacks on Asian American businesses came from different groups and not just the African Americans. "The media may have played up... the black versus Korean angle, but television cameras showed just as many Latino faces looting Korean stores" (Fong 2002, 174). Labeled as the model minority, Asian Americans were seen as the "near whites" and consequently the foe of other minority groups like the African Americans and the Latinos during the L.A. riots (Okihiro 1994).

Although the 1992 riots helped to publicize the strained relationship between the Asian American groups and other minority groups, the racial conflict was present long before its public manifestation. "Between 1985 and 1990 in New York City, there were three major protests against Korean storeowners in African communities, while in Los Angeles, as one boycott ended in the summer of 1991, another began, and within a six-month period, five Korean grocery stores were fire-bombed" (Okihiro 1994).

The Need to Diverge from Model Minority Homogenization

Although the model minority thesis is good in that it recognizes Asian American accomplishment, its negative repercussions are demanding ideological change. The four events illustrated above provide insight into the detrimental outcomes of the model minority image. In response to these four ill effects, there is a need to research the heterogeneity of Asian Americans. Researching Asian American diversity will effectively counter the narrowness of the model minority description.

Chapter 3

The Development of My Research of Model Minority Deviance

From Personal Inquiry to Qualitative Research

Even though I was born in the United States, I took English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) for the first five years of my schooling. Since Vietnamese was my primary language at home, English became my second language at school. Despite my linguistic struggles in elementary school, I started receiving straight A's once I arrived to middle school and kept up my 4.0 Grade Point Average throughout high school. My brother also maintained a 4.0 Grade Point Average. Our classmates referred to us as the "smart Asian kids" of the school.

In college, I later learned from an Asian American studies course that my brother and I were also labeled as the "model minority." From the course work, I began to question the validity of the model minority thesis and how it pertained to my own life. Initially, I was proud of the fact that Asian Americans were being portrayed in a

positive light, but critical inquiry forced me to wonder about my cousin.

My cousin, who was also Asian American, did not conform to the model minority image. He did not do well in school and was even at risk of not graduating high school. This revelation made me inquire about those Asian Americans who were not consistent with the model minority image. Were there more of them besides my cousin? If so, where were they and what were they doing?

"The public view of Asian Americans is a lot like that of Casper the Ghost: we're either white or we're invisible."

- Scott Kurashige (Phi 2001)

The "Casper" Dilemma

The quote provided by Scott Kurashige provides some insight into the identity crisis created by the model minority image. As "Caspers" of American society, Asian Americans are forced into two molds, white or invisible. This dichotomy is different from the traditional white-black polarization discussed in Gary Okihiro's article, "Is Yellow Black or White?" In essence, Okihiro argues that the black-white paradigm is not relevant to the unique Asian

American experience (Okihiro 1994). In accordance, Yen Le Espiritu contends "Yellow is neither black nor white" (Espiritu 1997, 109). Both Okihiro and Espiritu exemplify the resistance to the dichotomizing of Asian Americans whether it is black-white or white-invisible. As a consequence of the growing acceptance of the model minority image, the more recent view of Asian Americans as white or invisible has taken precedence over the black-white paradigm.

Economically and academically successful Asian Americans supposedly fit nicely into the "white" mold, and have consequently been referred to as the "near whites" by some (Okihiro 1994). Unsuccessful Asian Americans, on the other hand, are not acknowledged and become invisible to the larger American society. Due to the homogenizing effect of the model minority image, these unsuccessful Asian Americans are assumed to be non-existent. Thus, the "Casper" dichotomy makes unsuccessful Asian Americans invisible and accordingly neglected.

The needs of the invisible Asian Americans are being overshadowed by the model minority image. Due to the model minority thesis, Asian Americans are ultimately seen as

untroubled people who do not require the same assistance available to other racial minority groups (Rigdon 1991).

Research Target Group: The Invisible Asian Americans

In order to accurately represent the diversity of Asian Americans, further research is needed with regard to model minority deviance, that is Asian Americans who do not conform to the model minority image. Unveiling model minority deviance requires a direct investigation of those who seemingly belong to the label. It is important to note that the "model minority deviance" label, like the "model minority" label, is, in fact, a typification. Both labels assist researchers in the organization of Asian Americans, but do not accurately represent the Asian American individuals. These images are not completely false for some Asian Americans, but are rather deceptive overstatements for all Asian American groups (Fong 2002, 70). With this in mind, model minority deviance simply refers to some Asian Americans who do not fit into the successful image suggested by the model minority stereotype.

Who exactly are these model minority deviants? As a result of the idealistic image of the model minority, the larger American society is often unable to picture Asian

Americans as delinquents of society. Thus, some of the neglected Asian Americans are situated within the United States' correctional system. Invisible to the dominant American society, incarcerated Asian Americans are ideologically neglected. The dominant image of Asian Americans as the model minority has failed to recognize their model minority deviance. These criminalized Asian Americans do not conform to the superlative image that journalistic society has prescribed for them.

My Research Question

An investigation of model minority deviance has led me to the research of Asian Americans in juvenile hall. Considering the negative connotation attached to juvenile incarceration, mainstream society has marked these Asian American youth as "unsuccessful," and consequently fitting to the model minority deviance label. The reason for focusing on Asian American youth rather than adults is based on the fact that they are still closely connected to the educational system in the midst of their incarceration. This fact is important when bearing in mind the emphasis on education as a determinant of the modern model minority success of the eighties and presently.

From my research of Asian Americans of juvenile hall, it is my hope that my research will ultimately serve to inform others about the diversity of Asian Americans beyond the model minority stereotype. I will do this using the voices of the Asian American youth incarcerated in juvenile hall. From one-on-one interviews, I will expectantly provide some insight into the question as to ***how do Asian Americans in juvenile hall describe their life experiences and their perceptions of the model minority stereotype.***

Documenting first-hand accounts of model minority deviance will present mainstream society with an alternative to the model minority perspective of the Asian American experience, and also free Asian Americans from the constraints of an indiscriminate stereotype.

Qualitative Methodology

With regard to the methodology of my research, I am using biographical interviews with incarcerated Asian Americans minors. The juvenile hall where I located these interviewees is situated in downtown San Jose and serves as the largest juvenile detention facility in Santa Clara County. At any one time, the hall holds a little over three hundred minors. Of those minors, about ten percent of them

are Asian American. Similarly, about ten percent of the total juveniles are females. It is important to note that the number of Asian Americans confined to this particular juvenile hall has been slowly decreasing over the past several years.

Out of the total juvenile hall population during the time of my interviews, I interviewed twenty-eight minors that were identified as Asian Americans in the database. Of those twenty-eight, there was only one female Asian American minor. All of the interviews took place at the juvenile hall within interview rooms and centered on one-on-one interaction. At the beginning of each interview, I identified myself as a graduate student from San Jose State University working on my Master's thesis. I reassured each individual that the conversation between the both of us was confidential and would not involve the disclosing of any names. Considering that many of the minors that I interviewed were being charged with attempted murder and murder, this introduction served well in making them feel more at ease with answering the questions posed to them. Only one of the twenty-eight minors declined to be tape-recorded.

After I gave each Asian American minor a brief introduction, I commenced my interview using my interview protocol sheet (see Table 3.1). The protocol served as a guide in the interviewing process. It helped me in covering all the questions required in gathering sufficient data. The protocol was placed in front of me throughout all of the interviews.

In addition to the questions listed on the interview protocol sheet, I found myself asking questions that were not on the protocol throughout most of the interviews. Those questions included:

- Can you tell me about your relationship with your parents?
- How was your living? Was it rich, poor, average?
- What is your favorite subject in school and why?
- Can you tell me about a favorite memory you have about school?
- Are there differences between the Asian American groups?

Table 3.1 Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol Categories	Interview Questions
Characteristics of	How would you describe yourself?

Student Background	<p>How old are you?</p> <p>What grade are you in?</p> <p>What is your race/ethnicity?</p> <p>Where were you born?</p> <p>What was your first language?</p> <p>What language do you use the most?</p> <p>Have you ever done drugs?</p> <p>Have you ever participated in gang activities?</p>
Characteristics of Familial Background	<p>Can you describe your family to me?</p> <p>How old are your parents?</p> <p>Where were your parents born?</p> <p>What are your parents' race/ethnicity?</p> <p>What language do your parents use the most?</p> <p>What do your parents do for work?</p> <p>How long has your family been in the United States?</p> <p>Can you tell me about your brothers and sisters?</p>
Educational support	<p>Does anyone/anything help you with school?</p> <p>How do they help you with school?</p> <p>Do your parents help you with school?</p> <p>Do your brothers and sisters help you with school?</p> <p>Do you have any friends that help you with school?</p>
Social Network	<p>How would you describe your closest friends?</p> <p>Who do you hang out with the most?</p> <p>Why do you hang out with them?</p> <p>Do you spend more time with your family or friends?</p> <p>Is there anybody outside the circle of family and friends that you hang out with?</p>
Student Perception of Personal Delinquency	<p>How did you end up in juvenile hall?</p> <p>Can you tell me about the juvenile hall process you went through?</p> <p>Do you think juvenile hall will help you?</p>

	<p>What could you have done to prevent this?</p> <p>What could others have done to prevent this?</p> <p>What things could have prevented this?</p>
Student Perception of the Model Minority Image	<p>How would you describe a typical Asian American student?</p> <p>Some people think that Asian American students are extremely smart and successful. What do you think about this?</p> <p>Are there any examples of people that see you this way?</p> <p>Is there a difference between Asian American male and female students?</p> <p>In what ways are you smart and or successful?</p>
Student Perception of Life	<p>What do you like and dislike the most about life?</p> <p>What do you like and dislike the most about school?</p> <p>What do you like and dislike the most about your family?</p> <p>What do you like and dislike the most about yourself?</p> <p>What do you like and dislike the most about society?</p>
Student Perception of What Could Help Them With School	<p>What could have been done or be done to help you in school?</p> <p>What could your family or friends have done to help you in school?</p> <p>What could your teachers or school have done to help you in school?</p> <p>Who was your best and worst teacher? Why?</p> <p>What was your favorite year in school? Why?</p> <p>Are there any material things that would have helped you?</p>
Student Perception of Future	<p>Where do you see yourself in five years?</p> <p>What job/career will you have?</p> <p>How much school will you finish?</p>

	How will your relationships be with family/friends/significant others?
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In the Interview Protocol, the highlighted questions were those that were always asked during all of the interviews. The questions underneath each of the highlighted ones, on the other hand, served as follow-up questions. These questions would only be asked if the interviewee did not include certain needed information in his/her response. The protocol aided in the efficiency of the interview process.

After all of the interviews were completed, I transcribed them myself to ensure the accuracy of the dialogue being tape-recorded.

Chapter 4

Model Minority Deviance: Asian Americans in Juvenile Hall

Preface to the Interviewees

The decision to interview the twenty-eight minors was based on their classification in the juvenile probation department's database. They were all labeled as "Asian" in the department's system. Thus, this research did not account for those Asian Americans who did not identify themselves as Asian Americans upon their entry into the correctional system.

All of the data gathered on the Asian Americans in juvenile hall were based on the self-reports of the interviewees. This research seeks to effectively portray the voices of the Asian Americans rather than to scrutinize their validity.

Interviewee Profiles

Table 4.1 provides a brief overview of the Asian Americans in juvenile hall who were interviewed. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the Asian American

youth. From the table, there were significant observations made from the data produced from their general information. One observation made was that although all of the interviewees were labeled as Asian in the department's database, some of the minors came from racially mixed backgrounds despite their Asian label. About 14 percent (n=4) of the Asian Americans were of a mixed race that was not limited to the Asian category (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Interviewee Profiles

Alias	Gender	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Immigrant	Gang	Charge
Thuy	Female	13	Vietnamese-Hispanic	No	No	Bit Mom and Vandalism
Hai	Male	13	Vietnamese-European	Yes	No	Robbery
Victor	Male	14	50% Vietnamese, 25% White, 25% Native American	No	Yes	Burglary
Canh	Male	16	Vietnamese	No	No	Fighting
John	Male	16	Vietnamese	No	No	Attempted Murder
Toan	Male	18	Vietnamese	Yes	Yes	Attempted Murder
Dinh	Male	18	Vietnamese	Yes	No	Murder
Anh	Male	17	Vietnamese-Chinese	No	No	Accessory to Murder
Vinh	Male	18	Vietnamese	No	Yes	Drive-by Shooting
Thanh	Male	14	Vietnamese	No	Yes	Fighting with Brother

Xuong	Male	15	Vietnamese	No	No	Fighting
At	Male	17	Vietnamese	Yes	No	Possession of Drugs
Paul	Male	17	Vietnamese-Chinese	No	No	Possession of Drugs
Varen	Male	17	Cambodian	No	No	Truancy
Thoi	Male	16	Vietnamese	Yes	No	Fighting
Tam	Male	19	Vietnamese	Yes	Yes	Fighting
Hung	Male	18	Vietnamese	Yes	No	Attempted Murder
Samnang	Male	15	75% Cambodian, 25% Chinese	No	No	Robbery
Nam	Male	17	Vietnamese	Yes	No	N/A
Ngor	Male	17	Cambodian	Yes	Yes	Possession of Drugs
Tommy	Male	16	Korean	Yes	Yes	Petty Theft
Marcos	Male	16	Filipino-Mexican	No	No	Truancy
Sodana	Male	18	Cambodian	Yes	Yes	Grand Theft Auto
James	Male	19	Vietnamese-Chinese	No	Yes	Robbery
Phong	Male	19	Vietnamese	Yes	Yes	N/A
Van	Male	16	Vietnamese	No	No	Attempted Murder
Ninh	Male	17	Vietnamese	Yes	Yes	Attempted Murder
Sothea	Male	15	Cambodian	No	Yes	Pencil Stabbing

Most of the Asian minors were found to be overwhelmingly either Vietnamese or part Vietnamese. This Vietnamese group made up 75 percent (n=21) of the entire Asian American group. Meanwhile, 18 percent (n=5) were Cambodian or part Cambodian. With regard to age, there was

also a majority. Only a couple of the minors were enrolled in junior high, the two thirteen year olds of the group. The majority was enrolled in high school or had just graduated. This high school age group was about 93 percent (n=26). Thus, the majority of the Asian Americans in juvenile hall were Vietnamese and of high school age.

In contrast, when it came to immigrant status and gang affiliation, there was no overwhelming majority. About 46 percent (n=13) of the interviewees had immigrated to the United States, while 54 percent (n=15) were born in the United States. When asked whether or not the minors belonged to a gang, there were a steady mixture of yes's and no's. About 43 percent (n=12) admitted to being a gang member, and 57 percent (n=16) denied being a part of a gang. The charges pressed against the juveniles also varied. Although 25 percent (n=7) involved attempted murder or murder, the rest of the minors' crimes ranged anywhere between vandalism and robbery. However, it is important to note that those who were charged with attempted murder or murder were Vietnamese, except one who was actually Vietnamese-Chinese.

Unfortunately, these findings reveal little about the experiences of the Asian Americans in juvenile hall. Although the

profiling of these minors provides important information in determining trends among them, it does not help in understanding their unique experiences as model minority deviants.

From an in-depth analysis of all twenty-eight narratives, there were five major issues that were inherently significant. Those issues included: (1) the familial matters, (2) the minors' unique educational experiences, (3) the ineffective labeling theory, (4) the hidden Asian American hierarchy, (5) and the gender misconception with regard to school.

(1) The Familial Matters

What factors might have contributed to the model minority deviance of Asian Americans in juvenile hall? Although a direct causal relationship could not be argued between the possible factors and crime, some preliminary relationships were made. The most significant relationship found involved issues relating to the family of these Asian American minors. These issues included unstable family structure, weak paternal relationship, and influential sibling relationships.

Unstable Family Structure

Although not all of the interviewees came from "broken homes," many told of an unstable family structure.

"Unstable" simply referred to a family that lacked security, and not whether or not the family was seen as conventional or unconventional. The minors discussed their families as follows:

"They're not married, but they're still together. He goes around. I don't know. He's at my mom's house right now." - John

"So my parents knew this guy in the marines. My mom and him keep going back and forth, you know, so my mom moved in with him." - Ninh

The examples of family instability listed above are crucial in explaining the probability of the minors' criminal behavior. Rob White and Fiona Haines argue that deviations in family structure create instability and prevent the proper development of self-control against committing crimes, which is learned at a very early age (White and Haines 2000, 47). Their argument on the importance of self-control is based upon the research of M. Gottfredson and T. Hirschi in 1990. Gottfredson and Hirschi sought to explain the likelihood of criminal offending. Problems with the family were seen as one of the primary sources of delinquency.

Many of the interviewees mentioned brief accounts of their insecure homes, but Victor's following narrative provided a detailed description of his own experience with an unstable family. After asking him how his family life was at home, Victor unhesitatingly responded.

"My mom would come and go. She - she got in a fight with my dad again and she moved to Michigan and um and um after found a new guy. She would just come and go like she would just come and stay for like a month. The kids all happy and stuff when I was younger like fourth grade. She would get us all happy and stuff, and then she would just leave. Like after a while, I was just like fuck it. She just keeps on coming and going. We weren't rich. We were - we weren't that rich. I remember buying my sister stuff. Me and my brother would always get her stuff. We would go around and steal something. After a while, I started slinging. I was like fuck, it's all me now. I was like on my own. My dad did kind of care about me, like going out late at night. He did care about that. That's about it." - Victor

In Victor's story, he described the instability caused by his mother's ephemeral presence in his family's life. At the end of his description, he mentioned stealing and how he had become hopeless. According to Victor, his mom and the family instability she brought with her drove him to his criminal behavior. This ultimately led to his loss of self control outlined by White and Haines.

Weak Paternal Relationship

In addition to the general family structure, White and Haines commented on paternal relationships and their direct effect on children's behavior. "Poor attachment to the father lead[s] to low self-control and higher rates of criminal offending" (White and Haines 2000, 47). This was interesting when considering the lack of communication many of the Asian Americans in juvenile hall experienced with their fathers.

"But he's not really talkative, you know talkative. He talks shit for fun, you know." - John.

"I'm not sure. My father, I'm not sure. I haven't seen him in like ten years." - Samnang

"Yeah, I only live with my mom right now. My dad, he left somewhere. He's gone. I heard he went to Texas." - Sodana

The minors' descriptions of their relationships with their dads were indicative of the "poor attachment to the father" problem mentioned by White and Haines. Without the availability of an effective paternal relationship with their fathers, these Asian American minors were more likely to commit crimes due to their stunted development of self-control.

Sociologist William Julius Wilson's made a similar connection for African American delinquents in 1987. His work with African American families revealed a startling increase in the incarceration rates of African American males as a consequence in the increase of female-headed families (Curry and Decker 1998, 124). Like the African Americans, many of the Asian Americans lacked strong relationships with their fathers.

Influential Sibling Relationships

Another aspect of familial relationships that might have contributed to model minority deviance was the minors' relationships with their siblings. They describe:

"My sister, she's my sister, but sometimes I feel like she's my little sister cause she used to be like me too. She was glamoured by the gang stuff too." - Vinh

"My brother never wanted me to join the gang [with him], but the other guy asked me." - Dinh

"He dropped out and he went to adult ed. Maybe, I don't know, I was younger. I was following him, you know." - John

In their scenarios, some describe how their siblings' involvement with deviance was influential in their own behavior. Their relationships with their brothers and

sisters served as reinforcement in pursuing their criminal tendencies.

In other cases, some of the Asian American minors were indirectly forced into deviance by their siblings rather than influenced. The story by Ngor with reference to how he became a gang member exemplified this involuntary commencement of model minority deviance.

"I've been doing this stuff - I've been here since I was 12 years old. Yeah. I never wanted to bang, you know. It was just the fact that my older brother was and I was going to middle school, you know. A lot of them, they can't catch my brother, so they just jumped me after school, you know. So I decided to just fuck it, you know. I just decided to just, you know take a bat to school, you know. And they wait for me after school and I just hit him. It was always at the bus stop. That's the only place they catch me. I didn't want to tell my mom nothing. I didn't want to say nothing to my brother. You know what I mean? That's why - I was just a regular kid, and then I was tired of getting jumped after school, you know. They older kids too. They were from high school. Ever since then, I started banging."
- Ngor

Ngor felt like he was pressured into model minority deviance through his brother's connections with the gang life. Considering that Asian families tend to be larger than the average American family, the risk of negative sibling influence is greater for Asian Americans (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990).

Socioeconomic Status of the Family

There was also a question about the socioeconomic status of the family, and whether or not it affected their propensity toward criminal behavior. In the past, many researchers argued that there was a direct relationship between economic factors and criminality. "The economic position of the individual in society was now seen as an important factor in the commission of crime" (White & Haines 2000, 58). In my data analysis, however, economics of the family appeared less important in comparison to the social aspects of the family. This assumption was based on the minors' perceived views of their family's socioeconomic status.

"Welfare, we're on welfare. My dad, he's sick. If he can't go to work, then they give him some kind of money for illness problems." - Toan

"What I remember from when I was younger, I'd say we were more on the wealthy side. We had two houses. We're average right now." - Phong

The wealth of the minors' families varied greatly according to the interviewees' descriptions, thus a direct relationship could not be made between socioeconomic status and criminality. Not enough data was available to make that determination.

The Importance of Family

The family is the single most important social institutions that must be considered when looking at the socialization of juveniles. A closer examination of the interviewees' families confirmed the considerable effects a family has on a juvenile and his/her propensity toward deviant behavior.

An ineffective family experience causes children to grow up with either little or negative direction. Consequently, the need for socialization and order in their lives is often found on the streets. Families under stress hinder the family's ability to be able to deal with threats to the welfare of their children.

(2) The Minors' Unique Educational Experiences

Aside from their family experiences, it was also important to collect data on the minors' educational experiences. Considering that the model minority stereotype has been focusing more on educational attainment in the recent years, a third of my interview questions were related to education. One of the first educational questions I asked all of the interviewees was how their grades were. In recounting their past academic grades, I

noticed that most of the minors were doing extremely well toward the beginning of their education.

"Like high school of course, I started dropping out, failing and everything. But before that, I never got below a 3.0." - John

"Well a freshman, I almost get straight A's, probably all A's and one B. I go downhill after that." - Toan

"At the end of the year, they add your grade point 3.3, you get a certificate. My GPA was about 3.4-3.5." - Dinh

"I was getting A's and B's. I was going to try to get into Berkeley, but my grades kind of went down in junior year." - Anh

The Blame on "Laziness"

Educationally, most of them appeared to fit well into the mold of the model minority for a certain period of time. Then something changed it all. Most of them blamed their "laziness" as the primary reason for the worsening of their grades.

"It's just that I can - I know that I can. I'm lazy. It's just that I'm lazy." - John

"Some of us, we drop out of school because we just don't want to go. We lazy." - Toan

"I believe that I could have done all the work, but it's just that I didn't want to. I was lazy."
- Vinh

This idea of blaming their educational deterioration on laziness aligned well with their belief that smartness was based on hard work rather than innate intelligence.

Smart Equals Hardworking

Referring to the Model Minority theory, I asked the five Vietnamese males to describe a typical Asian American student. Their responses paralleled the ideology of the model minority stereotype and defined smart as hardworking.

"I think more of the Asian-Vietnamese came here are pretty smart. They work hard to go to school." - Toan

"Smart. Smart in math. Smart in math. Well I heard the statistics where Asians are, you know, in school, their academic levels are higher. No, no, not smart. It's just that they try harder." - John

"There's a lot of, yeah - you will find a lot of Asian Americans who are really smart cause they work really hard." - Anh

"We work hard. We honest. We work very hard. That's true (referring to the idea that Asian Americans are smart)." - Dinh

"A typical, I think that they have a lot of potential and like all the other Asian countries, I think it's all because of hard work. I don't know what it is, a gift from God, I don't know, but yeah, it seems like Asians, they're pretty smart." - Vinh

Many of the Vietnamese responded similarly, in that they perceived Asian Americans as smart in the hard-working sense. The cultural theory described by Fong attempts to explain. "A great deal of attention has been focused on Asian cultural values that place a high priority on education, hard work, and family honor as the main reason for Asian American academic success. At the same time, both the parents and children believed that learning comes from hard work and effort, rather than from innate intelligence" (Fong 2002, 84-85). According to the cultural theory, my interviewees' perception of a typical Asian American student was based on the cultural lessons surrounding them while growing up. A comment made by Vinh during my interview with him was illustrative of this point.

"It's kind of like cause I hang around with a lot of Vietnamese, after a while and I kind of just got, you know, I think everything was programmed. I see what I see, what I turned out to be hanging around with a lot of Vietnamese and my mom kept on telling me about how tough it is in Vietnam."
- Vinh

Vinh's comment demonstrated the importance of cultural environment in shaping his perceptions about education and his definition of smartness. Despite the reasonableness of the cultural theory, it is also important to note that the explanations of perception must not be confined to this one

theory. According to Bob Suzuki's relative functional theory, different aspects of society in addition to culture play some role in shaping perception, no matter how minor the role is (Fong 2002, 87-89).

"It's not that it makes us look bad."

One of the last questions I asked to gain further insight into the minors' view of the model minority stereotype involved what they thought about the model minority image. Most of them agreed that Asian Americans were, in fact, smart and they had no problem with the stereotype. Anh bluntly remarked, "I don't mind. It's not that it makes us look bad." His comment exemplified the many controversial issues surrounding the model minority theory. Simply because the model minority stereotype is perceived to be positive, does it mean the label should be accepted by the whole society, as well as the model minority deviants?

(3) The Ineffective Labeling Theory

Toward the end of the 1950s, society was becoming more racially conscious about equality through the civil rights movement. This forced many social thinkers to question the

effects of social class and minority status on those who came into contact with the criminal system. From this, they wanted to develop a more equitable juvenile justice system where juveniles were diverted before they were stigmatized with the label of "delinquent" (Williams and McShane 1999, 137). The labeling theory sought to reveal the powerful influence of labels on criminal behavior.

Primary and Secondary Deviance

Edwin Lemert emerged in 1951 as one of the major proponents of the labeling approach in understanding delinquency. Lemert focused his research specifically on how being labeled deviant shaped subsequent behavior. From his research, he determined that there were two types of deviance, primary deviance and secondary deviance.

Primary deviance refers to the initial deviant behavior and "occurs when an individual violates a norm and is viewed as deviant but rejects the deviant label and maintains a conformist conception of self" (Thompson and Hickey 1996, 112). The important point here is that in this initial stage of deviance, individuals do not change their self-concept. Deviance is seen merely as a passing event

and consequently does not change the identity of the individual (White and Haines 2000, 86).

On the contrary, secondary deviance acknowledges the hindering effects of others' perceptions in maintaining a conformist self-image after being labeled deviant.

Secondary deviance occurs because of the negative social reaction to primary deviation. With secondary deviance, "the deviant label is internalized and a deviant role is assumed" (Thompson and Hickey 1996, 112-113). Here, the individual begins conforming to his/her new status as a deviant, which leads to continued and increased deviance.

Some Model Minority Deviants as the Transitional 1.5 Deviance

The majority of Asians Americans in juvenile hall exemplified either the primary deviance or the secondary deviance models suggested by Lemert. However, some of the Asian American deviants were unique in that they still possessed their conforming "model minority" self-image, but continued to be deviant. Thus, they were consistent with both the primary and the secondary deviance models. The majority of those interviewed were repeat offenders, thus seemed to fit well into the secondary deviance model.

"No, [it's] my second time. My first time, I spent two days in here, that's all." - At

"Um, my first time was because I was smoking methamphetamines outside of the school during nighttime, and I went in for like a day. Then I got put on probation, and then second time, I had dirty bottles." - Paul

"First time, my ex-friend and I were burning something. We were playing with fire and stuff, and he got burned, so they put me in. And my second, I was let out on probation, and I didn't finish my community service. I did a month, and this time, I did petty theft and violations." - Tommy

However, despite their unremitting deviance, some of the Asian Americans in juvenile hall maintained the acceptance of their "model minority" image. Although their repeat offenses would suggest otherwise, their self-concept did not change. This suggested that they also belonged to the primary deviance model.

"I think Vietnamese, Asian Americans, we have a lot of potential, you know, even gang members they gang bang, but they're still smart you know." - Vinh

"I'm doing good. I just have bad friends." - Nam

"I could do what most of the Asians do that are like smart." - Sothea

"They know they're smart too cause a lot of us we know that we're smart." - Toan

"I'm trying to raise them up, but it turns out to be that I'm the lowest of the high." - Thanh

These model minority deviants maintained a positive image of themselves despite their unrelenting criminal behavior. The conforming model minority aspects of themselves remained prominent in their self-image even though their criminal charges contradicted their self-perception. This placed many of the Asian Americans in juvenile hall in the transitional 1.5 deviance model not established by Lemert.

Deviance as a Master Status also Fails with Some Model Minority Deviants

Everett Hughes first coined the term, "master status," in 1945. It was defined as a status that "tends to overpower, in most crucial situations, any other characteristics which might run counter to it" (Hughes 1945, 357). Howard Becker, as a staunch supporter of the labeling theory, applied the master status argument to the deviance label. He explained how the deviant label is internalized by the individual and consequently becomes the master status. Becker goes on to claim that once individuals have been labeled as deviant, the deviant identity most likely becomes dominant (Thompson and Hickey 1996, 114).

This was not the case for the transitional 1.5 deviant Asian Americans in juvenile hall. The flaw with Becker's claim was that he failed to acknowledge the possibility of an even more dominating label than the deviance label. With respect to Asian Americans, the model minority label sometimes tends to dominate over any deviant labels attached to Asian Americans. Hence, the model minority image remains a "master status" for some of the Asian Americans delinquents.

(4) The Hidden Asian American Hierarchy

Despite the homogenizing characteristics of the model minority image, some of the model minority deviants saw a difference between the different Asian American groups. When asked if they, in fact, saw a difference, a variety of responses were given. While some saw no difference, others claimed that there were notable dissimilarities between the Asian American groups. There were seven interviewees (i.e., 25 percent) who did not address the question because it was not on the interview protocol sheet. For those that did respond, their answers were grouped into "there is no difference," "I don't know," and "there is a difference."

"There is no difference."

Exactly 21 percent (n=6) of the model minority deviants did not see a difference between the different Asian American groups. Similar to the model minority theory, they conformed to a panethnic view of Asian Americans.

"They're all the same. They're all Asian." - Phong

"They're kind of all the same to me." - Xuong

"I think they're all the same, but kind of different in culture." - Hung

These students did not hesitate when responding to the question of racial difference. They were confident in the idea that all of the Asian American groups were similar.

"I don't know."

Three of the interviewees (i.e., 10 percent) openly admitted that they had no answer. This small group of minors felt that they did not have enough information to make a well-informed decision of whether or not they saw a difference between the Asian American groups.

"I don't really know about that." - At

"I don't know. I can't tell between any of them. Yeah, I don't know which ones are which. I don't

look at people like in that way. I don't know." - Tommy

"No. Actually, I don't really know any other - I don't know - cause I only kick it with Vietnamese people." - John.

At, Tommy, and John made up a particularly small group minors that felt they did not have enough experience with other groups of Asian Americans to determine an answer. Like most of the other minors, these three came from schools that were predominantly Vietnamese.

"There is a difference."

Of the twenty-eight that were interviewed, a majority 42 percent (n=12) saw differences between the Asian American groups. Although all of them agreed that there was a difference, their responses differed in what kind of differences they saw. While some model minority deviants saw differences in appearance, others delved further into the achievements and failures of certain groups. Some of them noted that the Chinese were doing exceptionally well.

"The Chinese are smarter." - Sodana

"I think like - I don't really meet the Korean people, Chinese barely, but they actually do like, they study more than us." - Nam

"Like in another - Chinese they like work hard. They like don't get into trouble or anything." - Thoi

"The Chinese people, I think like - they're up there, you know. They're coming up in life. That's what we need to do, you know, not just Chinese, but all Asians you know." - Ngor

The words of these minors illustrated their perception of Chinese American success in comparison to the other Asian American groups. In the last comment made by Ngor, the Chinese were seen as the embodiment of what other Asian American groups should strive toward.

Unfortunately while the Chinese were being praised for their achievements, other Asian American groups were noted for their misdoings.

"I don't think that there is much difference, but Vietnamese tend to get into a lot more trouble, like a lot of gangs." - Vinh

"Most of the Vietnamese people I know are going to continuation or community school right now." - Thanh

"I don't know like for me, Cambodian, some of them, they're good person, most of them because they grow up in the ghetto, you know. I think that's why we have an extra challenge in school." - Samnang

"Some Cambodians, they seem like they don't even care about school. Like when I hear them, 'oh I don't care about school.' I would never say that you know." - Van

For these individuals, they saw the Vietnamese and the Cambodians as not doing so well inside and outside of school. Like Samieth, some of them believed that the social environment had an effect in the level of success for the different Asian American groups. Anh and Thanh, two other minors, tried to explain this difference in environment.

"Cause we're usually in different neighborhoods then the - cause the Chinese and Japanese are usually in the white part of town, while we're all in the Vietnamese part of town."

"Nah, most of them like I ain't trying to pick on no Asians, but most of the people that go to my school like Japanese, Chinese, they're all smart, and when I see the Vietnamese, Filipinos, Cambodians [at other schools] and stuff like that, I see them all thugged out and stuff." -
Thanh

Anh and Thanh's explanation seemed to physically delineate between the East Asian and the Southeast Asian neighborhoods of the county. When looking at the demographics of Santa Clara County, there observations appeared to be accurate. The county's racial demographics based on geography revealed an apparent segregation between the East and the Southeast Asians in the county (see Table 4.2). The city of Cupertino is predominantly an East Asian community while Evergreen is predominantly a Southeast Asian community.

Table 4.2 Geographic Distribution of Asian Americans 2000

(Cupertino vs. Evergreen: Zip code 95121)

	Cupertino	Evergreen
Total Asian	22,807	17,436
Asian Indian	4,442	1,109
Bangladeshi	15	20
Cambodian	8	524
Chinese (except Taiwanese)	11,531	1,939
Filipino	405	3,574
Hmong	0	5
Indonesian	43	17
Japanese	2,450	225
Korean	2,153	147
Laotian	1	101
Malaysian	18	1
Pakistani	115	32
Sri Lankan	34	5
Taiwanese	860	21
Thai	48	34
Vietnamese	556	9,549
Other Asian	28	15
Other Asian, not specified	100	118

Source: American Factfinder***The Asian American Hierarchy***

The Asian American hierarchy is often talked about among Asian Americans, but rarely written about or analyzed. In the study of these Asian Americans in juvenile hall, it became necessary to disclose the apparent hierarchy that exists in the perceptions of some Asian Americans.

According to a number of the model minority deviants, there was a view that some Asian American groups were considered to be on top, while others on the bottom. Their narratives suggested a division between the East and the Southeast Asian American groups.

Figure 4.3 Asian American Majority-Minority Relations

According to John Farley, author of *Majority-Minority Relations*, hierarchies are inevitable when there are significant differences in the distribution of wealth, power, and/or social status among a group (Farley 1995, 2). When looking at the distribution of wealth for Asian Americans, Farley's argument is confirmed for the Asian American group.

Table 4.4 Per Capita Income for Asian Americans 1990

Ethnic Group	Income in 1989 dollars
Total Asian	\$13,806
Japanese	\$19,373
Asian Indian	\$17,777
Chinese	\$14,876
Filipino	\$13,616
Thai	\$11,970
Korean	\$11,177
Vietnamese	\$9,032
Laotian	\$5,597
Cambodian	\$5,120
Hmong	\$2,692
Other Asian	\$11,000

Source: The U.S. Bureau of the Census

From Table 4.4, there is an obvious discrepancy between the incomes of the East Asian Americans and the Southeast Asian Americans. It is through this disparity of wealth that the Asian American hierarchy exists and persists.

Thus, the interviewees' narratives revealed that some of the Asian Americans in juvenile hall were aware of the Asian American hierarchy.

(5) The Gender Misconception with Regard to School

All of the Asian Americans in juvenile hall were asked whether or not they saw differences between the Asian American male students and female students. The majority of their responses depicted Asian American female students in

a more positive light. Many of them talked about how the girls in their classes cared more about school, worked harder, and were well behaved in class. Some concluded that the Asian American girls were undoubtedly smarter than the boys.

"Well what I notice from when I was in high school, most of the females were a lot more into school, and like they're much smarter." - Paul

"Girls always, you know, doing what they supposed to do. And the guys, some good, some messing around." - Nam

"The girls who are Asian, from what I've seen, all the Asian girls that are in school are doing good, A's and B's. They get almost all straight A's. When they get one B, they go up and complain. But boys they don't care. That's why they mostly drop out." - Ninh

"I read a lot of magazines. Yeah, that's what they say. Girls are faster than guys, and they're a lot smarter than guys." Tam

"The girls have good grades and the boys have bad grades." - Van

Thus, many of the Asian Americans in juvenile hall seemed to agree that the Asian American females focused more on school and, as a result, tended to excel in the academics. However, this became a misconception when looking at the statistics for educational attainment by sex for Asian Americans (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 Asian American Educational Attainment by Sex 1990

(Percent 25 years old and over)

	High school Graduate Higher			Bachelor's Degree or Higher	
	Male	Female		Male	Female
Total Population	75.7	74.8		23.3	17.6
Total Asian	81.7	73.9		43.2	32.7
Chinese	77.2	70.2		46.7	35.0
Filipino	84.2	81.4		36.2	41.6
Japanese	89.9	85.6		42.6	28.2
Asian Indian	89.4	79.0		65.7	48.7
Korean	89.1	74.1		46.9	25.9
Vietnamese	68.5	53.3		22.3	12.2
Cambodian	46.2	25.3		8.6	3.2
Hmong	44.1	19.0		7.0	3.0
Laotian	49.4	29.8		7.0	3.5
Thai	88.6	66.2		47.7	24.9
Other Asian	85.6	78.7		47.5	34.2

Source: The U.S. Bureau of the Census

In general, Asian American males had higher rates than Asian American females for both high school graduation or higher and bachelor's degree or higher. Comparing the total Asian American rates with the total population rates revealed that the gap between the males and females was greater in the Asian American context than for the entire United States population. For the high school graduate and higher, the male-female percent difference was only .9 percent for the total population, but 7.8 percent for the

total Asian American population. The gap between the educational attainment for males and females was even greater for Southeast Asian American groups in the table.

These statistics suggest that some of the model minority deviants' perception that Asian American girls excelled in school was, in fact, a gender misconception. Contrary to the assumptions of model minority deviants, Asian American girls were less likely to complete high school or a bachelor's degree than girls than the boys.

Seeking to explain why this occurs with Asian Americans girls, Rosalind Mau's research suggest that "since the traditional role for the [Asian American] girls is watching younger siblings and cleaning the home, their role at home may interfere with their role as students" (Mau 1990, 183-197). Many of the girls Mau's study expressed role conflicts between the home and school settings. Often, this leads to the abandoning of one role for the other. The statistics imply that most of these girls tend to renounce their school roles for their home roles.

From the Female Model Minority Deviant Point of View

How did the one female model minority deviant feel when asked the same question about Asian American gender difference in school? Thuy took a different approach to the question than the rest of the interviewees, who were all males. Instead of focusing on the obviously educational aspects like her male counterparts, she focused more on the biological and social interaction. Thuy initially addressed the biological differences.

"Yeah, boys have something I don't want to say,
and girls have something I don't want to say." -
Thuy

Thuy was referring to the difference in genitals of Asian American male and female students.

Trying to move beyond the biological, she was asked to answer the same question, but with regard to school. She replied:

"They get treated more special." - Thuy

According to Thuy, Asian American female students were treated better than the Asian American male students. She did not address the differences that directly affected schooling like working hard or being smart.

Unfortunately, Thuy only gives an initial glance of the female perspective. In order to successfully provide voices for female model minority deviants, more of them

need to be interviewed in the future research. They are clearly underrepresented in the research on Asian Americans.

Conclusion

The five issues regarding (1) the familial matters, (2) the minors' unique educational experiences, (3) the ineffective labeling theory, (4) the hidden Asian American hierarchy, and (5) the gender misconception with regard to school all manifested from my interviews with the Asian Americans in juvenile hall. By addressing the issues that I found in their individual narratives, it is my hope that I have given model minority deviants a voice to counter the silencing imposed on them by the model minority image.

Chapter 5

Implications for the Future

Institutional Support

The three most important institutions in society that are able to directly help model minority deviants are the family, the school, and the juvenile justice system. Support in these three establishments serve as the backbone for the socialization of Asian American juveniles similar to the ones that were interviewed in this study. In order to understand the needs of these model minority deviants, an investigation of how they interact with these three institutions is essential.

The Family

The power of the family must not be underestimated in the lives of these Asian American delinquents. As the first institution in which an individual interacts with, the family serves as the single most important socializing unit. From the family, young people learn the rules of behavior in society and how to take the appropriate steps

to keep themselves within those rules (Curry and Decker 1998, 123).

Problems with the family, such as unstable family structure, weak paternal relationships, and negative influences from siblings, interrupt the effective socialization of these model minority deviants. Amendments in these three areas will hopefully prevent Asian American delinquents from continuing to deviate. The strength and stability of a family can serve as a support system for the model minority deviant.

The School

"After the family, schools are the most powerful socializing agent in the lives of adolescents" (Curry and Decker 1998, 124) Children attend school almost everyday not only to learn, but also to interact with their peers and various adults. Students interact with others from a variety of backgrounds, and may be influenced in either positive or negative ways.

The Asian Americans in juvenile hall are unique in that they carry the burden of the model minority stereotype. Despite its perceived positivism, there are many negative consequences that occur as a result of the

stereotype. In the school context, school officials must not let the model minority image blind them to the problems that some Asian American delinquents, in fact, face. Language difficulties and special education issues are just a couple of problems that some of the model minority deviants might be struggling with. By ignoring these problems, the Asian Americans in juvenile hall are more likely to continue their model minority deviance.

The Juvenile Justice System

For some juvenile delinquents, the juvenile justice system may play a more important role in their lives than their own families or their schools (Curry and Decker 1998, 132). Many of the deviants end up in juvenile hall because they were either having problems with their families or their schools. Thus, the juvenile justice system becomes the last resort for proper socialization of delinquent youth.

With regard to model minority deviants, the juvenile justice system, like the school, must not overlook the possible problems facing incarcerated Asian American youth. Juvenile hall may be the primary source of stability in their lives, and the one chance in which they can overcome

their social and/or academic problems. This fact must be taken advantage of once the juvenile justice system retains custody of model minority deviants. The juvenile justice system must not assume that just because model minority deviants are Asian Americans, they are invincible to the problems facing other juvenile delinquents.

Future Research

My research on model minority deviance has raised additional questions that must be addressed in future qualitative and quantitative research. These questions include:

- Do Asian Americans recognize Asian American delinquency?
- Does Asian American delinquency vary based on the racial demographics of a geographic region?
- How do the racial demographics for the juvenile hall compare with the national average?
- How do Asian Americans feel about the "Asian American hierarchy?"
- Why is there an overrepresentation of Vietnamese in the juvenile hall?
- What are the differences between the different Asian American juvenile delinquents?

- Why is there an overrepresentation of males in the juvenile hall?
- What are the life experiences of female model minority deviants?
- Are there other forms of model minority deviance beyond the criminal justice system?
- How can new Asian American identities beyond the model minority be created?

In addition to these ensuing questions, there is also the lack of Asian American voice when discussing Asian Americans in the larger American society. "Asian American voices have been conspicuously absent from the literature that describes Asian Americans as model minorities" (Lee 1996, 2). There is a need to look within the Asian American community rather than at it when researching Asian Americans. Thus, further research is needed from the Asian American perspective.

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