

Oral History Strategies: Finding and Telling the Story

MODULE 2

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Learning Objectives

- Introduce the concept of oral history
- Familiarize students with best practices for conducting an oral history
- Have students connect oral history as a practice with Ethnic Studies as a discipline
- Introduce the model minority stereotype
- Analyze examples of cultural representations of Asian Americans as the model minority
- Introduce counter-narratives to the model minority stereotype

Lesson 1: What is an oral history?

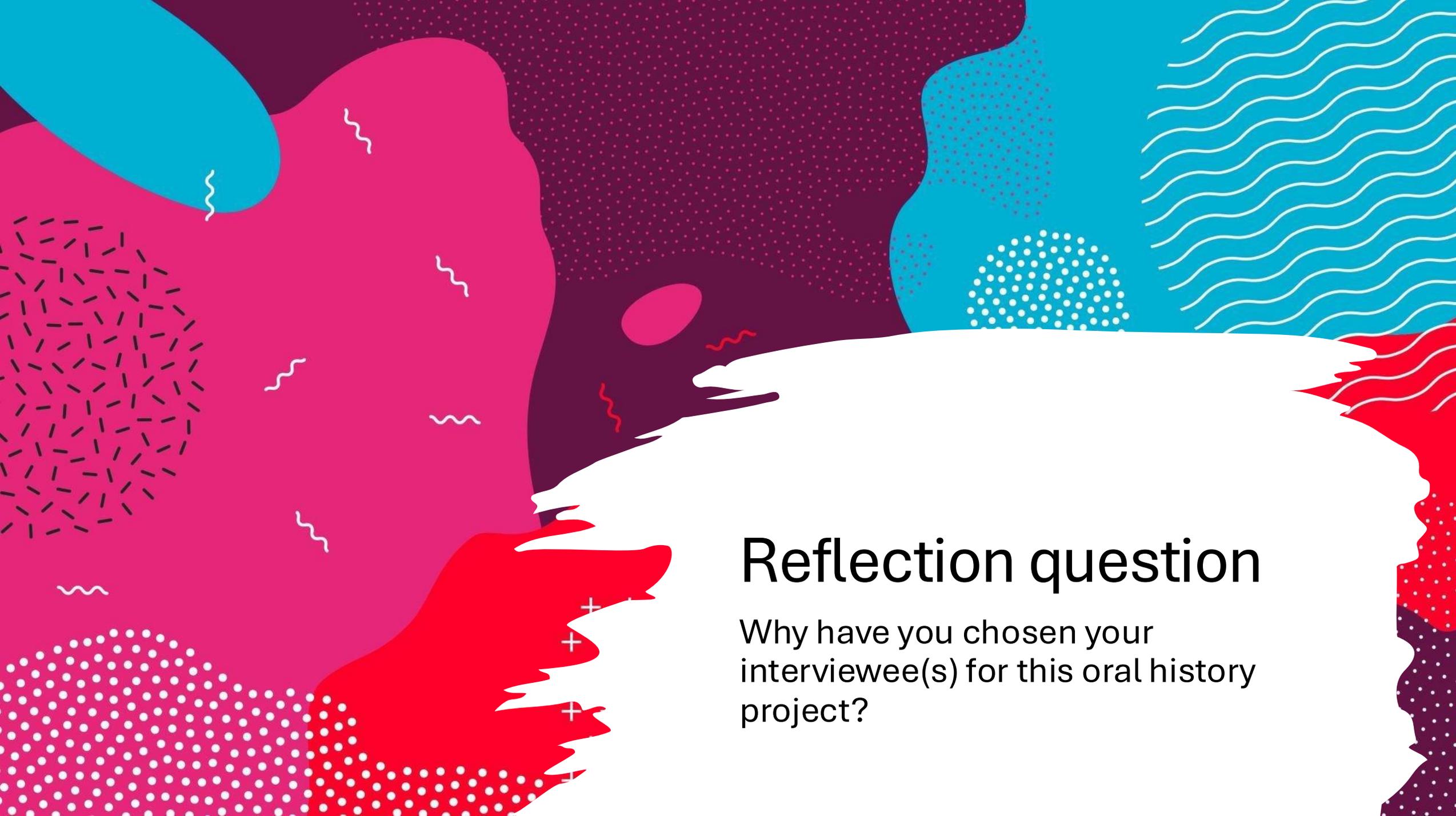
Warm-up questions

What surprising thing(s) did you learn about Asian American history from watching the interview?

What did you learn about conducting an oral history interview?

What is an oral history?

- According to the Oral History Association, "Oral history refers to both the interview process and the products that result from a recorded spoken interview (whether audio, video, or other formats)."
- Oral Histories are also:
 - A way of preserving the past
 - A practice guided by mutual respect
 - A way of understanding history from different perspectives
 - An opportunity to uplift historically marginalized people and their stories
 - An invitation to have a meaningful conversation with someone who lived through historic events

The background is a vibrant, abstract composition. It features large, organic shapes in shades of pink, magenta, and red. A prominent blue shape in the upper right contains white wavy lines. Another blue shape in the center has a white dotted pattern. The bottom left corner is filled with a dense pattern of white dots on a pink background. Small white squiggly lines and plus signs are scattered throughout the composition. A large, white, brush-stroke-like shape on the right side frames the text.

Reflection question

Why have you chosen your interviewee(s) for this oral history project?



How to conduct an oral history?

Review the [Guiding Principles](#) and [Best Practices](#) from the Oral History Association

Practice Activity

- In pairs: each person will tell a story of something impactful that happened to them recently. When telling the story, the listener should practice:
 - Showing engagement with the speaker through eye contact, head nodding, and/or other forms of body language
 - Asking follow-up questions to draw more detail from the speaker
 - Reflecting back what they heard to ensure they remember the story accurately
- Once both people have gone, reflect on the experience as both a speaker and a listener.

The background features a dark maroon base with various abstract shapes and patterns. On the left, there's a teal shape with a dashed border. Below it is a circular area filled with small black dashes. At the bottom left, a teal shape contains a pattern of small white dots. In the center, a large teal shape has a pattern of small white dots. To its right, a red shape contains a pattern of small white dots. At the bottom center, a red shape contains a pattern of small white plus signs. On the right side, there are several horizontal wavy lines in teal and red. The text "Lesson 2: The Model Minority Stereotype" is centered in white, with a white horizontal line underneath it.

Lesson 2: The Model Minority Stereotype

SUCCESS STORY OF ONE MINORITY GROUP IN U.S.

At a time when Americans are awash in worry over the plight of racial minorities—

One such minority, the nation's 300,000 Chinese-Americans, is winning wealth and respect by dint of its own hard work.

In any Chinatown from San Francisco to New York, you discover youngsters at grips with their studies. Crime and delinquency are found to be rather minor in scope.

Still being taught in Chinatown is the old idea that people should depend on their own efforts—not a welfare check—in order to reach America's "promised land."



Schooling is important to Chinese-American

any member of the family who does
and who just plays around."

It was during California's
that large numbers of Chinese
coming to America.

The myth of the model minority

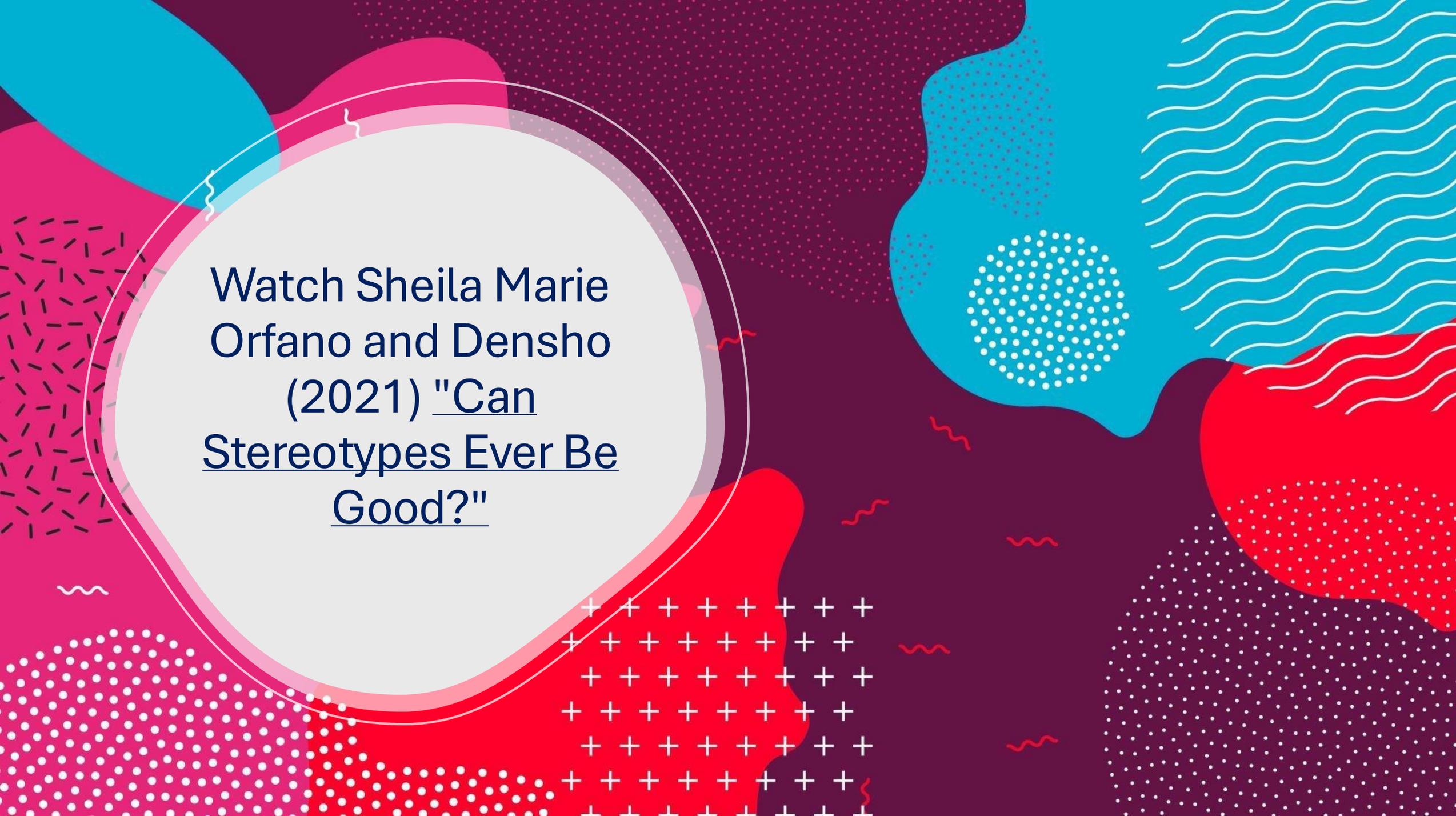
Dec 26, 1966

"Success Story of
One Minority Group in
the US" in *U.S. News
and World Report*

Asian Americans and Education

"If assimilation and other trends mean that the dramatic concentration of superstudents has peaked, talented young Asian Americans have already shown that U.S. education can still produce excellence. The largely successful Asian-American experience is a challenging counterpoint to the charges that U.S. schools are now producing less-educated mainstream students and failing to help underclass blacks and Hispanics" (Brand, 1987).



The background is a vibrant, abstract composition. It features large, overlapping organic shapes in teal, pink, and red. The teal shapes include a large one with a white dotted pattern and another with white wavy lines. The pink area has a pattern of small white dashes. The red area at the bottom is filled with a grid of small white plus signs. The overall background is a dark purple with a fine white dot pattern. A large, light-colored circle with a thin white border is centered on the left side, containing the text.

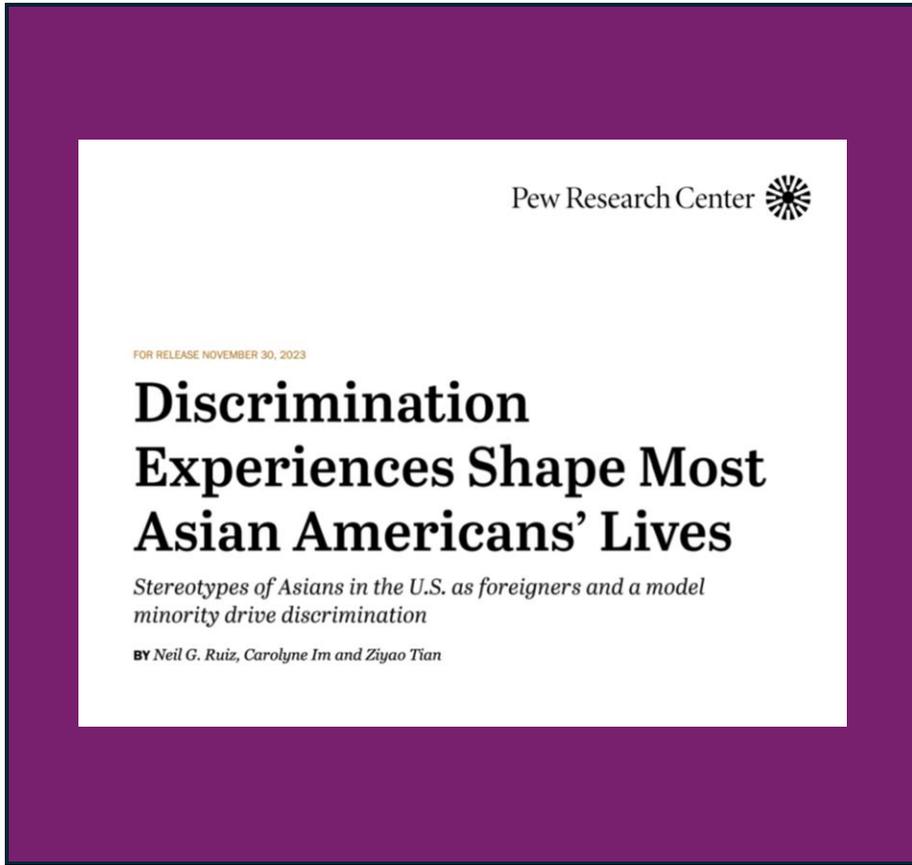
Watch Sheila Marie
Orfano and Densho
(2021) "Can
Stereotypes Ever Be
Good?"

The background is a vibrant, abstract composition. It features a dark purple field with a fine white dot pattern. Overlaid on this are several organic, flowing shapes in bright cyan, magenta, and red. The cyan shapes include a large one with white wavy lines and another with a white dot pattern. The magenta area contains several white wavy lines and a circular pattern of small black dashes. The red area at the bottom left has white plus signs. A large, white, brush-stroke-like shape on the right side frames the text.

Discussion questions

How does the model minority stereotype differentiate Asian Americans from other communities of color in the US? Why is this problematic?

The Persistence of Stereotypes



- Review on the Pew Research Center's [Report on "Asian Americans and the 'Model Minority' Stereotype"](#) (Ruiz et al, 2023)
- Questions for discussion:
 - What surprised you about the data on how Asian Americans view and/or experience the model minority myth in 2023?
 - Based on the data from Pew Research Center, construct *one narrative* about how Asian Americans view or experience the model minority stereotype.



ASIAN AMERICANS

Watch video clip: "The Model Minority Myth"
from *Asian Americans*
(PBS, 2020)



Compare/contrast forms of storytelling

- How do seeing numbers and statistics about the model minority myth impact you differently than the personal stories from the PBS clip?
- When might one form of storytelling be more effective over the other? In other words, when would you choose to tell a story using statistics and when would you choose to use a personal story?

The background is a vibrant, abstract composition. It features large, organic shapes in shades of teal, maroon, and red. These shapes are filled with various patterns: some have a fine dotted texture, others have wavy white lines, and some have a grid of small white dashes or plus signs. The overall aesthetic is modern and artistic.

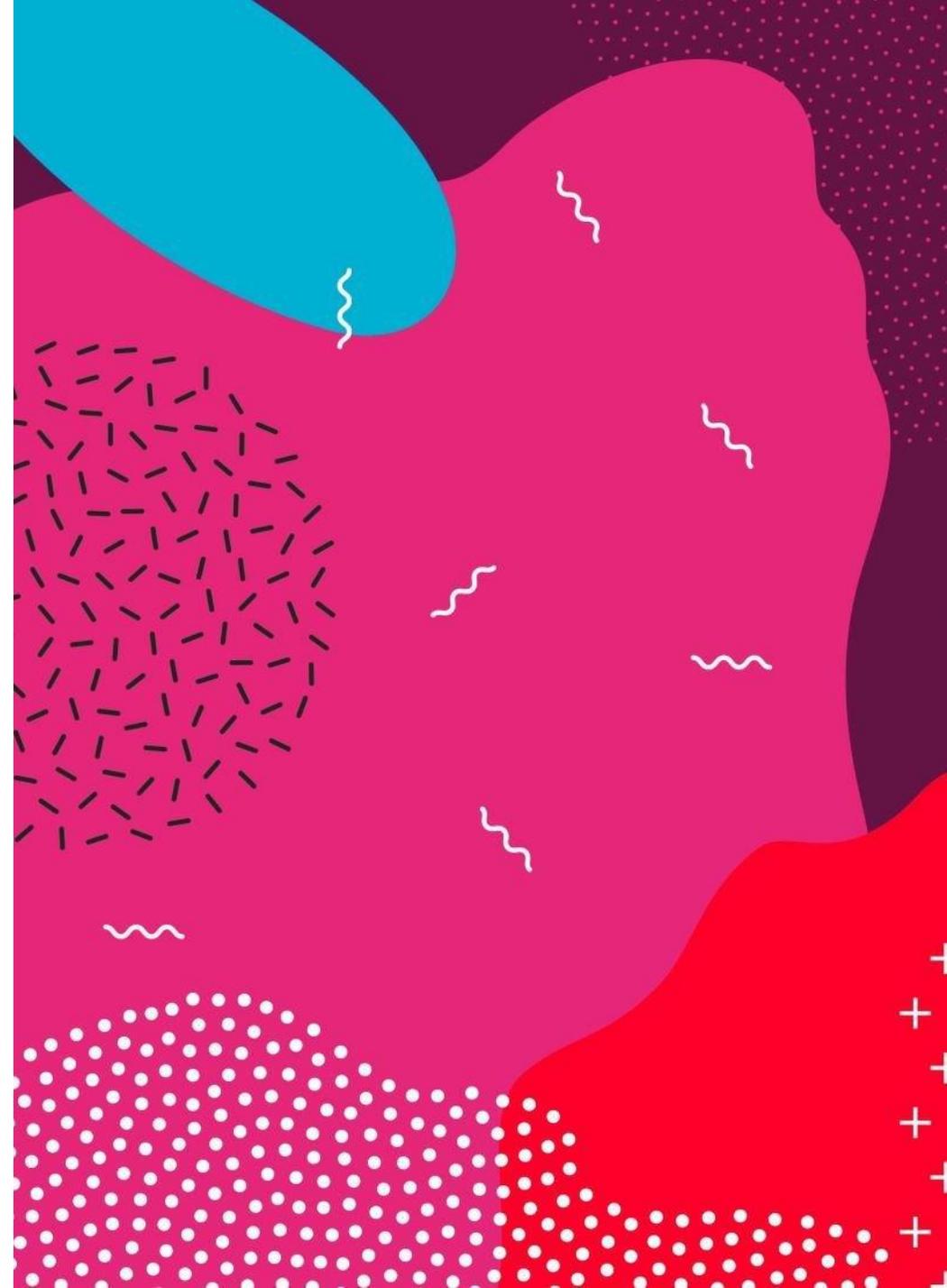
Lesson 3: Creating Counter-Narratives

Guiding Question

What are some narratives that counter the stereotype of Asian Americans as the "model minority"?

Connecting fiction to history

- Review Anthony Veasna So's "Superking Son Scores Again" and Noy Thrupkaew's "Myth of the Model Minority"
- Find 2-3 concrete examples from Thrupkaew's article that help contextualize events in So's story. In other words, what examples from Thrupkaew provide further evidence of the challenges faced by the Cambodian and Khmer communities in the US?
- Discuss: How do both texts challenge the image of Asian Americans as a "model of Asian Americans as a "model minority"?



The background is a vibrant, abstract composition. It features large, organic shapes in shades of magenta, red, and cyan. A dark purple area with a fine dot pattern is visible in the upper left. A light blue area with a larger dot pattern is on the right. The bottom left corner has a red area with a white dot pattern, and a red area with a white plus sign pattern is at the bottom center. Small, wavy lines in white and red are scattered throughout the design.

Analyzing Fiction: "Superking Son Scores Again"

The elements of fiction



Narrator: the one telling the story; sometimes the narrator is also a character in the story.



Character: a person in the story



Setting: the place *and time* in which a story takes place



Plot: the series of events in the story



Symbol: an object that has deeper meaning in the story; there can be more than one symbol in any story



Mood: the overall atmosphere or feel of a story, created through word choice, images, interactions between characters, etc



Theme: an important idea that gets repeated throughout the story; there can be more than one theme in any story

Analyzing Setting in "Superking Son"

- Reminder: **setting** refers to place *and time* because the meaning or significance of a place can change depending on the time period.
- Examples: Superking Grocery Store and the High School gym, the two main settings in the story
- Compare/contrast these two main settings and how their meaning changes over the course of the story
- Pay special attention to how the meaning changes for different characters in the story



The background is a vibrant, abstract composition. It features a dark purple field with a fine white dot pattern. Overlaid on this are several organic shapes: a large blue shape with a white dot pattern, a red shape with a white plus sign pattern, and a red shape with a white wavy line pattern. The text is contained within a white, torn-edge paper-like shape.

Discussion Questions

How did Superking Son's character arc make you think differently about the grocery store and the high school gym over the course of the story?



Final thoughts: connecting to the oral history

Think about the ways that actual people moving through physical spaces infuse those spaces with meaning.

When conducting your oral history, how will you tap into that unique character development that happened within your assigned place?



Module 2

Assessment: Oral History

Each group will conduct an oral history interview with at least one person associated with their assigned place. They will submit

- Signed release form from the interviewee(s)
- A recording and/or transcript of the interview(s)
- A list of important themes from the interview(s) supported by quotes from the interviewee(s)
- A brief analysis of how the themes might connect to some of the research they've done on the place

Sources

- Slides were created with the help of MS Copilot