

## RESEARCH REPORTS

*Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions*

### *“Factors Affecting East Asian Views of the United States: The Search for Common Ground.”*

Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1800 K St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. 77 pp. \$19.95

Author: *David I. Hitchcock*

East Asia’s financial crisis has quieted talk of the “East Asian miracle.” Now, perhaps, the notion of “Asian values” championed by Singapore’s Lee Kwan Yew and others can also be put in perspective. After interviewing 100 “opinion leaders” from seven nations, Hitchcock, a senior associate at Washington’s Center for Strategic and International Studies, finds that East Asians’ assertive claims about “Asian values” have stemmed in part from anxiety about social problems in their own countries—the same sort of problems that worry Americans.

In each country—Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, China, South Korea, and Japan—Hitchcock found that rapid economic and social change have produced “a sense of loss as old traditions weaken and urbanization brings new life styles.” Divorce rates, while still far lower than in America, are mounting; in urban areas of Thailand,

Malaysia, and Singapore, the rates have nearly doubled. The elderly increasingly live on their own. Drug abuse is rising (14 percent of teenagers surveyed in Malaysia were using hard drugs), school dropouts are more numerous, and crime and juvenile delinquency are on the upswing.

Asians have mixed feelings about the United States, and many resent U.S. demands for reforms in trade and other areas that would only accelerate social and economic change, and their accompanying problems.

The trend, a lawyer in Kuala Lumpur lamented, “is towards materialism—we are losing sight of values in the race for materialism.” Although many temples, shrines, mosques, and churches are crowded, Hitchcock writes, skepticism is common in the region “about the ability of religion or traditional concepts to reverse the deterioration of old values.”

### *“Race, Self-Employment, and Upward Mobility: An Illusive American Dream.”*

Woodrow Wilson Center Press/Johns Hopkins University Press. Order from Johns Hopkins University Press, Hampden Station, Baltimore, Md. 21211. 288 pp. \$16.95

Author: *Timothy Bates*

Seeing Asian-owned convenience stores, dry cleaners, and other small retail ventures in America’s cities, many people ask: where are all the black entrepreneurs? The surprising answer advanced by Bates, a professor of labor and urban affairs at Wayne State University and a former Wilson Center Fellow, is that they have better paths into business. “Running a small retail store in the ghetto, bluntly, is a waste of their time,” he writes.

Contrary to the stereotype, Bates says, small businesses are generally the domain of well-educated and highly skilled people. “The bedrock of small-firm creation is the owner’s human capital, that is, the founder’s education, training, work experience, and skills.” Many Asian business owners are underemployed, “blocked from occupying professional or managerial jobs . . . because of language barriers or employ-

er hesitation to recognize foreign credentials.” Often, moreover, Asians launching new businesses have good access to capital, including assets of their own and funds borrowed from banks, friends, and ethnic networks.

In a Census Bureau database of 25,337 start-ups between 1979 and ‘87, nearly 58 percent of the Asian business starters held college degrees, compared with 30.2 percent of their black counterparts and 37.7 percent of their nonminority counterparts.

Most new firms are launched by experienced people in their thirties and forties, Bates says. The first generation of blacks with widespread access to higher education is now entering those years. Indeed, black-owned firms are proliferating in lucrative fields such as finance, manufacturing, and business and professional services.