MAINSTREAM U.S. CULTURE

IDENTITY: INDIVIDUAL VS. GROUP

The general litmus test for determining whether you have a member of group identity is whether you, as an individual, feel implicated by what other members of your group do. In that regard, each CWM feels, by and large, responsible only for what he does or has done as an individual, not for what other white men have done. This is in stark contrast to the more ethnic/tribal view of members of other groups who do feel implicated by what other members of their group do. Compare the different group responses to the serial killers, Jeffrey Dahmer and the Washington DC, sniper shooters, John Allen Muhammad (African American) and Lee Boyd Malvo (Jamaican). No U.S. white man thought that he was personally implicated by what Dahmer, a white man, had done. Likewise, no white man in the U.S. felt personally implicated by the actions of Timothy McVeigh in Oklahoma City. To white men in the U.S., the fact that Dahmer and McVeigh also happened to be white men was irrelevant. White men said, "That was Dahmer and McVeigh. That wasn't me!" However, in the African American and Jamaican communities, the talk was filled with consternation and astonishment on the discovery that the snipers were respectively African American and Jamaican. African Americans and Jamaicans said, "Why did it have to be one of us." African Americans added, "We never do serial killing. That's a White thing!" Likewise the Korean community response to the Virginia Tech shooter, Cho Seung-Hui: "When Yung Yang, a South Korean-born secretary in Annandale, heard the first rumors that the man who had slaughtered 32 people at Virginia Tech University was Asian, she said a fervent prayer: 'Please don't let him turn out to be Korean.'"[2] Other Koreans responded insimilar fashion, most notably, South Korea's ambassador to Washington, Lee Tae Shik, who said, "The Korean American community needed to 'repent' … to prove that Koreans were a 'worthwhile ethnic minority in America.'"[3]

Within the workplace, each CWM is primarily out for himself ("number one"). In the broader social context, white men can be out for themselves without shame or guilt (or being labeled "selfish" by other CWM). By way of contrast, when our colleague, Ilya Adler, asked his class of Mexican college students whom they thought Anglos referred to when they spoke of "looking out for number one," their responses ranged from "family," "boss,", "mother," and were shocked when told that each U.S.

CWM meant himself when "looking out for number one." Despite their representation in high level positions, CWM do not attribute their success to having been members of a white male group, but, rather, to individual qualities and forms of preparation that enabled them to take advantage of opportunities at different times in their life.

2 Aizenman, N. C., Constable, P. April 18, 2007. "'Every Korean Person Is So Very Sorry' From N. Virginia to Seoul, A Plea to Avoid Stereotypes," in The Washington Post, pp. A10.
3 Hong, A. April 20, 2007. "Koreans Aren't to Blame," Ibid., pp. A31.