

This bachelor's thesis aims to examine the causes behind conflicts between two American ethnic minority groups – African Americans and Korean Americans. Problems between the members of these two groups were observed in all America's large cities in the 1980s and 1990s. The thesis begins with a short overview of the characteristics of the conflicts between the two groups. Subsequently, the media constructions and explanations of the conflicts are presented and discussed. The analytical part seeks to examine various approaches to explaining the tensions between African Americans and Koreans. It begins with examination of the common daily experiences of the two groups in Korean American stores in African American neighbourhoods that unveils the basic aspects of problematic co-existence between them. Next, the thesis examines the psychological process of negative stereotyping, the Middlemen minority theory (a socio-structural and economic theory), and the ideological, political and entrepreneurial motivations of the leaders of the anti-Korean protests to explain the likely causes of the tensions between Koreans and African Americans. The thesis concludes that the tensions between the groups were primarily caused by negative stereotypes of the other ethnicity, economic tensions between the different status groups (merchant-customer), bad experience of Koreans with African American criminality, and different norms of social exchange in merchant-customer relation. The thesis however also explains the tensions in terms of power struggle, as it points out the importance of African American activists, who used the ideology of Black Nationalism as a tool of mobilization of African American support against Koreans for the purpose of promoting their own control and influence over the primarily black neighbourhoods.