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Broken English and Fixed Stereotypes: The Portrayal of Asian Americans in the Popular Media

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BROKEN ENGLISH AND FIXED STEREOTYPES:
The Portrayal of Asian Americans in the Popular Media

By
Alice C. Huang

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
Honors in the Department of Anthropology

ABSTRACT

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Since the arrival of East Asian people to the United States of America in the nineteenth century, their portrayal in the popular media has largely consisted of stereotypes: John Chinaman, Charlie Chan, Fu Manchu, Geisha Girl, etc. To investigate if there are changes in the representation of Asian Americans in the popular media, two types of research methods were utilized: content analysis and surveys. With over 300 surveys distributed electronically on the Union College campus, 56 responses were received. The survey was composed of 30.4% Asian Americans and 69.6% Caucasian Americans. The surveys had some interesting trends, which indicate that the more time an Asian American spends in the United States, the less sensitive he or she is to other Asian Americans in the popular media. Asian Americans were also more likely than Caucasian Americans to assume another Asian American actor was born outside of the United States of America. This trend suggests that Asian Americans imitate the cultural snobbery of their Caucasian American counterparts, revealing more complex issues with their identity. Second, the content analysis was performed on primetime comedy shows (Family Guy, Modern Family, 30 Rock), and remakes of a primetime drama show (Hawaii Five-O), and a martial arts movie (Karate Kid). The rites of reversals observed in the primetime comedy shows and the dramatic changes in the portrayal of Asian American characters in the remakes signify a transformation in the representation of Asian Americans in the popular media. The dramatic decrease in the number of Asian American stereotypes observed in the analyzed media implies shifting racial attitudes in the United States of America.

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PLOTTING WORLD DOMINATION WHILE EATING DOG

Fortune Cookie #1: Man with one chopstick go hungry.

Once, one of my friends asked me if I had ever eaten a dog in my life.

I responded, “No, but my mother used to threaten to cook my pet rabbit if I didn’t finish the 200 pages of calculus she assigned me every night.”

As I watched my friend’s jaw drop in horror and eyes well up in tears from the trauma of listening to my story, I realized that she had thought my exaggerated joke was actually reality. She genuinely believed that my mother would not hesitate to cook my rabbit due to the overpowering stereotype present in the American media: Asians eat everything that is not fatally poisonous, finding their pet dogs especially tasty.

For example, during the 2000 Academy Awards, Joan Rivers, with more than 30 million viewers, said that to pass time during commercial breaks, the audience can take their dogs for a walk or if they were Filipino, eat them (Wu 2002: 219). Jay Leno has also made jokes about Asian people eating dogs on his late night show, which once had up to 17 million viewers (Quill 2007). In fact, the American public is so entranced by this image of Asians chowing down on a chow-chow that there was a recently circulated urban legend about Taiwanese people barbequing human fetuses, which they purchased for seventy dollars from the hospital. These delicacies were surprisingly unavailable at the local supermarket. Although the pictures that sparked the urban legend were merely snapshots of an art exhibition by the controversial performance artist, Zhu Yu, the racial background of the man “eating a baby” in the picture immediately led to a

believable assumption that Asians have finally slid down the slippery slope and out of their minds; they have begun to eat people (Emery 2007).

When the Chinese immigrants first appeared on the American landscape in the nineteenth century, people in the United States of America, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Horace Greeley, Bayard Taylor and Samuel Goodrich, became utterly disgusted with these “polluted” people. Newspapers greatly indulged in the number of adjectives they conjured up to describe the newly arrived Chinese immigrants: “almond-eyed,” “spindle-legged,” “yellow-skinned,” and “pig-tailed” (Gyory 1998:18).

One of the aspects of these Chinese immigrants that fascinated readers of the newspapers was their diet, especially the delicacies the Chinese immigrants served to their reluctant American neighbors during Chinese New Year: “Visitors...will be served bird nest soup, shark’s fins, fish maw, chop suey, Chinese candies...other concoctions strange to the American taste...” (Dirlik 2001: 78). The nineteenth century newspapers’ extensive coverage of the Chinese cuisine also included some imaginative additions that reaffirmed the belief of the Asian race of being too contaminated for ethnic assimilation in the American culture, as reflected in their diet: “the long tailed brutes are delighting themselves with worm soup, slewed kitten, roasted puppies, young entrails fried with batter, and bird’s nest dressing, opium...” (Dirlik 2001: 138).

In fact, the American public’s fixation on the exotic additions that the Chinese added to their cooking, especially dogs, cats, and rats, carried over to form one of the unique attributes of John Chinaman, a character who began appearing in minstrel shows around the 1850s. Performed in yellowface, the John Chinaman character became so popular on the minstrel stage that one performance troupe, the Buckley Family Minstrels, made the Chinese Theater their

permanent stage. The main audience for these minstrel shows during the nineteenth century was the urban working class. Like the blackface in the 1820s and the 1830s, these minstrel shows often showcased stereotypes of minorities that were deemed a threat to their main audience, using comedy to laugh off class anxieties (Lee 1999: 34).

Many of the minstrel songs in the 19th century, which were reproduced in books called songsters, emphasized the strange cuisine of John Chinaman in an attempt to transform the uncomfortably stark cultural differences of the Chinese immigrants into a comedic art form. Images of the Chinese immigrants scoffing down dogs and cats appeared frequently in these minstrel songs. For example, in Nick Gardner's "Hong Kong," a song that appears in his songster, Two Ring Circus Songster, manages to include a line referring to the peculiarity of the Chinese cuisine that was completely unrelated to the subject of the song:

"My name is Sin Sin, come from China...
Me fetchee large a lillie gal nicee...
Me like bow wow, wellee goddee chow chow
Me like lillie gal, she like me" (Lee 1999: 37).

Another minstrel song that also referred to the Chinese consumption of household pets was Luke Schoolcraft's song, "Heathen Chinee":

"Take a little pussy cat and a little bow bow
Boil 'em in a pot of stew wit a little mouse
Hi! Hi! Hi!" (Lee 1999: 38).

However, the Chinese did not restrict their diet to merely companion pets as seen in Billy Rice's song, "Chinese Ball":

"For supper, we had red eyed cats
And boot-legs stuffed with fleas" (Lee 1999: 38).

By eating "wild animals," the Chinese immigrants were automatically "wild people," unable to fully assimilate into the "civilized" American culture of which they entered into during the nineteenth century. In her article "Ritual and Belief," anthropologist Mary Douglas states that "dirt is a matter out of place" and gives an example of the Jewish restrictions against eating pork, the flesh of a pig that viewed as polluted since it did not fully belong to the category, "normal" farm animals (University of Waterloo 2011). The Chinese, who had never set foot in Americas until the nineteenth century, were physically out of place: they looked different, spoke a different language, and apparently had a very different idea of what was acceptable to eat. In the eyes of nineteenth century Americans, the Chinese belonged to this exotic empire across the ocean, not in the house across the street.

They also did not fit neatly into the two categories in the social order: white and non-white people. Normally, when a minority enters the United States, it occupies the spot of the pyramid below the previous group that had entered the country, according to the rank-sequence rule (Keyes 1981: 58). However, the placement of the Chinese immigrants was made difficult by their unique physical appearance. Although their distinct eyes classified them as a minority, their pale skin also made them "white." Would the white Americans place the Chinese below the African Americans based on the rank-sequence rule or sort them above the African Americans according to the lightness of the skin? Unable to precisely associate these new immigrants with

either a physical geographic location or in the social hierarchy, the Chinese immigrants were viewed as polluted, a case apart. Their pollution is further emphasized by their diet, which revealed their bestiality, a closer connection with nature that is often a characteristic of a structurally inferior group.

Since these new immigrants were polluted, they will never belong to the system. In fact, Hoy Sing's preferred taboo taste for animals is precisely the reason why his Irish wife leaves him for a white man in the song "Hoy Sing, Come From China" (Lee 1999: 76). With the Asian culture's barbaric tendencies running in his blood reflected through his strange diet, the Chinese man was seen as a creature symbolically unable to assimilate into American society, as seen in the loss of his Caucasian wife, and concomitantly his chance to become "American."

Before the first wave of Chinese immigrants to the New World, Americans had already formulated a strong image of China from the writings of others, who had come in contact with these foreigners. Shockingly, writers of the ancient times were extraordinarily gifted in exaggerating the features of the Asians that the Greeks encountered during the expansion of their empire. Hippocrates described the Asians with words that surprisingly withstood centuries: "monotonous...Longheads" with "yellowish complexions as if they suffered from jaundice" whose "uniformity engenders slackness" (Okihiro 1994:7). Aristotle in Politics was more forgiving, saying that the Asians were "intelligent and inventive but lacked spirit...more servile in character" and even "practiced cannibalism" (Okihiro 1994: 8). Since the time when people were worshipping Zeus, Europeans had already begun commenting on the strangeness of the Asian diet. Ctesias, another Greek historian in 5th century B.C., even went as far as depicting Asians without a very important organ in his description of the East: "dog faced creatures without heads." In the Wonders of the East, the authors explained that Asian women were

thirteen feet tall with the tusks of boars, the tails of oxen, the feet of camels and the teeth of donkeys (Okihiro 1994: 14).

Descriptions certainly did not decrease in absurdity around the 1200s when Marco Polo described Asia as a place of “diabolical men, unicorns, Amazons, dog-headed creatures, mountain streams with diamonds, deserts full of ghouls” (Okihiro 1994: 15). Other than Marco Polo’s accounts, The Travels of Sir John Mandeville, became the most famous book on the subject of the Far East from the mid-fourteenth century, with one of its admirers being Christopher Columbus. The book drew Asia as a place of “giants, pygmies, cannibals” (Okihiro 1994: 15).

America was first exposed to East Asians when a few Filipino sailors escaped from a visiting Spanish ship in the mid eighteenth century to reside in the area around Louisiana and Texas (Lee 199: xi). Between the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Chinese sailors can be seen as servants on trading ships as well (Zinzius 2005: 9). However, for those Americans who could not catch the rare sight of the sailors, they could visit the Peale’s Museum in Philadelphia, which opened in 1784. There were everyday items like utensils and weapons and even pictures of the departure of the Empress of China, a ship that had opened the “China market” to the Europeans. The most popular display, however, was the linen wrappings used to bind the feet of Chinese women and the small shoes that upper class women wore in East Asia. In 1805, the museum was so popular that it was rechristened the Philadelphia Museum and sported life size dioramas with detailed wax models (Lee 1999: 28). Another museum in Salem, Massachusetts, boasting of life size clay figures resembling Chinese officials opened in 1799 by the East India Marine Society. In 1838, the Chinese Museum with its eleven dioramas depicting the various hierarchal ranks of Chinese society from farmers to actors was started by Nathan Dunn in an

effort to combat the negative accounts of Chinese people by missionaries, who were aggravated by their inability to convert the natives.

The Barnum's American Museum, which opened in 1834 due to the popularity of the other themed museums, was the first collection to display a live Chinese person as an exhibition: a Chinese woman by the name of Ah Fong May, who "performed Chineseness" or pretended to be a wealthy Chinese lady of rank, at the American Museum, Brooklyn Institute, and City Saloon in New York (Lee 1999: 29). In 1860, Barnum introduced its most successful act: the Asian conjoined twins, Chang and Eng, who had been touring the United States and Europe since 1829. The twins accumulated so much wealth from their shows that they married two white women, purchased two farms in western North Carolina, and had twenty two children. In fact, Americans were so enamored by the strangeness of Asians that for fifteen cents, they could purchase publications, like "His Gags and Stump Speeches: N-gger and Dutch Stores and Dialogues," "Broken Chinees," and "Dialect Pieces and Queer Conundrums" to familiarize themselves with Chinese pidgin.

Like Europe, America also experienced orientalism, the long-standing fascination with the possibilities that lay in the Far East, as seen through their obsession with these exhibitions (Lim 2006: 53). However, apart from the museum exhibitions, Americans were relatively unaware of the happenings in China. For example, in 1785, George Washington was startled to hear that the Chinese were not white. The first time Americans were exposed to the Far East was when China opened its doors for trade to the American ship, the Empress of China, in 1784 (Okihiro 1994: 20).

The Opium War, from 1839 to 1842, was the first key historical event in which the American newspapers began covering the Celestial Empire in the Far East, described by them as

a place of “deceit...despotism, xenophobia, cruelty, infanticide, intellectual and sexual perversity” (Gyory 1998: 10). When foreign merchants first introduced opium to the Chinese in the 1830s, nine out of ten Chinese in the Kwantung Province were classified as addicts by 1838 (Dirlik 2001: 129). Several million out of the four hundred million Chinese under the Celestial Empire were addicted to opium by the first Opium War (Zhu 1997: 81). The stereotype of the Chinese smoking opium became so popular that by the mid-1870s, the majority of the newspapers in the United States ran a story on the opium dens organized by the Chinese people in America. In fact, every tour of Chinatown had a stop at an opium den (Dirlik 2001: 129).

In the early nineteenth century, Americans’ perception of the strangeness of East Asians was built solely on the vast distance between the two countries; the physical separation of America from the Celestial Empire by the Pacific Ocean was “used to define the racial differences.” The East Asians were “distant,” and so they were “exotic” (Lee 1999: 28). Since the Chinese never set foot in the United States, they were outsiders, entities that were external to the structural arrangements of the social hierarchal system of the American culture. They participated in the structure of the American culture as much as fairies, Bigfoot, and vampires did.

As for the story of how I responded to my friend’s question of my diet by saying that my mother used to pressure me into doing my daily assignment of two hundred pages of calculus by threatening to cook my pet bunny, only one half of this tale is true. I ask you to guess which fraction of the sentence is true and which part is just a stereotype.

SWARMING COOLIES

Fortune Cookie #1840: Man who fish in other man's well often catch crabs.

What happens when the distance between the West and the Far East becomes not so far?

The foreignness of East Asians based on the distance between the two countries was demolished when the first immigrant from China arrived at the United States Office of Immigration in 1820. In 1840, eleven Chinese people immigrated to the United States with three of them being students at the Manson Academy in Massachusetts (Zinzius 2005: 9). The small number of Chinese immigrants was barely noticed by the American public; based on previous observations of Mongolians and Persians made centuries before, newspapers described the “Chinaman [as] cold, cunning, distrustful, quarrelsome, vindictive, timid...” even before their arrival (Min 1995: 73).

However, in the 1850s, the first large wave of Chinese immigrants swept through America after the Chinese heard about the gold rush in Sacramento, California (Zinzius 2005: 9). In the mid nineteenth century, more than 370,000 Guangdong residents crossed the ocean to work in “sugar plantations, miners, railroads, wheat, veggies, fruits, cigar, clothes, shoe-making, laundries, restaurants, groceries, gift shops, herbal medicine, salmon canneries” (Cassel 2002: 125). Since the time for a ship to travel from Hong Kong to San Francisco was substantially less than if employers recruited workers from the East Coast and Panama, the demand for these Chinese workers was high. Operating on a credit system which, in effect, created indentured servants, the immigrants had to work off the cost of their ticket to the United States. The business owners called for so many Chinese laborers that by 1852, ships carrying thousands of Chinese workers regularly docked in the ports (Zinzius 2005: 12). In fact, the number of Chinese

people living in the Chinatown of San Francisco exploded from 2,719 residents in 1860 to 21,745 inhabitants by 1880 (Zinzius 2005: 15). Also, the population of the Chinese in the Boise Basin in Idaho increased so dramatically from ten men in 1865 to more than 15,000 Chinese immigrants that the area was constantly experiencing water shortages (Zhu 1997: 52). By 1869, “an American could scarcely pick up a newspaper...without reading about some new plan to import Chinese workers to the U.S.” (Gyory 1998: 34). The sudden influx of Chinese immigrants was immediately seen as a “massive storming” of a strange minority into America (Zinzius 2005: 12).

Although the majority of the Chinese immigrants barely survived on their income, a few lucky East Asian men made profit from mining. In 1876, the Idaho Statesmen published the headline describing the success of the Chinese: “a large Chinese company own a claim for which they paid \$8000...now be bought for \$20,000” (Zhu 1997: 110). In the same year, several Chinese men made \$6,000 in a mine located near North Elk within one day. In fact, Loke Kee, a Chinese miner, managed to amass an amazing fortune valued at \$60,000 to \$90,000 (Zhu 1997: 110). With their newfound wealth, the Chinese immigrants began to make their homes permanently in the United States; in 1864, land was purchased by a Chinese man for the first time. Tang Jah, a Chinese miner, paid Elizabeth Frary \$180 for her house and property in Placerville, California (Zhu 1997: 52).

These very rare success stories among the Chinese people inspired negative sentiments against the newly arrived minority; the white workers believed that the Chinese were stealing this newly found wealth from them. At the peak of the first wave of Chinese immigration to the United States, newspaper headlines emphasizing the hordes of these invading Mongolian barbarians proliferated along with the rising number of Chinese people in the country. In 1852,

one of the many newspapers that condemned the arrival of the Chinese immigrants, the San Francisco Herald, commented, “The Chinese hive has swarmed here...we observed our Oriental friend, John, frequently multiplied” (Dirlik 2001: 5). By the 1850s, white miners became so paranoid about the possibility of Chinese miners stealing from them that they convinced legislators to pass the Foreign Miner’s Tax in 1852, which forced any non-white miner to pay extra money to continue mining (Min 1995: 73). The law existed for more than 20 years, collecting approximately five million dollars in revenue: 95% of the money raised came from the Chinese (Zinzius 2005: 20). In 1855, the California legislation passed the Capitation Tax Ordinance, which forced ship owners to pay \$50 for every Chinese immigrant on their ship. In 1858, the fear of the Chinese invasion was so overpowering that Chinese immigration was completely outlawed by the California state government. Although the law was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court both in 1858 and in 1870, this law was enforced through impossibly high taxation and strict punishment (Zinzius 2005: 19). In 1879, the Fifteen Passenger Bill prevented incoming American ships from docking in the ports if they carried more than fifteen Chinese travelers. By 1882, the United States government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which outlawed all immigration of Chinese laborers as well as the naturalization of the current Chinese residents.

In addition to preventing more East Asian from entering the country, the state governments passed laws to make life difficult for the existing Chinese residents. The Lodging House Ordinance, passed in 1876, required a certain area per person in a residence, a constraint specially tailored to fine and to jail the Chinese immigrants, who were living in dormitories due to their working contracts. Many Chinese residents were jailed for the violation of this ordinance. The Queue Ordinance was then passed that required all prisoners to have short hair; since the

Chinese viewed their queue as a symbol of allegiance to the Qing Dynasty, they were forced to pay a fine for keeping their hair long until the early 1900s. By 1860, Chinese children were not permitted to attend public school (Zinzius 2005: 20). In 1879, the Chinese were not allowed to seek employment at a governmental institution. Laws on laundry with their focus on the use of horses and bamboo carriers were specifically tailored to force Chinese laundry workers to pay extra taxes. The Chinese, who were relatively unfamiliar with using the horse, did not use this foreign animal to deliver their laundry. Instead, they employed bamboo carriers to distribute their services. Therefore, the government was obviously targeting the Chinese laundry owners when they passed a law requiring laundry services that did not use horses but bamboo carriers to pay extra taxes (Zinzius 2005: 20). By 1889, the Chinese and Japanese were not longer allowed to purchase land in the State of California (Zinzius 2005: 13).

However, these legislative acts were unable to quell the fear of the Chinese stealing jobs from the white workingman because they were willing to be a coolie, or a “...unfree and servile, racially defined state of subordination” (Lee 1999: 9). The term, coolie, originated in India and was used to describe involuntary servitude (Cassel 2002: 125). Indeed, there were three, very well-known cases of the Chinese laborers being brought into a factory to serve as cheap replacements for striking white employees: Buckingham Boot Factory in San Francisco (1869), Sampson Shoe Company in North Adams, Massachusetts (1870) and laundry companies in Passaic, New Jersey (1875). Their reputation as the coolie, stealing jobs from hard-working white employees, was spread throughout the United States through every available media: newspapers, politics, books, and even songs.

These highly publicized cases were used as evidence to prove the Chinese were here to replace every man’s job because of their eagerness to work the worst jobs for the lowest wages.

The newspapers condemned the arrival of the Chinese, calling them various names: “Mongolian hordes” by Montana Radiator in 1866 (Dirlik 2001: 342), “infectious disease” by New York Tribune in 1879 (Gyory 1998: 3), and “...a leech fastening himself upon the vitals of the country, leaving nothing, taking everything” by Arena in the early 1900s (Zinzius 2005: 27). Register simply stated in 1876 that it “expressed contempt for Chinese labor in general” (Dirlik 2001: 276). In 1869, a newspaper in Prescott ran a headline: “More Chinamen. Three more Chinamen...There are four of them, which is quite enough” (Dirlik 2001: 42).

In response to the threat of the Asian invasion, many public figures and publications called for action to be taken against the Chinese. For example, when Calvin Sampson hired 75 Chinese laborers for his shoe factory in North Adams, Massachusetts, a local congressman, Benjamin Butler, “called upon the working men of U.S. to resist the Mongolian invasion” (Chan 2003: 4). The California Senate also set up a commission, the Anti-Chinese Union, who presented the damaging “Chinese Immigration: Its Social, Moral and Political Effect” to Congress and distributed ten thousand copies of their pamphlet, “Upon the Evils of Chinese Immigration,” in newspapers across the country, emphasizing the lack of contributions the Chinese had made to the United States and for concealing their valuable secrets of growing tea and rice (Zinzius 2005: 21). Even in the 1980s, one anthropologist compared the efforts of the Chinese to assimilate to the American culture were not enough compared to the West Indian population in Great Britain (Keyes 1981: 41).

Books also warned against the threat the Chinese immigrants posed. Called one of the most “outstanding documents of intellectual history...in the western world,” Brook Adam’s analysis of the arrival of Chinese immigrants perpetuated this fear: “Asia will produce such cheap goods that the center of exchange will pass from Europe to Asian... [where]...vigorous,

tenacious barbarians supersede bloated opulent civilized people” (Okiihiro 1994: 125). Pierton W. Dooner in his novel, Last Days of the Republic, compared the Chinese immigrants to a serpent: “The coil of the Asiatic serpent was gradually encircling the entire body of the victim now, virtually within its grasp” (Okiihiro 1994: 133). In 1900, the Forum, Outlook, Harper’s Weekly, and Saturday Evening Post all attributed the distancing relationship between the employer and the worker was due to the inexpensive Chinese labor (Zinzius 2005: 27).

The panic of being replaced by a cheaper Chinese worker was also apparent in the main entertainment available to the masses in the nineteenth century: songs. For example, in the 1869 song, “John Chinaman,” the singer belts out “For if John Chinaman comes in, For us—there’s only graves” (Lee 1999: 70). In “Twelve Hundred More,” the possible number of jobs taken is exaggerated:

“They are hiring all the Chinamen
and discharging you and me...
twelve hundred honest laboring men
thrown out of work today
by the land of the Chinaman” (Lee 1999: 61).

The aggravation of a Chinese man stealing employment opportunities can be seen in many nineteenth century songs, often in a form of fondly remembering the times before the Chinese came to America: “National Miner,” “John Chinaman,” “California As It was and Is,” “Days of ‘49” and the simple phrased, “Get Out Yellowskins!” (Lee 1999: 47-50). These songs reached mainly urban dwellers, being sung either at a saloon, on a musical stage, or during a minstrel show. Due to the invention of the lightening press, or the steam powered rotary press, in the 1880s, these songs were easily purchasable for a nickel by millions of Americans, serving as a source of entertainment as well as political opinion to a wide national audience (Lee 1999: 16).

Numerous political cartoons were also distributed throughout the United States, often depicting the Chinese immigrants buzzing in hordes like locusts, replacing a sleeping Irish man in an infinite line of willing workers, stealing food from a white couple, springing out of a manufacturer's box labeled "weapon," against the Irish. One particular cartoon compared the invasion of the Chinese to the raid of the white man on Native American territory; the race that was previously settled in the land were brutally massacred by the invading one (Gyory 1998: 144, 180, 181, 49, 57).

Furthermore, countless newspapers called for white workingmen to unite against the coolie labor supplied by the Chinese and *actively* oppose the arrival of Chinese immigrants into their town. In 1885, The Wasp called for both the English and Irish workingman to forgive their own cultural differences to rise up against this severe threat to their livelihood (Lee 1999: 51-53). Restaurants began to advertise "the best 35 cents meals in the city—no Chinese employed" (Dirlik 2001: 175). The Ogden Herald called for a boycott of the Chinese vegetable store in 1885 (Dirlik 2001: 276). When a mob in Rock Springs burned down 19 Chinese shacks, murdering 28 residents and leaving their bodies to be eaten by hogs, local newspapers, like the Sweet Water Gazette, complimented the violent acts that were committed (Durlik 2001: 344).

COLORING THE YELLOW PERIL

Fortune Cookie #5: A wise man knows everything. A shrewd man knows everybody.

When I was very young, one of my classmates called me yellow. Confused, I marked myself with my yellow highlighter and shoved my arm in front of my classmate's face, showing him that my skin color did not blend in with the one of the marker. For several years, I strongly objected to anyone describing my skin color as yellow since this marker incident, insisting that white people merely called Asians yellow because they ran out of colors to describe the different races. However, after shopping for makeup and being forced to buy foundation with a yellow undertone, I grudgingly admitted I may be suffering from jaundice.

Yellow has long been the color associated with people originating from the countries in the Far East. In fact, this terror that Asians would be taking over the American economy in the late nineteenth century is called the Yellow Peril, which was first defined by the historian Roger Daniels as an "irrational fear of Oriental conquest with its racist and sex fantasy overtones." The origins of the yellow peril phenomenon can be seen in the fifth century B.C. when the Greeks fought the Persians. In the 13th century, the yellow peril concept resurfaced when the Mongols attempted to invade East Europe. Marco Polo expressed in 1275 that the Mongols were "mechanical... fanatical in devotion to conquest." The amazing obedience to sacrifice their lives and the little investment required to upkeep the spirits of the Mongolian soldiers made them "fitted to subdue the world" (Okihiro 1994: 118-120).

The phenomenon of the yellow peril emerges from hibernation as a convenient scapegoat every time there is a period of ground-breaking political changes that may potentially challenge the white as the superior majority in the United States. For example, the yellow peril made its

first appearance in the 1850s. Suffering from “urbanization, poverty, class conflict, deep divisions between North and South, East and West, and depressions of 1873 to 1893” America faced a period of severe uncertainty of the white race in its superior position on the hierarchy of society after the Civil War when blacks were liberated (Okiihiro 1994: 128). The common hatred of the hordes of Chinese immigrants stealing employment opportunities from the workingman was essential in forming the white identity: “America’s perception of that yellow peril was colored by the Republic’s earlier fears of the wilderness and its beasts and the South’s black majority and all three formed a historical continuum insofar as they imperiled and helped define the white identity” (Okiihiro 1994: 128). The yellow peril in the late nineteenth century manifested from the brutal tensions of the newly freed blacks, uncertain economic downturns, and intense differences in cultural beliefs between the North and the South, which had only recently resolved their difference through the bloodiest war in United States history. The universal paranoia of the yellow people consuming the American economy helped mend the cracks in the white identity in the late 1800s. The yellow peril in the nineteenth century effectively lowered the Chinese population from 72, 472 in 1890 to 37,367 in 1930 (Zinzius 2005: 26).

The yellow peril was reborn during World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution during which Americans once again experienced ground-breaking changes; they saw the white race commit racial suicide over class struggle in Russia, which they saw as a result of Japanese influence in that area, and the economy evolve into a new entity with the introduction of corporatism, a new economic structure (Lee 1999: 10). Once again, the white’s position on the top of the social hierarchy was threatened by these monumental events. In 1920, the Hawaiians thought that the Japanese and Filipino’s strike for equal pay was actually a “dark conspiracy to

conquer sugar industry” and prepared for war against Japan twenty years before World War II (Okihiro 1994: 135). In the same year, Lothrop Stoddard published a very popular book, The Rising Tide of Color, which claimed that “the brown and yellow races possess great military potentialities” and will soon invade the “racial homeland of the Anglo-Saxons” (Lee 1999: 136).

The fears of the yellow peril were fulfilled when the Japanese navy attacked Pearl Harbor. During World War II, Gunnar Mryrdal agreed with the immensely popular author, Pearl Buck that because the Asians were rapidly increasing both in their numbers and technology, the non-white races were destined to become the more prolific one in the future (Okihiro 1994: 146). World War II made the ability to differentiate between the different types of Asians absolutely important for the first time in history with Life magazine running a two page pictorial on how to separate a Chinese from Japanese based on the appearance of a beard, height, and rosy cheeks (Lee 1999: 145-147).

The ability to tell Asians apart was reflected in the progression of the yellow peril. After World War II was over, the Japanese soldiers of the yellow peril were replaced by the Communist Chinese people of the Red Scare in 1951 when China joined the Korean War (Lee 1999: 152-153). By the 1970s, the Vietnamese Communists were the harbingers of the yellow peril. Now, the yellow peril is represented by the image of men in “business suits carrying attaché cases filled with yen, buy political influence in Washington as easily as they buy Rockefeller Center and Pebble Beach, buy and steal technology and America’s brightest minds and gain entry into millions of American homes in the form of cars, televisions, and stereos, appliances and computers” (Okihiro 1994: 138-139).

The quiet, insidious Asian conquest of the western world is portrayed in the media. For example, in Michael Cimino’s 1982 film, the Year of the Dragon, one of the characters said,

“Chinese are coming across Canal street and taking over the drug trade, banks and real-estate” (Lee 1999: 180). In the second Back to the Future film, Michael J. Fox travels to the future world where his boss is an Asian supervisor shrieking orders at him on his home television set (Wu 2002: 118). In Bladerunner (1982), Alien (1979), and Soldier (1998), hordes of Asians are seen invading the white United States (Tong 2003: 1999). In fact, in Bladerunner, the only people left in Los Angeles were Asian worker drones.

In addition, there are many books propagating the theme of the yellow peril such as Steven W. Masher’s Hegemony: China’s Plan to Dominate Asia and the World, Bill Gertz’s The China Threat: How the People’s Republic Targets America, and Clyde Prestowitz’s Trading Places: how We Are Giving Our future To Japan and How To Reclaim It. Even the politicians were speaking about the yellow peril; Congressmen, John Dingell, publicly held the “little yellow men” responsible for the failing American economy (Wu 2002: 70). In fact, the yellow peril is obviously in full swing, as seen in May 2001, when a telephone poll and focus groups on highly educated city dwellers in the United States revealed that one-third of Americans think that Chinese Americans have too much power in technology and are more devoted to their origin country than to the United States. Two-thirds of those surveyed believe that China will be an enemy of the United States and almost half of the people believe that Chinese Americans are giving national secrets to China. A quarter of the surveyed believe that Chinese Americans are taking too many employment opportunities from Americans (Wu 2002: 12).

The yellow peril phenomenon and the resulting measures the majority takes to restore the status quo, either through racist legislations or violent acts, that was seen both during the first wave of Chinese immigration in the 1850s, the 1920s, 1950s, 1970s, and 1990s are seen in a smaller environment as well: the college campus. When the United States decided to relax its

immigration policies on East Asians in the Immigration Bill of 1965, many of the Asian immigrants decided to seize the opportunity of the American dream and encouraged their children to go to college. Indeed, although Asian Americans compose only 3% of the overall population in the United States, they represent more than 30% of the students on the University of California's campuses, and 15% in the prestigious colleges (Min 1995: 2-11). This increase in exposure of Americans to Asians in the late twentieth century is similar to the first wave of Chinese laborers in the late nineteenth century.

The percentage of Asian Americans on college campuses has increased exponentially. For example, the number of Chinese and Japanese students at the University of California, Berkley jumped from 7.25% in 1966 to 45.2% in 2000 (Zinzius 2005: 174). Instead of taking jobs, the East Asians were now taking classes. Asian Americans were still seen as a negative presence on campus, increasing the curve in a class instead of decreasing the wage on a plantation. The white's less than welcoming response to the sudden increase in Asian Americans on campus and their success in academics is directly aligned with the white Americans' reaction to the first wave of immigration in the 1850s and the Chinese miners' meager income: "As long as only a small Asian group is successful, this fits the paradigm of American dream but should it become whole hordes, then the fear of a yellow peril arises. This danger touches not only whites but also other minorities..." (Zinzius 2005).

Similar to the introduction of immigration laws to curtail the number of Chinese immigrants entering the United States, Berkeley also proposed three suggestions, which seem suspiciously tailored to lower the number of Asian American students being accepted: increasing the required grade for the SAT verbal section and allowing Asians in EOP to transfer to other colleges (Zinzius 2005). Just as the newspapers printed countless insulting descriptions of the

new Chinese immigrants in the late 1800s, contemporary college and university students also described the increased numbers of Asian students as the “Asian invasion” and redefining abbreviated school names: MIT as “Made in Taiwan” and UCLA as “University of Caucasians Living around Asians” (Zinzius 2005: 174). From 1986 to 1996, more than 250 racist acts were committed on college campuses, ranging from the derogatory graffiti in the Harvard Library or a flier depicting the Berkley library as a pagoda (Zinzius 2005: 174). The fliers resembled the political cartoons of the nineteenth century. Therefore, the yellow peril will rise as a kneejerk reaction to an increase in Asians that is correlated with threats to the current status quo.

The phenomenon of the yellow peril is surprisingly the oppositional complement to the other stereotype, the model minority: “the yellow peril denoting a masculine threat of military and sexual conquest...the model minority symbolizing a feminized position of passivity and malleability...in either swing along the arc, white supremacy is maintained and justified through feminization in one direction and repression in the other” (Okiihiro 1994: 143). For a lack of a better analogy, the yellow peril and the model minority were the yin and yang to each other, forming a circular continuum.

The perception of the East Asian Americans as a model minority first arose in the post-Civil War era when plantation owners sought cheap replacements of their recently freed slaves. One of the most popular recommendations to these “planters in the culture of cotton” was to utilize the first incoming wave of Chinese immigrants, who were unskilled, illiterate workers from 1849-1882 (Wu 2002:60). For example, in 1856, Elihu Burritt in his pamphlet, “Learned Blacksmith,” heavily endorsed the substitution of slaves with Chinese workers: “...positive admission that Chinese labor would be more profitable...” (Lee 1999: 61). The Baton Rouge newspaper also published an article supporting this idea right after the Civil War, publishing one

of the first relatively positive reviews of the Chinese of its time by describing them as “...more obedient and industrious than the negro, work as well without an overseer...more clearly in their habits and persons than freedmen” (Wu 2002: 60).

From the 1870s up to the 1900s, numerous trade pamphlets, newspapers, and publications described the Chinese as “superior replacements” for Irish and African American laborers (Lee 1999: 61). In fact, when the Chinese first arrived in North Adams, Massachusetts around 1867 to 1868, local newspapers enthusiastically welcomed the new immigrants a new source of cheap labor, frequently ranking the Chinese higher than the Irish immigrants, who were currently supplying this labor during this era. For example, the North Adams Transcript was particularly thrilled to see the first Chinese immigrants walk into the town, describing the new arrivals as “...neat, smart and intelligent and had a merry twinkle with their eyes...delightful contrast in these parts to the Celtic population who vociferously abused Mr. Sampson” (Lee 1999: 69). In 1867, Bret Harte described the Chinese workers in the Springfield Republican “...as servants, they are quick-witted, patient, obedient and faithful” (Lee 1999: 69). Even the Berkshire Eagle, a conservative newspaper, managed to utter a compliment, commenting on the lack of “odor” these “heathens” had. The Chinese were also seen as a more reliable source of inexpensive labor elsewhere in America, receiving more trust than other minorities, like the Irish and African Americans: “...they have proven themselves to be better servants than white men and women...pagan...patient, industrious and faithful...he may steal sugar from the pantry [but is] punctual...never comes slander” (Dirlik 2001: 138). Around the 1880s, newspapers began to publish relatively positive stories on the Chinese immigrants, replacing insulting terms like “heathens” with “Chinese gentlemen” and “Chinese pioneers” (Zhu 1997: 167).

The Chinese laborers, however, did not submit to the miserable working conditions, and often demanded better wages and benefits in their massive strikes. For example, on June 24, 1867, 8,000 Chinese railroad workers in the high Sierras participated in a strike against the Central Pacific Railroad Company (Lee 1999: 65). In 1909, 7,000 Asian workers on a Hawaiian sugar plantation went on strike. In 1920, more than 3000 Asian people went on strike against a sugar plantation, carrying pictures of Abraham Lincoln as they marched down the streets of downtown Honolulu, demanding “simple justice” (Okihiro 1994: 157). Despite major newspapers across the United States running headlines on these large revolts, the Chinese immigrants were still perceived as “...too naturally subservient to organize a resistance movement...” (Lee 1999: 65). Since the white Americans assumed that silence and servitude were the only two genes in the biological makeup of the Chinese people, these new immigrants were promoted as wage laborers. Since the Chinese would have such a low income that is barely sufficient for basic survival, they will be unable to rise to become “independent producers” and therefore did not pose a “political threat to the white man” (Lee 1999: 61). Throughout the 1870s, the Chinese were often seen as the superior replacement of the Irish and the African American laborers (Lee 1999: 65).

By 1942, due to the World War II propaganda promoted heavily by the government in newspapers and newsreels to support the Chinese allies and defile the Japanese enemies, the majority of Americans, who watched pro-Chinese movies like China Girl (1942), China (1943), The Story of Dr. Wassell (1944) and China Sky (1945), viewed the Chinese as “hard-working, honest, brave, intelligent” in a Gallup poll (Chan 1991: 121). In 1940s, America acknowledged the Chinese population as a positive entity in the country for the first time, drafting more than 40% of the Chinese population in New York City during World War II, the highest draft

percentage than any other minorities: “In the 1940s for the first time, the Chinese were accepted as friends...all of a sudden we became part of the American dream...whole different era...we feel good about ourselves...” (Espiritu 2008: 58).

Just a few decades ago, the Chinese were not even allowed to participate in law enforcement because they were still viewed as outside of the structural arrangement of the United States. For example, when a pack of Indians massacred forty-nine Chinese settlers in the West, the remaining Chinese in the community were not allowed to join the white settlers in avenging these deaths. However, when the war came, all racial boundaries were temporarily abolished, establishing a stage in history that closely resembles the liminal part of a ritual.

In “Passages, Margins, and Poverty: Religious Symbols of *Communitas*,” anthropologist Victor Turner introduces the new concept of *communitas*, the antistructure to structure, through his meticulous description of rituals. A ritual consists of a separation from a previous role in the social structure, a liminal stage of which statuses and roles are indefinite, and a reaggregation as a neophyte back into the social structure. He differentiates this stage of liminality in rites of passages from outsiderhood (people who permanently dwell outside the social structure, like shamans, priests, mediums) and marginals (people who belong to more than one socially distinct group, like second generation Americans).

When the Americans began to identify with the Chinese fighting back in Asia during World War II, *communitas* was being fostered by the propaganda. The soldier uniform of the Allies power during the war served the same function of a graduation gown during the graduation ritual, stripping of people’s cultural differences and dressing them exactly the same. It temporarily wiped out all previous social norms of viewing different races as different people in order to induct the Chinese from being outsiders to a position on the social arrangement in the

United States as marginals. As marginals, their appearance belonged to the structurally inferior group of their native country but their uniforms belonged to the structurally superior group of which they were now part of: America. With the U.S. abolishing its Chinese Exclusion Acts and the Asian American soldiers fighting alongside Caucasian ones, Chinese and Filipino men were now permitted to enter the system, as seen in their participation in the economy by joining previously barred industries, like engineering and aviation, with their improved reputation; in fact, the number of Chinese and Filipino men employed in professional jobs increased from 1,000 in 1940 to 3,500 in 1950 (Espiritu 2008: 58).

BECOMING THE MODEL MINORITY

Fortune Cookie #1980: Your great attention to detail is both a blessing and a curse.

During my freshmen orientation at Union College, I played “Two Truths and a Lie” as an icebreaker. I said three statements in which two of them were true and one of them was fake. I collect pens from hotel rooms. I had once gotten so lost in the airport that I had to ask a woman what country I was in. Finally, I am great at math. No one in my orientation group guessed that my third statement, claiming that I excelled in math was, in fact, untrue.

This phenomenon of Asian Americans excelling in the workplace, as compared to the performance of other minorities in America, was first referred to as the “model minority” in the mid-1960s. When minorities, like African Americans, were conducting marches, strikes, riots, and demonstrations across the United States and demanding the disintegration of segregation and emergence of equality in the Civil Rights movement, journalists across the United States decided to print numerous stories on the “model minority,” or the Asian Americans, who achieved “equality” without revolting against the current system.

In 1966, William Peterson wrote the influential article “Success Story: Japanese American Style” for New York Times Magazine, praising how Asian Americans achieved equality, as seen through their impressive educational attainment levels, median family incomes, and low rates of criminal activity and mental health issues without “loot or burn down our cities” (Chan 2003: 69). George Lipsitz was quoted in the article: “If Asian Americans can make it, why can’t you?” (Chan 2003: 69). In the same year, U.S. News and World Report also published their own “model minority” article, highlighting the Chinese Americans in “Success Story of One Minority in the U.S.” indirectly questioning the Civil Right movement with explosive comments:

“At a time when it is being proposed that hundreds of billions be spent on uplifting Negroes and other minorities, the nation’s 300,000 Chinese Americans are moving ahead on their own with no help from anyone else” (Lee 1999: 149).

The “model minority” myth may have been an extrapolation of the nineteenth century’s perception of Asian Americans as a subservient, dutiful minority. From 1910 to 1920, American born Asians began to join the middle class in large numbers (Espiritu 2008: 62). By 1929, the Chinese and Japanese Americans owned one and a half times more businesses than other people of all races in the United States (Espiritu 2008: 43). In fact, a study conducted in the early twentieth century showed that Japanese students were scoring on the same level if not better than their European American counterparts on IQ tests (Chan 2003: 76). Furthermore, in 1965, the American government revised the Immigration Act, allowing a wave of low skilled but highly educated Asians to enter the United States from the 1960s to 1970s, which may have perpetuated the model minority image in the media (Dave 2005: xiii). By the beginning of the new millennium, 45% of Asian Americans were employees of the management and professional sector, as seen in only 34% of the total population. In 2000, Asian Americans also produced the highest percentage of college graduates in the United States with more than 49% of Asian Americans, 25 years old and older, attaining at least a bachelor’s degree. Also, between 1997 and 2004, 10%-14% of the scientists and engineers in the country were Asian Americans. In fact, one-fifth of American engineers with a doctoral degree from 1980 to 1990 and one in four healthcare providers in the metropolitan areas were Asian Americans (Espiritu 2008: 75).

However, the arguments that labeled the Japanese and Chinese Americans as the “model minority” citing these educational attainment levels and high family income were flawed and cleverly manipulated to conceal the glass ceiling in the workplace for minorities. For example,

the articles complimented Asian Americans on their high educational level attainment. However, Asian Americans are still finding a lower return in salary for each additional year of schooling than their Caucasian colleagues (Chan 1991: 169). In 1990, Asian Americans were still less likely to have a high school diploma and even a ninth grade education than Caucasians (Min 1995: 76). Also, Asian Americans are perceived to have a higher family median income. However, they are more frequently living in high-cost areas and therefore require a higher income to maintain the same lifestyle; in addition, Asian American women are more likely to work because the salaries of Asian American men are insufficient to support their families. Therefore, the combination of these two salaries make Asian Americans appear to have a higher median family income. These two statistics may fuel the misconception that Asian American families have a higher income than other minorities. In addition, despite most Asian Americans being “managers,” their companies are actually small businesses, such as grocery stores, that make significantly less than the average American small business (Chan 1991: 169). In fact, Chinese Americans are more likely to be living under the poverty levels than other minority groups (Zinzius 2005: 229).

The news media’s obsession with labeling Asian Americans as the “model minority” continued after the Civil Right movement to the 1990s. In 1971, Newsweek cleverly accused Asian Americans of “outwhiting the whites” (Wu 2002: 41). When five winners of the prestigious academic competition, Westinghouse, were Asian Americans, the racial backgrounds of these awarded students launched media frenzy. People published an article named “Brain Drain Boon for U.S.” and New York Times printed Stephen Groubard’s article, “Why do Asian Pupils Win Those Prizes?” in the opinion-editorial section. Times, Newsweek, and “60 Minutes” sprinkled the term “model minority” among their articles. Fortune, in an effort to be unique, used

their own shortened version: “superminority.” New Republic printed David Bell’s article “The Triumph of Asian Americans” in 1985 while the Washington Post decided on “Asian Americans Outperform Others at School and At Work.” Advertising Age decided to equate Asian American students to a balding real estate moguls, naming the winners as “the Donald Trumps of the 1990s” (Wu 2002: 41).

So why did the Asian Americans win these prizes? Could the reason behind their success be their diet of dogs, cats, and rats? Could these Asian students be outperforming their colleagues due to their background in doing laundry, building railroads, or opening grocery stores? Working the cash register to ring up cigarette packs and potato chips must have given them a head start in working math problems. Surprisingly, although the news magazines from 1960s to the 1990s did not cite these blatantly racist reasons to explain the Asian Americans’ “success,” they used the same explanations proposed by nineteenth century reporters, like Bret Harte in the 1870s. The same subservient, dutiful, obedient qualities of Chinese Americans that supposedly made them better cheap laborers than the Irish and African Americans were the same exact characteristics that made them winners of the Westinghouse competition. David Bell’s attempt to explain the phenomenon in his 1985 essay, “The Triumph of Asian Americans,” as seen in New Republic, strangely resembled a fortune cookie, citing “...virtues of self sufficiency... intact family, good, disciplined, submissive [nature]” (Lee 1999: 184). The 1987 cover story of Times Magazine, “The New Whiz Kids” managed to mention Confucius as well in their proposed reasons behind the performance of Asian American students: “...the Confucian ethic drives people to work, excel, and repay the debt they owe their parents” (Lee 1999: 186). Stephen Groubard in his 1988 New York Times essay, ‘Why do Asian Pupils Win Those Prizes?’ attributed the accomplishment to the “traditional Asian culture” or “obedience,

discipline” (Lee 1999: 185). This culture of submission and duty made Asian Americans both exemplary candidates for picking cotton on a plantation *and* winning academic awards in high school.

This perception of Asian Americans as the “model minority” is often viewed as an improvement on the image of Asian Americans. Although no one would deny that being seen as an overachieving genius studying math and science is a step up from pig-tailed heathens specialized in roasting rats and cats, the “model minority” image does come with its thorns. For example, when teachers were asked for the reasons why they think a particular student is doing well in their classes, they are more likely to say that a Japanese student is excelling because he or she exhibits “...hard work and good study habits” whereas a Caucasian pupil is succeeding because he or she shows “...originality and general intelligence” (Chan 2003: 76). Asian Americans are often viewed as computers, able to solve extraordinarily difficult math problems but incapable of showing basic human emotions: “[Asian Americans are]...criticized for being without passion, even bereft of human soul...we know the notes...but...become too precise to be artists. We are automatons, frightening in our correctness” (Wu 2002: 68). The use of the robotic nature of Asian Americans to explain their startling precision is reflected the participants in reality shows:

“While reality TV programs open up a space for greater representation of racialized minorities, they also adhere to, and authenticate, radicalized and stereotypes by embodying them in the characters of “real” people. Through an analysis of Top Chef and Project Runway, this essay reveals how the narrative of the Asian ‘technical robot’ has emerged as a stock character for Asian Americans in reality TV programs, flexibly applied to a range of fields where Asian Americans threaten to achieve success.. Such representations illustrate the very narrow ways that racialized minorities are allowed to integrate into the U.S. For the allegation that Asian Americans are technicians who lack creativity is a barrier that not only helps keep them from their racialized labor niches but also serves as an explanation for why people of color cannot make it to the top of their professions” (Wang 2010: 404).

In fact, Asian models are more likely to be featured in magazine advertisements of technical products, like electronics and cars, than non-technical items, like sporting goods and clothing. 60% of the magazine advertisements that feature Asian Americans show them in the context of a business setting, as compared to a leisure setting (Stern 1997). This robotic image of Asian Americans is also shown in the movie, Bladerunner, in which Los Angeles is overrun by “Asian worker drones...perfect workers, indistinguishable from humans” but “completely inauthentic and need not be treated humanely” (Lee 1999: 193). The model minority image promotes the Asian American stereotype as a robot devoid of human emotion.

In addition, the model minority aspect of the Asian American image is also directly correlated with the “silent minority.” In order to be the model, you must be silent. In fact one of the criteria that first sparked the creation of the term “model minority” in the 1960s was the Asian American silence during the civil rights movement. Indeed, Asian Americans do appear to be relatively “silent” in American politics. For example, the Japanese Americans remained relatively quiet about their experiences in the internment camps during World War II until almost two decades after with the Asian American movement in 1970s and the Redress Movement in the 1980s. Also, although 15% of the Chinese families in New York City are surviving underneath the federal poverty level, only 3.4% of them have applied for public assistance in 1970 (Lee 1999: 150-151). In 1995, Robert S. Boyriton’s coverage on minority public figures in Atlantic Monthly did not include an Asian Americans. In 1997, D’Souza, on a C-Span program, “American Perspectives,” commented, “there aren’t any Asian American civil rights activists, and it’s a good thing too.” Asian Americans were always “...conspicuously absent from television talk shows and op-ed pages” (Wu 2002: 84). In fact, David Braden, a well-known,

highly reputable journalist, was able to say "...the Chinese are not nice people" on national television without receiving any punishments for his racist comment (Wu 2002: 88).

Contrary to this silent stereotype, Asian Americans were definitely not quiet when they first arrived in America in the nineteenth century. In fact, of the 200 published cases bought by Asians in the Supreme Court, this number is estimated to represent not even ten percent of the real number of litigation cases. For example since 1882 when the Chinese won the right to testify against the whites in *New Mexico v. Yee Shun*, they became "very litigious." In fact, according to two different sources, the Chinese made the judges modify the swearing in ceremony since they were not Christians so that they can testify in court. Instead of placing one's hand on the Bible and reciting an oath, the Chinese instead cut off the head of a chicken, wrote the oath with the blood of the slain animal on a piece of paper, and then burned the paper by the candlelight. Through this method, they were able to win several monumental court cases, like the right to citizenship through birth in the case of Wong Ark Kim, land ownership in the case of Toyota, and lack of rights during internment camps in the case of Fred Korematsu (Lee 1999).

Even when Asian Americans defy these stereotypes of the "silent minority," they are slapped with the Americans' denial of any type of racism against a minority with such a "great" reputation. For example, an Asian American interviewed in the Los Angeles Times said, "They think if you're Asian, you're automatically interning at Merrill Lynch and that you have never been touched by racism." In fact, Fortune called a 1992 U.S. Civil Rights Commission report on the civil rights predicament of Asian Americans absolutely absurd, asking "What's the problem?" (Wu 2002: 69). In fact, Americans do not think the Asians in the country experience any type of racism since they are the "model minority": "It is as if Asian American civil rights concerns can be ruled out categorically without the need for serious consideration of the facts

because everyone knows that Asian Americans are prospering” (Wu 2002: 46). In addition, murders of Asian Americans are frequently not classified as hate crimes despite the overwhelming evidence because of the perception that Asian Americans could not possibly be exposed to racism with such an excellent reputation. For example, in 1996, two white young men repeatedly stabbed Thienh Minh Ly forty times in San Diego and had been heard to say “I killed a Jap...” He was actually a Vietnamese American and a promising UCLA graduate. Despite the obviously racial comments his killers had uttered, his murder was not classified as a hate crime (Wu 2002: 70).

Although the perpetuation of the model minority myth can be explained by a counter argument used by journalists against the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, why did this image of Asian Americans continue after the violent demonstrations in the ghettos? Since the 1960s, the model minority term was often used in the context to “positively” describe Asian Americans as “...willing to learn, disciplined and modest, hard-working and understanding,” as in the presidents’ speeches at Chinese New year festivities since Reagan’s term, and utilized as a direct comparison to the African Americans, the “failed minority.” These supposedly positive compliments of Asian Americans seemed to be a cleverly masqueraded, more politically correct manifestation of the yellow peril. The continuation of these articles promoting the Asian American success story seemed to be correlated with the emergence of China as a communist power or the “Red Menace” in the 1950s, and another manifestation of the yellow peril: “The model minority terminology in its current function of maintaining the American dream, or negatively speaking, the warning of Asian success...” (Zinzius 2005: 229).

In fact, the model minority performs the same function as the minstrel songs in the nineteenth century, emphasizing how the Asians will always be the “other,” unable to fully

assimilate in the American culture. The model minority concept only works on the basis that the Asian culture shares the similar values as the Anglo-American culture, which implies the “east is the east. The west is the west...never meeting” (Okihiro 1994: 139). Even the US News and World Report printed that Asian Americans will always have the “racial disadvantage;” although they can achieve “ethnic assimilation,” they will still suffer from the “continued reproduction of racial differences” (Lee 1999: 145).

Asian Americans are always seen as “the other,” suffering from “Perpetual Foreign syndrome” (Wu 2002: 79). One harmless symptom of this syndrome is being persistently asked where one is from until a country located across the Pacific Ocean is the answer. One author comments, “‘Where are you from?’ is a question I like answering. ‘Where are you *really* from?’ is a question I hate answering” (Wu 2002: 79).

The question whether an Asian will ever become a true American has existed since the late nineteenth centuries. In 1893, a newspaper in Butte, Montana printed, “The Chinaman is no more a citizen than a coyote is a citizen and never can be” (Durlak 2001: 377). The symptoms of the syndrome continue to be found in the media. For example, in 1998, MSNBC published the headline, “American beats out Kwan” during the Winter Olympics despite both Tara Lipinski and Michelle Kwan competing for the same country: the United States of America (Wu 2002: 21). During Bill Clinton’s presidency campaign, people charged the Asian American donors, specifically of the name John Huang, of “unseeingly campaign finance practices to serious conspiracies verging on treason” (Wu 2002: 104). During his widely popular speeches, Ross Perot said, “Now then, Mr. Huang is still out there, hard at work for Democrats. Wouldn’t you like to have someone out there named O’Reilly? Out there hard at work. You know, so far we haven’t found an American name” (Wu 2002: 111). A name of Chinese origin could not possibly

belong to an American. In addition, when Christopher Lee, the producer of “The Joy of Club,” was pitching the movie to studio executives, they responded that the movie will not succeed because it will have no Americans starring in it. Christopher Lee replied, “There are Americans in it. They just don’t look like you” (Wu 2002: 21). The most appalling manifestation of the Perpetual Foreign Syndrome of Asian Americans appeared during World War II when 120,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated in internment camps on February 19, 1942 in which “...the legal distinction between citizen and alien is not as important as white and yellow” (Espiritu 2008: 53).

Using the functionalism’s view of culture as a body composed of organs, or segments, the introduction of Asians to the western hemisphere can be compared to the new surgery of replacing the human heart with the one of a pig. The two hearts, or two races, have once existed in two separate systems; the only contact between them was an evolutionary link that happened several hundreds of thousands of years ago with the Great Migration. When the pig’s heart was introduced to the human body to fill the need of cheap human labor, the body would immediately reject it because it was not born with the same antibodies, or characteristics, of an insider of the system. Although the two hearts shared the similar appearances and performed the same functions, the slight differences in physical appearance, such as in the eyes and skin tone, were too overpowering to overlook. The pig’s heart can pump blood and contribute to the overall stability of the body just as efficiently as the previous human heart that it replaced, but there would always be antibodies in the system to reject its full acceptance and maintain the social order. Asian Americans can excel in academia and deliver the most outstanding achievements to the United States of America, but their distinct appearances and point of origin cannot be overlooked; they will never gain full acceptance as a segment of the system. If they are even

slowly gaining acceptance into the system by exhibiting more characteristics of their structurally superior group than their structurally inferior part, there will always be a force, like the antibodies, to prevent their jump from marginals to full participant of the system. A heart from a pig will always be defined by its origins, and not its function. A person from China will always be defined by his or her native country, and not the one on their passport.

In addition to confirming that Asian Americans will always be “the other,” the model minority also promotes the current societal system of the whites enjoying their dominant position in America: “The model minority fortifies white dominance, or the status quo, but it also poses a challenge of the relationship of majority over minority.” Yes, the Asian Americans may be “diligent” but they are “slavish,” “frugal” but “cheap,” exhibit “filial piety” but “superstition,” and seem to be “integrating” into the society but actually “infiltrating” America (Okihoro 1994: 141).

Asian Americans are seen as a model minority, always “the other” and a possible threat to the superiority of whites in United States. The terror of the yellow peril is hidden deep within this seemingly positive image of Asian Americans as a model minority. This concealed reality behind the perpetuation of the model minority myth can be seen in Michael Cimino’s 1982 film, Year of the Dragon, in which there is a scene of a grandmother pleading the Chinese gang leader, Joey Tai, to fund her granddaughter’s education; her granddaughter, an overachieving honor student, had been accepted in the prestigious Ivy League college, Columbia University. In the next scene, the audience is exposed to the same granddaughter, the quintessential image coherent with the model minority myth, shooting a restaurant with a machine gun. Beneath this innocent image of an overachieving Asian American with excellent grades in math and science lies a dangerous menace to society with the intention to destroy the status quo (Lee 1999: 180)

THE MISSION OF THE GOOK

Fortune Cookie #1973: War does not determine who is right. War determine who is left.

Surprisingly, the stereotype of Asian Americans in the yellow peril reappears: it was repackaged as the “gook” in the 1980s. The term “gook” was used by American soldiers to describe Filipino insurgents, the Korean and Chinese people in the Korean War and finally, the Viet Cong during the Vietnam War. The gook refers to a “ubiquitous and invisible enemy” or an “alien threat” and had risen from the ashes of the Vietnam War (Lee 1999: 199). The gook stereotype was the “faceless Asian enemy” and the cause of the “American decline” (Lee 1999: 11). With the decline of the United States with the Watergate scandal, OPEC oil crisis, Vietnam War, Eurodollar crisis, and ultimately the fall of the economy, Asian Americans served as a scapegoat in the rising tensions in the country (Lee 1999: 180-181).

In fact, in 1981, Maya Lin, a Chinese American from Ohio, produced the winning design for the Vietnam War Memorial. Chosen without a name on the project to ensure fairness in the selection process, the winning project created a large scandal. The leaders of the Vietnam War Memorial Commission was reportedly unhappy that a “gook” had been the winner of the competition; Ross Perot had commented to the press that he “hated that she was Asian” (Wu 2002: 95). Maya Lin, who was born in America, was automatically classified as a faceless enemy due to her racial background. People feared that instead of pushing buttons on a graphing calculator, she will be pulling the trigger on a machine gun.

The stereotypes of Asian Americans, which ranged from the coolie, the yellow peril, the model minority and finally to the gook, are the manifestations of an outsider becoming a marginal, repackaged with the historical events occurring at the moment. Although Asian

Americans have made great progress by graduating from an outsider to a marginal in two centuries, they are yet to experience full integration into the social structure of America due to their “polluted” state.

THE DISAPPEARING ACT OF FU MANCHU

Fortune Cookie #1000: A girl's best asset is her "lie" ability

Every Halloween, I always have trouble picking a costume. However, whenever I asked my friends what they think I should be, I never had trouble receiving the same suggestion every year.

Several friends over the course of my young life have squealed with great enthusiasm, "You should be a geisha! It's perfect!"

Refusing to submit to this hyper-sexualized, submissive, and highly offensive stereotype, I have rejected it year after year for a less stereotypical costume: a ninja.

As an Asian American woman, I have often wondered where this docile and subservient image had originated especially when my mother definitely does not hesitate from voicing her opinions to my father, only allowing him brief breaks from her nagging when she went to the bathroom. The image of Asian women in the American media stemmed from descriptions that date as far back as when paper money and gunpowder was first invented.

Before the first arrival of a group of Asian women to the Western hemisphere in the nineteenth century, the perception of Asian women was molded from a few historical, highly imaginative accounts. For instance, the physical appearance of an Asian woman described by the Wonders of the East, written around 1000 A.D., contained the characteristics of a mythological creature: "Asian women...have boar's tusks and hair down to the heels and oxen's tails growing out of their loins...thirteen feet tall, whiteness of marble and...camel's feet and donkey's teeth..." (Okihiro 1994: 10).

Despite being thirteen feet tall, Asian women were still viewed as an untouched territory of “secrecy and sexual promise” (Okihiro 1994: 11). Although Marco Polo did mention some honorable women that he encountered in the Far east, describing these pure women as “...the most delicate and angelique things...” in his thirteenth century historical tales, he filled more of his pages with generous accounts of prostitutes and the amazing sex that they provided (Okihiro 1994: 15). In addition, Aman’s stories of how ten thousand Greek soldiers married Asian women, how easily an Asian woman would give up her chastity with the promise of an elephant afterwards, and how Alexander the Great enjoyed several Asian wives contributed to the eroticism of Asian women in Europe (Okihiro 1994: 11).

Although the main attraction at the P.T. Barnum American Museum was Ah Fong May, a Chinese woman who portrayed herself as a chaste, honorable, and wealthy woman, the majority of other Chinese women were seen in the erotic context of burlesque and vaudeville as singers and dancers (Dave 2005: xiii). By 1870, 77% of the 2,794 Chinese female immigrants were prostitutes. In fact, 10,000 of the first Chinese female immigrants were presumed to be selling their bodies.

Ironically, the Chinese woman in late nineteenth century America actually enjoyed more rights than she did in her native country. For example, Ah Toy, the most famous courtesan in mid-nineteenth century San Francisco, charged more than sixteen dollars for a mere glance at her face. Although she was a prostitute, whispering sweet nothings in her client’s ears, she was also using her voice in the community, frequently testifying in court to defend prostitution as an honest occupation, suing her customers for failure to pay in gold, and earning enough money to open her own business, a brothel, on Pike Street: “...the value of that owners and customers

placed on prostitute's services allowed these women to retain some control while giving...an illusion of submission" (Espiritu 2008: 37-39).

Although the power of sex gave women somewhat of a voice, prostitution was so prevalent among Chinese female immigrants that they began to be viewed mainly as property by nineteenth century media. For example, when a Chinese woman disappeared, she was publicized in the newspaper advertisement as missing property: "...if you keep Sing Gim, you must pay me...a girl for \$1000" (Dirlik 2001: 73). Another article covering a story of how a man won a Chinese female during a gambling competition described the woman as "...property...not the kind [he] wished to pay taxes on" Dirlik 2001: 384).

Between the 1870s and the 1880s, during the height of anti-Chinese sentiments, the image of the Asian prostitute as the "conduit of disease and social decay" covered the pages of many newspapers, magazines, and even official government documents concerning the social hygiene of the urban living environment in the West (Lee 1999: 89). White Americans feared that the Chinese prostitute will lure young promising boys to a world of opium, crime, and sexually transmitted diseases with their lack of morality. Although there were indeed cities, like San Francisco, which had more than 900 Chinese women working as prostitutes, this stereotype of the Chinese prostitute was grossly exaggerated in the media. In fact, according to Helen Campbell and Thomas Knox, only three of the prostitutes in their Chinatown were actually of Asian origin. Anne Butler, who studied prostitution in Denver, also reported only three of the several hundred current prostitutes were Asian (Lee 1999: 89). However, the image of the Chinese prostitute was so popular in the media that Asian women became one of the first groups of people in the history of the United States of America to be barred from entry into the country due to the doubts of their morality in the Page Act of 1875 (Espiritu 2008: 22-23). Due to this

immigration barrier, the percentage of Chinese female immigrants dropped from 7.2% in 1870 to a meager 3.6% in 1890. The perception of all Chinese women being prostitutes became so strong that several more laws were passed in 1903, 1907, and 1917 limiting the rights of Chinese female immigrants (Espiritu 2008: 22).

Even during the Depression, Asian women were only allowed in three employment sectors: self-employment, domestic service industry, and prostitution. Although many women were highly respectable and worked as elevator girls, stock girls, and Oriental hostesses at restaurants with one even graduating from the College of Pharmacy in Detroit in 1925, English-speaking Asian American women were still viewed as mainly prostitutes by the media (Espiritu 2008: 36). In addition, since the immigration of Chinese females was restricted, Chinese women were a prized commodity. They possessed so much power in a marriage due to the abundant supply of bachelors in the community that runaway wives were very common. Advertisements placed by a husband whose wife had run away with her lover were a common site in newspapers up until the 1920s. These public announcements of Chinese women freely committing adultery in the media further perpetuated the perception that they lacked both morals and respect for their sexuality (Espiritu 2008: 28-30).

By the 1920s, only Americans of European descents were permitted to play positive Chinese characters in Hollywood characters (Lim 2006: 53). One of the first roles opened to Chinese American actors was the dragon lady, who was popularized in Sax Rohmer's dime novel, Daughter of Fu Manchu (Tong 2003: 206). The dragon lady was promiscuous and cunning, concentrating on world domination instead of humane morals: "...while puffing on her foot long cigarette holder, could poison a man as easily as she could seduce him...with her talon like six inch fingernails, her skin tight stain dress slit to the thigh, the dragon lady is desirable,

deceitful, and dangerous” (Espiritu 2008: 105-106). The dragon lady with her goal to dominate the world and her use of sex to reach it is the union of the yellow peril with the Chinese prostitute, both popular images of the Chinese immigrants in the late nineteenth century. Since the introduction of this deceitful, sexually available woman, she has reappeared in comic strips, like the 1934 Terry and the Pirates, dime novels, and various other forms of media (Espiritu 2008: 106).

The dragon Lady appeared most prominently in the 1924 film, The Thief of Baghdad, in which Anna May Wong, the first prominent Chinese American actress, was hired to portray a maid, who betrayed her master so that the diabolical Mongolian prince can marry the princess of Baghdad. She reprised her role as the exotically appealing but dangerously deceiving dragon lady in her next film, the 1931 film Daughter of Fu Manchu (Espiritu 2008: 106).

Anna May Wong, who was born near the Chinatown in Los Angeles, California on January 3, 1905 to a laundry man, began her career as an unnamed extra in The Red Lantern (1919). Her role as a sexy and devilish dragon lady in The Thief of Baghdad, however, launched her into the first famous Chinese American actress (Lim 2006: 51).

Although Anna May Wong became a trailblazer for the Chinese American acting community and was the first Chinese American to be featured in Look magazine, the equivalent of People magazine today, her roles were restricted to the villainous Dragon Lady in the 1920s to the early 1930s. In fact, when a Hollywood company was making Pearl S. Buck’s popular novel, The Good Earth (1931), the only role they offered to a Chinese American actor was the part of Lotus, the second wife, an evil temptress (Dave 2005: 161). When Anna May Wong lost the role of the respectable first wife, O-lan, to a European American actress, Luise Rainer, she passionately rejected the role of the villain despite the movie having an exorbitant budget of two

million dollars: “I am so tired of the parts I had to play. Why is it that the screen Chinese is always the villain? And so cruel a villain—murderous, treacherous, snake in the grass! We are not like that...we have our rigid codes of behavior, of honor. Why do they never show these? Why should we always scheme, rob and kill? I got so weary of it all” (Dave 2005: 162). After the Hays Code was passed in 1934, which forbid any romantic interracial relationship onscreen, she was passed up for a few breakout roles for European American actresses. Frustrated with the limited roles offered to her by Hollywood, she traveled to Britain, where she not only mastered the aristocratic British accent and became fluent in the German language but also became so famous that she had the top billing in theater productions and met the Prince of Wales (Lim 2006: 53-57).

In the mid 1930s to the mid 1940s, the United States of America dramatically altered their perception of China; this era was nicknamed the “Age of Admiration.” In fact, one of the most popular images of the Chinese was Madam Chiang Kai-shek, a Wellesley College graduate, whose visit to the United States was so extensively covered by the press in such a positive light of adoration that the Chinese Exclusion Act was revised. President Roosevelt personally endorsed Madame Chiang Kai-Shek himself, saying “We must correct the historical mistakes and eradicate the misleading Japanese propaganda” (Zinzius 2005: 33). In 1943, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was completely eliminated (Zinzius 2005: 34).

Many Chinese American actors agreed that their roles during this period improved dramatically from the characters originally offered to them (Lim 2006: 61). Anna May Wong actually returned from Europe during this period to receive star billing in B-listed movies. In these movies, she surprisingly played the image of the “new woman,” or a female who effectively balances her mature sexuality with service to the community (Lim 2006:68-76). In

fact, her movie, Daughter of Shanghai (1937) was one of the first motion pictures to feature positive non-stereotypical images of Chinese characters played by actual Asian American actors. The transformation of Anna May Wong's character, Lan Ying Quan, in the movie symbolizes the amazing barriers the movie surpassed. She enters the movie in a traditional Chinese dress, viewed as an object of sexual desire and backwards customs by the movie's villain, Mrs. Hunt. By the end of the movie, Anna May Wong's characters looks back at the now arrested Mrs. Hunt she, a white woman, was an object (Dave 2005: 163). The film introduces a new type of Asian Americans: "a distinct demarcation between the...American born, acculturated middle class Chinese identity that was distinct from the...class of illegal coolie laborers" (Dave 2005: 157-158). Anna May Wong reprises her non-stereotypical role as a middle class Asian American female professional in King of Chinatown (1939). She plays a wealthy Chinese American medical surgeon who effectively reforms a gangster through her passion for the Red Cross (Dave 2005: 159). In fact, her character was based on a real person, Dr. Margaret Chung, a professional, accomplished woman who embraces both her Chinese culture and the one of her country (Lim 2006: 47).

In 1945-1953, the percentage of Chinese who were female entering the country jumped dramatically from 12% in 1943 before the abolishment of the Chinese Exclusion Act to more than 89% (Espiritu 2008: 63). Although the United States Immigration Service was inhumanely cruel to the incoming Chinese female immigrants, intimidating several women to commit suicide and a hundred females to go on hunger strike when threatened with deportation, most of the Asian women successfully entered the United States as the wives of U.S. servicemen. For example, in the 1950s, more than 80% of the Japanese female immigrants were married to a U.S. soldier. Nearly all of the 16,000 Filipino women entering the U.S. during this period were also

G.I. wives (Espiritu 2008: 64-68). Called the “orientalism domesticated,” the arrival of these Asian women to serve a pivotal role in the American family prompted the American people to reformulate their view of Asian woman as perilously forbidden partners to domesticated models of ethnic assimilation (Lee 1999: 161).

These wives of American soldiers were seen as the principal candidates and excellent models for assimilation into the American culture. The image of these G.I. wives resembled the long-standing perception of the Asian woman as a “China Mary,” a passive, voiceless, subservient woman who walks in small, hesitant steps behind her man with her eyes on the floor. This image of the China Mary, Lotus Blossom, Madame Butterfly, or China Doll, was surprisingly absent from minstrel songs in the nineteenth century, as silent as she was perceived to be although she was referred to as a passive character in the short stories of The Overland Monthly and the Californian (Lee 1999: 90). As a “perfect foil for the virility and attractiveness of the Euro-American male,” she is an exotic, innocent woman ready for a sexual conquest by a white male (Tong 2003: 209). She is often portrayed without a voice but if she does make a sound, it is often a giggle or pidgin English. This China Doll character frequently experiences the Pocahontas complex in which the only way she can be fully assimilated into the American culture and be with her attractive white male is if she sacrifices her ties to her Chinese heritage by betraying her family. This character of the subservient Asian woman is later given other names to adapt to the historical event of the moment: Geisha girl, war bride, and Vietnam prostitute. The Lotus Blossom stereotype is the direct cause for the high demand for Asian women in the adult film industry, as mail order brides, and employees in Oriental bathhouses and restaurants (Espiritu 2008: 107).

The perception of the Chinese woman as a China Mary or a China doll, especially in the context of the bride of a soldier, is one of the most prevalent images of Asian women in Hollywood films. In fact, Anna May Wong's breakout role was not the one of a dragon lady but as a Madame Butterfly in the Toll of Sea (1922). In this film, Anna May Wong portrays a Chinese woman who gives up her child to her re-married white American lover and commits suicide when she realizes her child is in better hands of an all white couple than an ungodly interracial one. The most iconic China Doll was Miyoshi Umeki, who was the first Asian American woman to win an Academy Award for her role as Katsumi Kelly in the 1957 film Sayonara. In this motion picture, she portrays a quiet, soft-spoken woman who falls in love with an American soldier, Airman Kelly. She is so traditional that when she was denied entry into the United States, she commits suicide with her husband using Japanese swords. She reprises her role as a traditional, subservient woman as Mei Li in the Flower Drum Song (Lee 1999: 178-179). During the peak of her fame, Miyoshi Umeki carried herself in the same exact manner as her characters did to the press: short shuffling steps, eyes shyly at the floor, and in traditional kimono wear (Lim 2006: 165).

Although Miyoshi Umeki was the main character of the Flower Drum Song, Nancy Kwan as Linda Low was surprisingly more publicized on promotional material for the movie. Linda Low was the modern China Doll, as symbolized in her title song "I Enjoy Being a Girl": a woman who modernity is defined by her obvious sexual desires, which are regularly satisfied without any danger to the male. Featured as Suzie Wong in The World of Suzie Wong (1960), Hana Ogi in Sayonara (1957), and Linda Low in The Flower Drum Song, this modern China Doll was ethnically assimilated but exotic, sexually available but domesticated, independent but still wants a husband to share her lifestyle with (Lee 1999: 175). France Nguyen, who was often

attached to this modern China doll image, had in reality a highly publicized interracial romance with Marlon Brando, which may have perpetuated this stereotype to the American public (Lim 2006: 169). She was succeeded by Nancy Kwan, who, as a highly feminized temptress, was famous for her exotic cheongsam and long hair (Lim 2006: 173). The modern China doll was the combination of the hyper feminized, traditional China Mary with the masculine, dangerously promiscuous dragon lady (Espiritu 2008: 68). This modern China doll is further portrayed in the 1985 Year of the Dragon; Tracy Tzu was a physically appealing and dependable news reporter who serves as a sexual object for the white male lead, Stanley White. Loyal to Stanley White even after he raped her, she is a traditionally submissive woman with a modern career (Lee 1999: 201).

Asian women continued to be these exotic sexual objects in various television shows, such as Gunsmoke (1955-1975) and How the West Was Won (1978-1979). In the 1990s, the modern China Doll stereotype became the Connie Chung Syndrome when Connie Chung hosted the 6 o'clock news television show with Dan Rather from 1993 to 1995. In the 1990s, there was a dramatic increase in physically attractive Asian American women being partnered with an established, headlining white anchorman, which suspiciously implied the repeat of history when the submissiveness of the Asian American female actresses served as a foil to the power of the Caucasian male. In fact, 80% of Asian reporters are women in 2002 (Espiritu 2008: 107). Asian American female reporters with the Connie Chung syndrome were trusted by the audience to deliver unbiased news because as a passive, voiceless woman, she could not possibly speak for herself (Wu 2002: 281).

However, while the Asian women in the American media have been hyper-sexualized, the Asian men portrayed in popular culture have lost their sexuality. Before the ship, Empress of

China, departed from the New York in 1784, Americans had never had any personal accounts of the East Asians in China. However, when they did meet, the Americans sadly did not enjoy the company of the East Asian men, as noted in their journals, complaining of the rampant gambling, common use of drugs, and corrupt government. In fact, the East Asian men the American sailors encountered during their stay in China were “the most vile, the most cowardly and submissive of slaves...despotic, cruel...” (Okimoto 1994: 20). The use of opium as a recreational drug would become one of the most defining characteristics of the Chinese man in nineteenth century America. As the first event in China to be covered by American newspapers, the First Opium War (1840-1842) exposed the American public to the several million opium addicts in China (Zhu 1997: 81). American newspapers would continue to be fascinated with the “opium-inspired devils,” claiming the Chinese addicts were increasing the crime rate in the community and using the drugs to seduce white women into their dens in various articles: “A Chinese Opium Joint” (1868) and “A Raid on a Chinese Opium Joint” (1900)(Tong 2003: 209). However, there is seemingly no record of an opium-induced crime nor were there an increase in criminal activity among the Chinese due to the drug; in fact, in 1899, only two out of the two hundred and twenty eight prisoners in the Yuman prison were Chinese (Dirlik 2001: 69).

The second physical meeting between Americans and Chinese men occurred on February 2, 1848, when Charles V. Gillespie, a passenger on the ship Eagle, acquired two Chinese men and one woman as servants. However, once these three Chinese people were notified of the possibility of gold in the west, the two Chinese men and woman immediately abandoned their master in the search for wealth (Zhu 1997: 15). Both encounters produced negative images of the Chinese men as greedy opium-addicted cowards in the newspapers.

However, one of the most prominent images of the Chinese man was his asexuality. In 1879, Robert Louis Stevenson published “Across the Plains: Leaves from the Notebook of an Emigrant between New York and San Francisco” in which he confessed that he thought a Chinese man was a low-class, physically revolting European woman from afar (Okiihiro 1994: 25). The Chinese male immigrant of nineteenth century America wore his hair in a long braid; the length and the style of a man’s hair in the Qing dynasty had indicated his rank in society, age, and sex. This unique hairstyle was one of the most popular characteristics used to describe John Chinaman in minstrel songs from 1850 to 1870, like Luke Schoolcraft’s “Big Long John,” Billy Rice’s “The Chinese Ball” (Lee 1999: 27). However, the Chinese man’s long hair made him a sexually ambiguous entity to the American people; only women wore their hair long and yet the Chinese man still displayed his queue proudly.

In the late nineteenth century, Chinese men were viewed mainly in the context of temporary source of labor that required the least financial resources to maintain due to the bachelorhood of the Chinese male immigrants. Merchants were discouraged from hiring Chinese women for their plantation because they were afraid of having to pay the extra costs of maintaining a family. The immigration of Asian females were further restricted with immigration laws, like the Page Law in the nineteenth century. The resulting bachelor societies, compounded with their long hair, perpetuated the perception of Chinese men of being viewed as undesirable, asexual partners in the media: “No other racial groups have been subjected to worse legalized...sexual deprivation than the Chinese male immigrants between 1868...and 1952” (Espiritu 2008: 23). For example, a Californian agriculture business owner said that he preferred to hire Filipinos because he did not need to build houses to accommodate for their families, like the Mexicans had previously (Espiritu 2008: 20-22).

By the late nineteenth century, Chinese men were highly restricted in their employment options after their coolie labor contracts, or “non-unionized, dead end jobs in the agricultural and service sectors” were terminated (Espiritu 2008: 34). To survive with no employment opportunities offered to them due to blatant racism, the bachelor Chinese men were forced to enter the “feminized” occupations, such as cooking, domestic service, and most notably, the laundry industry (Espiritu 2008: 40-42). According to the split market theory, the first evidence of racism is often seen in the “ethnic lines” drawn in the labor markets (Keyes 1981: 56). The laundry business was a lucrative sector; for example, in 1908, Choo Kee, a laundry owner in Centerville, Idaho, accumulated so much wealth from his service that he was able to afford an expensive Columbia phonograph and twenty four records to host entertainment nights (Zhu 1997: 104). However, doing laundry was often associated with being a woman’s duty and laundry men “occupied a status which was in accordance with the social definition of the place in the economic hierarchy suitable for a member of an interior race...associate [laundry] with the washing of menstrual blood” (Espiritu 2008: 40-42). By entering the laundry business in addition to the bachelor societies, the sexual virility of the Chinese man in the eyes of the American public further decreased. In the late nineteenth century, advertisements publicizing “Chinese washing” began appearing in newspapers (Zhu 1997: 118). The shame in performing womanly chores was so great that many Chinese men who were involved with the laundry business often disguised their occupation as an owner of a *yishangguan*, or clothing store, when they returned to China to see their relatives (Chan 2003: 9). Sadly, the Chinese laundryman is one of the most popular characters in the comedy skits on vaudeville, which were later popularized in short films, like In a Chinese Laundry (1897) and Fun at a Chinese Laundry (1901); he was always portrayed as an asexual, clumsy clown (Tong 2003: 209).

The actions of the Chinese male immigrant in nineteenth century America transcended the typical definitions of man and woman. They wore their hair long in a braid. They lived in bachelor societies with no access to an outlet for their sexual desires. They entered occupations normally reserved for women, especially the laundry business, which is as associated as a female duty that it is equated to washing menstrual blood. Unable to be definitively classified in the category of man and woman in the American cultural context, the Chinese male immigrant was perceived to be a third sex: asexual. As a result, John Chinaman was portrayed as a feminine, subservient, pre-puberty figure in the nineteenth century minstrel shows (Gyory 1998: 18). In fact, the depiction of a Chinese American man as a feminized third gender is most apparent in newspapers advertisement publicizing eastern and western medicine. In the advertisements of white male physicians who practice western medicine, they are often drawn with a beard and convey a sense of overbearing, masculine firmness. The newspapers advertisements that ran between 1871 to 1912 showing Chinese doctors, however, drew them as a beardless, feminine boy. In fact, female patients notably preferred the Chinese physicians because they were perceived to be more “sensitive” (Cassel 2002: 181). Even in the 1940s, America continues to emasculate the Asian American male. In 1942, Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the evacuation of 120,000 Japanese Americans into internment camps and indirectly stripped the Japanese men of their masculinity: “Issei men, who lost the economic authority over their family by not being the breadwinner anymore, viewed the internment camps as emasculation” (Espiritu 2008: 53).

The depiction of the Chinese man as a third gender is seen in short stories, like Mary Mote’s “Poor Ah Toy,” which was published in 1882. In this short story that warns against interracial romance, Ah Toy is perceived to be feminine because he is immature, child-like, and performs household chores. He also has more of a mother-child relationship with Fanny Siddons,

his love interest, than actual romance. However, when he confesses his love for his white master, he is then seen in a masculine light. The blend of portraying the Chinese male in both feminine and masculine spheres in this short story shows how the Asian man in America is perceived to be a completely separate gender from the previously defined categories (Tong 2003: 208).

The image of the Chinese American male as an asexual, submissive person who talks in pidgin English and expresses undying devotion to his master is very popular in American media: “William Wu reported that the Chinese servant as the most important single image of Chinese immigrants in American fiction between 1850-1940” (Espiritu 2008: 103). This character is often known by many manifestations: the Chinese laundryman and the houseboy. One of the earliest examples of a Chinese American male in this role is the character of Ah Lam in Maud Lowe’s novel, The San Rosario Ranch (1880) in which he is an obedient servant who willingly sacrifices his own life to prevent the rape of his white female owner (Tong 2003: 207).

However, the character of Charlie Chan is the most popular depiction of the Asian male in this asexual, subservient role. Invented in 1925 by Earl Derr Biggers, Charlie Chan is a middle class houseboy, who reports to his white supervisor. Although he was born in Hawaii, Charlie Chan still ironically speaks in broken English, especially in phrases that seem to originate from a fortune cookie. By passively and dutifully serving his white superiors and the American community as seen in his frequent apologies for other people’s racist remarks directed towards him, he is allowed a chance to assimilate into the American culture: “Whereas Charlie Chan was an adult, a finished product, schooled and domesticated by whites and the yellow peril contained” (Okimoto 1994: 144). His appearance is highly feminized: “...very fat indeed, yet he walked with the light dainty step of a woman” (Okimoto 1994: 143). According to the Warner model of the assimilation of an immigrant population into the majority, Charlie Chan is rewarded

with acceptance from “the receiving society” when he conforms to this houseboy image (Keyes 1981: 37).

Charlie Chan was so popular in his dime novels and B-listed movies, such as The Chinese Parrot (1927) and The House Without a Key (1925), that it had imitators: Mr. Moto and Mr. Wong (Dave 2005: 161). Ironically, Warner Oland, the Swedish actor who popularized Charlie Chan in 1931, also played Fu Manchu, the villainous Asian male and the opposite of Charlie Chan (Dave 2005: 159).

This Charlie Chan image of a Chinese friend whose undying devotion will result in relative assimilation into the American culture was stopped, however, in 1949 when China turned into a Communist nation (Dave 2005: 161). Charlie Chan will later return as the asexual, eternally single Asian sidekick, who both performs household chores and also talks like Confucius, as seen in many popular television programs: Bachelor Father (1957-1962), Bananza (1959-1973), Star Trek (1966-1969), and Falcon Crest (1981-1990) (Espiritu 2008: 103).

The character of Herbert Kuang in the 1980s movie, Year of the Dragon, actually refers to this Charlie Chan stereotype in his short monologue. Sadly, although he informed Stanley White, his European American superior, that he will refuse to die like a coolie or a houseboy for a white master, he is still eventually murdered when carrying out one of White’s assignments. Despite Herbert Kuang’s efforts in refraining from being the houseboy, he cannot escape his fate of fulfilling a stereotype (Lee 1999: 203).

In fact, the emasculation of the Asian male is so engrained in the American culture that Bruce Lee, a talented Chinese American actor, lost the role of Russell Wong to a European American actor in the series, Vanishing Son (1994-1995) although he helped develop it. The producers of the show thought he was not suited to play a man who was described as “virile,

fearless, and sexual” (Tong 2003: 228). Devastated, Bruce Lee flew to Hong Kong. When his wife and children attempted to convince him to return to America, he responded, “I’m somebody here. I’m special. Back there, I’m just a gook, just another wet-back Charlie Chan low pay gook dishwasher in a tacky restaurant” (Dave 2005: 344).

Although Asian men have always been seen as the third gender, neither fitting into the masculine nor feminine category, they have also been perceived to be hyper masculine monsters that are imminent threats to virginal white women. Between 1850 to 1940, Asian men were often depicted as animalistic beasts that chased after innocent Caucasian females in hundreds of illustrated dime novels, which include The Bradys and the Yellow Crooks, The Case for the Chinese Diamonds, The Opium Den Detectives, and The Stranglers of New York (Espiritu 2008: 100).

In fact, the first Chinese male immigrants to America proved that they were definitely not asexual and had actually participated in interracial relationships with Irish and African American women. For example, when the Barnum’s Siamese twins, Chang and Eng, settled in North Carolina, they had more than twenty two children with their two Caucasian wives (Lee 1999: 30). Due to the rarity of Chinese females in the community, Chinese men were limited in their choices for a spouse; interracial marriages between Chinese men and Irish women were common, as reported in various publications like Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Weekly in 1875 and New York by Sunlight and Goslight in 1882 (Lee 1999: 75).

However, these common interracial relationships between Chinese men and Irish women immediately increased the tensions between American Caucasians and this infiltrating minority. First, a Chinese man marrying a white woman indicated he did not wish to return to China, as one-third of all Chinese male immigrants did in the nineteenth century, but rather planned to

permanently settle in America. Once this interracial relationship produced a family, America would be forced to acknowledge their presence, which cannot be allowed in nineteenth century America. Second, the union of a woman who was in a higher position on the social hierarchy with a man who did not even occupy a spot on it shattered the established sexual arrangements of hypergamy in nineteenth century America, where women were expected to marry up to increase their social status, but never a man (Lee 1999: 30).

By 1890, the threat of these taboo unions produced various publications that either indirectly discouraged these relationships or invoked fear among the American public. For example, in the 1890 edition of Harper's Weekly of a Chinese wedding between two Chinese people featured a lithograph in which the two newlyweds were not highlighted. Instead, in the center of the drawing was an interracial family: a white woman with her Chinese husband and two children. The lithograph warned the American public of the growing peril of family formations between interracial couples while supposedly covering the story of a Chinese couple (Lee 1999: 72). In 1869, Harper's Weekly publishes another political cartoon notifying the public of the completion of the Pacific Railroad by symbolizing the unity of the nation by this railroad with an interracial couple: the west part of America was represented by a Chinese man whereas the east side of America was symbolized by a white woman (Lee 1999: 83). Purportedly reputable studies like Jess Frederick Steiner's "The Japanese Invasion: A Study in the Psychology of Interracial Contracts" concluded that Asian men are unable to fully assimilate in America and therefore interbreeding should be discouraged for the good of the country (Okihiro 1994: 133).

Shorts stories published during the nineteenth century also subconsciously implied the tragic consequences of participating in an interracial union. For example, the Chinese character

that falls in love with a Caucasian always dies horrifically, either murdered by the white lover in Ambrose Bierce's "The Haunted Valley" or commits suicide when the white character must marry another man in Mary Mote's "Poor Ah Toy" (Lee 1999: 91). If the interracial relationship did actually produce an offspring, this child can only follow the path of a criminal because he is unable to identify with either the passion of his Irish side or the submissiveness of his Chinese part, as seen in the character of George Appo in Louis Beck's New York Chinatown (1859) and Chin Sum in the 1900 play by T.S. Denison (Lee 1999: 81). These short stories promote only tragic endings for their characters who indulge in interracial romance: the Chinese character either dies or produces offspring destined for a life of crime.

In fact, one of the largest anti-Chinese riots in the United States resulted from an interracial romance in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 1889, one of the residents in the town found a young Caucasian girl underneath the bed of one of the Chinese men who ran Lee Chung's, a laundry business. The implied pedophilic relationship that crossed not only racial barriers but moral boundaries outraged the entire town into riot and was covered widely in newspapers, appearing as front page stories in the Chicago Tribune, Detroit Free Press, and Atlanta Constitution (Cassel 2002: 7). This image of the faceless, lustful Chinese man running after innocent, honorable Caucasian girls will be one of the most recurring image of the Chinese in films between 1894 to 1910: "ludicrous, clownish people...salacious seducer of white women...heartless murders of innocent Christians" (Tong 2003: 208). Scenes of Chinese men threatening the honor of naïve, white young women as they waves their knives in the air can be seen in films like Chinese Massacring the Christians (1900), Tortured by Boxers (1900), and Rescue of White Girl from the Boxers (1900) (Tong 2003: 209).

In films of the early twenty century, if Chinese men were not being killed in masses on screen to desensitize the American public to the horrific events in China during the world wars and smoking opium as they built railroad, they were attempting to rape a white woman, who could not possibly love them because Asian men were perceived to be too feminine. In 1916, Petria showed a group of Asian men sneaking into the United States for the sole purposes of raping white women (Espiritu 2008: 100). Even in 1993, a movie called the Rising Sun emphasized the Japanese businessmen's fascination with blond white woman. However, since white women could not possibly love them because of their innate feminine nature, the Japanese businessmen were shown paying for sex in the suitable setting of an opium den in Chinatown (Lee 1999: 212). Surprisingly, only seven years later, Newsweek announced that Asian American men were now the ultimate status symbol for women, serving as a "trophy boyfriend" for established women (Wu 2002: 278).

In Cecil B. De Mille's The Cheat (1915), one of the earliest feature length films in the United States, showed Hisuru Tori, a wealthy Burmese businessman who appeared to be fully assimilated into the American culture with his fluency in English. His character was feminized through his elaborate clothing that emphasized the culture of unnecessary luxury and his undeveloped boyish look. His cold brutality, however, is a result of his failure to convince a white woman to sleep with him without resorting to threats and physical violence, revealing his innate inability to assimilate: "Tori is a cheat for having attempted to coerce Edith into having sexual relations with him and for having the pretension of becoming white through acculturation" (Lee 1999: 126).

In 1919, the director of Birth of Nation decided to remake Thomas Burke's short story, "The Chink and the Little Girl" (Lee 1999: 127). Cheng Huan, like his predecessors in film,

appears to be very feminine with his slender frame and subservient nature: “after a gracious childhood, they attain only the most mediocre virility” (Lee 1999: 127). Although he seems like a timid, submissive, asexual man who saves Lucy, an innocent 15-year-old Caucasian girl sexually abused by her stepfather, his actions still label him as a “licentious dirty old man.” Despite Cheng Huan never physically touching Lucy, his confessing his romantic feelings for her while secretly kissing the hem of her sleeve as she slept, dressing her in the oriental clothes of Chinese prostitute, and hiding in the dark shadows of his luxurious room made him the Asian man who lusted after virginal white woman despite being feminine (Lee 1999: 128). Like all of the Chinese men who lusted after white women in stories preceding him, Chen Huan kills himself after Lucy is murdered by her stepfather. Only the death of the Chinese character can the reader and viewer be thoroughly convinced that this interracial romance is completely impossible (Tong 2003).

Although Charlie Chan and the image of Asian men lusting after white women were often seen in the American media since the nineteenth century, the first ever universally recognized stereotype of an Asian male was Fu Manchu. Invented in 1913 by Sax Rohmer, Fu Manchu was such a popular villain that he continued to appear in thirteen more novels, three shorts stories, and Hollywood films from 1913 to 1959 (Lee 1999). He was given a feminine appearance with his slender body frame, smooth porcelain skin, cat-like eyes, and characteristic long, clawed fingers that he used to stroke the hands of white men. To make him more like a woman, he often wore a long dress and long eyelashes (Espiritu 2008: 101). As the physical manifestation of the yellow peril, he was trained by the West, excelling in technology and speaking in perfect English, but sided with the East, plotting world domination (Okiihiro 1994). His fluency in English proved he did not need a white man to speak for him and therefore served

as a symbol of yellow peril gone unchecked. He operated from the smoke and shadows of opium dens in Chinatown.

The representation of an Asian man as the symbol of the yellow peril dates back to 1860, when the Japanese visited the United States. Their curiosity in learning the secrets of American technology was seen in the 1860 political cartoon with four Japanese men dressed in kimonos staring in fascination with their slanted eyes at a white woman operating a sewing machine (LaFeber 1997: 116). Many books, like Charles H. Pearson's National life and Character (1893), warned American citizens that the non-white population will dominate the world soon by living longer with the technology that the whites introduced to them (Okihiro 1994: 129). The fear of the assimilated Asian man who uses the education provided to him by America to betray this country and fight for his native one evolved into another form of the yellow peril: "...sinister Oriental—a brilliant powerful villain who plots the destruction of western civilization...combines Western science with Eastern magic and commands an army of devoted assassins" (Espiritu 2008: 101).

Nowadays, the fear of Fu Manchu is only sublimely hinted in present movies. For example, in both Falling Down and Menace II, two Korean shopkeepers become very difficult and trivial when the character did not have exact change. Americans had introduced the concept of capitalism to these Asian men. However, instead of thanking the west with kowtows, the Asians are instead twisting capitalism into a weapon against the Americans. Replaced by Charlie Chan as the most recognizable Asian American male figure in the American media for several decades, Fu Manchu returned in the 1982 movie, Year of the Dragon. However, John Lone, the actor that played Joey Tai in the Year of the Dragon, explicitly stated he will not play the role of Fu Manchu and cleverly included classic American wit within his dialogue. Despite his

intentions not to portray Fu Manchu, his character still closely resembled this Asian male caricature. Joey Tai, like Fu Manchu, was the highly educated and sophisticated criminal genius with forces located in the west as well as the east. Like Fu Manchu, he even operated from his headquarters in Chinatown and was given a very feminine appearance (Lee 1999: 180).

Although Fu Manchu was replaced by Charlie Chan, a relatively more positive image of Asian males to promote China during World War II, Fu Manchu resurfaced in 1990s media in form of Asian gangs, like the Chinese triad. Ironically, the Chinese gangster on television, who is highly efficient in operating his criminal empire, is still coherent with the model minority image. The Chinese outlaw is not a new image. When the Chinese first immigrated to the Wild West, they were shocked at the violence but were quick to adapt. In fact, on June 8, 1875, a Chinese man had cut into another man's head with an axe over a gambling conflict in Idaho City. In 1876, a sheriff stumbled in on a Chinese man stabbing another Chinese male violently as the crowd roared for killer (Zhu 1997: 148-150). In 1899, Justice Fleury "recorded an unusual amount of criminal business" with one crime being "two Chinamen, charged with applying a hatchet to the head of another Celestial" (Dirlik 2001: 69). In fact, one newspaper, the Idaho World, said "A Chinaman is slow to deeds of desperation but when he starts in, he generally means business" (Zhu 1997: 148-150). Since the 1870s, Chinatown have often be described as a "morally corrupt" area in which respectable men and women do not venture to in many publications: Charles Nordhoff's California for Travelers and Settlers, Mrs. Frank Leslie's Leslie's Weekly Magazine, Louis Beck's New York Chinatown, Helen Campbell and Thomas Knox in Lights and Shadows of New York, and Jacob Riis' How the Other Half Lives (Lee 1999:133). The Chinese were particularly known for using violence to settle crimes of racism and often had unsettling reputations: "The Chinese was something of a fighter...knife in one

hand, hatchet in the other, discouraged many white bully b'hoys. They duals resulted in lopped off ears and gauged cheeks if not death" (Dirlik 2001: xxvi).

From the 1960s to the early 1970s, newspapers published stories of Chinese gang violence but since these incidents were mainly isolated in San Francisco and New York City, these stories were more of an exception than the rule. The public had ignored these events and favored the model minority myth. However, in 1977, a Chinese gang openly shot at customers in the Golden Dragon Restaurant. The large number of intentional murders and spontaneous massacres began to appear across the United States, from Los Angeles to Boston to Chicago and even spread to Canada in Toronto and Vancouver (Cassel 2002: 239).

The Asian gangster with his coldly calculated violent murders, highly reminiscent of Fu Manchu from the early 1900s, appears in a number of popular action movies like Year of the Dragon in 1982, Gideon Oliver (1989), MacGyver (1985-1992), Lethal Weapon 4 in 1998, and Rush Hour in 1998 (Mahdzan and Ziegler). In fact, the 2003 MTV film, Better Luck Tomorrow, features all Asian American young people as criminals and killers (Ono 2005: 190).

However, the image of Charlie Chan and Fu Manchu may be breaking down, especially in the new millennium: "Charlie Chan is dead...gone for good his yellow face, asexual bulk, his fortune cookie English, his stereotypical Orientalist version of the Confucian Chinese family" (Espiritu 2008: 113). Although Asian Americans are still seen often portraying occupations that are related to their model minority, such as the Asian actress who played a doctor on numerous television shows, like Modern Family and How I Met Your Mother, they have recently been seen publicly denouncing these stereotypes and purposely picking roles that were denied to Asians a half a century ago. Asian Americans are increasingly given parts that not only do not perpetuate

an Asian American stereotypical caricature but also does not even mention their race as being an important characteristic of their role.

In fact, Chow Yun Fat is one of the Asian male actors who have a highly masculine image, exuberating aggression, power, and sexuality (Dave 2005: 284). John Cho, a popular Asian American actor, who has appeared as a college student in the cult classic comedy Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle, Alyssa Milano's temporary love interest in the television show Charmed, and a FBI agent in Flashforward, was recently included in People's Magazine's sexiest men alive (Aznraps.com 2009). In fact, in The Corrupter (1999), when Mark Wahlberg's character jokes that Asian men's penises, the symbol of virility, are small, Andrew Pang and Chow Yun Fat thoroughly assured him that theirs was not (Dave 2005).

Asian American men's frequently doubted sexuality is not the only aspect that is changing in the media. There are quite a few instances in blockbuster movies and television shows in which the Asian character manipulates the long-standing stereotypes of Asians in American to his or her advantage. For example, in Rush Hour (1998), Jackie Chan's character is able to avoid answering annoying questions when Chris Tucker's character automatically assumes his new Chinese partner cannot speak any English. In The Karate Kid (2010), the main character asks a Chinese man who was sitting next to him in the airplane of where he was from in Chinese; the Chinese man responded back in perfect English, "Dude, I'm from Detroit." Finally, in the "Great Firewall" episode of the CBS television series, The Good Wife, one of the Caucasian characters points out that the Chinese expert was purposely talking like Confucius and intentionally perpetuating the stereotype to win the trust of the jury easily.

COUNTING CHARLIE CHANS

Fortune Cookie #100: Good luck is a result of good planning.

To see if Asian Americans are portrayed differently in the popular media over the last decades as a way of gaining insight into changing racial attitudes in the United States, content analysis and surveys were utilized as appropriate methods in this thesis project. Surveys were used to reveal the opinions of the audience of the media and the perception of Asian Americans in a small college campus while content analysis of television shows and films explored the culture of a larger population.

Content analysis should help reveal if Asian Americans are still being type cast into stereotypes, like Charlie Chan and Fu Manchu, or if their roles in the popular media have become more complex. Three forms of media were selected to cover a wide range: primetime comedies, primetime drama, and movies. Like the minstrel shows of the nineteenth century and the B movies of the early twentieth century, primetime comedies are more likely to openly address the issues concerning the presence of minorities in America since racial tensions can be masked by humor, while revealing the deeper racial attitudes that still exist. Primetime dramas have also been selected to observe the portrayal of Asian Americans in a more serious context. In the past, Asian American actors and actresses have not received important non-stereotypical roles in dramas. By peering into a more dramatic lens, one can see if the portrayal of Asian Americans has changed in dramas, a medium that they have been ignored. A successful movie with a prominent Asian American character is also selected since movies often play a pivotal role in popular American culture, both revealing and promoting trends. For all of the types of

media, remakes are often preferred. With the same character being portrayed in two different time periods, the researcher can gain incredible insight as to whether the representation of Asian Americans has undergone a cultural shift.

For the content analysis of primetime comedy shows, Family Guy, 30 Rock, and Modern Family were selected based on a set of requirements to classify the program as popular among the American public: acknowledged critical acclaim proven by winning an Primetime Emmy Award, a loyal fan base supported by being renewed for more than two seasons, and popular support as evidenced by achieving a minimum of five million viewers for the most current season. The episodes of the shows that were chosen for content analysis featured either an Asian American actor in a cameo appearance or revolved the plot around Asian elements most prominently among all of the other episodes of all of the seasons. For Family Guy, “Breaking Out is Hard to Do” was selected due to the largest coverage of Asian American stereotypes the show has ever exhibited when the family escapes to the local Chinatown. For 30 Rock, “Double Edged Sword” was the episode reviewed because it advertised an Asian American guest star: John Cho. “Fear” was the episode chosen to represent Modern Family due to its featuring of an Asian American pediatrician, who is invited by the two fathers of an adopted Asian baby to dinner.

For these three shows, the length of time of spoken dialogue by all of the characters on the show and the Asian American characters were recorded and compared in the following percentage:

$$\% \text{ of episode featuring Asian Americans} = \frac{\text{time of spoken dialogue of all Asian American characters}}{\text{time of spoken dialogue of all characters}}$$

The intent of this percentage is to serve as a quantitative measurement. The screen time of an Asian American compared to the screen time of all of the characters was initially utilized to calculate the percentage. However, after observing an episode of Family Guy, the percentage was modified to compare the time of spoken dialogue instead of the screen time because the Asian American characters in Family Guy often appeared in the as a background and did not participate in the plot. I would have preferred to compare the number of distinct words the Asian American characters say to the number of words all of the characters say for a more accurate measurement. I wanted to count the number of *distinct* words because an Asian American character can receive a lot of time to say his or her dialogue, but this time may overestimate the character's contribution to the overall show if he or she was merely uttering the same catchphrases, like instructions on how to kick in karate. However, due to the lack of written screenplays available to the public, this method was discarded for later use and the character's time for spoken dialogue was chosen instead for practical reasons. Therefore, to ensure that the percentage is a reliable quantitative measurement of the portion of the episode dedicated to actively portraying Asian Americans, the time of spoken dialogue was used.

Next, each Asian American character received a profile composed of his or her occupation, family background, physical appearance, and personality. The profile was then processed through the following flowchart to classify the Asian American character in either the stereotypes seen in the past or not as a stereotype (Figure 1):

Next, the percentage of the dialogue of the Asian American characters spoken in broken English was calculated. An accent has been used since the nineteenth century in minstrel songs to indicate that Asians, despite being born in the United States of America, will never be American, always suffering from Perpetual Foreigner Syndrome as an outsider. Another indicator of broken English was obvious grammatical mistakes, such as the lack of a pronoun in a sentence, and strange string of words, like the advice given in a fortune cookie. The percentage of broken English of an Asian character that was either born in the United States or has immigrated long enough to assimilate will provide a quantitative measurement of how much the Asian American character is portrayed as an outsider.

Then, the number of times an Asian American character defies a stereotype, such as verbally expressing that he or she is not a stereotype, or is portrayed actively involved in the opposite of a stereotypical behavior, is recorded to see if there has been a change in the portrayal of Asian Americans. In the earlier motion pictures, Asian Americans quietly fulfilled stereotypes or passively acknowledged them. Recently, a new phenomenon of Asian Americans calling out these stereotypes and defying them either through their speech or actions has been observed beginning two decades ago. The number of times an Asian American character speaks or acts out about stereotypes can provide clues to whether there is indeed a cultural change in the portrayal of Asian Americans in motion pictures.

Finally, the Asian American character was analyzed qualitatively in the context of the past history of the other characters of the show, providing some information that could not be offered by quantitative measurements. I also recorded my own analysis of the episode. Although this particular method may include researcher bias and experience, I believed that quantitative measurements were insufficient in fully answering my questions.

These methods were also used in analyzing primetime dramas. “Hawaii Five-O” was selected for the content analysis because it was a remake of the original series, which had premiered almost 40 years before. Significant insight into whether the portrayal of Asian Americans have changed in the last half a century can be achieved through comparing the same two recurring Asian American characters in the same series airing four decades apart.

The methods were slightly altered for analyzing the feature-length film Karate Kid (1984) and its remake, Karate Kid (2010) because the character of the martial art expert changes from an Asian American to an Asian in China. First, the percentage of the dialogue spoken by the Asian character in broken English was made exclusive to only Asian American characters, eliminating Jackie Chan’s character in the second Karate Kid from being analyzed in this specific aspect. Jackie Chan’s character was excluded from the broken English percentage because it is a measurement of how much an Asian American character is viewed as an outsider. Jackie Chan’s character, however, was not born in the United States nor did he appear to spend any time in North America. Since he is already an outsider to the United States by not being an Asian American, his accent in speaking English is acceptable.

The percentage comparing the amount of time of spoken dialogue by Asian American characters to the time of all of the characters was also modified for the Karate Kid series because the damsel in distress and the villainous bullies change from being played by Caucasian actors to Asian actors due to the setting being moved from the United States to China. Therefore to most accurately measure the amount of influence the wise kung fu expert character exerted on the movie plot, I compared the time of spoken dialogue of only the Mr. Miyagi and Mr. Chan characters to the spoken dialogue of all of the characters in the movie. The other methods were

utilized without modification though the comparative analysis of the two characters was emphasized.

The second technique used in this research project was conducting surveys of students at Union College. Although content analysis of the media is very important in determining if there is a difference in the representation of Asian Americans in media, surveys can provide vital insight about the attitudes of the audience who is exposed to the media and its changes.

To receive enough samples from the Asian American population at Union College, the Southeast Asian population was included as the definition of Asian American despite being excluded from the content analysis. To ensure there was a relatively equal distribution throughout the student population on the Union College campus an electronic version of the surveys was sent to the mailing lists of a judgment sample of organizations on campus that might over-represent the Asian population: the mailing lists of Biology Club, Asian Student Union, and Leadership in Medicine program, and Gamma Phi Beta, which was 336 students. Although the ideal methods would be to distribute the survey to a random selection of the entire student population of Union College and have a 100% response rate, only certain mailing lists were available for use at the time and I wanted to ensure adequate Asian participation in the survey.

The survey that was distributed electronically is submitted in Appendix A.

Question 1 was created to see if any of the favorite shows and movies of the participants would contain a prominent Asian American actor featured in either a supporting role or the main character role, indicating the sensitivity the survey taker exhibited toward Asian American actors. My hypothesis is that Asian Americans would list more favorite shows and movies featuring an Asian American actor in a prominent role than Caucasian Americans due to the fact

that they can relate to the character by finding similarities in their racial background. I would have preferred to conduct a ten minute video with a few media clips and ask the survey participants how many times an Asian appeared on the screen to measure this sensitivity. However, due to time constraints, this method was discarded for later use. Question 1 preceded Question 2, which concerned the race of the survey taker, to ensure the survey participant would not be thinking of his or her own race when listing his or her favorite media. Question 3 was used to classify the participant into Generation 0 (born in another country), Generation 1 (parents were born in another country; self was born in USA), and Generation 2 (parents and self were born in the USA). The age at which the respondent immigrated was very important to provide evidence of the process of assimilation. Will the answers of an immigrant who came to the United States at one year old differ from one who immigrated at twenty years old?

Question 4, which asks the survey participant if he or she enjoys learning about his or her culture through family gatherings and stories, was used to measure how receptive the survey taker was to his and her native culture. Question 5, which asks the survey taker to rank his or her opinions of watching Asian characters in the media, measures how open the survey taker is to seeing Asian American characters on television or movies.

Questions 6 to 8 measured if Caucasian Americans would be more likely to think an Asian American actor is an outsider and not American by assuming that the Asian American actor is born outside the United States than Asian Americans. Question 6 asked for the survey participant's favorite American actors/actresses whereas Question 7 asked for the survey's participant's favorite actors and actresses and the country of origin of his or her answers. I had wanted to see if the lists of favorite American actors and actresses would be solely dominated by Caucasian actors and if Asian Americans actors would be mentioned as a favorite actor/actress

that is not from the United States.

Question 8 was one of the most important parts of the survey and one of the most important indicators of whether or not Caucasian Americans would more likely treat an Asian American as an outsider as compared to another Caucasian. Asian American actors that were American citizens were listed alongside Caucasian actors that were not from the United States. The survey participants were asked to guess the country of origin of the actors and actresses listed. The correct answer used in the survey was the country of which the actor or actress was born. Although the ideal question would have been in form of photos instead of a list of names, the electronic survey system I utilized was incapable of supporting the technical aspects of this method. I hypothesized that Asian American actors would receive more country of origins votes outside the United States than the Caucasian actors despite being born in the United States, regardless of where the actors were actually born. I thought that the Caucasian survey participants would show this phenomenon more strongly than Asian American participants. The percentage of the countries of origins the participants got correct was separated into two categories: responses about Asian American actors and Caucasian actors. The percentage that the participant had gotten right is different from the percentage of times the participant gave a country of origin outside of the United States of America. The percentage of correct answers measures the survey taker's knowledge of the actor's background and consequently indicates his or her sensitivity to the cultural background of the actor. The percentage of times the participant places down a country of origin outside of United States of America measures the survey taker's perception of the actors as outsiders.

Question 9, which asks for images that the participants sees in Asian Americans on television, is to observe which stereotype is most prominent in the current young adult

population. The adjectives provided by the respondents were then filtered through Figure 1, which had been submitted earlier.

Question 10 was used to measure the opinions of the audience toward the portrayal of Asian Americans. I hypothesized that Asian Americans would show more sensitivity to the representation of Asians in the media than Caucasians by being more critical of the media in their responses. A comment was classified as positive if it had words similar to “accurate,” “positive,” etc. A comment was labeled negative if it had words comparable to “inaccurate,” “stereotypical,” “negative,” etc. A comment was neutral if it contained both type of words.

336 surveys were sent out. I received 56 responses. The surveys were then sorted into Caucasian Americans, Generation 0 Asian Americans, Generation 1 Asian Americans, and Generation 2 Asian Americans. T-tests under 5.00% error were performed to see relationships of statistical significance. Graphs were used to analyze the relationship between certain variables.

By employing content analysis and survey methods, I wanted to be able to use this range of methods to observe if there is indeed a change in the representation of Asian Americans in media in the recent decades and if this revolution reflects shifting racial attitudes in the United States of America.

THE DEFINITION OF BEING AMERICAN

Fortune Cookie #336: You and I merged as one.

From 336 surveys sent out to the three organizations, the survey received 56 responses. The average age of the sample surveyed was 20.8 years old. There was an extraordinarily over-representation of Asian American participants in the survey; there is only 7% of Asian American students on the Union College campus as compared to the 30.4% of the survey sample. The generation to which the Asian American respondent belonged prioritizes where the parents were born and then where the student was born. For example, one student was born in Japan but his or her parents were born in the United States. Since the person immigrated to the United States at 6 months old, an age before memories begin forming, I thought labeling him or her as a Generation 2 Asian American would be an acceptable assumption. There were 6 Generation 0 Asian Americans, 10 Generation 1 Asian Americans, and 2 Generation 2 Asian Americans. In a more ideal setting, I would have had a much larger sample with a more balanced number of participants in Generation 0, Generation 1, and Generation 2, but due to limitations of the accessible information, I was forced to work with the available data.

To begin the analysis, I plotted the percentage of the question that asked the participants to guess which country of origin that actors were from against their classification as Asian Americans and Caucasian Americans. Reflecting on the wording of the question, I realized I should have defined country of origin in my survey as specifically the country in which the actor or actress was born instead of assuming that the participants were aware of my definition. My hypothesis had been that the Caucasian Americans would more likely be incorrect about the

origins of the Asian American actors as compared to the white actors because they would be less sensitive to the biographical information of actors of a different racial background. I also hypothesized that with the increasing generation number of Asian Americans, they would exhibit more similarities in performance with the Caucasian counterparts due to assimilation. The relationship between the correct response to actors' origins compared to the respondents' racial and generational classification is seen in Figure 2:

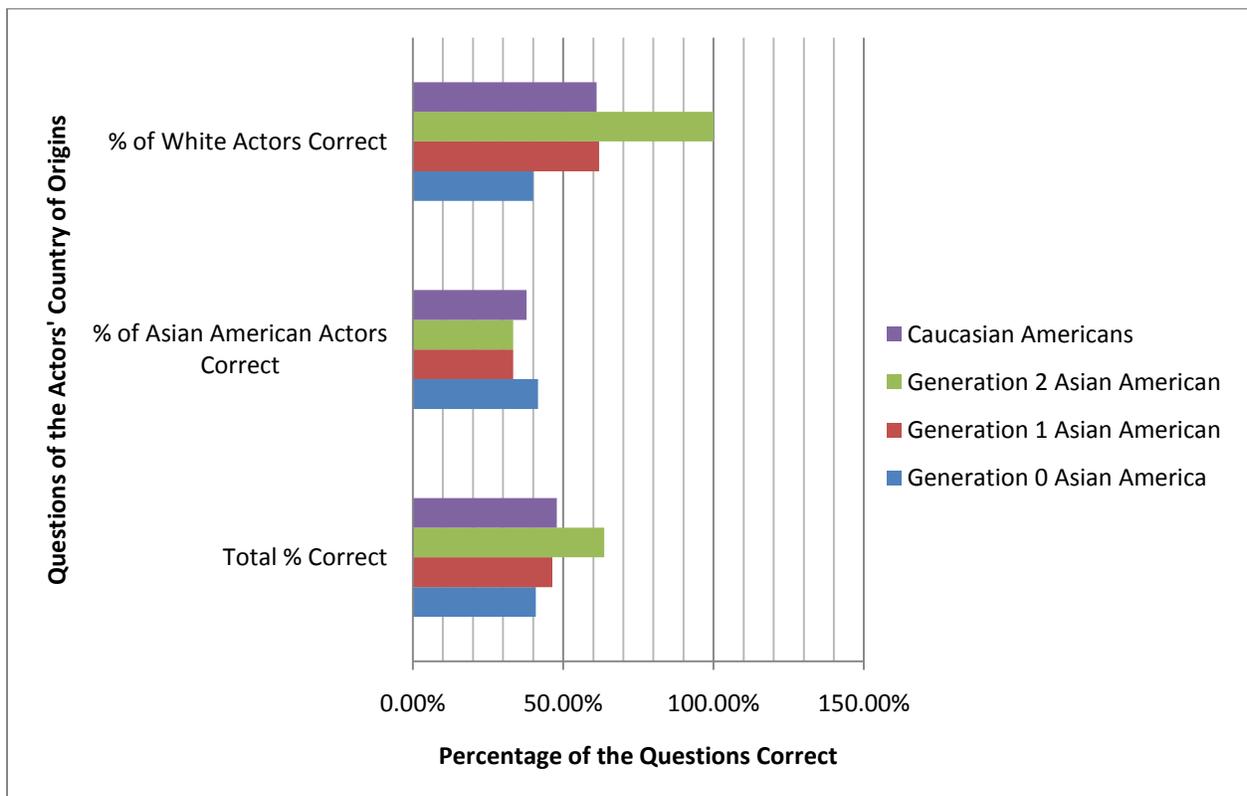


Figure 2. The percentage of questions about the actors' country of origin answered correctly separated into Caucasian Americans, Generation 0 Asian Americans, Generation 1 Asian Americans, and Generation 2 Asian Americans.

Surprisingly, the performance of the Caucasian Americans was most similar to Generation 1 Asian Americans. This finding may be due to the shortage of participants from Generation 2 rather than an accurate indicator of my hypothesis that Generation 2 would have the most similar answers to the Caucasian Americans than another generation. However, the

similarities in performance may indicate that the Generation 1 Asian Americans have already assimilated by growing up with the media despite foreign influences from their parents. Within one generation, they already had similar views of Asian American actors with Caucasian Americans, which may indicate that the process of assimilation take only one generation.

Generation 0 Asian Americans were more likely to assume an Asian American actor was indeed from the United States of America, which was the correct answer for all of the Asian American actors, except Daniel Dae-Kim. Generation 0, who had immigrated to the United States and are assumed to reflect the highest influence from their native country, may be more receptive to seeing an Asian as an American because they, themselves, cope with this identity conflict and trouble of being labeled as American more than the other generations as well. Generation 1 and 2 were surprisingly least likely to assume an Asian American actor was from the United States of America, ranking even lower than the Caucasians American respondents.

This deviation from my hypothesis can be explained by the need of Generation 1 and 2 to establish a bond with their native country. Although they experience the American culture every day, Generation 1 and 2 are often exposed to their heritage when looking in the mirror, at their family, or through the eyes of other people. In an attempt to connect with their native country, they may overestimate the number of other Asians that they see on television that come from abroad.

However, this finding may also be explained by the definition of which Generation 1 and 2 used for country of origin. While the Caucasian Americans and Generation 0 may have used country of origin as the country in which one was born, Generation 1 and 2, with their exposure to their native country through vague notions given by their parents, friends, etc. may have

defined country of origin as the place from which the ancestors of the actors had immigrated.

The consistent misinterpretation of the definition of country of origin by Generation 1 and 2 may indicate a struggle to identify with their native country.

Generation 2 received the highest score in assigning the correct country of origin to the international Caucasian actors. Although this score may be due to the relatively few participants, it might indicate that Generation 2 is more likely to assign someone to a status outside of the country than other generations and race because of their internal conflict with a native country that is distant in both geography and time. They may have assumed more people were from outside the United States because they might have a stricter definition of what it is to be American due to their identity conflict or reflecting the traditional “American” view of labeling anyone foreign looking as an outsider.

Other relationships were observed for statistical significance. The only relationship that showed statistical significance was between the age at which the participant immigrated to the United States and the correct number of actors’ country of origins as seen in Figure 3 and 4.

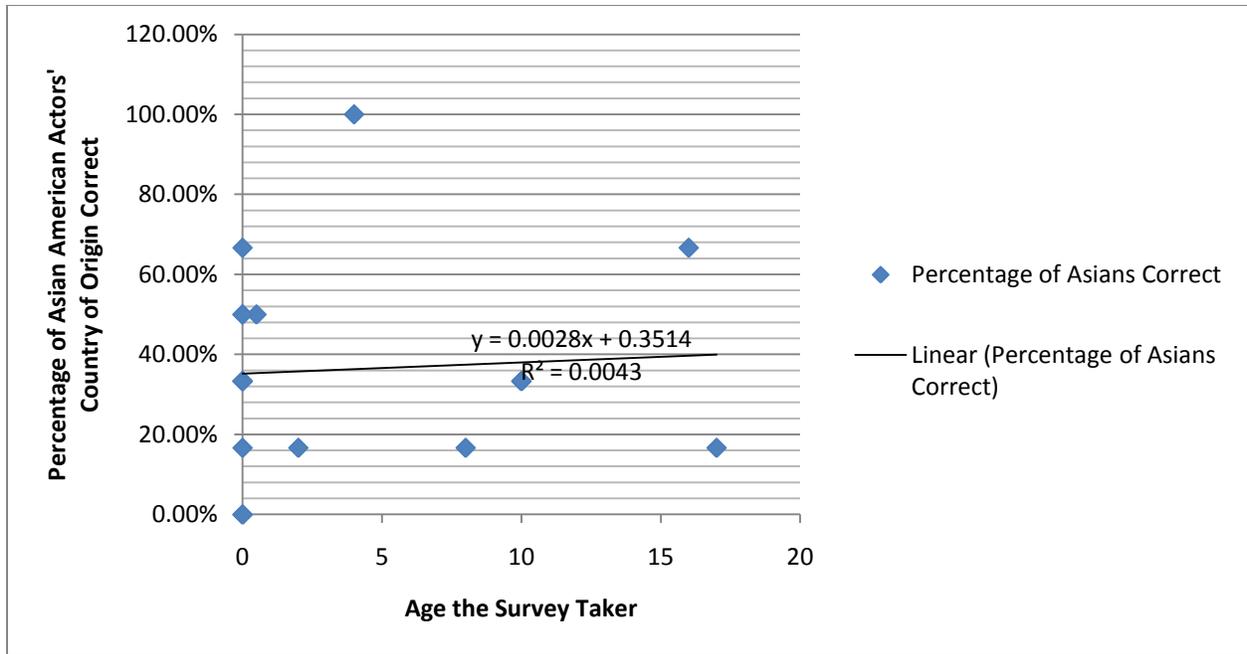


Figure 3. The percentage of Asian American actors' country of origin correct v. the age of immigration of the Asian American participant

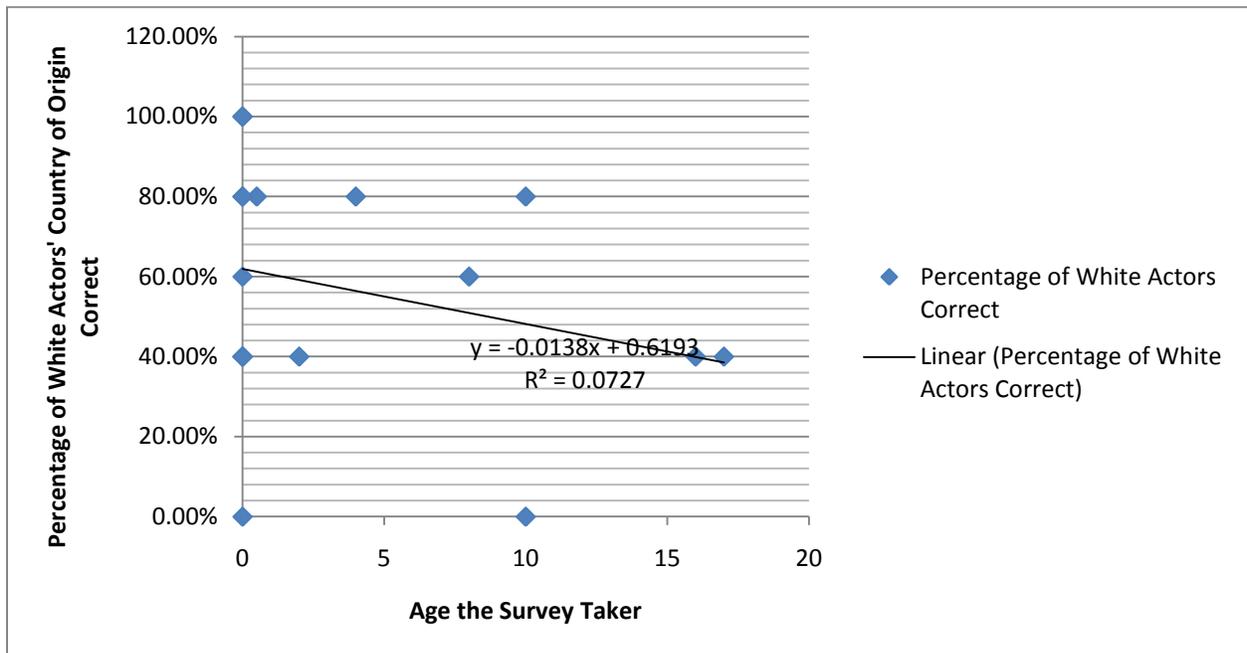


Figure 4. The percentage of Caucasian actors' country of origin correct v. the age of immigration of the Asian American participant.

The later the Asian American respondent came to the USA, the more countries of origin of the Asian American actors he or she answered correctly (p-value= 2.29%). The later the Asian American survey taker came to the USA, the less country of origin of the white actors he or she answered correctly (p-value=3.35%). These results indicate that the later an Asian American immigrated to the United States, the more sensitive the person is to the background of actors of the same race. The more an Asian American was exposed to the media of their native country, the more active he or she is in collecting biographical information of actors of the same racial background and giving correct answers when asked for these actors' country of origin.

Next, the percentage of the answers that the participant gave a country of origin outside of the United States of America was tallied according to race, as seen in Figure 5:

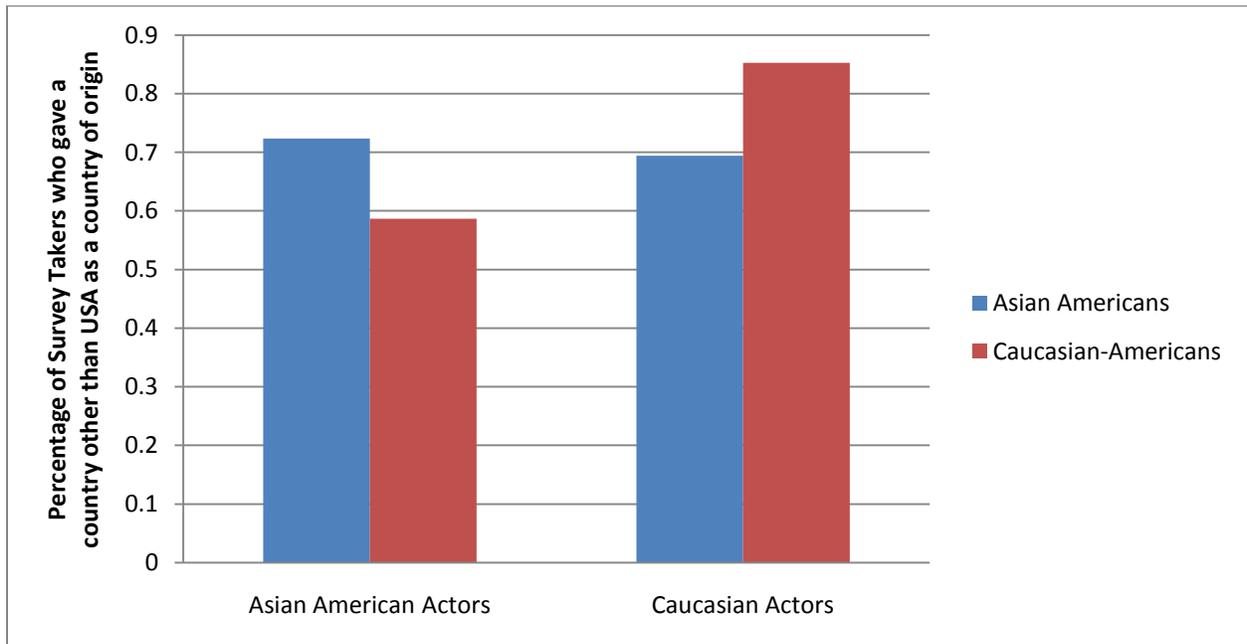


Figure 5. Percentage of answers that were country of origins outside of the United States separated by race.

I believe that when the participant gives a country of origin outside of the United States for an actor, he or she labels this actor as an outsider, or not American. Surprisingly, Asian Americans were more likely to give Asian American actors a country of origin that is outside the United States. In fact, Caucasian Americans were more likely to give white actors a country of origin that is outside of the United States. These results unexpectedly indicated that someone will think a person of their *own* race was an outsider and not American.

Caucasian Americans could have merely been more sensitive to white actors more by preferring to watch movies with white actors, paid more attention to the actors' accents and biographies and were aware that the actor was from a country other than the United States. This hypothesis is also supported by the previous graph, which showed that the less time Asian Americans spent in the United States, the more sensitive he or she was to the biographical information of Asian American actors.

As for the Asian Americans thinking that other Asians are more likely to be from outside of the United States, this unexpected result may be a further extension of their identity crisis. Their struggle to identify with both the country of which they are born in and constantly exposed to as compared to their native country in addition to the consistent reminder from others of how "Asian" they are may have made Asian Americans attempt to overcompensate for their American identity by defining being "American" with a stricter set of rules. By always being asked what country in the east that they are from and frequently suffering from perpetual foreigner syndrome, Asian Americans may have tried to compensate for their lack of American identity viewed by others by being overly "American." They may have labeled another Asian American as non-American because they have been emulating the cultural snobbery of their Caucasian counterparts.

Next, the respondents' perception of the media's portrayal of Asian Americans was gauged in Question 10, which asked the participant for his or her opinion on the representation of Asian Americans in movies and television shows. The responses were sorted by generation and race, as seen in Figure 6:

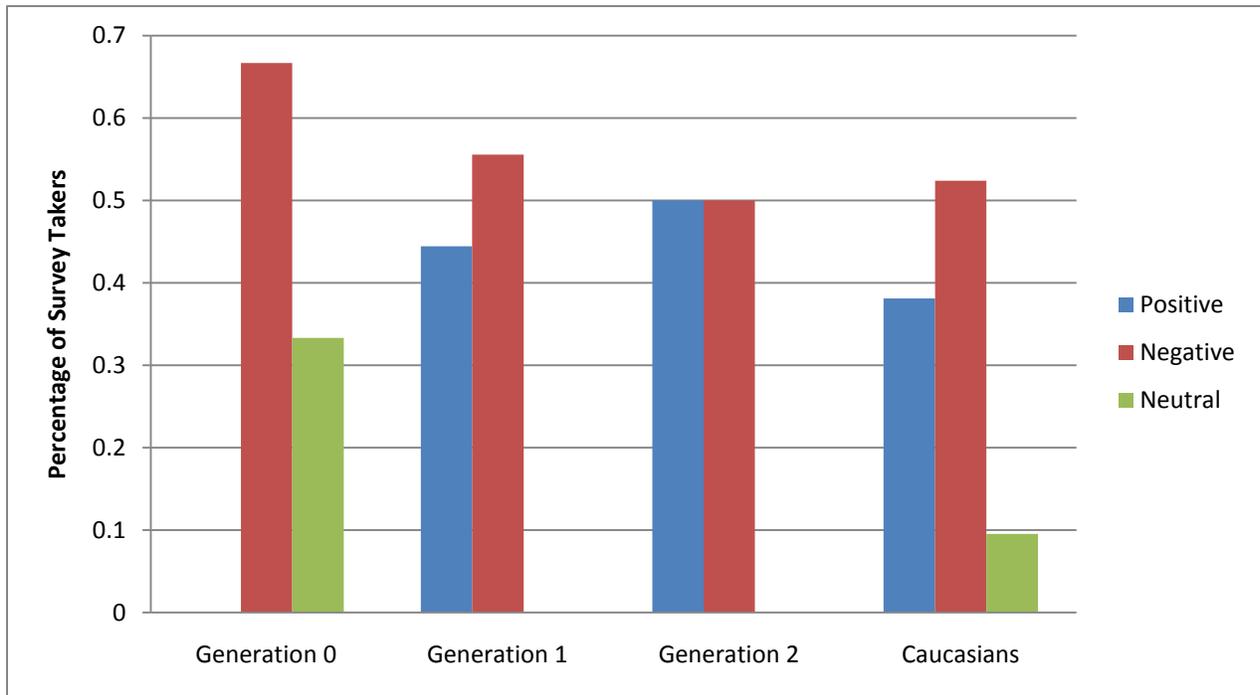


Figure 6. Perception of Media's Portrayal of Asian Americans according to race and generation

The majority of the respondents believe that the portrayal of Asian Americans in the media is negative. Generation 0 Asian Americans are more likely to believe that the portrayal of Asian Americans in American media is negative and ridden with stereotypes while Generation 2 was more likely to say that the portrayal of Asian Americans is positive. Generation 0, born abroad, may be more sensitive to the portrayal of Asians in the American media. Since some of them are old enough to have watched Asian media where there are no American stereotypes of Asians, they may have noticed the stereotypes more than the other generations and consequently

were more likely to label the representation of Asians Americans in the media as inaccurate. Generation 2 may be more likely to say the portrayal of Asian Americans is accurate because they had spent all of their years desensitized to American media and only know of their native country mainly through this outlet as their parents are also distant from their native country. Once again, Generation 1 and the Caucasian Americans are most similar in their responses, which indicate that a lot of assimilation is possible with one generation.

Next, the receptiveness of Asian Americans and Caucasian Americans to connect with their native country and to seeing Asian Americans on television was sorted according to race in

Figure 7:

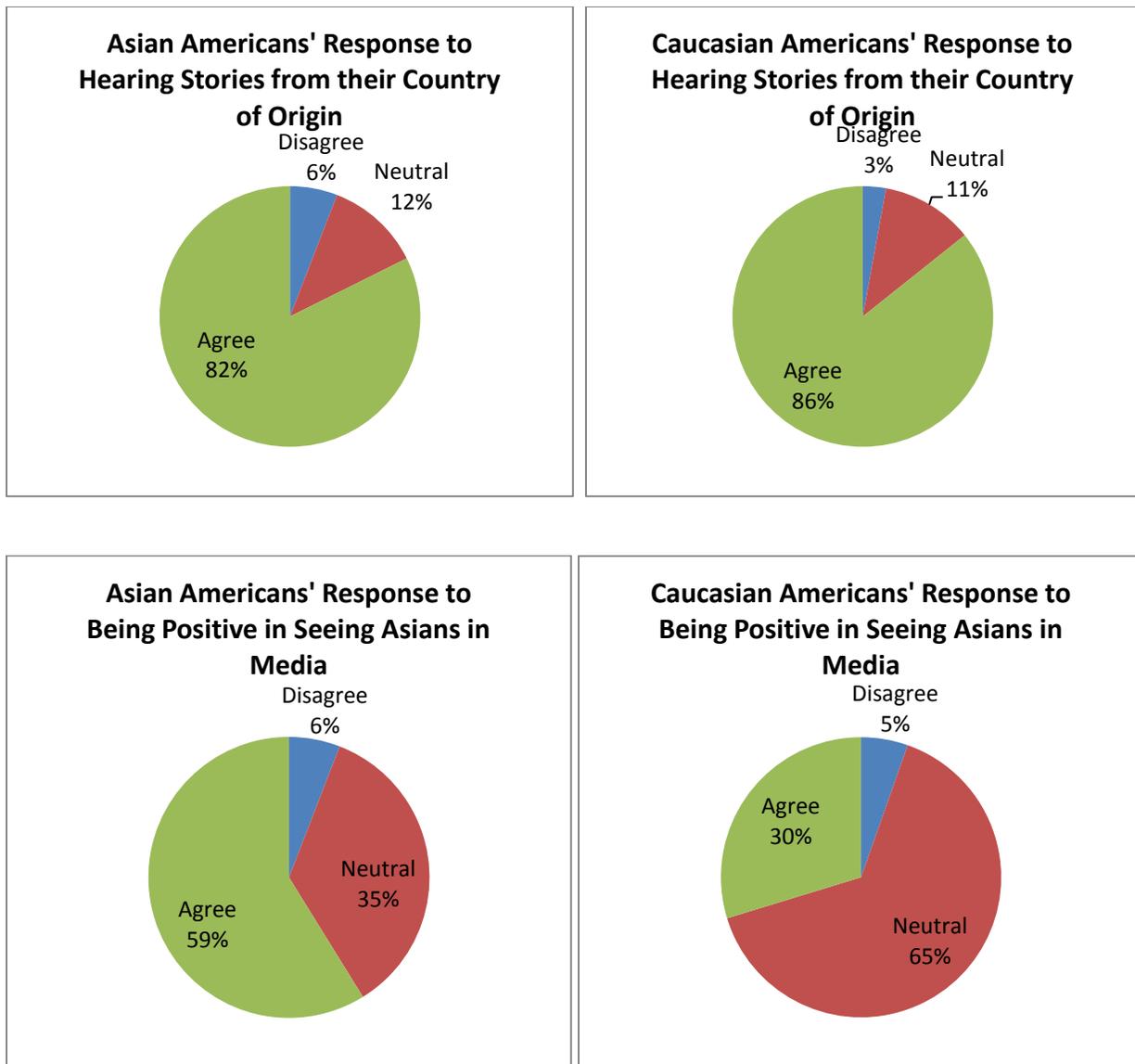


Figure 7. Responses of willingness to reconnect with native country and seeing Asians in popular media categorized by race.

Both Asian Americans and Caucasian Americans responded overwhelmingly positive to listening to stories of their origins, which indicates an eagerness to connect with one’s origins and native country. Asian Americans are more likely to enjoy seeing another Asian American in the media, perhaps in an attempt to finally relate to a character that seem to originate from a similar background.

Finally, the survey was analyzed to see which Asian American stereotype is the most widespread among students at Union College as seen in Figure 8:

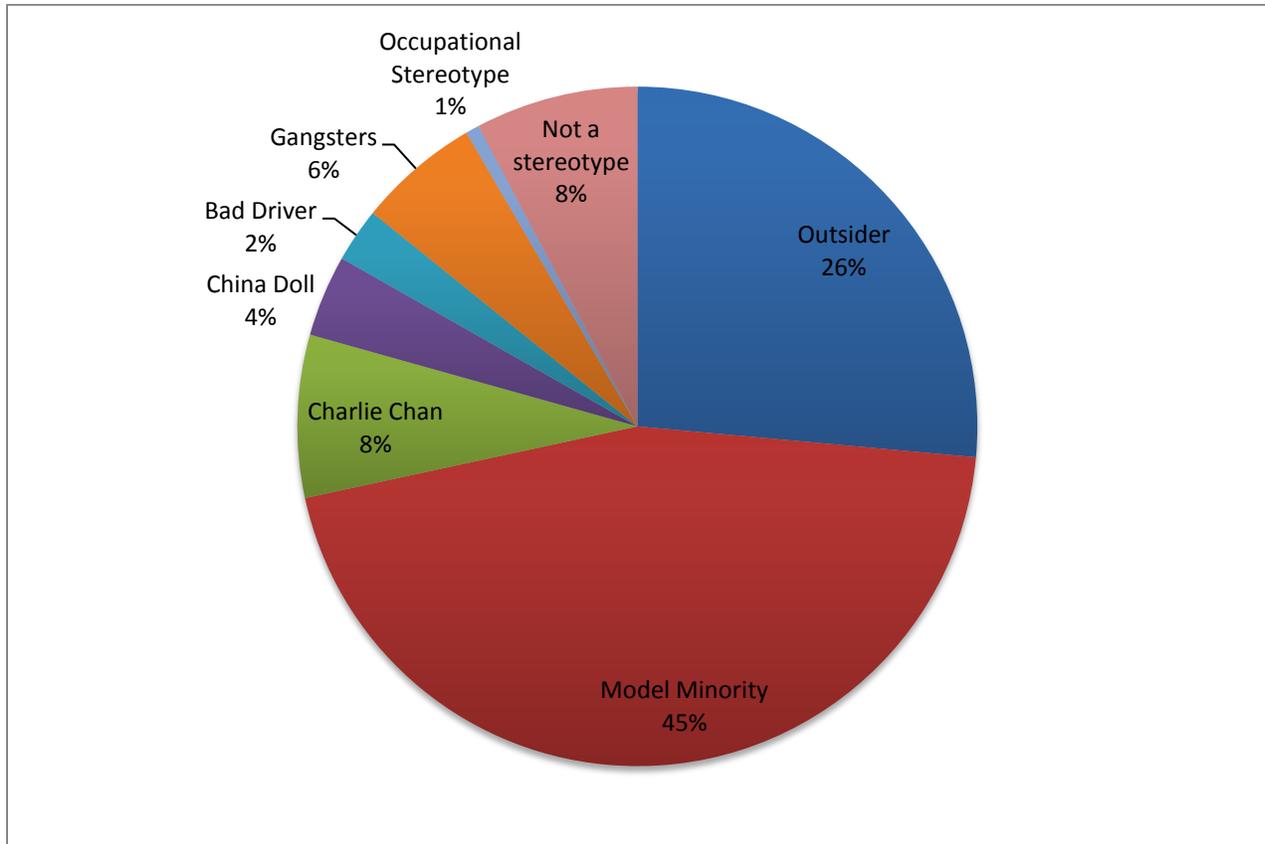


Figure 8. Popularity of Asian American Stereotypes on Union College Campus.

Adjectives that are typical of the Model Minority stereotype are most frequently mentioned as stereotypical characteristics of Asian Americans in total. These results show that the model minority is the most prevalent Asian American stereotype among young college students, which is expected since the model minority is one of the most recent stereotype and probably the one that college students are most exposed to, especially in an academic setting.

TURNING JACKIE CHAN INTO ETHAN HAWKE

Fortune Cookie #1911: Men in the game are blind to what men looking on see clearly.

The percentage of spoken dialogue for the primetime comedies was significantly low as the Asian American actors were often only guest stars of the show. For Family Guy, Asian Americans only had 3.20% of the spoken dialogue. They were always portrayed with a strong accent and extraordinarily slanted eyes even for their CBS eye icon. There were nine incidents of representing Asian Americans as an outsider, one occupational incident, and three as model minority incidents. Since Family Guy often employs stereotypes to show how much the main character, Peter, is an idiot for assuming these stereotypes, the large number of the stereotypes portrayed is not surprising for this one episode. The most prevalent issue addressed was the “outsider” aspect of Asian Americans, by having them working as rickshaw drivers, sumo wrestlers, and laundry room operators. For 30 Rock, the percentage of spoken dialogue was 5.92% with the fulfillment of the model minority, Geisha Girl, and Asian gangster though none of these characters spoke in broken English. In Modern Family, the percentage of spoken dialogue was 6.49% and had the following stereotypes: outsider, model minority, and bad driver. All three of the episodes interestingly had one of the lowest ratings for the particular comedy series of the season, which may indicate that the Asian American and Caucasian American audience alike may not be as receptive to Asian American actors as they claim in the survey.

Although the Asian American characters played minimal roles in the primetime comedy shows, there was a social phenomenon that was observed consistently in all of three episodes. For a moment, the Asian American character acts outside of the cultural boundaries, as if he or

she was a Caucasian by verbally pointing out the absurdity of Asian stereotypes. After this outburst, the Asian American characters fulfill a stereotype. The Asian Americans assume roles that are normally given to Caucasian Americans by uncharacteristically focusing on the irrationality of stereotypes but then always become a stereotype in the end, which restores the natural order. Asian Americans in primetime comedy shows were conducting rites of reversals.

For example, in Family Guy, Peter was mistaking all of the Asian American males for Jackie Chan, the manifestation of the stereotype that all Asians look alike. When he actually did approach Jackie Chan, Jackie Chan thought that Peter, a severely overweight Caucasian American male was Ethan Hawke. After Peter said that he wasn't Ethan Hawke, Jackie Chan immediately moves on to Peter's son, Chris, in exactly same excited manner as if he were Ethan Hawke. Jackie Chan turns a stereotype normally directed toward Asians on Caucasians, a race the stereotype is often not associated with, imitating a rite of reversal and a latent objection to the conventional order. For once, Jackie Chan, an Asian actor, assumed the actions of a Caucasian male by twisting the stereotype against Peter. However, like all other rites of reversal, order is immediately re-established with a bombardment of other stereotypes that followed: a rickshaw driver, sumo wrestler, a Japanese businessman, a laundry man, and a sweatshop owner.

In Modern Family, a similar rite of reversal is also observed. In the entire episode, the two gay fathers, Cameron and Mitchell, of an Asian adopted daughter, Lily, obsess over pleasing a pediatrician, who happens to be Asian, so that they can have preference for a flu shot in case there is a shortage. In the entire episode, the doctor's character can be portrayed by an actor of any other race; she had no accent, was composed, and did not fulfill any stereotypes. She was essentially acting like an American, similar to the way that Jackie Chan had acted in Family Guy; she refused to marry a man her mother had suggested and instead, chose to have a fulfilling

career as an independent woman with modern Western ideas. She even stated she did not fit the typical mold of an Asian American: “The best thing I can do is to not be a stereotype.” However, as in rites of reversal, hers came to an end when she reaffirmed to the gay dads that she was indeed a stereotype by crashing her car into several garbage cans before speeding away. The proper order of using long-standing stereotypes of Asian Americans was, in fact, restored.

John Cho in 30 Rock also seemingly defied a type of Asian American stereotype during his initial appearance. He was a Canadian who operated a meth lab in the back of his van along with his two Caucasian friends. In fact, he even played with the stereotype of martial art expert for Asian Americans by saying, “I am good at karate. I know. All men from Quebec are great at karate.” He made fun of all the people who believe in the stereotype and in essence, was protesting against the cultural order of stereotypes. However, in the end, he revealed how his parents had pushed him to become prime minister, excel in academics, go to law school because of their commands, which fulfills all of the qualification of model minority stereotype.

This rise of the role reversal in primetime comedy shows correlates to the rites of reversals proposed by anthropologist Max Gluckman. Although the image of Jackie Chan yelling Ethan Hawke at every white male that passes his sight does not seem to resemble to the women acting like men in Zulu agricultural rites, both cultural phenomenon are amazingly similar. First, both parties play an ambivalent role in society. In Max Gluckman’s observation of the Zulu culture, the menstrual blood of Zulu women had both negative and positive connotations. When a woman menstruated, she was capable of great evil, such as deteriorating the health of the crops and casting harmful spells as witches. However, menstrual blood also represented the good that women possessed, such as her ability to produce life. Women were both good and evil in the Zulu society, and therefore had a vague classification in the culture. Since men do not possess a

conflicting position in the society, only women performed rites of reversals, emulating the profanity of men for a limited time period (McGee and Warms 2004: 204).

Asian Americans, like the Zulu women, also held an ambivalent position in American culture, represented both as participants of the social structure with their inclusion in occupational sectors and as outsiders with their blatant differences in their physical appearance. Since they waver in their role in the social structure, unlike the established role of Caucasian Americans, Asian Americans are seen performing these rites of reversals in which they act like Caucasian Americans for a temporary period of time.

Anthropologist Max Gluckman also proposed that these rites of reversals often arise during period of strong social solidarity. The power of the Zulu states was undeniable and the stability of the patriarchal society was strong. With both its political position and social structure well established, the Zulu women were then permitted to conduct rituals of reversals, which promoted solidarity by pointing out areas of conflict (McGee and Warms 2004: 213). Currently, the United States of America has been relatively stable in politics and social structure. Their steady relationship with East Asian Americans is seen in the lack of wars with any countries located in the Far East and lack of civil right movements. In this time of a strongly recognized structure, Asian Americans are allowed to conduct rites of reversals without truly threatening the social cohesion of the society.

Therefore, the rise of rites of reversals observed among Asian Americans in the primetime comedy shows has both similar context and setting as the rituals performed by the women in the Zulu culture. Both rites of reversals involve a person whose place in society is not clearly defined. This person then assumes the role of an established participant of the culture for

a temporary period of time. Both rites of reversals emerged during a period of stability in both political power and social structure. In “The Licence in Ritual,” anthropologist Max Gluckman argued that these rites of reversal preserve the social solidarity of the culture. However, the rites of reversal observed in primetime comedy shows may be a symptom of shifting racial attitudes in the United States of America, as seen in dramatically different portrayals of the same Asian American characters among remakes of television shows and movies.

TRANSFORMING FROM BUFFOON TO BABE

Fortune Cookie #1968: You think only with your eyes so you are easy to fool.

In the original series of Hawaii Five-O (1968), the two Asian American characters had significantly less influence in the storyline of the show with a percentage of spoken dialogue at 7.41% for the series premiere and 5.74% for the first season finale as compared to 21.6% and 21.9%, respectively, for the new version that aired in 2010. Asian American roles in Hollywood had been severely restricted a few decades ago, represented by the significantly smaller percentage of the spoken dialogue of Asian American characters as compared to all of the characters. The representation of Asian Americans in the pilot of the original version was often negative, plagued with many stereotypes as compared to the remake, especially in the depiction of Chin Ho Kelly and Kono.

Chin Ho Kelly in the 1968 version served as a modernized form of Charlie Chan. He entered the series in a buffoonish manner, screaming, “And the great Chin Ho Kelly strikes again!” and assumed the stance of a superhero. This entrance automatically stripped the character of any respect in a more serious context. Instead of asking Chin Ho what he had accomplished, McGarrett simply ordered him to “shut up and sit down,” which Chin Ho Kelly quietly obeyed. His fat and jolly appearance, which made him nearly sterile as a man, along with his blind devotion to his white superior and his passive response to the insults, made Chin Ho Kelly the exact replica of Charlie Chan. His lines were not of substantial importance and did not drive the plot. Instead, he was often given lines that referred to his Asian background such as “someone load it with some Chinese New Year stuff,” which seems to indicate that the writers merely

wanted to capitalize on the character's exotic background instead of his credentials as a police officer.

In Hawaii Five-O (2010), the portrayal of Chin Ho Kelly was dramatically altered. Instead of fulfilling a stereotype that had existed since the beginning of the twentieth century, the new Chin Ho Kelly defied all of the stereotypes that ever existed for Asian American men. First, instead of being fat and jolly, Chin Ho Kelly is played by Daniel Dae Kim, an extraordinarily fit and muscular man. His chiseled facial features and amazing physique made him impossible to be a comic relief to the show, like the role the Chin Ho Kelly had originally served. In the past, Asian American men have often been highly feminized to the point of being labeled as a third gender. In the new Hawaii Five-O, Chin Ho Kelly actually serves as a sex symbol on the show, often appearing half-naked in the center of the advertisements.

In fact, McGarrett comments on how the governor of Hawaii, a very attractive blond Caucasian woman who was both highly intelligent and incredibly powerful in the state, keeps giving "sex eyes" to Chin Ho Kelly. The new McGarrett, on the other hand, had no romantic love interest in either the series premiere or the season finale. He also had no females show interest into him sexually. In the older version, McGarrett was portrayed as extremely suave with the ladies, smoothly asking out the female witness after an interrogation. The fact that Chin Ho Kelly replaced McGarrett as the sex symbol of the show is an incredible indication that Asian American men are finally not being viewed solely as feminized asexual beings.

Instead of constantly referring to his Asian heritage, Chin Ho Kelly does not even mention any indications of Asia in his dialogue. In fact, he engages in all-American activities, like being the football star in high school. When he encountered illegal Asian immigrants,

McGarrett was the one who talked to them in Mandarin, not Chin Ho. Unlike the old Chin Ho Kelly, the new one does not capitalize on his exotic background and instead focuses on his credentials as a police officer.

Also, he does not have a blind devotion to McGarrett. His loyalty to McGarrett is explained when he was dismissed from the police force after being accused of taking bribes. McGarrett's Five-O department was his only option to redeem himself in the law enforcement profession. When he believed McGarrett committed a crime in breaking into the governor's office, the new Chin Ho Kelly had no problem arresting McGarrett and voicing his disapproval of McGarrett's actions. Although Chin Ho Kelly is only a supporting actor on the new version of Hawaii Five-O, he certainly surpasses McGarrett in both sexual appeal through the attention he receives from women, and intelligence through his constant dismissal of McGarrett's suggestions with facts about Hawaii. He acts on his own beliefs of what is right and wrong, not on the orders of his white superior.

Chin Ho Kelly is not the only Asian American character on the show to exhibit drastic change in his or her portrayal since the last few decades. Kono in the new Hawaii Five-O (2010) is a young Asian American woman, who certainly does not fulfill the stereotype of a Geisha Girl, the submissive, quiet female, nor the Dragon Lady, the evil, promiscuous woman. She has no problem punching men if they ruin her day, as seen through her physical assault on a man who ruined her surfing. She also does not mind taking advantage of the Geisha Girl stereotype when going undercover as a helpless girl who wanted her parents to be smuggled illegally into the United States. Her strategic manipulation of the stereotypical view of Asian American females shows that she is anything but a stereotype.

On the other hand, Kono, in the original Hawaii Five-O, is exactly a stereotype: another modernized version of Charlie Chan. He responds in short and curt words and often looks confused when asked to use his logical skills though he proves to be valuable in terms of physical force. He blindly follows McGarrett's orders without question and verbally acknowledges the superiority of McGarrett by only referring to him as "boss." While Chin Ho is used as a comic relief in the plot, Kono is often viewed as an outsider with backwards Asian traditional beliefs. For example, in the season finale of the 1968 Hawaii Five-O, Kono explains why he bailed out his uncle, who had shot at his neighbors. In response to Kono's explanation, Danno called him "nine-tenth Hawaiian and one-tenth cop." This comment is the reflection of Asian Americans as an outsider. Despite contributing enormous physical power to the police department, these achievements are only one-tenth of his identity in the law enforcement profession. Kono is still being defined mainly by his race, which makes up ninety percent of how others view him. In addition, Kono reveals his superstitious beliefs in the season finale, which the other characters poke fun at. Even though Kono has been exposed to American modernism for most of his life, he still refuses to fully absorb Western ideas and drop these superstitious beliefs of his heritage. His fear of an Asian mythical creatures reinforces the belief that Asian Americans refuse to assimilate and will always be "the other."

The view of Asian Americans as perpetual outsiders or part of the Yellow Peril extends beyond the portrayal of Chin Ho Kelly and Kono in the 1968 Hawaii Five-O, as seen through the roles played by the Asian American extras. For example, in the old Hawaii Five-O, a young woman in a cheongsam, a traditional Chinese dress, randomly walks by the police station when McGarrett gets out of his car. Also, in the original Hawaii Five-O, the first person to speak in the season premiere after the musical opening was a Chinese tour bus operator who had a very

strong accent despite appearing to have been working in the country for a very long time as indicated by his extensive knowledge of the history behind the police department building. The only Asian American in the 2010 Hawaii Five-O who spoke in broken English was one of the villains, an Asian smuggler and gang leader of a slave trade. Although he spoke in broken English and therefore would have appeared to be automatically labeled as a stereotype, he was actually far from it; he was married to an African woman from Rwanda and has two multi-racial children with strange names. Although he had a very strong accent, this villain definitely did not fit the mold of a stereotype.

Furthermore, the cultural ignorance about the different types of Asian was also emphasized in the 1968 Hawaii Five-O through the Chinese tour bus operator's greeting, which combined Cantonese and Japanese together. McGarrett, in an attempt to appear open-minded and knowledgeable to other cultures to the audience, responded in a *third* dialect: Mandarin. Oblivious to the differences between the three languages, the audience believed that McGarrett's use of another language to respond was sufficient credentials for him to operate in a community largely dominated by Asian Americans.

In the 2010 version, the audience seemed to require more than just "goodbye" in Chinese to fully acknowledge McGarrett as a man who was often exposed to Asian influences and consequently qualified to head his own department in a state with a majority of Asian Americans. In 2010, McGarrett not only served in South Korea during his military mission but he was also completely fluent in Mandarin, which he used to communicate with illegal Chinese immigrants. By giving McGarrett actual credentials that can be included on a real resume to prove he is knowledgeable about Asian countries, the intentions of the producers seem to

indicate that American ignorance about different types of Asians and countries has dramatically decreased.

Furthermore, the season premiere of the original show opened to a scene with an Asian villain and Asian worker drones torturing a Caucasian man with a method later referred to as “Chinese water torture” in Hawaii. The scene of Asians conducting secret torture on American citizens, harming an American police officer despite being welcomed with opened arms to the country, was a clear manifestation of the Yellow Peril. Despite torturing American citizens, the Asians operated under the instructions of a faceless Caucasian male as if to remind the audience that the white male would always be in the most powerful position, good or evil.

The superiority of the white male, or Western civilization, was an ongoing theme of Hawaii Five-O (1968), which was further highlighted when an Asian gangster was shot dead in his tracks by McGarrett during his attempt to creep up behind McGarrett with a knife that was obviously decorated to appear exotic. The Asian gangster was not given a regular kitchen knife but an adorned knife that showed clear Asian design influences. Therefore, the death of the Asian gangster, who was immediately killed by the gunshot, reaffirmed that the gun was better than an Asian knife, implying that Western civilization was superior to the East.

In fact, one of McGarrett’s white superiors verbally voiced the feelings of the supremacy of white men by saying that he feared there would be resentment among the original Islanders even though the white people came to the island to change it in the “name of progress.” Even the Asian American who outranked McGarrett as the attorney general did not actually have any control over him in reality. McGarrett practically ordered the Asian American attorney general to approve of the exhumation of a body to which the Asian American attorney general responded,

“Sometimes, I don’t even know if I work for you [McGarrett].” Furthermore, McGarrett still manages to utter “I am in control” after experiencing an intense Chinese brain-washing technique, verbally stating his superiority in the show. The dominance of the white man over Asian American men is further emphasized in the interactions between the two Asian American members of the department with the Caucasian ones. Kono and Chin Ho are often assigned to do the dirty work, like scoping the soil for leaves and mineral samples, whereas McGarrett and Danno received more prestigious assignments. Whenever McGarrett tested his subordinates, Danno, not Kono or Chin Ho, would think of the answer first.

In the new show, however, the writers seemed to struggle with justifying why McGarrett is the head of the department by giving him extraordinary credentials instead of simply telling the audience to accept him due to his race. The season premiere opens to McGarrett serving in the American military during a mission in South Korea, which may imply the producers’ attempt to make the main character more open-minded and knowledgeable of other cultures to the audience due to his exposure to international issues. In fact, the producers also try to make Danno more exotically appealing by giving him a British ex-wife.

The type-casting of Asian Americans in only villain or outsider roles also appears to have decreased in the new version of the show. The first villain to appear on the show was not Asian but two Irish brothers. In fact, the crime was crueler than the one conducted in the original version. In the 1968 Hawaii Five-O, McGarrett does attempt to humanize the murdered policeman by repeatedly claiming how great friends they were and how his friend hated Hawaii because he was a redhead who burnt very quickly. In the new version, the brothers commit a far more heinous and personalized crime aimed at the new McGarrett by shooting his father as McGarrett was on the other end of the phone. The Irish villains in the second version were more

evil than the Asian ones in the original show by committing a highly personalized crime to McGarrett.

In the series finale, the audience finds out that these two Irish brothers were actually working for an Asian American villain, Wo-Fat. By placing an Asian American in the top position of the most intelligent villain instead of serving a white superior, the new Hawaii Five-O appears to have progressed in its representation of Asian Americans. The supremacy of the Caucasian Americans was certainly downplayed in the newer version. For example, when a white male interrupted the surfing of Kono, who is now played by a female, Grace Park had no problem approaching the man and punching him square in the face. Whenever McGarrett would recommend a course of action, Chin Ho Kelly is the one to turn it down with some strange fact about Hawaii. The Chief of Police in the new version is also Asian American and he had true power over his Caucasian American subordinates, unlike the attorney general in the 1968 Hawaii Five-O.

However, this progress is not without its stereotypes. Although the content analysis of the two Hawaii Five-O series reveals that the representation of Asian Americans has finally shifted from a largely stereotypical context to a more unique approach, as seen through the portrayal of Chin Ho Kelly, Kono, and Wo-Fat, and that the superiority of the white male and cultural ignorance of the different types of Asians have mainly been eradicated from the new series, there is still some hesitation to fully accept Asian Americans in the media. There is an indication of slight fear of an Asian American ruling over Caucasian Americans. In the new Hawaii Five-O, the two brothers that operated under Wo-Fat had obvious Irish accents and would not have been considered American and the governor, who worked for Wo-fat, was a female. Therefore, Wo-Fat being superior to Caucasian non-Americans and American females was acceptable, but not to

Caucasian American males. This subtle addition of an accent to the brothers and the sex of the governor may indicate there are still roadblocks to the abolition of stereotypes in primetime dramas.

THE TRAINING OF THE KARATE KID

Fortune Cookie #1984: One generation plants the trees and another gets the shade

Due to the setting changing from United States to China, which would have forced the producers to hire Asians to portray certain characters, only the wise, kung-fu mentor was analyzed in the content analysis. In Karate Kid (1984), Mr. Miyagi at 24.4% received significantly more time to speak his dialogue than Mr. Han at 15.5% in the remake. However, these percentages are a misinterpretation of the amount of influence Mr. Miyagi exerted on the storyline, which would have been fixed if I had used word count on the screenplay instead of time of spoken dialogue in the actual movie. Most of his dialogue consisted of screaming “Up, down, right, left” to Daniel and random Japanese words. Therefore, this percentage grossly overvalued his involvement in the movie.

The portrayal of Mr. Miyagi was highly stereotypical in the older version of the Karate Kid. Although Mr. Miyagi is a decorated WWII American soldier, he is shown with more Asian objects than Mr. Han, who lives in China. Mr. Miyagi enters the movie trying to catch a fly with his chopsticks, responding only in curt, loud “Aye!” He had a cloth tied around his head in a Japanese style and was surrounded by bonsai trees. Meanwhile, Mr. Han, who actually does live in an Asian country and not America, enters the new version eating ramen with chopsticks, not trying to catch a fly with his eating utensils. In fact, the writers point out the absurdity of this stereotype by having Mr. Han appear to attempt to catch the fly with his chopsticks but end up using a fly squatter instead. This acknowledgement in the 2010 movie of the stereotype used in

the 1984 version strongly indicates that the audience is more aware of stereotypes and no longer tolerates the acceptance of stereotypes as a norm in movies.

The view of Asian men as asexual beings seems to be almost eradicated in the remake. As seen in Hawaii Five-O when Chin Ho Kelly replaces McGarrett as the sex symbol on the show, Mr. Han is seen more masculine than Mr. Miyagi. Although both are married, Mr. Han of the newer version had a ten year old child, which proves that he is virile, as compared to Mr. Miyagi, who is never seen in a sexual context. By having a child, Mr. Han defies the stereotype that Asian men are too feminine to be portrayed as a sex symbol, potent male or even leader of a family.

Furthermore, the producers of the original movie seem to capitalize on the exoticism of Mr. Miyagi as much as possible as compared to the treatment of Mr. Han in the 2010 movie. The overwhelming emphasis on the foreignness of Mr. Miyagi shows that the audience still does not view Asian Americans as Americans but instead foreigners that refuse to assimilate, like Kono's superstitious beliefs in the original Hawaii Five-O. Mr. Miyagi's role as an outsider was emphasized throughout the entire movie, especially noticeable when no one, including Daniel, his mentee, can correctly pronounce his name. Although Mr. Han lives in a house that certainly shows Asian influences with an outside courtyard and sparring equipment, Mr. Miyagi has a fully decorated Japanese home that seemed to have been transported piece by piece from Japan to the United States. His American home is made of paper walls and has a stereotypical garden with wooden pathways. He only uses lanterns and candles. The most revealing evidence that Mr. Miyagi, an Asian American citizen in the 1980s, is viewed more as an outsider than Mr. Han, a Chinese citizen in the new millennium, is his broken English. Although both characters speak in strange fortune cookie-like sayings, Mr. Han's comments are always in perfect English with no

grammatical errors such as “You think only with your eyes so you are easy to fool” whereas Mr. Miyagi seemed to have never learned the existence of pronouns and verbs since he had immigrated to the United States. With quotes like “Balance bad, karate bad” and “it come from inside you, always right one,” an Asian American in the 1980s was viewed more as an outsider than an Asian in the new millennium.

Furthermore, the casting for the kung-fu mentor also shows a change in attitudes toward race. Pat Morita was not a known kung-fu expert. Before the Karate Kid, he had a background in comedy, not martial art films. His race as an Asian was sufficient evidence he was a kung-fu expert to the American audience. In the new movie, however, Jackie Chan, who plays Mr. Han, has extensive background in karate with a long list of movies of which he had proved his expertise. His training is what qualified him for the role. Similar to McGarrett in Hawaii Five-O, race was no longer a justification for being a leader of a police department or for being a martial art expert; instead, the American audience wants authentic credentials and experience.

The drastic change in the portrayal of Mr. Miyagi in Karate Kid (1984) and Mr. Han in Karate Kid (2010) indicates that Americans may have not only realized that the race card is no longer part of the deck but also toned down their cultural snobbery and acknowledged the stereotypes of the past as inappropriate. Americans are starting to see more similarities between Asian Americans and Caucasian Americans than differences.

CONCLUSION

Fortune Cookie #21: A conclusion is simply a place where you got tired of thinking.

The dramatic changes seen in the portrayal of Asian Americans in the popular media imply that the racial attitudes toward Asian Americans are shifting in the United States of America. First, Asian Americans are conducting rites of reversals in primetime comedy shows. According to anthropologist Max Gluckman, their permission to perform rites of reversals is indicative of their wavering position between an outsider and a participant in the social structure of the American culture. However, these rites of reversals do not preserve the social solidarity. In fact, the sight of Jackie Chan calling every Caucasian American male that passes by him Ethan Hawke is only the first domino to topple over an entire social structure.

The dramatic changes in the portrayal of Asian Americans are more clearly visible in the analysis of the remakes of Hawaii Five-O and Karate Kid. Cultural ignorance between the different types of Asians, capitalization on the exoticism of the Asian American characters, and the utilization of stereotypes have considerably been reduced in the remakes. An Asian American character can now hold a substantial role in the popular media instead of a teapot, speak like an American instead of like a fortune cookie, and defy their white superiors instead of gravity with their karate moves.

Although the advancement observed in the media is amazing, Asian Americans show a poisonous tendency to further their own stereotype as outsiders in an attempt to emulate the cultural snobbery of Americans in the hopes of being recognized as “American.” The survey responses unveiled the dangerous effect of exposing Asian Americans to their own stereotypes

on their personal conflicts with their identities. Asian Americans frequently experience doubt from other Americans if they are truly American, such as being consistently asked where they are *really* from. They are often being judged by other Americans by what they see in the mirror than the country on their passport. As victims of the perpetual foreigner syndrome, they infect others by establishing stricter rules of what defines a person as “American,” which is seen in their unusually high number of assigning a country of origin other than the United States to another Asian American. In an effort to become more “American,” they imitate the cultural snobbery of their white counterparts but end up perpetuating the outsider stereotype, forming a vicious cycle.

Despite the cultural snobbery that hinders the radical changes, the progress of eliminating Asian American stereotypes from the media has been astounding in the last fifty years. An Asian American has evolved in the popular media from being viewed as a strange creature who bound his foot to a regular person who plays football, an asexual man who desires white women to a fit sex object that all women desire, and a submissive wife who walks ten steps behind her husband to an independent woman who throws ten more punches than a man. The changes in the portrayal of Asian Americans in the popular media show the transformation of a group of people from complete outsiders to full participants of a social structure as seen in the disintegration of their stereotypes in the popular media.

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APPENDIX A

1. Media

Media What are three of your favorite
television shows?

What are three of your favorite
movies?

2. What is your race?

- What is your race? White
- African American
- American Indian
- Southeast Asian
- Chinese
- Japanese
- Filipino
- Korean
- Vietnamese
- Other

3. Classification

Classifications How old are you?

What country were you born in?

If not the USA, at what age did you
immigrate to the USA?

What countries were your parents
born in?

What languages, other than English,
do you speak?

4. I enjoy learning about the culture of my native country (or my parent's native country if you were born in the USA) from family gatherings and stories.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

5. I enjoy watching television shows and movies that depict Asian characters.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

6. Who are three of your favorite American actors/actresses?

Who are three of your favorite

American actors/actresses? Actor 1

Actor 2

Actor 3

7. Who are three of your favorite actors/actresses? Write down the country you think they are from.

Who are three of your favorite

actors/actresses? Write down the country you think they are from.

Actor/Country 1

Actor/Country 2

Actor/Country 3

8. Name the country you think these actors or actresses are from.

Lucy Liu (Ally McBeal, Charlie

Angels, Dirty Sexy Money)

Gerard Butler (300, PS I Love You,

Gamer)

John Cho (Harold and Kumar go to

White Castle, Flash Forward)

Clive Owen (Closer, Sin City,

Children of Men)

Kal Penn (Harold and Kumar go to

White Castle, House)

Hugh Jackman (X-men, The Prestige,

Van Helsing)

Daniel Dae Kim (Lost, Hawaii Five-

0)

Keira Knightly (Atonement, Pirates

of Caribbean)

Ken Jeong (Hangover, Hangover 2,

Community)

Nicole Kidman (Australia, Moulin

Rouge)

Grace Park (Hawaii Five-O,

Battleship Gallactica)

9. Asians in Media

Asians in Media Please list three positive images of Asians that you have seen in television or in the movies.

Please list three negative images of Asians that you have seen in television or in the movies.

10. What is your assessment of the depiction of Asians in television shows and movies today? For example, does the depiction seem realistic, overly positive, overly negative, etc.? Give example.

Done