

**Effects of Stereotypes and Inaccurate Media Portrayals on
Asians and Asian Americans**

By

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ABSTRACT

Few studies have examined how stereotypes and inaccurate media portrayals affect Asians and Asian Americans. As recent media representation of Asians has increased, but the use of stereotypes has not, this study was done to investigate the effects of that. Through an online survey and literature review of previous studies done, results show that stereotypes and inaccurate media portrayals have more negative than positive effects on Asians and Asian Americans. The Likert scale was used in survey questions for respondents to rate how they towards stereotypes, inaccurate media representations, and white washing. Feelings towards their Asian identity and performing stereotypical roles assigned to them, made Asian Americans conflicted between being Asian or being more American. Implications for future research are also discussed.

1. INTRODUCTION

Accurate media portrayal of minority individuals and stereotypes have been an issue for many years. Stereotypes, which have been manifested by our society, give an inauthentic depiction of how certain racial and ethnic groups really are. My focus is the effects of East Asian stereotypes and misrepresentation in media. This is important because these stereotypes have resulted in discrimination and hate crimes against East Asians. For years, Asians have been “invisible”, given background roles in movies and television shows. Asian culture has been mocked through media, and East Asians have long been negatively stereotyped. I studied how the lack of proper representation of Asians in the media affects Asian Americans; more specifically how does the media portrayal of Asians influence the way Americans view Asians and Asian Americans. This topic is significant because of the lack in research done on it and how it remains a persistent issue. To collect data, I produced an online survey for Asian students on campus. I

used Typeform to make the survey, using a Likert scale with questions pertaining to my topic and collected 30-40 responses. I also conducted a demographic questionnaire in the beginning of the online survey to collect background data on participants. A literature review of previous studies with research relating to this topic and my research questions was also done.

Previous studies have looked into messages shown through primetime television and their effects on the attitudes and beliefs of their audience (Dalisay and Tan, 2009; Zawawi and Ibrahim, 2010; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). There have also been studies on representation of minority groups in American general interest magazines (Sengupta, 2006; Knobloch-Westerwick and Coates, 2006). Previous research done on Asian values portrayed in media, found that they do not show accurate or appropriate core values and responses from Asian Americans to misrepresentation and stereotypes are often defensive (Mok, 1998; Lee et al., 2007; Huynh and Woo, 2014). The model minority stereotype (cultural expectation that a demographic group is perceived to achieve more socioeconomic success than others) has shown to make Americans treat East Asians with hostility because of an economic threat and a threat to White privilege (Taylor and Stern, 1997; Berdahl and Min, 2012; Parks and Yoo, 2016). Internalized stereotyping has affected Asian Americans by influencing their choice in college majors and changing their overall view on their own ethnic group (Shen, 2015). Internalized stereotypes happen when a person or oppressed group become used to or start to accept the prejudices and stereotypes set upon their own group. Varying media portrayals of Asians have directly influenced the way Americans view Asian culture and customs.

The main reason I chose this topic was growing up and seeing the lack in representation of Asians in media. Another reason for choosing this topic was experiencing first-hand stereotypes being tied to me. People I knew would ask “you’re Chinese so why aren’t you good at math?” or “will you grow up to be a tiger mom?” which at the time I did not understand. These micro

aggressions (indirect statements made to discriminate against marginalized groups), are often heard by many Asian Americans. Statements such as “so where are you really from?” or “what are you?” are common ones that are often used. Growing up, the television shows I watched and magazines that I read, rarely had an Asian as the main character or Asian model for the front cover. Previous studies that have researched media representation of Asians and prescribed stereotypes of Asians, have also noted how there is lack in research on these topics. More research needs to be done to investigate the complicated relationship that exists between Asian Americans and media stereotypes (Taylor and Stern, 1997; Mok, 1998). This study is significant on increasing the knowledge for others on the effects of lack in accurate media portrayal of Asians and stereotypes on Asians. Statistics on the amount of media representation that Asians get, remains at a low percentage compared to other minority groups. Through this study, people will gain more knowledge on how Americans view and treat Asians as a result of inaccurate media representation and prescriptive stereotyping. This study also reveals how many Asians and Asian Americans feel that they have been affected by stereotypes and what they think of the ways they are represented in media.

Sociology has prepared me for this project by teaching me to look more into how the socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity and gender, play a role in the way that the individual is viewed through the eyes of others in their community. The focus here is gender and race/ethnicity, as Asian men and Asian women are treated differently but can share similar experiences. Asian men are regarded as being less masculine and typically being more timid or shy, while Asian women are regarded as submissive or delicate, and fetishized for their “exotic beauty” (Mok, 1998; Dalisay and Tan, 2009). Through a sociologist point of view, all factors that can contribute to how Asians and Asian Americans view themselves as a result of stereotypes must be considered. Looking

beyond the inaccurate representations of Asians in media and the prescriptive stereotypes of “model minority” and “all work, no play”, this study investigates all factors that lead to Asian Americans having low self-esteem and questioning their social identity.

There are multiple ways this research project adds to sociological knowledge. One way this study helps expand sociological knowledge is by showing the responses of Asians and Asian Americans, and how they feel they have been affected by inaccurate media representations of them as a minority group. The feelings of Asians and Asian Americans will be measured on a scale as to how inaccurate media representations and stereotypes have personally affected their views and identities on being Asians. There will also an added increase on knowledge of how Americans have been influenced by inaccurate media representations and prescriptive stereotypes of Asians. From personal experience, I also studied effects this topic has on the mental health of Asian Americans, specifically self-esteem and the views Asians have of themselves from American beauty standards. This research project investigated the multiple factors that influence both Americans and Asian Americans with their views of each other.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Below, I discuss studies of how Asians are portrayed in television, movies and magazines. I look at the overall representation of Asians in media and effects of stereotypes on Asians and Asian Americans. Previous research investigated the effects of misrepresentation and stereotypes such as “workaholic”, “nerd”, and “socially inadequate” on Asians and Asian Americans (Mok, 1998; Lee et al., 2007; Huynh and Woo, 2014). Malaysian reality television was among the primetime television that was studied to see portrayals of Asian values and overall portrayals of race and ethnicity (Zawawi and Ibrahim, 2010; Tukachinsky et al., 2015).

The complete survey and graphs of survey question results referenced are in the appendix.

Among television advertising, Asian Americans were often put into stereotypical settings, given background roles such as waiters, cooks, servants, laundry workers, or peasants (Taylor and Stern, 1997; Dalisay and Tan, 2009). General interest magazines such as *Teen Vogue*, *Seventeen*, and *Fashion 18* were studied to see how adolescents reacted to the misrepresentations of women of color, including Asian women (Sengupta, 2006). A similar study was done looking at minority models in advertisements in magazines (Knobloch-Westerwick and Coates, 2006). Prescriptive stereotypes and internalized stereotyping, such as the idea of “model minority”, were found to affect Asians in their workplace and in college. For example, Asians that showed dominance in their workplace were racially harassed by other employees, often discriminated against (Berdahl and Min, 2012). The model minority stereotype has also affected both Asian parents and Asian American parents in cultural career choices (Berdahl and Min, 2012; Shen, 2015; Parks and Yoo, 2016). There were varying responses to stereotypes and misrepresentations in media.

Media Portrayal in Television v. Magazines

Ethnic minorities are rarely represented on television, especially Asians and Native Americans. Of characters in top primetime television from 1999-2001, only 1.4% were Asian and 0.2% were Native American (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Television shows in the 1990s rarely featured Asian Americans. Actors on these television shows were given negative ethnic minority characters (Mok, 1998; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Some of these roles, for example were an evil emperor, karate expert, or often just a caricature to be made fun of. American television shows today continue to promote the image of nerdiness among Asians, portraying them as socially awkward (Huynh and Woo, 2014). Representation of Asian women on television compared to Asian males, was less frequent. Asian women were hardly given major roles, often kept in the background and perceived as less important. In magazines, female Asian models were only shown

in 25% of ads and often kept behind other models who were Caucasian. Among product advertisements, female Asian models were seen less than male Asian models, only appearing in 6.6% of ads (Taylor and Stern, 1997). Even among Asian television shows, there were debates on the Asian values portrayed. In a study on Malaysian television programs, it was found that they reflect the Islamic concept of *istislah*, which is “to seek the best of public interest”. Malaysian reality television programs aired what they thought would please their audience, highlighting Malay-Muslim culture. This in turn, clashes with the adopted values of *timbang rasa* (tolerance) and social harmony (Zawawi and Ibrahim, 2010).

Magazines give false representations of women of color; Asian women were portrayed as cute and girlish, and Black women were given roles of “entertainer” and “athlete”. General interest magazines followed other stereotypical media images of Asians. Mass media does not offer a diversity in Asian role models, giving off the perception that as an ethnic group, they do not matter as consumers and members of society (Knobloch-Westerwick and Coates, 2006; Sengupta, 2006). When Asians are represented in media, their presence was still rare, only shown in 7% of ads (Knobloch-Westerwick and Coates, 2006). Media images of Asians are stereotyped and do not properly portray Asian values. Asians value harmony, honesty, loyalty, wisdom, and to those who follow Confucianism, filial piety. Asians are known for being very prideful, family honor is also important. Television shows make Asian characters negative and threatening. The few Asians that did make it to the big screen embodied the characteristics of sneaky, mysterious, unintelligible, and a sexual threat. White men feared that Asian men or Asian immigrants would take away their women or jobs, and that they would corrupt White women (Mok, 1998; Sengupta, 2006; Zawawi and Ibrahim, 2010; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Both television and magazines often do not properly represent the Asian community.

The complete survey and graphs of survey question results referenced are in the appendix.

The articles overall, conclude that the reason for improper representations of Asians in media, is the long history of white Americans portraying Asians in media the way they view them. Mok in her 1998 study wrote how the “model minority” stereotype was to set up Asian Americans as an ethnic minority group worthy of emulation. This then set the stage for other minority groups to be compared to Asian Americans, finding other groups to be lacking in skills and ability. Comparisons made between Asians and other minority groups results in other minority groups viewing Asians less favorably, and more likely to treat them unfairly because those minority groups are looked down upon when compared to Asians.

Media Portrayal in Television v. Movies

Television programs pose a threat to the various dimensions of Asian values by borrowing from Western lifestyles. Values such as respect, social harmony, and the importance of family are not really shown through reality television (Mok, 1998; Zawawi and Ibrahim, 2010). An important commonality across Asian cultures is the Confucian core values of family, filial piety, and loyalty (Taylor and Stern, 1997). White casting of Asian characters in movies, portray one dimensional stereotypes. White characters outnumber Asian characters in movies and television (Mok, 1998; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). This white washing of male Asian characters in movies became what others depicted of Asian males and it made actual Asians ashamed (Mok, 1998). White actors casted to portray Asians would do yellow face and ridicule or villainize Asians through their performance. Roles given to Asians in movies either portrayed them as nerds or masters in martial arts. One famous character was Long Duk Dong in *Sixteen Candles*, where the male Asian actor was made a fool of. Taking on the stereotypical image of being awkward and nerdy was a popular representation of Asians in movies (Huynh and Woo, 2014). Representation of Asians in television and magazine advertisements, often associated them with items for work life rather than social

life. Asian models were often used to advertise automobiles, electronics, and computers, rather than non-technical items. Advertisements that depicted Asians in social settings, would counter the “all work, no play” stereotype, yet Asian models were still depicted in business settings a majority of the time. By doing so, those advertisements further promoted the stereotype of Asians being “workaholics”, not shown enjoying any leisure activities (Taylor and Stern, 1997). The “all work, no play” stereotype was placed upon on Asians for their focus on working diligently and not making time for leisure. This is a misunderstanding by white Americans, because while Asians do work hard, they are just trying to make it in a place with a community that continues to challenge them. White Americans have a long history of excluding Asians and other minority groups, viewing them as a threat to economy and opportunity for work.

The portrayal of certain Asian values on reality television programs follow the concept of *istislah* (public interest) but go against the concept of *timbang rasa* (tolerance). For the Malay-Muslim community watching those reality television programs, they criticized borrowing from Western lifestyle (Zawawi and Ibrahim, 2010). The authors wrote how Malaysian reality TV programs were doing adaptations of popular American TV shows, *The Bachelorette*, being one of those shows. As Asians were supposed to be modest, shows like *The Bachelorette*, were the complete opposite. Traditional Malaysians viewed that kind of Western lifestyle as immodest and scandalous. There is too much Western influence on media used to represent Asians, representations are inauthentic and misleading (Mok, 1998; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). In her study, (Mok, 1998), noted how in movies and on television, Asian groups were often lumped together, given minor background role. Asian women were fetishized, portraying geishas, dragon ladies, or prostitutes. Portrayals of Asians in media that countered the “model minority” or “all work, no play” stereotype led to Whites perceiving Asian Americans negatively (Dalisy and Tan, 2009).

The complete survey and graphs of survey question results referenced are in the appendix.

While television and movies are slowly increasing the use of Asian characters, they still fail to give the Asian community a role model in media to look up to.

Effects of Misrepresentation in Media and Stereotypes

Contrary to what others assume, Asians are very responsive to stereotypes made about them, becoming upset or defensive when they are stereotyped or discriminated against. The model minority myth was created by dominant White culture as a means to justify racial inequality, leading to a growth in negative attitudes towards Asian Americans (Park and Yoo, 2016). Misrepresentation of Asians have led to hate crimes and harassment (Lee et al., 2007; Berdahl and Min, 2012). News outlets after 9/11 made Asian Americans targets for hate crimes. The authors stated how it was after 9/11 that violence related incidents increased against Asians, especially South Asian Americans. Their examples given were two Asian-Indian businesses being vandalized, and a White truck driver shooting a 21-year-old South Asian American (Lee et al., 2007). The common stereotyping of Asian Americans having poor English communication skills and favoring high-salary careers, lead others to believe that they are more competent in careers that do not involve verbal skills or social skills. While labeled as the model minority, Asians are hardly promoted to higher roles at work and harassed for showing dominance (Berdahl and Min, 2012; Huynh and Woo, 2015; Shen, 2015). Results from surveys handed out to an international union, showed that East Asians who went against the descriptive stereotype lacking warmth/friendliness and sociability were disliked and treated unfavorably.

Prescriptive stereotypes and internalized stereotyping, such as the “model minority” has led to consequences for Asians in college and at their workplace. Whites who believed in the model minority myth/stereotype had unfavorable attitudes and behaviors towards Asian Americans.

Asian Americans were assigned various stereotypes during the mid-19th to mid-20th century as to justify mistreatment towards Asians as a minority group. Some of these assigned stereotypes were “yellow perils”, “deviants”, and “aliens”. White college students who believed Asian Americans had traits consistent with the model minority stereotype would relate that to them being nerdy and unassimilable (Parks and Yoo, 2016). Americans do not like the idea of Asians being a threat to their social and economic positions. There is a link between the model minority stereotype and anti-Asian sentiments among Whites. Movies in the 1920s even reflected anti-Asian sentiments when Whites thought of the Chinese as the “Yellow Peril” (Mok, 1998; Berdahl and Min, 2012; Parks and Yoo, 2016). The “Yellow Peril” was a racist metaphor used to describe the belief that East Asian peoples were a threat to Western civilization. Stereotypes affect the ways Asian Americans view themselves and they are relatively more positive towards Asian men than Asian women. Asian women are fetishized and sexualized, viewed as “exotic” and objects more than people. Asian women get compared to geishas and porcelain dolls, liked by American men for their delicateness and assumed shy/quiet demeanor. It was argued that mental health professionals, clinicians and therapists should look beyond the “model minority” stereotype and expand their knowledge other images that society view Asians as a racial group. Diversity training and addressing issues of powerlessness and oppression through culturally relevant therapy were recommended. By participating in diversity training and being more critical of the lack thereof of Asians in media, mental health professionals and therapists would have a better understanding of the ways Asian Americans view themselves. (Mok, 1998). The lack in television advertisements of Asian Americans in social settings and enjoying leisure activities, reinforces the “all work, no play” stereotype (Taylor and Stern, 1997). Since Americans perceive Asians as dedicated to the work ethic and excelling in areas of math and science, Asian parents put pressure towards their

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children going for those culturally valued careers (Shen, 2015). Asian parents in America and countries in Asia have long been known to be strict about being good in school. They value a good education and being successful. Speaking from personal experience, my family would pay for SAT prep and learning centers, such as KUMON, to try and improve my math and English reading/writing skills. TV mediated messages portraying Asian Americans make white people link Asian Americans to the model minority stereotype, since portrayals constantly put emphasis on work ethic (Taylor and Stern, 1997; Dalisay and Tan, 2009).

Minority groups do not get shown in the media frequently. From data collected in a study, 20.6% of images in magazines were visible minority women (Sengupta, 2006). Over 50% of advertisements in Asian magazines related to fashion or beauty used Western models. East Asian and South Asian models were hardly used, and it affects the social “reality” for young minority women. Their definitions of beauty are given through images of Western models. Western women were featured more as sexy or sensual beauty types, whereas Asian women were more likely to be portrayed as cute and girlish (Sengupta, 2006). Asians view Western beauty standards as having high nose bridges, double eyelids, having a small face, and sharp jawlines. The ideal body being skinny but well filled out. Young Asian women view themselves as less than or not beautiful enough, appearing to have internalized Western beauty standards, and decide to get cosmetic surgery. Cosmetic surgery is most popular in Korea, with young Asian women paying to get double eyelid surgery, nose jobs, cheek implants, and breast implants (Mok, 1998). Histories of racial violence plays a role in negative effects of stereotypes. More research and comparisons need to be made on media representation of minority groups. A focus could be the psychological effects of inauthentic media representation and stereotypes (Sengupta, 2006; Lee et al., 2007). Endorsement

of the model minority stereotypes could be studied to see more of how that affects Asian students and employees (Berdahl and Min, 2012; Parks and Yoo, 2016).

There is not much literature on the effects of media representation on attitudes towards race and ethnicity among colleges with a small Asian community. While there have been studies of how often Asians are represented in media, my research explores attitudes of Asian and Asian Americans towards the lack of proper media portrayal and stereotypes of Asians. Americans form and use stereotypes to discriminate against Asians and Asian Americans. Even the model minority stereotype, which is supposed to be perceived as positive, has its negative effects on Asian Americans. With the media's failure to promote products and services towards minority consumers, they feel that their community and marketers in general view them as invisible (Taylor and Stern, 1997). There needs to be more understanding of cultural differences so that hate crimes, violence and harassment can be reduced. My study investigates the overall influence of misrepresentation and stereotyping in the media has on how white Americans view Asians and Asian Americans. The focus will be college students, regardless of year and major, to see their differing attitudes towards the topic.

3. METHODS

I conducted an online survey on Typeform, using the Likert scale, including a demographic questionnaire for Asian and Asian American students on campus. This method is the most appropriate because with an online survey, I obtained many responses as to what people feel are the effects of stereotypes and misrepresentation in the media of Asians. The questions have a single-select response through the Likert scale, and all relate back to the accuracy and consistency of media portrayal, misrepresentations, and stereotypes of East Asians. My research questions consisted of "How much do you identify with your Asian background?", "Have you ever had a

The complete survey and graphs of survey question results referenced are in the appendix.

stereotype used against you?”, and “Were you able to identify with and relate to Asian characters you saw in movies and television shows?” Questions on the survey are a mix of multiple choice and rating on the Likert scale. All demographic questions were multiple choice, while the rest were rated on the Likert scale. I also did a demographic questionnaire within the survey to gather background information on participants, looking for variables such as age, gender and ethnicity. Survey results were collected for over a course of two weeks, starting as soon as the project was IRB approved.

I deployed a survey to 36 respondents asking questions about the effects of stereotypes and misrepresentation of Asians in the media. The survey asked questions about experience with stereotypes and opinion on misrepresentation of Asians in the media, with a focus on white washing of Asian characters and makeup to change skin tones (Mok, 1998; Huynh and Woo, 2009). I conducted my sampling through purposive and snowball sampling. The sample consists of Asian students and adults of any gender from ages 18-30+. Demographics of the participants resulted in mostly female identifying respondents, and a majority were of Chinese ethnicity. Graphs and charts of the demographics are listed in the appendix. Participants were contacted through Facebook, but I first asked members of the Asian cultural club on campus in person if they would like to participate. The Asian community at Purchase is a small but growing one, most are international students. Upon looking up the demographics for the number of Asian students on campus, the Purchase website listed Asians making 4.3% of undergraduate demographics. 52% of the undergraduate demographic being White, and 23.3% being Hispanic/Latino. Other participants of the online survey were also co-workers from my workplace, and the rest were friends of participants.

Along with the survey responses, data was collected through a literature review of previous studies done with research on the topic or relating to my research questions. I looked for similarities and differences in how Asians are portrayed through various types of media. I also categorized and grouped together findings that were under the same theme or section. These themes/sections being demographics, sense of identity, and accuracy of representation. Once survey responses were collected, I did data analysis, looking through the responses for reoccurring answers and patterns.

4. DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

After collecting quantitative data, I coded for themes I found within the survey results. The three themes I found among survey responses were beliefs towards stereotypes/ effects of stereotypes, sense of identity, and representation (both accuracy and feelings towards misrepresentation). Demographics of respondents is also a theme/section, in which most of the results were scattered but there were still differences in majority. Major differences were between results of gender identity and ethnicity of respondents. Findings among the results in answers about stereotypes and misrepresentation were similar to what was found and written about in the literature review. A summary of results for questions referenced can be found in the appendix.

Of the thirty-six respondents to the survey, only two answered “not yet” when asked if they ever had a stereotype used against them. Both respondents were female identifying, but from different age groups and ethnicities/cultural heritages. In total, 94% of respondents answered “yes” for having a stereotype used against them, while 6% answered “not yet”. One respondent out of thirty-six chose not to answer how much they identified with their Asian background. Upon being asked if respondents felt they had to perform the stereotypical roles assigned to them, 61% of

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respondents rated strongly agree. This being that they felt they had to play the role of the “model minority” to Americans, but also the stereotypical gender roles of their culture. Other than the significant difference in how many respondents had a stereotype used against them, the average for results of other questions were more or less equal. Many answered either neutral or more between strongly agree and neutral on the Likert scale.

Demographics

In terms of demographics, a majority of the respondents were either 18-20 or 21-25 years old. 47% of respondents being between 18-20 years old, and 42% being between 21-25 years old. 67% of respondents were female gender identifying as a result of snowball sampling, and 31% were male gender identifying. Among the respondents, only one was gender non-binary. When asked about ethnicity/cultural heritage, majority were Chinese and Korean. Two out of thirty-six respondents were Japanese, and there were equal numbers of respondents being South Asian and Southeast Asian. Among the respondents, a little over 10 of them were Purchase students, and the rest of the respondents that the survey was shared with were friends of the initial people I reached out to, or co-workers and family members. Respondents were a mix of Purchase students and people from different boroughs of New York City, a result from purposive and snowball sampling.

Beliefs towards Stereotypes/ Effects of Stereotypes

In the past, stereotypes were used to reinforce xenophobic sentiments, resulting in East Asian Americans to be victims of discrimination and hate crimes. While hate crimes against Asians have not happened as frequent as in the past, discrimination is still an issue that Asians in America face. From the results of the answers given towards questions that asked about stereotypes, “neutral” or 4 was the answer chosen on the Likert scale most for questions thirteen and fourteen. The question was if they believed that stereotypes were harsher towards Asian men

or women. 39% of respondents chose neutral towards stereotypes being harsher towards Asian men, and 42% chose neutral towards stereotypes being harsher towards Asian women. It made sense for respondents to answer neutral for this question, as people did not want to be biased towards their opinion. While that may be, the percentages in the next answer chosen most for questions thirteen and fourteen, clearly showed people feel stereotypes were harsher towards Asian women than Asian men. 17% of respondents rated 7 on the Likert scale when asked if stereotypes were harsher towards Asian men, and a 7 equated to strongly disagree. It was another 17% of respondents that rated 3 on the Likert scale when asked if stereotypes were harsher towards Asian women, and a 3 equated to more between neutral and strongly agree. This again shows how while a majority answered “neutral”, the next majority leaned towards stereotypes being harsher towards Asian women than Asian men.

Previous studies reviewed also support my findings in how stereotypes are harsher towards Asian women than Asian men. Not only that, but a common theme found with previous studies done, is how the researchers point out that Asian women have long been given less opportunities and kept in the background compared to their Asian male counterparts. The study done by Taylor and Stern, found that even when Asian models were used in product advertisements, female Asian models were only present in 6.6% of ads compared to male Asian models. Asian American models were only present in 7% of ads with models and only present in 3% of all advertisements in general (Knobloch-Westerwick and Coates, 2006). This goes to show that Asians in comparison to other minority groups, do not get as much representation in media, and when they do it is more Asian men than Asian women. Prescriptive stereotypes have strongly affected 70% of survey respondents’ view of themselves and their self-esteem. Previous studies have found that stereotypes influence overall self-esteem of Asian Americans, and also have an effect on job

opportunities because of the labeling of “model minority”. 67% of survey respondents rated that they heard use of the “model minority” stereotype very often.

When asked to rate how much respondents feel that stereotypes played a role in their Asian identity, 38.9% of respondents rated a 3 on the Likert scale. That equated to them feeling that stereotypes had between a strong to neutral influence on their Asian identity. This was the same for the question regarding if they have been affected by Asian stereotypes, except the result being 52.8% of respondents rating 3 out of 7 on the scale. The range between answers for feelings towards the “model minority” and “all work, no play” stereotypes, was about the same. There was an equal number of respondents that rated a 4 and 6 on the Likert scale, and a total of 69.4% of respondents feeling more negative towards the “model minority” and “all work, no play” stereotypes. While these stereotypes were used more often back then, Asians and Asian Americans still hear about it today. It is brought up when Americans view someone of Asian identity having the traits of those stereotypes assigned to them. Internalized stereotyping has led to parental pressure of Asian parents towards their children in picking stereotypical major choices for college in fields such as science and technology (Shen, 2015). Many people I know, along with myself, and some participants of the survey, relate to this matter personally because assigned stereotypes and internalized stereotypes have had their influences on decisions we made. Most Asian American teens and adolescents do not chase their dreams but rather try to achieve goals set by their parents.

Regarding how respondents feel about Hollywood’s whitewashing of Asians in movies, 83.4% of respondents rated between neutral and strongly agree on whitewashing promoting negative Asian stereotypes. Hollywood’s whitewashing of Asians is a big issue, because rather than going through the effort to find and choose an Asian actor to play the role, White actors are

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cast instead, and yellow face was often done. Films such as *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Madame Butterfly*, and *Dragon Seed*, are well-known examples of yellow face. A total of 72.2% of respondents strongly agreed that other Americans viewed them through prescriptive stereotypes, with 19.4% of respondents feeling neutral. This topic was discussed among Purchase students at a cultural club meeting, and many students spoke up about white Americans constantly questioning them about their identity based on stereotypes.

Sense of Identity

I created this survey wanting to know how much respondents identified with their Asian identity, and whether that had an influence on how they feel towards Asian stereotypes and misrepresentations in media. Again, with the question about the influence of stereotypes on Asian identity, eight out of thirty-six respondents feel stereotypes had between a neutral and low influence on their Asian identity. There was also one respondent who chose not to answer how much they identified with their Asian background, and two respondents that rated that they identified not so strongly with their Asian background. There are many reasons as to why some Asians and Asian Americans may not strongly identify with their background. Some of those reasons were brought up as family choosing not to celebrate cultural holidays, not being taught the language of their country, or family favoring one Asian identity over the other. Even among the Asian minority group, people from different Asian countries do not get along. There are many reasons behind that, different cultural beliefs being one of them. Many respondents feel between strongly agree and neutral about media representation and stereotypes affecting their view of themselves and their self-esteem. 56% of respondents rated between strongly agree and neutral on media representation of Asians affecting their self-esteem. As for prescriptive stereotypes and their

effects on views of oneself and self-esteem, 70% of respondents rated between strongly agree and neutral on the Likert scale.

Much of the reason some Asians either feel more or less strongly about their sense of identity, has to do with their upbringing, experiences, and what they were taught. I say this because from personal experience, growing up, my family had a lot of pride and felt strongly for our Chinese culture. It was similar with my cousins, except they are half Chinese and half Pakistani, so the culture they grew up around was a mix of Chinese and Pakistani culture. Their father, my uncle, was also Muslim, and that definitely had its influence on my understanding of culture and what it meant to be Muslim. Having a mixed family does help give a wider view and understanding of other culture and people. This is not the case with everyone however, many bi-racial/mixed Asians often get more in touch with one side of their culture than the other, identifying more with the side they feel comfortable with or the side their family chooses to strongly identify with.

Some Asian students on campus spoke about their struggles with identity during the meetings with the Asian cultural club at Purchase, and a few explained their parents as being the reason behind not knowing a lot about the other half of their Asian background and culture. Another reason that came up a lot was choosing to be more American so that they would not be viewed through stereotypes and what media presented them as. 72% of respondents rated that they feel strongly that because they identify as Asians, Americans viewed them through prescriptive stereotypes. Results were almost the same when asked if they felt Americans view them through media representations of Asians because of their identity, a total of 70% rating that they strongly agree. A major reason the Asian cultural club on campus was created, was because the Asian students at Purchase wanted a space to bring Asians together to talk about issues they face and can relate to. The club is not exclusive, but it is one that strives to teach others and help others

The complete survey and graphs of survey question results referenced are in the appendix.

understand Asian culture and struggles faced with an Asian identity. Many of the topics discussed during those club meetings deal with issues of fetishization, racism, feelings of exclusion, and Asian history not taught in American textbooks or history classes.

With recent increases in Asian American representation in media, it was interesting to find that respondents were neutral towards how they feel recent media representation of Asian Americans made them and other Asian identifying people feel. The majority of results were neutral for both questions 22 and 23. A total of 33% of respondents felt recent media representation of Asian Americans made them and other Asian identifying people think more positively of themselves. It was a total of 47% of respondents felt that recent media representation made them, and other Asians feel more negatively of themselves. Looking at the results as whole though, more respondents strongly agreed that recent representation of Asian Americans has made them, and others think more positively of themselves than negatively. 56% of respondents agreeing that it had a more positive effect, while 30% disagreeing that it had a more negative effect. That being said, while results show that most respondents feel neutral, the answer as to if the effects of recent media are more positive or negative, is that is affected Asian Americans more positively.

Accuracy of Representation & Feelings towards Misrepresentation

It is clear from a literature review of previous studies and results from the survey, that misrepresentation of Asians in media had led to Americans treating Asians and Asian Americans differently. White Americans view Asians through portrayals of them seen on movies and television shows, but most of the time those portrayals are inaccurate. Portrayals of Asians on movies and television shows are usually exaggerated and based off stereotypes against Asians. The earliest movies portraying Asian characters made Asian men play evil villains or experts in martial arts, while Asian women were given the roles of prostitutes or geishas. Television shows

constantly made Asian characters nerdy and outcasts in the school, and female roles were made to be rebellious or the popular girl that bullied others. 33% of respondents felt neutral towards media representations of Asians being accurate, while 44% disagreed to finding them being accurate. It was rare to see Asian characters in media, so when they were represented, portrayals were often stereotypical rather than accurate.

From comparisons of current media to media in the past, there has been a shift on the way Asians are portrayed in movies and television. A show such as *Fresh off the Boat* or the movie *Crazy Rich Asians*, both which have the same leading Asian actress, show Asian characters thriving and making the best of the situation they are put in. Unlike roles in the past which made Asian characters into fools or unsociable, these recent television shows and movies made Asian characters strong and inspiring. Previous studies done have found that the way Asians are portrayed in media has a direct effect on how they are treated and viewed by other Americans. The lack of representation of Asians in movies and television shows for Asian American kids growing up affects their feelings towards their Asian identity. 56% of respondents were not really able to identify with or relate to the Asian characters they saw in movies and television shows grow up, and 36% of respondents did not identify or relate with the characters at all.

The accuracy in representation of Asians in movies and television remains an issue today because Hollywood casting directors still choose White actors to play the role of Asian characters. Magazines also made the mistake misidentifying several Asian American actors in their published photos, which resulted in them being called out and criticized. With success of the movie *Crazy Rich Asians*, the Asian American actors in that movie received a lot of publicity, but magazines such as *People* and *Vogue* still managed to misidentify those actors. This further promoted the stereotype of “all Asian look alike”, since both magazines published

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photos of Asian American actors while not being able to tell them apart. Remy Hii, one of the actors from *Crazy Rich Asians*, responded to People magazine's mistake on Twitter by saying, "When you fail to recognize our faces, when you consistently misattribute our names as though any Asian performer is interchangeable, you erase our identities & you erase our humanity. You negate our achievements & talents with your ignorance." Both publications also have not publicly acknowledged their mistake, only making corrections to the captions on their social media posts.

I was present in the room when one respondent was taking the survey, and she was one of the few that answered yes as to if she felt that she was able to identify with and relate to the Asian characters she saw in movies and television shows growing up. Upon answering the question, she asked, "What if I grew up not watching a lot of American television and movies?". She explained how she grew up watching Bollywood movies, which is why she answered yes. However, she said she would have picked not really or no had the question been reworded to specifically ask about watching American movies and television shows growing up. A total of three respondents answered yes to being able to identify with and relate to Asian characters they saw in movies and television shows growing up. Those respondents were all female identifying, each with a different ethnicity/ cultural heritage. I believe it was their ethnicity/ cultural heritage for the reason they answered yes, growing up they may have watched movies and television shows from their country, and in their native language. I grew up doing that as well but watched American movies and television shows more often. Individual upbringing and varying cultural beliefs shape how we identify as Asian. No one has the same experiences, and it is those differences that help teach others.

Accuracy in representation of Asians would greatly influence how Asian Americans feel towards their identity. With less misrepresentation, Asian Americans growing up in America will be able to relate more with characters they see on movies and television. Less endorsement of the model minority myth would potentially help white Americans shift their color-blind racial attitudes towards Asian Americans. If Hollywood stops casting white actors to play Asian characters, that would help Asian actors gain recognition.

5. GENERAL DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Both stereotypes and misrepresentations in media are complex issues of their own. Stereotypes are generalized beliefs or preconceived notions towards a group of people or things. More often than not, stereotypes are negative, and they are generalized because individuals believe them to be true about the people categorized under that specific stereotype. Misrepresentations in media are often a result of stereotypes because in the past white Americans would portray Asians the way they saw them or believed them to be. For a long time, Americans felt threatened by the presence of Asian Americans, saying that they were taking their jobs and that Asian men were out to corrupt white American women. As mentioned before, negative stereotypes made against Asians were used to reinforce xenophobic sentiments. Asian Americans in the United States were not welcome, often experiencing discrimination and hate crimes.

The Chinese were among many Asians mistreated by Americans, and even excluded from entering the United States for over twenty years when the Chinese Exclusion Act was put into place. South Asian Americans and Asian-Indians were also treated harshly and hated against after the events of 9/11. Asians as a minority group in America were given countless obstacles while trying to make a life living in the United States. From doing a literature review and looking at the

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results of my survey, stereotypes have had their influence on how Asians feel towards their identity. Asian Americans either feel stereotypes have played a role in their feelings towards Asian identity or they have been affected by stereotypes directly. Previous studies have found that stereotypes influence overall self-esteem of Asian Americans, and also have an effect on job opportunities because of the labeling of “model minority”. 67% of survey respondents rated that they heard use of the “model minority” stereotype very often.

Feelings towards the “model minority” and “all work, no play” stereotypes were between about the same and more negative. A majority of respondents rated between a 4 and 5 on the Likert scale, 28% rating a 5 and 22% rating a 4. This meaning that they did not feel too negatively towards those stereotypes, but more towards feeling neutral. An equal number of respondents rated a 3, 4, or 6 on the Likert scale when asked if as a result of stereotypes, they tried to be more American than Asian American. A 3 was between strongly agree and neutral, a 4 being neutral, and a 6 being between neutral and strongly disagree. The clear answer as to if stereotypes made Asian Americans respondents try to be more American, is no because 56% of respondents rated more towards strongly disagree on the Likert scale. That in comparison to the 29% that rated more towards strongly agree, is much higher since 17% remained neutral. Survey results differed in comparison to that of previous studies that asked participants about stereotypes and being American. Previous literature stated how Asian American respondents to their studies felt more negatively than neutral towards stereotypes and misrepresentations of them in media.

Internalization of stereotypes has caused issues for many Asian Americans, as it is the reason behind white Americans believing all Asian Americans struggle with communicating in English, and promotion of the model minority stereotype correlated with Whites color-blind racial attitudes towards Asian Americans (Shen, 2015; Parks and Yoo, 2016). While these two studies

and a few others investigated effects of stereotypes, and response of Asian Americans towards stereotypes, more research still needs to be done. The research from this study has added to current sociological knowledge on responses towards misrepresentation in media and stereotyping of Asians, but more studies need to be done to further look at how endorsing stereotypes has effects on both racial attitudes of white Americans and feelings towards identity of Asian Americans.

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7. APPENDIX

Survey Questions:

1. How old are you?
2. What is your gender identity?
3. What is your ethnicity/ cultural heritage?
4. How much do you identify with your Asian background?
5. Rate from 1-7 how much stereotypes have played a role in your Asian identity (1 being the highest and 7 the lowest)
6. As an Asian/Asian American how often have you heard the stereotype "model minority" being used?
7. Have you ever had a stereotype used against you?
8. Do you find media representations of Asians to be accurate?
9. Rate from 1 to 7 (1 being the highest and 7 being the lowest) How much Asian stereotypes have affected you?
10. How do you feel about the "model minority" and "all work, no play" stereotypes?
11. In general, I try to be more American than Asian American as a result of stereotypes
12. Growing up, were you able to identify with and relate to Asian characters you saw in movies and television shows?
13. I believe stereotypes are harsher towards Asian men than women
14. I believe stereotypes are harsher towards Asian women than men
15. Media representation of Asians has affected the way I view myself and my self-esteem
16. Prescriptive stereotypes have affected the way I view myself and my self-esteem
17. Rate from 1 to 7 (1 being the highest and 7 being the lowest) I believe stereotypes have affected the way I live my life
18. As a result of stereotypes, I have been treated differently by other Americans
19. As a result of misrepresentations in media, I have been treated differently by other Americans
20. Because I identify as Asian, Americans view me through prescriptive stereotypes
21. Because I identify as Asian, Americans view me through media representations of Asians
22. Recent media representation of Asian Americans has made me and people that identify as Asian think positively of themselves

The complete survey and graphs of survey question results referenced are in the appendix.

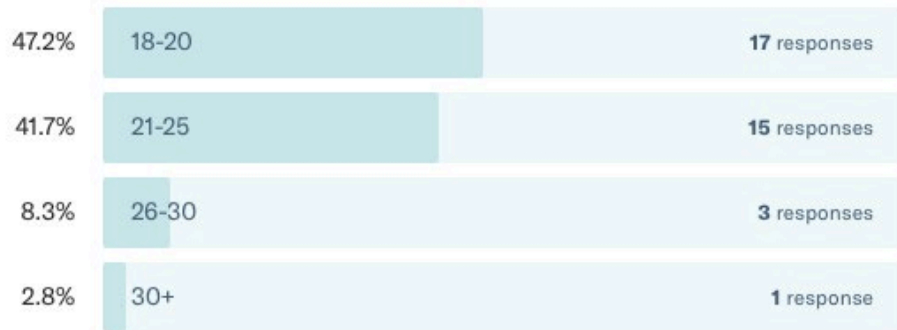
- 23. Recent media representation of Asian Americans has made me and people that identify as Asian think negatively of themselves
- 24. Hollywood's whitewashing of Asian characters has promoted negative Asian stereotypes of Asians and Asian Americans
- 25. Hollywood's whitewashing of Asian characters has promoted inaccurate representations of Asians and Asian Americans
- 26. As an Asian/Asian American, I feel I had to perform the stereotypical roles assigned to me



1

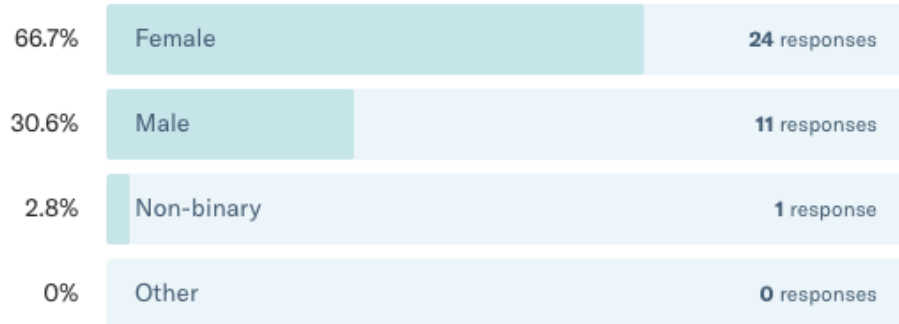
How old are you?

36 out of 36 people answered this question



2 What is your gender identity?

36 out of 36 people answered this question



3 What is your ethnicity/ cultural heritage?

36 out of 36 people answered this question



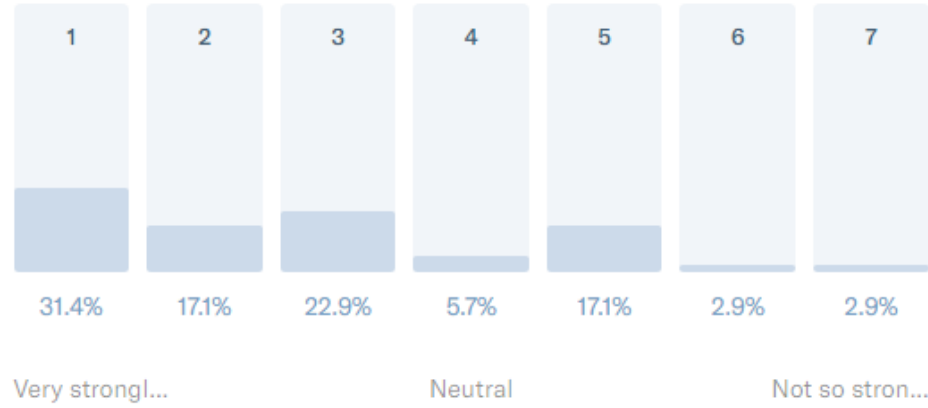
The complete survey and graphs of survey question results referenced are in the appendix.



How much do you identify with your Asian background?

Avg. 2.8

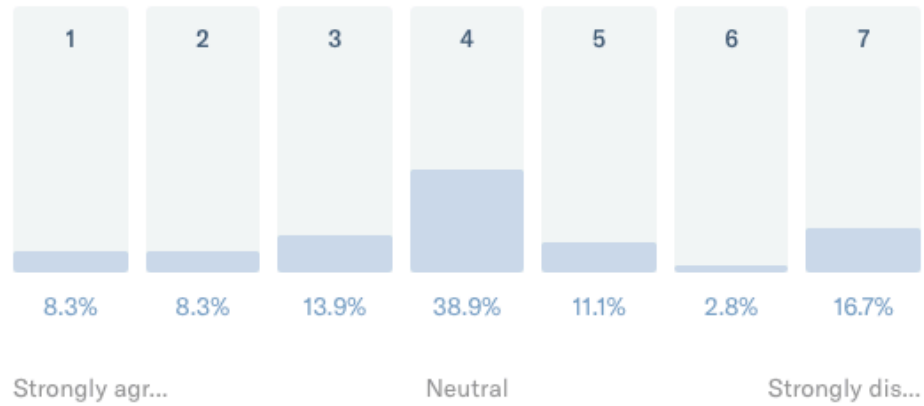
35 out of 36 people answered this question



I believe stereotypes are harsher towards Asian men than women

Avg. 4.1

36 out of 36 people answered this question

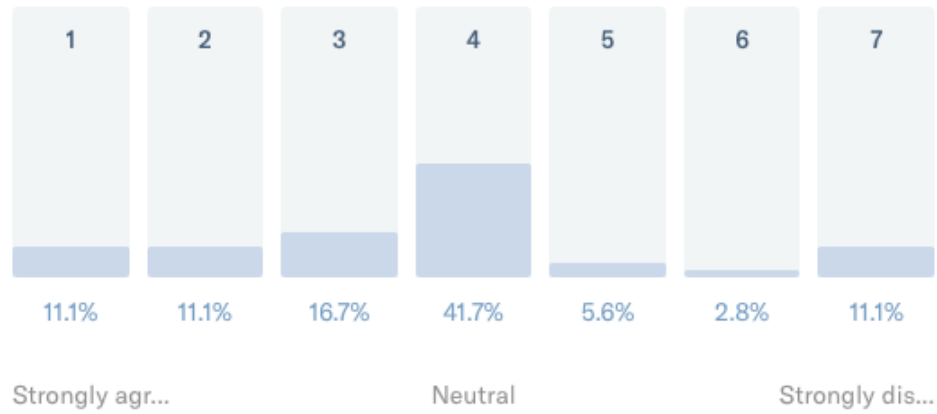


14

I believe stereotypes are harsher towards Asian women than men

Avg. 3.7

36 out of 36 people answered this question

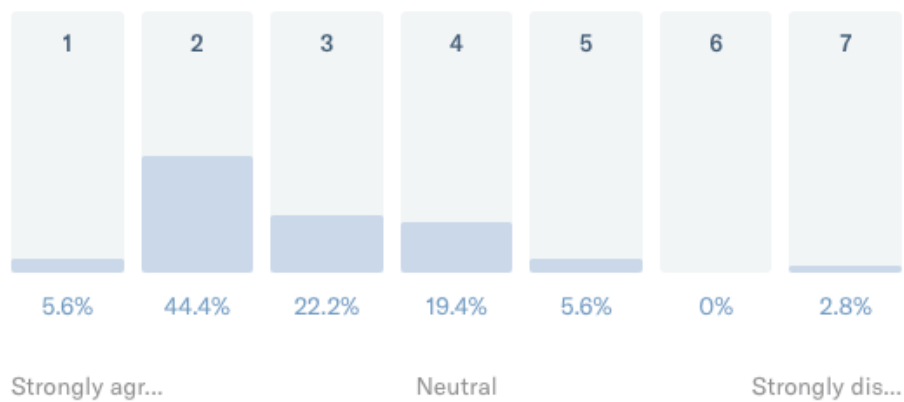


20

Because I identify as Asian, Americans view me through prescriptive stereotypes

Avg. 2.9

36 out of 36 people answered this question



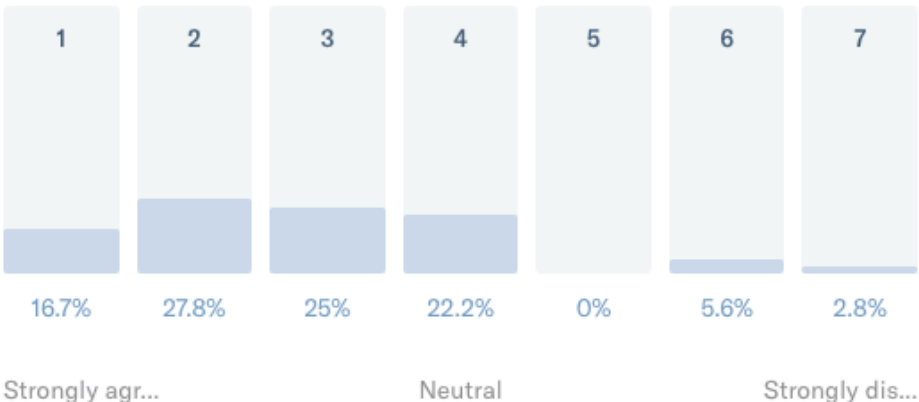
The complete survey and graphs of survey question results referenced are in the appendix.

21

Because I identify as Asian, Americans view me through media representations of Asians

Avg. 2.9

36 out of 36 people answered this question

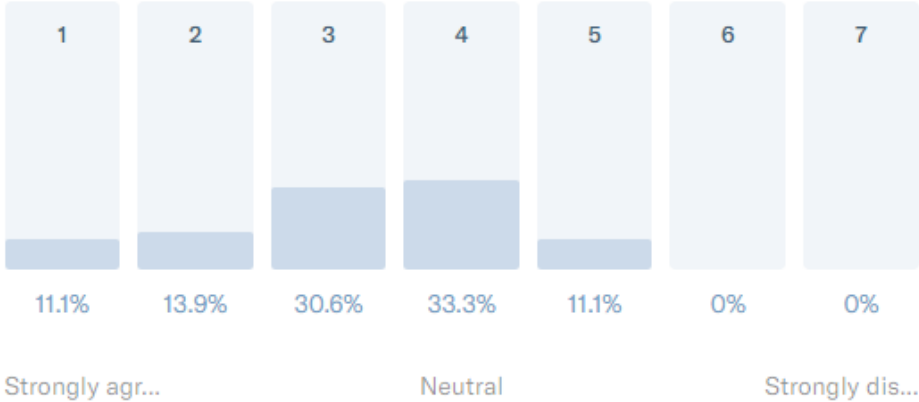


22

Recent media representation of Asian Americans has made me and people that identify as Asian think positively of themselves

Avg. 3.2

36 out of 36 people answered this question



Recent media representation of Asian Americans has made me and people that identify as Asian think negatively of themselves Avg. 4.2

36 out of 36 people answered this question

