

From *Flower Drum Song* to *Twilight*:

Observing the Trend of Asian Representation in Hollywood Movies from the 1960s to the 2000s

Word Count: 4998

1. Introduction

From slanted eyes to exaggerated accents, the racial stereotyping of Asians in American Hollywood cinema has prevailed throughout the 1900s. The problem was multifaceted: the movies were ‘whitewashed’¹ with no Asian casts, or Asian actors were morphed into archetypal figures to represent sexual, exotic or other negatively connotated characteristics. It was an example of Orientalism, a term coined by Edward Said, that referred to inaccurate or exaggerated representation of the ‘East’ by the West.

These overt evidence of Orientalism in movies did not escape critical evaluations. Various scholars continued to analyze movies with prominent Asian roles, such as *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960) and *Flower Drum Song* (1961), criticizing them for highlighting sexuality, casting wrong ethnicities, or creating problematic cultural symbols like the term ‘Dragon Lady’² (Shimizu, 2007). However, there are flaws in the focus of most existing literature criticizing these practices. The most recent works focus on a few historically influential or pivotal films from the 1940s to 1970s. Yet they disregard the fact that those particular samples are already known for racial misrepresentations, purposefully chosen to corroborate that Orientalism exists. This confirmation bias, or a tendency to search what is confirming one’s expectations, creates limitations in drawing an objective and complete conclusion about Orientalism in films.

Therefore, this research sought to fill this gap: it looked at a range of movies that also included minor Asian elements, not studied by most existing literature. Also, instead of criticizing individual films, this method grouped those movies to observe the general trend from the 1960s to 2000s to speculate whether the film industry is improving or regressing, and how they may ‘change.’ To avoid already existing bias in this topic, the movie selection for this research did not depend on any evaluations from previous literature. Instead, it devised a unique selection standard by choosing the Top 10 Grossing Movies in Hollywood for each decade that featured Asian characters, setting, or both. Then using a test created for this research, each film was quantitatively analyzed on whether Asian misrepresentation exists or not, and if it does exist, its severity. Then, data were organized into trends to answer the question: To what degree are Hollywood movies still reinforcing or adhering to the negative projection of Asian culture and people developed in the 20th century?

From *To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before* (2018) to *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018), the recent production of movies with Asian protagonists has increased people’s interest in the racial prejudice of film industry (Tseng, 2018). With this growing attention, it is critical to observe how this issue has progressed over time. It will not only directly impact the Asian people who are frequently marginalized in American society (Bernardi & Green, 2017), but also will provide valuable implications to varying stakeholders: what the general audience should be cautious of, how their perceptions are being impacted, and what actions the movie industry should take to facilitate positive change.

¹ Refers to the casting of all Caucasian ethnicities, even for Asian roles.

² Portraying Asian women as being deceitful, mysterious, or domineering.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Orientalism

A term coined during the decolonization era by Edward Said, Orientalism, refers to the imperialist West's prejudiced representation of the 'East' (Schlund-Vials, Vö, & Wong, 2015). It criticizes the political, intellectual, and moral domination by the West, along with their lack of geopolitical awareness (Said, 1979). This embellished or inaccurate distinguishing of the East was first evidenced from the early 19th century imperialist paintings, but many assume it has originated from earlier periods of the Crusades and the Ottoman Empire. Various forms of art were created to either present the East in exotic ways-- romanticized and sexualized-- or to inaccurately mimic its authentic culture (Damerdash, n.d.).

A recent article from the Qualitative Sociology journal argues that the portrayal of the East was affected by the stereotypes of that era, like the Model Minority³ myth or the growing antagonism against Asians after the Vietnamese War. These were most often manifested through forms of marketing, also called 'consumer-Orientalism.' For example, day-to-day objects with sinophobic themes or exaggerated traditional attires in advertisements demonstrated distorted representation (Kim & Chung, 2005). In some cases, Asians imposed the oriental image on themselves to appeal to the consumers (Schlund Vials, Vö, & Wong, 2015).

2.2 History of Asians in Hollywood Films

The very first commercially significant 'Asian movie'⁴ was *Broken Blossoms* in 1919 on the tragedy of interracial romance. It portrayed Asians as 'victims' and 'betrayers', while also stigmatizing them as opium users. After this movie, the status of Asians greatly shifted across decades. In his book *Race in American Film*, author Daniel Bernardi characterizes each time period from the 1920s to the 1970s. In the 1920s, movies that featured Asians were mostly romantic in nature, but their roles were limited by the anti-miscegenation laws that enforced racial segregation. In the 1930s, the popular genre including Asian characters was mystery and thriller, producing archetypal Asian detectives like Charlie Chan or infamous villains like Fu Manchu. From then to the 1960s, American films largely reflected the social and political issues of the day, distinguishing the "good Asians" or allies from "bad Asians" or Communists. Finally, film makers gained an interest in portraying Chinese culture and the exotic mysticism of Kung Fu and temples (Bernardi & Green, 2017).

One unique approach to this topic is a statistical analysis done by the University of Southern California Annenberg. The study considers a total of 1,100 films and shows the scarcity of Asians in those movies. Only 6.3% of characters were Asians, and their screen percentage remained similar from 2007 to 2017. The statistic was lower for female Asian characters (Annenberg et al., 2018). This numerical approach to the representation of Asians, however, can only measure the 'shortage' or 'rarity' of the casts.

³ Model Minority myth refers to an image of Asians as hard-working, successful minorities of the society (Yee, 1992)

⁴ By using the term 'Asian movies', this paper is referring to movies with prominent Asian characters, roles, or setting elements

When compared to the qualitative observations, this quantitative statistical analysis pays insufficient attention to the character traits or connotative messages.

2.3 Critical Views on the Films

Scholars have attempted to understand the cause of such distorted or insufficient cinematic portrayal. Resulting in recent movements like #OscarsSoWhite, the extent of underrepresentation in Hollywood is still considered severe (Yuen, 2016). However, certain views justify the absence of colored characters. They claim that greater involvement of Asians may hinder the movie's success; the level of attention, scrutiny, and repercussion the movie receives when it features Asian characters are too high. Because there is such little precedence of 'Asian' movies, each Asian film that is produced has a higher risk of being thrown under people's deliberate observations (Mae, 2018). Other views are less sympathetic to the movie industry, pointing out that the cause of misrepresentation is the dominance of racial and cultural ignorance. For example, movies such as *Dragon Seed (1944)* failed to address the racial diversity by generalizing all Asians and their culture as being the 'same' (Bernardi & Green, 2017).

As mentioned above, most critics condemn Hollywood films for the lack of cultural authenticity and diversity concerning Asians. Yet, the intentions behind these film makers may also be understood through political, economic, and diplomatic agenda of these films. Economically, the bias that 'favors' white American society in cinema was actually found to be beneficial for the movie's domestic revenue. Sensational and provocative material concerning other races was especially effective for the film's short term profit. The films also depended on political negotiations. In 1938, for example, Japan threatened to cut the nation's intake of films from foreign markets due to their misrepresentation of Japanese culture. The American Motion Picture Association retaliated by warning that the Japanese would be "singled out to to wear the black hats" in American movies (Vasey, 1992). These incidents show that ethnic relationship is not the only cause of behind the scenes decisions about Asian cultural portrayal.

2.4 Gap in Current Knowledge

Current literature on the topic of Orientalism in films holds various gaps. Most importantly, existing studies repeat and reuse the few prominent movies that are already well known for contributing to negative stereotyping of Asian characters (e.g. Charlie Chan, *Flower Drum Song*). This is highly susceptible to confirmation bias, as the research criticizes the movie industry by intentionally choosing movies widely known for being discriminatory. Also, the limited scope largely ignores other movies with minor Asian elements. For example, newspapers such as *The Guardian* blame Hollywood for underrepresentation, claiming that there were only 4 Asian leads in 100 movies for 2017, or that for 38 years, there has been no Asian female lead in romance movies (Mae, 2018). Although accurately corroborating their initial criticism, this is a very narrow evaluation looking at only the 'leads,' and not at other equally vital elements such as supporting character roles, Asian themes, and settings.

This research paper attempted to fill this gap by considering a range of Asian movies that are not generally commented on. Furthermore, instead of pinpointing certain characters or movie titles, the research's primary focus was set on observing a general trend of representation from the 1960s to 2000s, in which the presence of Asians really began to show. This was valuable as it provided insight on whether the existing criticisms has actually made an impact on improving these depictions or not. Lastly, the

analysis of this research include not only the 'lead actors' but also the setting, the dialogue, and other components of the film. This was to help people acknowledge that racial stereotyping goes beyond specific characters and achieve greater societal implications like culture, religion, and language.

3. Method

3.1 Movie Selection

This research was designed so that it examines 50 Asian movies, 10 from each decade between 1960s and 2000s, and analyzes each movie with a test developed. The scope of the word ‘Asian’ was limited to three regions where the highest proportions of Asians in America came from: 24% were Chinese or from East Asia (4.9 million), 20% were Indian or from South Asia (4.0 million), and 19% were Filipinos or from Southeast Asia (3.9 million) (Lopez, Ruiz, & Patten, 2017). The research began from the 1960s because it was a decade after two globally impactful events in Asia-- the rise of Japan during World War II (1940s) and the rise of Communism in China (1949-50). Approximately 10 years was an appropriate time frame for the American public’s reaction towards these events to be formed and reflected in popular culture.

The very first procedure of this research was to select 50 movies. First, 10 movies were chosen based on the IMDb⁵ Top Grossing Movies list for the 1960s. The chosen movies were ones that either featured Asian characters that were placed within top ten names of the ending/rolling credits, or ones that were set in Asian nations. The term “characters” included both Asian roles played by Asian and non-Asian actors/actresses, or characters with unclear ethnicities played by Asian actors/actresses. The IMDb website provided the necessary list of credits in order of importance and filmed location. Beginning with the number one grossing movie of the decade, each movie was checked on the IMDb list until 10 movies that fit the criteria were found. This process was repeated for each decade until there was a total of 50 movies. Though 50 might be an insufficient number to represent half a century, it was the optimal target with the time constraint for this research.

Since the ‘Top Grossing Movies List’ guaranteed that they were, out of all Hollywood movies, most watched and profitable, it was likely that the effect they must have had on people’s perception of Asians would be meaningful and important. Furthermore, because a quantified record of movie profit was used, the method was more objective than relying on a list qualitatively created by critics. Finally, the criteria ensured the presence of Asian elements in the films chosen for analysis.

Using the selection method described above, the following movies were chosen. These information were written next to the title: filmed year, ranking on the IMDb grossing list (#), and if applicable, the name of the actor, actress or setting.

Table 1. Movie List

Decades	Movie titles with names of actors, actresses, or setting
1960s	-You Only Live Twice: Akiko Wakabayashi, Mie Hama, Teru Shimada, Setting Tokyo #22 (1967) -Swiss Family Robinson: Sessue Hayakawa #26 (1960) -Thoroughly Modern Millie: Jack Soo, Pat Morita, Philip Ahn #32 (1967) -The Green Berets: Jack Soo, George Takei, Irene Tsu, setting South Vietnam #62 (1968) -Dr.No: Yvonne Shima #80 (1962) -Flower Drum Song: Nancy Kwan, James Shigeta, Benson Fong #117 (1961)

⁵ Internet Movie Database

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Art of Love: Miiko Taka #133 (1965) -The World of Suzie Wong: Nancy Kwan, Jacqui Chan, Yvonne Shima, Andy Ho, Lier Hwang, Setting Hong Kong (China) #137 (1960) -Alice's Restaurant: Tina Chen #143 (1969) -Caprice: Irene Tsu #159 (1967)
1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Apocalypse Now: set during Vietnamese War #28 (1979) -MASH: set during Korean War #31 (1970) -Moonraker: Toshirô Suga #42 (1979) -The Deer Hunter: Vietnam War + Thai actors #54 (1978) -Three Days of the Condor: Tina Chen #75 (1975) -The In-Laws: James Hong #82 (1979) -1941: Toshiro Mifune #102 (1979) -Tora! Tora! Tora!: So Yamamura, Tatsuya Mihashi, Takahiro Tamura, Eijiro Tono / setting: part Japan #115 (1970) -Enter the Dragon: Bruce Lee, Kien Shieh, Angela Mao, Bolo Yeung #130 (1973) -The Owl and the Pussycat: Kim Chan #137 (1970)
1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom: Jonathan Ke Quan, Amrish Puri, Roshan Seth, Roy Chiao, David Yip, set in India #10 (1984) -Rambo: First Blood Part II: George Cheung #19 (1985) -Gremlins: Keye Luke #20 (1984) -Platoon: set in Vietnam (filmed in Philippines) #23 (1986) -Good Morning, Vietnam: Tung Thanh Tran, Chintara Sukapatana, set in Vietnam #29 (1987) -The Karate Kid: Part II Pat Morita, set in Okinawa, Japan #32 (1986) -Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home, George Takei #38 (1986) -The Karate Kid: Pat Morita #52 (1984) -Die Hard: James Shigeta #60 (1988) -The Golden Child: Victor Wong, James Hong, Shakti Chen, Tau Logo,.. #64 (1986)
1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Jurassic Park: BD Wong #3 (1993) -Rush Hour: Ken Leung, Jackie Chan, Tzi Ma,... #50 (1998) -Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: James Saito #60 (1990) -Lethal Weapon 4: Jet Li, Kim Chan #65 (1998) -Tomorrow Never Dies: Michelle Yeoh + set in South China Sea #73 (1997) -Mulan: Set in ancient China + Chinese characters voice over #81 (1998) -Wild Wild West: Bai Ling #90 (1999) -Entrapment: David Yip #146 (1999) -Disclosure: Jacqueline Kim #155 (1994) -Payback: Lucy Liu #160 (1999)
2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Twilight Saga New Moon: Justin Chon #24 (2009) -The Hangover: Ken Jeong #32 (2009) -Star Trek: John Cho #37 (2009) -Rush Hour 2: Jackie Chan, Ziyi Zhang #51 (2001) -King Kong: Lobo Chan #55 (2005) -Kung Fu Panda: Animation set in China #58 (2008)

	-Austin Powers in Goldmember: Diane Mizota #61 (2002) -Twilight: Justin Chon #76 (2008) -The Day After Tomorrow: Tamlyn Tomita #79 (2004) -The Pursuit of Happyness: Takayo Fischer #106 (2006)
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3.2 Movie Evaluation and Data Collection

Until now, there have been several attempts of similar tests. For example, an actor and an activist, Dylan Marron, analyzed the number of lines characters of color spoke. Another observed every line of dialogue between two characters of color and whether they were talking about a white protagonist or romance (Latif & Latif, 2016). Yet these one-dimensional methods of assessment focus on a single aspect of the movie and generalize their observations into a conclusion that Hollywood is discriminatory. The main purpose of this paper was to create a more multifaceted standard of evaluation and ultimately draw a conclusion that can comment on more specific variables, trends, and correlations. Therefore, using a newly developed test, the purpose was to collect consistent quantitative data from all movies of each decade.

The test was composed of two parts. The first part consisted of measuring the screen time for Asian characters in minutes and the number of derogatory terms that were screened/spoken. The screen time served as a standard to accurately compare movies of different length. The number of derogatory terms were counted to compare the prevalence of explicit forms of stereotypical and/or insulting remarks against Asians.

The second part of the test employed the scale of 1 to 4 in responding to six indicators.

They were:

1. The Asian character was unnecessary and or unsuitable for the genre⁶
2. Certain physical traits of Asians (and/or Asian character) were emphasized⁷
3. The Asian character's ethnicity did not match the actor's ethnicity⁸
4. Certain aspects of Asian culture were exaggerated noticeably⁹
5. Certain aspects of Asian culture were inaccurate or distorted¹⁰
6. There were characters that fit into one or more of the following stereotypes: Model Minority, Dragon Lady, Tiger Mother, Hypersexual Women, Misogynists, Predators of White Women, Asexual Men, Yellow Peril, Martial Arts Man¹¹

These indicators were formed based on the preliminary research. All six categories were evidenced in two or more sources as being discriminatory factors in movies, as cited in the footnotes.

⁶ Mentioned in Bernardi, D., & Green, M. (2017) and Mason, F. (2011).

⁷ Mentioned in Denzin, N. K. (1994) and Kim, Minjeong, & A. Chung. (2005).

⁸ Mentioned in Tseng, A. (2018, August 12) and Yuen, N. W. (2016).

⁹ Mentioned in Bernardi, D., & Green, M. (2017) and Yee, A. H. (1992).

¹⁰ Mentioned in Kim, Minjeong, & A. Chung. (2005) and Yang, A. A. (1980).

¹¹ Mentioned in Tseng, A. (2018, August 12), Bernardi, D., & Green, M. (2017), and Shimizu, C. P. (2007).

The numbers on the scale represented:

- 1 = None
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Yes
- 4 = Extremely

Initially, a scale of 1 to 10 was set for this research. However, if 1 represented 'none' and 10 represented 'extremely', the numbers between (2~9) lacked clear distinction from one another. Thus, the scale was reduced to four clear levels. Lower scores of the scale indicated 'better' scores, or less severe misrepresentation.

The six indicators do not consider every aspect of Asian representation. It may also not be entirely applicable to every movie, as there will be exceptions with characters, historical occasions, or context. Yet it was impractical to create a test specific to each of the fifty movies; instead, it summarized a few of the most commonly criticized problems into six indicators that were specific enough but still flexible to evaluate all movies.

4. Result

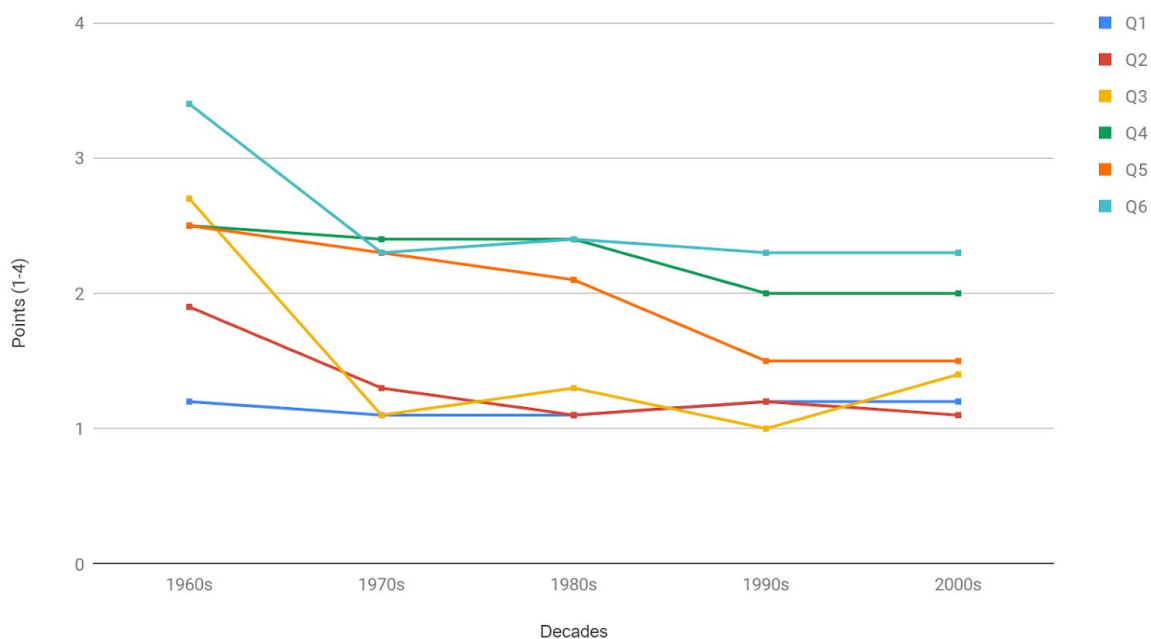
The fifty movies were watched in a random order to prevent any bias from watching 10 movies from the same decade in a row. The collected raw data was then organized by each decade, as can be seen in the appendix.

The screen time and number of derogatory terms were measured while watching the movie. Each movie was evaluated based on the six indicators after it was fully watched, and the scores were supported with clear evidence (e.g. certain scenes, lines, words).

To observe the most generic trend, the scores for each indicator were averaged by decades. The following graph and table present the information. For example, the mean score in the 1960s for Indicator 1 was 1.2.

Graph 1. Averaged Trendline for All Indicators

Averaged Points (4 scale) for Orientalism Indicators over 1960s to 2000s

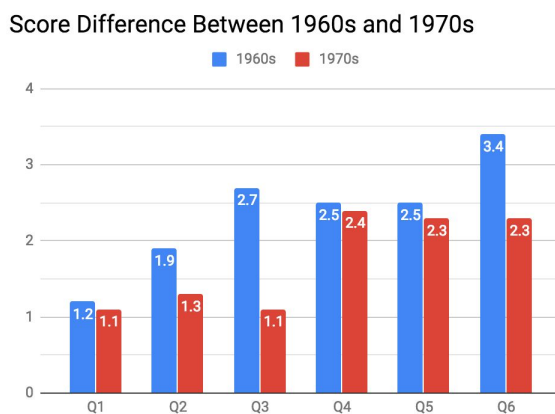


The line graph visually displays the general trend headed downwards for all indicators, meaning that the scores were falling from the scale of 4, or ‘extremely,’ to being closer to a 1, or ‘none.’ However, as the lines approached more recent decades, they levelled off. The slope of the trend lines gradually became less steep, reaching a horizontal line at the end. For example, for both the 1990s and the 2000s, the score for Indicator 4 was a 2. This signifies that the extent of exaggerating Asian culture in movies generally did not improve notably between the two decades.

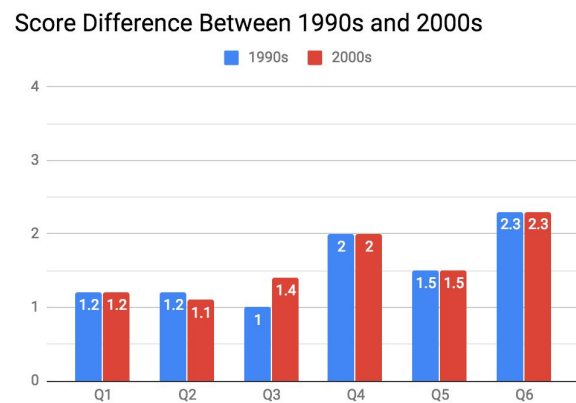
When looking at the trend of each indicators separately, the scores for Indicator 6 were the highest out of all, regardless of the time period. Indicator 6 asks if there were characters that fit into one or more of the following stereotypes: Model Minority, Dragon Lady, Tiger Mother, Hypersexual Women, Misogynists, Predators of White Woman, Asexual Men, Yellow Peril, Martial Arts Man. The average for Indicator 6 was over 2.0 for every decades, meaning the movies were always ‘slightly’ or more than slightly showing characters of such stereotype.

To explore the amount of discrepancy in scores between specific decades, comparative bar graphs were created to compare the average scores of 1960s and 1970s, and 1990s and 2000s.

Graph 2. 1960s vs. 1970s



Graph 3. 1990s vs. 2000s



Graph 2 shows that the two bars, one representing scores for 1960s and the other 1970s, are all different in height for each indicator. The largest discrepancy was for Indicator 3, in which an average score of almost 1.6 fell between the decades. On average, 0.62 points fell from 1960s to 70s. On the other hand, graph 3 demonstrates almost no difference between scores for 1980s and 1990s, and 4 out of 6 indicators exhibited no change at all. On average, only 0.083 points fell from 1990s to 2000s. This proves that there is less change observed in recent decades.

Looking at individual indicators, the lowest average score was subtracted from the highest average score for each indicator to find the category with minimum change. Indicator 1 had the smallest value, with only 0.1 difference. Indicator 1 stated: The Asian character was unnecessary and or unsuitable for the genre. The following data table shows the individual scorings of indicator 1 for all 50 movies. The score range that can be observed is mostly a 1 or a 2, with only one 3. A score of N/A meant there were no Asian characters present in the movie.

Table 2. 50 Scores for Indicator 1

	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Movie 1	1	n/a	1	1	1
Movie 2	1	1	1	1	1
Movie 3	2	1	2	1	1
Movie 4	1	1	n/a	1	1
Movie 5	1	1	1	1	1
Movie 6	1	1	1	1	n/a
Movie 7	2	1	1	2	3
Movie 8	1	1	1	1	1
Movie 9	1	1	1	1	1
Movie 10	1	2	1	2	1

On the other hand, Indicator 3 proved to reveal the biggest difference between the highest and lowest average scores, illustrating most change. Indicator 3 asked whether “The Asian character’s ethnicity matched the actor’s ethnicity.” Compared to Table 1, the table below for Indicator 3 shows a range of scores from 1 to 4, with 1960s having the most number of 3s and 4s and 1990s having only a score of 1.

Table 2. 50 Scores for Indicator 3

	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Movie 1	1	n/a	1	1	1
Movie 2	n/a	1	2	1	3
Movie 3	4	1	1	1	3
Movie 4	4	2	n/a	1	1
Movie 5	4	1	1	1	1
Movie 6	3	1	1	1	n/a
Movie 7	3	1	1	1	1
Movie 8	3	1	1	1	1
Movie 9	1	1	1	1	1
Movie 10	1	n/a	3	1	1

Despite Indicator 3 having the largest range of scores, however, the columns except 1960s very closely resemble to the data table above for Indicator 1. Therefore, it can again be observed that the greatest change happened between 1960s to 1970s, and the decades from 1980 to 2000 were similarly static for both Indicator 1 and Indicator 3.

The final portion of data that was recorded was screen time and number of derogatory terms. Screen time was measured when an Asian character was being shown on the screen or was speaking, yet it did not include scenes with Asian crowds or groups with no particular speaking role or attention to the scene (e.g. a passerby). This research acknowledged that it must not use screen time to discuss the rarity of Asian characters in movies, as there were outliers (movies with Asian setting but no Asian characters).

Derogatory terms were defined as sexual, cultural, or racial remarks that were said with the purpose of sounding offensive. Some of the terms that were written down during this research were: “Chinese girls’ taste,” “yellow swine,” “Jap,” “monkeys,” “dragon breath,” and “Mr. Rice-a-Roni don’t even speak American!”

The two measurements were compared against each other, acknowledging that the number of derogatory terms may differ by how extensive the role of the Asian character is. Thus, it was biased to simply look at the raw number of terms. Therefore, the relative frequency of such terms was calculated by dividing the movie’s screen time by the number of terms. This was done for all ten movies in each decade, and the median of those values were found to exclude outliers such like movies with zero terms or less than a minute screen time for Asian characters.

Table 3. Median Frequency for Derogatory Terms Relative to Screen Time

Decades	Median Frequency for Derogatory Terms
1960s	15 min/word
1970s	3.31 min/word
1980s	25.27 min/word
1990s	8.22 min/word
2000s	7.25 min/word

The table above records the median value for each decade. The highest value was 25.27 min/word for 1980s, meaning that it took approximately 25 minutes for one derogatory term to be spoken. However, there was no pattern observed across the time periods, as the relative frequency fluctuates.

5. Discussion

To summarize the data above, there were a total of four key observations: 1) For the most generic trend, there was an overall decrease of scores for all indicators, showing improvement. However, in more recent decades, the trend became more static. 2) Out of all indicators that demonstrated such trend, Indicator 6 had the highest score. 3) The category that manifested the greatest improvement was Indicator 3, and the least was Indicator 1. 4) There was no noteworthy pattern observed for the relative frequency of derogatory terms to screen time.

5.1 General Trend

In context, the general decline in scores for all six indicators implies that the severity of misrepresentation stated in these categories alleviated as time progressed. For example, answers to Indicator 5, which stated that certain aspects of Asian culture was inaccurate or distorted, showed a steady decrease from an average score of 2.5 in 1960s to 2.3 in 1970s, then 2.1 to 1.5. A significant improvement from a 2.1 to a 1.5 was found between 1980 and 2000. The fact that there was an improvement in accurately portraying Asian culture, such as traditional custom and language, implies that the industry has become more attentive to such details. An ethnographic case study of Asian American actors suggest one possible reason for this: “commercial profitability.” As Asia’s economic market expanded more rapidly from the late 1900s, it is likely that such market demand was met, and what “cultural images makers deem is commercially viable” were shown in films (Lee, 2001). Thus, due to the growing presence of Asian consumers, the movie industry was inclined to become more attentive to cultural details.

However, these improvements turned static as time progressed. Most average scores were unchanging after the 1980s, like Indicators 1, 4, 5, 6 that had same scores for both the 1990s and 2000s. This particular trend suggests the relatively stationary status of Hollywood. The greatest amount of improvement was from the 1960s to 1970s. This improvement, however, is magnified because of the high scores that were given during the 1960s in the first place. Once the extreme, most notable forms of discrimination (e.g. score of 3.4 for indicator 6) were improved upon, the subtler forms naturally demonstrated less change. Applying this to the public’s tendency to react more towards provocative and defamatory misrepresentation in films, their negative feedback would have been equally likely to decrease as the forms of misrepresentation became subtler and less noticeable.

5.2 Indicator with the Highest Score

Looking at individual indicators, Indicator 6 had the highest average and individual scores. This can be explained by the fact that it observes the most recurrent type of misrepresentation-- forced archetypal roles of Asian Americans. The list of stereotypes in Indicator 6¹² was including character types that are already familiar to scholars; for example, terms such as ‘Yellow Peril’ were initially coined because certain images of Asian villains were often *repeatedly* observed, thus it was evidenced more in these 50 movies. Another reason is that when such stereotypes are present, it is often explicit.

¹² Model Minority, Dragon Lady, Tiger Mother, Hypersexual Women, Misogynists, Predators of White Women, Asexual Men, Yellow Peril, Martial Arts Man

Hypersexuality, for example, is often manifested in unnecessary context with dramatization of the female character like the movie *Payback*, in which an Asian female is an extreme sadist and a prostitute. These movies tend to receive higher scores of a 3 or a 4 due to their direct and unhidden showing of elements like ‘sexuality’ or ‘martial arts’. Often accompanied with actions, lines, make-up, or attire that goes along with the stereotype, they are harder to be subtle.

5.3 Indicators with the Most and Least Positive Change

The category that exhibited the greatest amount of positive change was Indicator 3. Its reduction was the highest (1.7 fall from the highest to lowest average score) out of all six indicators. Since Indicator 3 asked about accurate ethnic casting in Hollywood, it meant less characters were casted for the wrong ethnicity in movies. The reason behind this reduction of score may be attributed to the lack of Asian characters in Hollywood in the first place. Only 14 movies out of the 50 selected had multiple Asian characters, and the rest featured only a single character or a setting. The lack of Asian characters on the castings list creates a lower possibility to cast an inaccurate ethnicity, as trying to correctly match five or six Asian characters’ ethnicities in movies like *Thoroughly Modern Millie* would prove to be more complicated. Since 5 out of the 14 movies with multiple Asian characters are from the 1960s (more than 35%), it explains why the 1960s would have had the most miscasting and why the scores would fall sequentially after that decade.

The category that exhibited the least amount of positive change was Indicator 1. There was only a 0.1 change from the highest to lowest average score. This is largely due to the fact that the initial score was very low, with 1.2 for 1960s, leaving not much room for the scores to improve. A score between a 1 or a 2 for Indicator 1 convey that most of the times, Asian character are still casted for reasons suitable for the genre. There were not many movies that use Asians as a comedic relief, or as a completely unnecessary side characters that do not influence the plot but are placed for the sake of representing race (e.g. the Japanese twins in *Austin Powers in Goldmember*).

5.4 Relative Frequency of Derogatory Terms

Lastly, there was no notable pattern observed for the relative frequency of derogatory terms to screen time. When the median relative frequency was found for each decade, it had no positive or negative correlation with time. However, it must be acknowledged that even when the outliers were excluded, the number of derogatory terms largely depended on what the movie was about, instead of it’s specific time period. For example, the movie *Rush Hour* was released during the 1990s and *Rush Hour 2* during the 2000s; however, they both had a high number of derogatory terms regardless of the time span because both movies included a character that was condescending to Asian culture. Due to multiple cases like this, it was difficult to find a trend of verbal disparaging across decades.

5.5 Limitation

The limitation of this research mainly comes from the number of movies as fifty movies across five decades is an under representative sample size. Increasing the sample size would improve this research, especially for the averaged data, because the standard deviation would decrease and get closer to

the true mean. For example, watching over 100 movies would strengthen the ability to detect whether the trend was due to simple chance or a statistically significant cause. However, such sample size is impractical for the time frame of this given research. Assuming 2 hours for each individual movie, 100 movies mean approximately 200 hours of watching and evaluating. Therefore, instead of unrealistically increasing the number of movies, other methods such as taking the median to eliminate the outlier were taken. The limitation was always acknowledged when drawing a conclusion, thus no definitive conclusions about Hollywood movies were made.

Another limitation came from the fact that the analysis in this research only takes in 'race' as the influencing factor. When evaluating movies, there are variables that exist beyond social justice such as financial gain or political influence. It is impossible to deduce from the scores that ethnic treatment and prejudice were the sole causes of misrepresentation. The demand of the market, relationship between nations during a particular time period, and various other factors must be taken into account before criticizing the movie industry in a whole about their attitudes towards Asian Americans. Therefore, the conclusion drawn from this research did not intend to explain a 'direct' cause behind Asian misrepresentation in cinema.

6. Conclusion

This research paper has aimed to find a trend in Asian portrayal in Hollywood films. In order to do so, it incorporated its own method of testing 50 movies over five decades, measuring screen time, number of derogatory terms, and scoring six evaluation criterias with a scale of 1 to 4. The research method attempted to address the gap in current literature, which mainly was subject to confirmation bias, along with a narrow scope of analysis.

The results showed a generic trend of improvement in Asian representation in Hollywood although it levelled out as time progressed. This implied that subtler forms of discrimination and stereotyping (scores lower than a 2) were harder to address for improvement and change initiated by the movie industry.

The impact of inaccurate cinematic portrayal of Asians may be highly negative, as having unfavorable images projected would make cultural blend and assimilation of Asian communities in America more challenging. For example, second generation Japanese Americans found it difficult to merge into the society because of always being portrayed as the “enemy” in films (Bernardi & Green, 2017). In worse cases, it created confusion in identity, as the depiction of Asians constantly changed over time periods, sometimes going from “model” minority to a yellow “peril.” This sudden shift from being in-group to out-group affected Asian Americans by creating blurred distinctions of their position in society (Yee, 1992).

Therefore, this research may prove to be valuable to various stakeholders: what people as the audience of the movies should be aware of, how their perceptions are being directly and indirectly swayed, and what action the movie industry should take to generate positive change. There can be variations that can be considered for future research, such as organizing these evaluations based on ‘genres’ instead of decades, expanding its scope of analysis by looking for specific motifs and recurrent themes, or looking into the possible psychological impacts cinematic portrayal may have on the actors and actresses themselves. However, while it has plenty of room for innovative research, it must be acknowledged that what comes before a critical study is the awareness and interest of the people.

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Appendix. Raw Data

1960s:

	Derogatory Terms	Screen Time	Sentences about culture	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Protagonist/A ntagonist
You Only Live Twice	7	29:26:32	4	1	2	1	3	3	4	Both (more pro)
Swiss Family Robinson	0	4:58:09	0	1	3	n/a	1	4	4	Antagonist
Thoroughly Modern Millie	1	16:13:17	1	2	3	4	4	4	4	Antagonist (except one)
The Green Berets	1	28:39:41	4	1	1	4	4	4	2	Both
Dr No	1	15:00:22	0	1	2	4	1	1	3	Antagonist
Flower Drum Song	4	1:52:27:55 (hr)	9	1	2	3	4	4	4	Both
The Art of Love	0	0:40:00	0	2	1	3	1	1	3	None
The World of Suzie Wong	5	1:09:38:84 (hr)	4	1	2	3	4	2	4	Protagonist
Alice's Restaurant	1	7:04:29	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	Protagonist
Caprice	0	5:57:19	0	1	2	1	2	1	4	None
Average	2		2.2	1.2	1.9	2.7	2.5	2.5	3.4	

1970s:

	Derogatory Terms	Screen Time	Sentences about culture	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Protagonist/A ntagonist
Apocalypse Now	3	0:00:00	5	n/a	1	n/a	4	4	n/a	None
MASH	1	2:27:03	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	None
Moonraker	0	5:21:29	0	1	1	1	2	2	2	Antagonist
The Deer Hunter	1	28:24:07	1	1	1	2	4	4	4	Both
Three Days of Condor	1	4:22:30	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	Protagonist
The In-Laws	0	2:51:59	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	None
The 1941	4	14:40:04	1	1	1	1	3	2	4	Antagonist
Tora! Tora! Tora!	0	1:46:50:12 (hr)	3	1	1	1	2	3	2	Antagonist
Enter the Dragon	3	1:34:21:00 (hr)	3	1	2	1	3	3	4	Both
The Owl and the Pussycat	0	0:00:37	0	2	1	n/a	1	1	2	None
Average	1.3		1.6	1.1	1.3	1.1	2.4	2.3	2.3	

1980s:

	Derogatory Terms	Screen Time	Sentences about culture	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Protagonist/An tagonist
Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom	1	1:37:20:00 (hr)	1	1	1	1	4	4	3	Both
Rambo: First Blood Part 2	1	35:28:20	2	1	1	2	3	2	3	Both
Gremlins	1	8:43:00	0	2	1	1	2	1	2	None
Platoon	2	n/a	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	2	n/a	None
Good Morning, Vietnam	2	29:12:17	3	1	1	1	2	1	1	Both
The Karate Kid Part II	0	1:31:40:01 (hr)	2	1	1	1	3	3	4	Both
Star Trek IV	0	7:59:12	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	Protagonist
The Karate Kid	1	57:14:02	2	1	1	1	2	2	4	Protagonist
Die Hard	0	5:49:52	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	None
The Golden Child	4	1:01:17:00 (hr)	3	1	2	3	4	4	3	Both
average	1.2		1.5	1.1	1.1	1.3	2.4	2.1	2.4	

1990s:

	Derogatory Terms	Screen Time	Sentences about culture	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Protagonist/A ntagonist
Jurassic Park	0	3:39:10	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	None
Rush Hour	8	1:11:28:03 (hr)	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	Both
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	0	33:59:00	1	1	1	1	3	2	3	Antagonist
Lethal Weapon 4	1	14:44:00	0	1	1	1	2	1	3	Antagonist
Tomorrow Never Dies	0	42:17:53	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	Protagonist
Mulan	0	1:25:22:00 (hr)	3	1	2	1	3	2	1	Both
Wild Wild West	0	3:16:12	0	2	1	1	2	1	4	Antagonist
Entrapment	1	6:20:03	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	Both
Disclosure	0	2:17:09	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	None
Payback	2	15:07:21	0	2	2	1	2	1	4	Antagonist
Average	1.2		0.8	1.2	1.2	1	2	1.5	2.3	

2000s:

	Derogatory Terms	Screen Time	Sentences about culture	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Protagonist/A ntagonist
The Twilight Saga New Moon	0	1:24:05	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	None
The Hangover	3	21:05:21	1	1	1	3	3	2	4	Antagonist
Star Trek	0	9:34:07	0	1	1	3	1	1	1	Protagonist
Rush Hour 2	5	1:22:00:38 (hr)	2	1	1	1	3	2	3	Both
King Kong	1	7:49:21	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	Protagonist
Kung Fu Panda	0 (voice over)		3	n/a	n/a	n/a	3	3	4	n/a
Austin Powers in Goldmember	3	4:08:13	1	3	2	1	4	2	4	None
Twilight	0	3:35:47	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	None
The Day After Tomorrow	0	4:18:26	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	Protagonist
The Pursuit of Happiness	0	1:46:53	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	None
Average	1.2		0.8	1.2	1.1	1.4	2	1.5	2.3	