

MODEL MINORITY STEREOTYPES OF ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN AMERICAN
MEDIA: PERCEPTIONS AND INFLUENCES AMONG WOMEN OF DIVERSE RACIAL-
ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS

by

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Abstract

This study examines women's interpretations of model minority stereotypes of Asian American women in prime-time television. This stereotype depicts Asian Americans as well-educated, intelligent, competitive, hardworking and successful career women. Using focus group discussions, this study recalls perceptions and explores potential effects of model minority stereotypes in prime-time television among women of varied racial-ethnic backgrounds. The study finds that both Asian/Asian American women and women from other racial-ethnic groups confirm belief in the model minority media stereotype in prime-time television. The self-perception and others' perception of Asian American women as a model minority imposes stress on Asian/Asian American women in terms of gender role, academic performance and career achievement. Additionally, perceptions toward the model minority media stereotype among women of varied racial-ethnic backgrounds influence intergroup relations, interracial contact and evaluation of the model minority media image. Implications indicate that the model minority media stereotype has both positive and negative influences on Asian/Asian American women and other racial-ethnic groups. The study suggests that American media can increase the frequency and diversity of Asian American women's media representation to reduce the negative societal influence of one-dimensional media stereotypes.

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Dedication

For all the women who always have faith in themselves and pursue their dream

CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

As the economic power and academic achievement of Asians and Asian Americans soared in recent decades, the model minority stereotype of Asian Americans has become exceedingly popular in United States. The model minority stereotype emphasizes that Asian Americans are perceived to be competent, diligent and successful in their economic and educational endeavors (Lin et.al, 2005). The characteristics associated with model minority stereotypes are highly affluent, well educated, professional, and technologically skilled (Paek and Shah, 2003).

Despite other negative stereotypes of Asians and Asian Americans in the media (e.g., Yellow Peril, dragon lady), the media have recently begun to gradually embrace the model minority stereotype. Asian Americans have been portrayed by a variety of media outlets as the model minority since the 1960s. In 2005, the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC) published a report that revealed that the roles played by Asian Americans in prime-time television have reinforced the model minority stereotype.

The media representation of Asian Americans as a model minority has aroused scholars' interest and desire to explore this topic. Many studies have been done to analyze how Asian Americans are portrayed in prime-time television advertisements (e.g., Taylor and Stern, 1997). However, model minority portrayal in prime-time television shows is largely overlooked in previous literature, and no studies have been conducted to investigate the influence of the model minority stereotype in prime-time on Asian and Asian American women.

Previous studies primarily use content analysis and quantitative methodology to examine the portrayal of minorities in the media, as well as the impact of media stereotypes. However, little has been done to investigate the individual experiences using qualitative methodology. In

addition, previous studies use mostly white participants (e.g, Banaji, Hardin and Rothman, 1993; Dixon et. al, 2006), even though many scholars have pointed out that perceptions of Asian Americans among different racial minority groups are fundamentally different (Fong, 1998; Lee, 1996; Tuan, 1998). Pre-existing differences in values, culture, religion and beliefs may induce the variations in perceptions and attitudes. Consequently, it is important to include participants from other ethnic minority groups in any study.

The model minority stereotype is generally perceived as a positive media stereotype. However, studies have shown that the misleading perception stemming from the model minority stereotype might contribute to a negative influence on the self-identity, academic achievement, psychological well-being, racial identity and intergroup relations of Asian Americans (Oyserman and Sakamoto, 1997; Yang, 2004; Chow, 2004; Sue and Sue, 1990). In addition, Ho and Jackson (2001) asserted that the positive characteristics of the model minority stereotype might arouse jealousy and hostility from other racial groups. Therefore, it is important to examine how Asian Americans perceive their own media image as model minority.

In addition, considering the fact that non-American-born Asians and Asian Americans attach more meaning to their traditional culture, while American-born Asians are more assimilated into American culture, it is necessary to investigate the two groups separately in order to determine perception gaps. As a result, the main goal of the study is to explore the perceptions and attitudes Asian Americans have toward their model minority image in prime-time television. In addition, the study aims to explore the perceptions, attitudes and emotions of other racial groups toward Asian Americans' model minority media image and their possible influence on interracial contact.

Few studies have explored gender-specific perceptions and attitudes towards minority media stereotypes. It is likely that men and women perceive the model minority stereotypes in significantly different ways. As a result, the present study exclusively focuses on Asian American women's media image and female participants' perceptions, attitudes and experiences. Furthermore, this study attempts to investigate women's perceptions toward gender roles and gender beliefs reflected in the model minority stereotype of Asian American women.

In summary, the current study bridges previous literature gaps and gains further insight into the possible influence of the model minority media stereotype in prime-time television on Asian/Asian American women. This study uses focus group discussion methodology that includes the perspectives of non-American-born Asian women, American-born Asian women, African-American women, Hispanic women and White women. The study is timely in that, given their soaring population, Asian and Asian Americans are interacting with other racial/ethnic groups with increasing frequency.

CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review

Lippmann (1922) introduced the concept of stereotype in his book *Public Opinion*. He defined stereotypes as “pictures in our heads” that we use to comprehend the world around us. Several social psychologists have argued that the formation of stereotypes has roots in a useful but not necessarily desirable “economy of effort,” meaning individuals would hold habits of thoughts in order to reduce cognitive effort, even when new experiences or contradictory evidence was encountered (Seiter, 1986).

Lasoff (1987) proposed that human beings think in terms of categories. The human mind stores information in categories to save work and space. When a stereotype is applied to individuals, a stereotype is defined as beliefs about a group of people (Kanahara, 2006), that is an oversimplified perception with overall attributes of that group. Therefore, as Rinehart (1963) explains, stereotypes are “sets of beliefs, usually stated as categorical generalizations that people hold about the members of their own and other groups” (p.137). Psychologists Hamilton and Troler (1986) hold the similar definition of a stereotype as “a cognitive structure that contains the perceiver’s knowledge, beliefs, and expectancies about some human group” (p.133).

Consequently, negative connotations can be associated with stereotypes due primarily to overgeneralizations and factual inaccuracy. According to Katz and Braly (1935), a stereotype is “a fixed impression, which conforms very little to the fact it pretends to represent, and result from our defining first and observing second” (p.181).

Some researchers claim that a stereotype is the cognitive component of prejudiced attitudes (Harding, Proshansky, Kutner and Chein, 1969; Secord and Backman, 1974). Others suggest that stereotypes are justifications, allowing individuals to rationalize their prejudice against a group

(Allport, 1954; Saenger, 1953; Simpson and Yinger, 1965). An example of such prejudice would be ones' refusal to be neighbors with black people based on the stereotype that "they are dirty, trashy, and stupid" (Rinehart, 1963, p.137). In this way, stereotype can be used to justify prejudice and potential discrimination "intellectually" (Rinehart, 1963).

Ethnic stereotypes are generally endorsed by individuals in majority groups to be used against minority groups. Stereotypes of an outgroup are usually inaccurate, rigid and oversimplified (Coon, 1994). Maykovich (1972) argues the societal function of stereotypes define "the power relationships of dominant versus minority in a given social structure" (p.876). In an attempt to maintain power and privilege, mainstream groups intentionally employ positive attributes in stereotypes of themselves while negatively stereotyping minority groups (Maykovich, 1972). Rinehart (1963) pointed out that stereotypical attributes assigned to ethnic groups are generally mutually exclusive. For example, Asian Americans are believed to be "timid, nonathletic, good only at math, and clannish" (Taylor et al., 1994, p.216) while Jews are described as "shrewd, mercenary, industrious, grasping, overaggressive, proud, rich and powerful, in control of business and finance, unscrupulous, and overbearing" (Rinehart, 1963, p.139-140).

Mass Media and Minority Stereotypes

The mass media play a profoundly significant role in modern U.S. society. People largely depend on media not only to obtain a variety of information, but also to learn norms, customs and values of another culture through media depiction. From these portrayals people form subsequent attitudes and perceptions toward specific groups of people. As Baker (1996) asserts, "When experiential knowledge does not exist, we often assume that images we see in film reflect reality" (p.261).

Nevertheless, the accurate and diversely anti-stereotypical presentation of ethnic groups is rarely seen in the media. The media are quite often engaged in creating, reinforcing and magnifying stereotypes (Ross, 2003). Entman (1994) argued that images of race/ethnicity on television not only impose the potential to provide misinformation about who racial/ethnic minorities are, but additionally offer evidence to corroborate misperceptions regarding why minorities should be perceived in a certain way.

Concern about minorities on television emerged in response to issues raised by the civil rights movement in the 1960s (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights' investigation into television portrayal of minorities revealed that depictions of minorities were both infrequent and stereotypical. Additionally, the commission reported that such portrayal of ethnic minorities influenced the way in which both whites and non-whites perceived minorities (1977). For instance, African Americans were depicted in as having a low social status on television. On the screen, they frequently displayed unfavorable personality traits, which included being lazy, untrustworthy and unintelligent (Atkin, 1992) and the majority of the characters lived in ghettos and slums and were involved in crime (Cummings, 1988). Likewise, media also depicts Latino Americans in a stereotypical way. Numerous studies have shown that Latinos are commonly portrayed as criminals, buffoons, Latin lovers, or law enforcers (Berg, 1990; Faber, O'Guinn and Meyer, 1987; Greenberg and Baptista-Fernandez, 1980). In terms of the Latino/Latina's media image in prime-time TV, they are younger, have less job authority, are lazier, less articulate, less intelligent and more seductively dressed (Mastro and Behm-Morawitz, 2005). They are also four times more likely to be characterized as domestic workers compared to their on-air non-stereotype counterparts (Children Now, 2004).

Early Media Stereotypes of Asian and Asian Americans

Asian Americans currently comprise approximately 4% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census, 2000) and are expected to more than double in population size over the next decade. Despite their astonishingly rapid increase in population, Asians and Asian Americans are still underrepresented in the media. In addition, early media stereotypes were mostly negative. Studies suggest that Asian Americans were relegated to peripheral roles, or portrayed as one-dimensional stereotypes (Hamilton, 1991; Paik, 1971). In terms of numeric representation, Asian and Asian Americans constitute between 1% and 3% of the characters on prime-time TV (Children Now, 2001; Children Now, 2004; Mastro and Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Mastro and Greeberg, 2000). When they are seen on TV, Asians and Asian Americans are found predominantly in minor and non-recurring roles (Children Now, 2001; Children Now, 2004).

Although there has been an increase in the diversity of roles and portrayals of Asian Americans in the media (Poneterotto and Pedersen, 1993; Sue and Morishima, 1982), some studies have found that Asians are often used as “background color” — assigned to minor roles with lower social status such as waiters, cooks, babysitters, laundry workers, peasants or gardeners. Meanwhile, when they are cast in more prominent roles, negative attributes and personality traits are often attached to the roles that including being villains, warmongers, geishas, dragon ladies or prostitutes (Cheng and Hirano-Nakanishi, 1982; Hamaoto, 1994; Paik, 1971; Quinsaas, 1976).

Historical factors play a crucial role in the formation of Asian Americans’ media stereotype. In the 1920s, a large number of Asian immigrants came to the United States, which triggered pronounced anti-Asian sentiments in early films. The dominant stereotype of the Asian immigrants in America depicted them as the Yellow Peril, and referred to them as to an economic threat to Whites because they uncomplainingly took on labor-intensive jobs that others

did not want (Mok, 1998). The Yellow Peril stereotype also depicted them as having crooked yellow bodies and speaking Pidgin English (Ma, 1993). Perceptions associated with the Yellow Peril stereotype were “immorality, treachery, unscrupulous competition, and subversive intent.” (Maykovich, 1971, p.448). During that period of time, Asians were mostly depicted on the screen in roles that embodied Yellow Peril stereotypes, showing them as being as wily, mysterious, sneaky and inscrutable (Hamilton, 1991; Liyama and Kitano, 1982; Pacific Productions and Gee, 1987; Paik, 1971).

The Image of Asian Americans as a Model Minority

The popular press and media began portraying Asian Americans as the “model minority” in the middle 1960s. In an attempt to dispel the notions that America was falling apart and the American Dream was doomed to be shattered, a news article appeared in *U.S. News & World Report* that declared, “At a time when Americans are awash in worry over the plight of racial minorities-- one such minority, the nation’s 300,000 Chinese-Americans, is winning wealth and respect by dint of its own hard work.” (Amy Tachiki et al., 1971) In a *New York Times Magazine* article, Peterson (1966) coined the label “model minority” (p.11) to compliment the achievements of Japanese Americans and suggested that other racial/ethnic minority groups follow their example. Since then, Asian Americans have been perceived as a successful minority depending on their own efforts instead of the social welfare programs provided by U.S. government. They are believed to be better educated, have occupational upward mobility, and high median incomes, and be problem-free with respect to mental health and crime (Wong et al., 1991). Recent studies strongly support the existence of a model minority stereotype of Asian Americans, depicting them with traits such as being intelligent, capable, ambitious, hard-

working, mathematical, skillful and self-disciplined (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick, 2007; Ho and Jackson, 2001; Kao, 2000; Lin, Kwan, Cheung and Fiske, 2005).

McGowan and Lindgren (2006) provided five key characteristics and phenomenon of model minority portrayal:

1. Asian Americans are supposed to be extremely hard-working — more hard-working than Whites.
2. Asian Americans are said to be intelligent and highly educated, though a large number of them are dismissed as math and science geeks.
3. As a group they are seen as economically successful, especially compared to other ethnic minorities, even though they faced severe discrimination in the past and may encounter some (fairly minor) discrimination now.
4. Asian Americans are described as “assimilating” into mainstream American life-living in the suburbs and intermarrying with whites (p.335).

Asian Americans as a Model Minority in Television Advertising

Asian Americans’ strikingly extraordinary demographic profile (Fisher, 1994) — being affluent, having high levels of education and managerial/professional occupations, as well as their rapid growth in population — make them an increasing target for marketers. This desirable demographic profile reinforces the positive stereotype of Asian-Americans as intellectually gifted, mathematically skilled, technically competent and hard-working (Delener and Neelankavil, 1990; Yim, 1989). Despite Asian Americans’ positive stereotype and marketers’ increased attention, studies have indicated that Asian Americans are underrepresented in both magazine and television advertising and are predominantly depicted in a stereotypical way (Taylor and Lee, 1994; Taylor and Stern, 1997; Mastro and Stern, 2003; Bowen and Schmid,

1997; Bang and Reece, 2003). For example, Taylor and Stern (1997) conducted a content analysis of more than 1,300 prime-time television advertisements. Their findings suggested that Asian models are more likely to appear in background roles compared to members of other minority groups.

Furthermore, Asian models are overrepresented in the business setting but underrepresented in home settings and family or social relationships. Consistent with Taylor and Stern's findings, a more recent study further substantiated the stereotypical portrayal of Asian Americans in magazine advertisements (Taylor, Landreth and Bang, 2005). The study indicated that despite the increase in overall representation of Asian Americans, the portrayal still manifests the model minority stereotype, and that Asian models often appear in ads for technology and business-related products, in business settings and business relationships, and in business magazines.

Asian Americans as a Model Minority in Prime-time Television

Due to the underrepresentation and background roles of Asian Americans in prime-time television, little has been done to investigate how Asian Americans are portrayed in prime-time television and the impact of these characters on racial perception and racial attitude.

In 2005, the NAPALC (National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, 2005) published a report revealed that the roles played by Asian Americans have reinforced the model minority stereotype. The report's content analysis of television programming demonstrated that 100% of these roles had occupations that emphasize their intelligence and hard work ethic. For example, the character of Archie Johnson on the CBS prime-time drama *CSI*, played by Chinese American Archie Kao, reflects the model minority stereotype. He is characterized as a lab technician and science fiction fan whose expertise lies in computer and audio-visual research and analysis. Another major role that reflects the model minority stereotype is the character of Hiro Nakamura

in NBC's television series *Heroes*, played by Japanese American Masi Oka. He is a time-traveler who can do incredible things and is extremely tech-savvy.

Gender Issues in Asian/Asian American Women's Media Stereotypes

Numerous studies have shown that the media have promoted gender-biased stereotypes in television programs, commercials and print advertisements. Previous research has demonstrated that depictions of adult women in American television and print advertisements have stressed passivity, deference, lack of intelligence and credibility. Conversely, men have been portrayed as constructive, powerful, autonomous and achieving (Bretl and Cantor 1988; Courtney and Whipple 1983; Kolbe and Albanese, 1996).

Stereotypes of Asian/Asian American women created and perpetuated by American media include the China doll, geisha girl and dragon lady stereotypes. These stereotypes represent two valenced gender attributes, in which both passivity and aggression are embodied. Therefore, the media's portrayal of Asian/Asian American women as being scheming and sexually submissive complicated the gender role representation. Conversely, the model minority media stereotype emphasizes Asian women's intelligence, competence, diligence and career aspiration, which seems to manifest completely different gender roles and attributes from the typical Asian women's media stereotypes. However, the model minority media stereotype still reflects gender stereotyping, which is inseparable from typical media stereotypes of Asian women.

Gender Representation in Traditional Media Stereotypes

The early media depiction of Asian/Asian American women emphasized exoticism, seduction and feebleness (Ling, 1993). The movie images of an Asian woman as the dragon lady contradict traditional beliefs about women's personality traits. For example, the dragon lady was described in the movie as "sneaky, foreign, inscrutable exotic, with a deadly desire to corrupt the

innocent morals of white people” (Mok, 1998, p.189). The movie character of the dragon lady was inaccurately generalized to Asian/Asian American women until today. These days, individuals with varied racial-ethnic background refer to the “dragon lady” as an Asian woman who is perceived as seductive and desirable but at the time untrustworthy, with behaviors that include sabotage and backstabbing (Benze, Jr., 1990). The gender attributes of the “dragon lady” drastically challenge the traditional gender stereotype of women as being nurturing, kind, selfless and sacrificing (Bakan, 1966).

However, the depiction of Asian women as geisha girls and China dolls falls right into the category of traditional gender stereotyping, overwhelmingly addressing the helplessness, dependence and servile qualities of Asian women (Mok, 1998). In addition, the media’s concentration on Asian women’s relations with white men potentially contributes to the stereotypical gender role, shaping the gender beliefs and attitudes towards Asian/Asian American women. In the 1960s and 1970s, the sexually submissive characteristic of Asian women was accentuated in the media. Fung (1994) found in his study that Asian women were often depicted as property or sexual possessions to be acquired by white men. For example, the film *The Deer Hunter*, released in 1978, depicted Vietnamese women as either peasants or prostitutes (Pacific Productions and Gee, 1987; Woll and Miller, 1987). A stereotype that forcefully reflects the submissiveness of Asian women in their relations with men is that of the geisha girl. The image began with the depictions of Japanese women as lotus blossoms, whose only desire was to selflessly cater to the whims of men (Mok, 1998). Japanese women are viewed as erotic creatures able to please men in special ways (Fung, 1994; Noda, 1989; Tajima, 1989). Similar to a geisha girl, the China doll stereotype appeared in the movie, *Joy Luck Club*, “perpetuating the stereotype of Chinese women as sexual objects” (Yin, 2005, p.151).

Gender Representation in Model Minority Media Stereotype

The model minority stereotype suggests that Asian Americans have better educations, superior work ethic and more successful careers for both genders. It stresses that Asian Americans exceed other minority groups in terms of academic performance and career achievement. At first glance, the increasing media portrayal of Asian American women as a model minority, emphasizing their intelligence, competitiveness, competence and career aspiration has progressively emancipated them from the rigid gender stereotype. However, the substantially positive improvement of gender representation is superficial. These seemingly non-traditional roles still exhibit certain stereotypical gender attributes of Asian women from early gender stereotypes in the media. (National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, 2005)

The stereotype content model, or SCM (Fiske et al., 2002), emphasizes a different set of attributes consistently ascribed to certain social groups. Specifically, the SCM is intended to unravel the complexity of stereotypes on the basis of intergroup relationships. The SCM proposes that the central dimensions of the stereotype are competence and warmth and are predominately used to describe the traits of people and social groups. Competence demonstrates that target group's perceived intellectual aptitude and capability to succeed in given tasks. Individuals who are perceived as competent usually enjoy high status and prestige. On the other hand, warmth refers to sociable and agreeable attributes, focusing on the target group's socio-emotional orientation when interacting with others (Eckes, 2002). Individuals from an outgroup are considered warm to the degree that the perceived competitiveness imposes no threat or harm to the ingroup. These two dimensions differentiate the stereotypes of various social groups, which have been widely applied to stereotyping and person perception research (Eckes, 2002).

From the SCM's point of view, competence and warmth are inextricably intertwined to produce mixed stereotypes that endorse high levels of one attribute and low levels of the other

attribute simultaneously. Based on the hypothesis of the SCM, the media depiction of Asian American women as intelligent and career-oriented women overshadows the representation of their warmth and sociability (Lin et al., 2005). Therefore, the model minority image reinforces stereotypes of Asian American women as highly competent yet cold, selfish and lacking interpersonal skills, leading to *envious prejudice*. It functions to justify the system that the desirability of competence comes at the expense of rejection on other grounds, such as a low level of sociability (Glick and Fiske, 2001b; Jost, Burgess and Mosso, 2001). Asian women are admired for their competency because they are perceived as being in control of their lives. However, this control can also be perceived as intimidating, as depriving individuals from other social groups of the same level of control. Envy and discomfort are likely to be generated from the admiration of Asian women's competence. When the perceived competence and competitiveness of Asian women has reached a point of jeopardizing the benefits and status of the perceivers' own group, negative attributes such as cold and unsociable are associated with Asian women. Consequently, the SCM can interpret the speculation that discrimination is justified through attaching negative labels to the envied group despite the perceived admiration. In other words, when outgroups become threatening competitors, discrimination can be used as a form of self-defense (Eckes, 2002; Fiske et al., 1999; Glick and Fiske, 2001b). Dr. Christina Yang, a female Asian character in the prime-time television series *Grey's Anatomy* played by Sandra Oh, an actress of Korean descent, is a good example of the SCM in the media. Although her screen character is well-educated, competent, highly competitive and ambitious, she exhibits negative characteristics such as being socially awkward, unsympathetic and lacking femininity.

According to the SCM matrix, the representation of Asian women as high-achieving and powerful career women is likely to elicit the perceptions of them not being able to fulfill gender

expectations. Lorber (1993) proposed the concept of “contradictory status,” arguing that if people’s behaviors are inconsistent with their sex, then they would fail to fit into the normative category of gendered behaviors, resulting in negative gender-related perceptions. The model minority image puts Asian women in the situation of contradictory status because the perceived competence, superb work ethic, self-sufficiency and ambition contradict the normative gender expectations of women to be sacrificing, gentle nurturing and accommodating. When this concept is applied to the SCM, one observes that the characters of Asian women in the media as successful career women are frequently punished by setting a bad example in marriage and motherhood because the characteristics of the model minority stereotype conflict with the typical sex role.

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory provides a useful theoretical framework to explain the effects of the media’s stereotypical depictions of racial-ethnic groups on viewers’ perceptions toward the target groups. Cultivation theory proposes that long-term and heavy exposure to television contributes to the homogenous construction of social reality and ideology (Gerbner et al., 1980; Mastro and Behm-Morawitz, 2005). Perse (2001) indicated that cultivation theory interprets the repeated media exposure and acquisition of racial/ethnic stereotypes as social reality. The model minority images of Asian Americans are clearly visible in the media, to which a wide range of audiences have access to. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the responses of audiences to the model minority image and examine how audiences recognize, perceive and use model minority image as references to evaluate and interact with Asian Americans. Gerbner and Gross (1979) indicated that heavy and repetitive exposure to television cultivates exaggerated perceptions and inaccurate beliefs. Television penetrates and cultivates audiences’ views in a variety of aspects.

For example, heavy exposure to the world of television cultivates exaggerated perceptions of the number of people involved in violence in any given week (Gerbner et al., 1979, 1980; Shanahan and Morgan, 1999). Signorielli (1993) found that adolescents who viewed television heavily craved high status jobs with higher incomes but also expected the jobs to be relatively easy.

Based on cultivation theory, it is highly likely that cumulative exposure to model minority media images might affect people's perceptions and racial attitudes towards Asian Americans. Zhang (2010) applied cultivation theory to investigate whether people's perceptions of Asian Americans are consistent with media stereotypes and whether racial stereotypes in the media influence individuals' interactions with Asians. The study found that Asians are perceived as more likely to achieve academic success than other racial/ethnic groups, but they are also perceived as nerdy, unsociable and make the least desirable friends (Zhang, 2010). As a result, if media constantly portray Asian Americans as intelligent, ambitious, hardworking and successful in their economic and educational achievement, it is highly possible that some audiences would acquire the biased perceptions of Asian Americans as reflected in the media regardless of the reality.

In addition, heavy and cumulative exposure to the gendered media stereotype of Asian women might generate and magnify gender-stereotyped perceptions and attitudes. Cultivation theory provides a theatrical framework to the gender stereotypical perceptions and beliefs toward Asian/Asian American women. In other words, viewers might perceive the gender attributes and gender roles of Asian women stereotypically after exposure to early media stereotypes such as the China doll and the model minority stereotype.

The Influence of Model Minority Stereotype on Asian Americans

Numerous researchers have comprehensively scrutinized the unfavorable impact of the model minority stereotype on Asian Americans in terms of self-perception, psychological well-being and identity development (Maddux, et al., Tang, 2007; Wong and Halgin, 2006, 2008; Wong, et Al., 1998). McGowan and Lindgren (2006) have summed up the criticisms of model minority stereotype from Asian critical scholars as follows:

1. They argue that the term is at best a gross generalization and at worst misleading and false.
2. They argue that statistics that purport to prove comparative Asian American economic or educational success are often misleading upon closer examination.
3. They worry that aside from its misleading factual claims, the model minority stereotype has several bad consequences including denies Asian Americans the government attention and assistance, blinds the discrimination against Asian Americans, implicitly blames other minority groups for their problems, divides Asian Americans from other minority groups, and association with “yellow peril”. (p.335-345).

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (SIT) explains the effects of media on viewers’ self-perception ((Mastro and Behm-Morawitz, 2005). The model minority media stereotype might contribute to both desirable and undesirable impact on the self-perception and self-identity of Asian Americans. SIT proposes that in attempts to maintain positive views about one’s own group identity, individuals compare the positive, favorable characteristics of ingroups to corresponding unfavorable characteristics of outgroups (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). According to SIT, individuals enhance their self-esteem by concentrating exclusively on the most desirable,

advantageous characteristics of one's own group compared to an outgroup (Abrams and Hogg, 1990). Media images play an important role to create and support group-based attributes that might be used as a reference in the real-world experiences. Therefore, media depiction presents the "group's strength in the intergroup context" and reflects the social value and status of the group (Harwood and Roy, 2005).

Kanahara (2006) asserted that some stereotypes can be positive for an individual to whom the stereotype is compatible with self-perception; in the mean time, the same stereotype can be negative to another individual from the same group who is unwilling to conform to the stereotype. Studies have indicated that not all Asian Americans like the label attached to them. Ambivalent feelings and attitudes have been generated among Asian Americans resulting from the perception of model minority. For example, Wong and Halgin (2006) revealed that students whose self-identity is consistent with group identity are proud to be perceived as members of the model group. Nevertheless, students who negatively perceive the model minority label expressed dislike for being associated with this group image. Because they do not want to subject to the high expectations, these students feared the label would alienate them from mainstream society as well as overshadow their distinctive personalities as individuals.

In order to conform to group identity, some Asian Americans internalize the model minority stereotype, believing that they should be successful academically and possess a higher motivation to succeed than other minority groups (Wang et al., 1998). However, the internalization of the model minority stereotype might impose enormous pressure on Asian Americans, resulting in low self-esteem, frustration and anxiety in various aspects.

The Pressure of Academic Achievement

The conception that every Asian American student is able to or is supposed to achieve academic success is prevalent. Wong, Lai, Nagasawa and Lin (1998) conducted a study that showed students from all racial/ethnic backgrounds, including Asian Americans, believe that Asian Americans perform better academically, are more motivated to do well at all levels of education, and are more likely to succeed in their chosen careers than are other students. However, this perception is misleading and falsely generalized. No empirical evidence exists to verify the claim that Asian Americans have outstanding academic abilities. The aggregate data might display better academic performance of Asian Americans, but a more intensive analysis of subgroups actually demonstrates that numerous Asian Americans face obstacles to succeed academically (Yang, 2004). Lee's (1994) study demonstrated that the model minority label does not apply to all Asian Americans. In support of Lee's finding, Ying et al., (2001) found that whites had higher GPAs than all ethnic minority students. Asian Americans' GPAs were similar to those of other racial/ethnic students. At a small, private college, Asian American students were also more likely to be on academic probation or to withdraw from classes for medical reasons, resulting from emotional problems compared to other ethnic minority students. They also had greater difficulty keeping up with the course work, which did not appear to be problematic for other ethnic minority students (Toupin and Son, 1991).

The various academic problems that emerged among Asian American students are attributed largely to the enormous pressure on them to outperform other racial/ethnic students. For instance, Cheryan and Bodenhausen (2000) investigated how the effect of salient cultural stereotypes concerning Asians' mathematical prowess affected their actual math performance. The findings indicated that ethnicity salience gave rise to diminished ability to concentrate during the test, which in turn significantly undermined math performance.

The findings of many studies provide evidence that Asian American students are experiencing overwhelmingly high pressure to succeed academically as a result of the model minority label. Their individual personalities are neglected and actual academic capabilities are overrated, which leads to unfavorable psychological stress that is in fact detrimental to their academic performance.

The Illusion of Socio-economic Status

The danger of the model minority stereotype lies in its reinforcement of a misconception and obstruction of the true nature of being Asian American (Tang, 2007).

Some Asian scholars critical of the stereotype have argued that the model minority stereotype's line about the socioeconomic success of Asian Americans obscures the hardships of many struggling Asian Americans (Wu, 2002). Asian Americans comprise a diverse minority group in which financial resources and access to education varies across Asian American families (Lew, 2004); Southeast Asian Americans, especially, encounter difficulties in education and socioeconomic quality (Chang and Le, 2005). As a matter of fact, Asian Americans are socioeconomically underprivileged compared to the White. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that in 2003 11.8% of Asian Americans lived in poverty, compared to 8.62% of non-Hispanic Whites (Carmen, Bernadette and Robert, 2003).

The model minority stereotype reflects the distorted perception that Asian Americans are able to obtain high status jobs with fairly desirable incomes and their unemployment rate is low. However, critics argue that many Asian Americans would rather work for low pay or work seasonally or part-time than receiving government assistance due to the cultural influence to preserve self-esteem (Ong, 1984). In addition, foreign-born Asian Americans who need

employers' sponsorship for work visas or permanent residency might be willing to work at the cost of considerably lower wages compared to other racial-ethnic counterparts (Tang, 1993b).

Even if some Asian Americans are working in higher paying occupational categories, these niche occupations are not in competition with the dominant groups (Bonacich and Modell, 1980; Hirschman and Wong, 1981). In addition, Chan (1991) has discovered that Asian Americans in management are more likely to be "self-employed than to be managers of large firms" (Chan, 1991, p.169). In sales, they are more likely to get lower pay, holding relatively inferior positions such as retail clerks rather than being higher paid brokers or insurance agents (Chan, 1991, p.169).

Therefore, the media portraying Asian Americans as being advantageously privileged both academically and economically may contribute to the distorted perceptions about the real socioeconomic status of Asian Americans. That image, however, has been created based on the success of a few elite groups among the total Asian American population (Sandhu, Leung and Tang, 2003).

Invisibility and Discrimination against Asian Americans

A number of scholars argue that the model minority stereotype unfavorably conceals the fact that a large proportion of the Asian American population still lacks education resources and career opportunities. The model minority stereotype generates biased judgments convincing people, particularly other racial/ethnic groups, that Asians need no help in attaining economic and educational success (McGowan and Lindgren, 2006). Other scholars also assert that the model minority stereotype creates the illusion that Asian Americans could not possibly experience racial discrimination (Wu, 2002). Being perceived as a model minority is an obstacle

to the Asian Americans who need public assistance, culturally specific programs, and private foundation support as well as educational help (McGowan and Lindgren, 2006).

Studies have been done to examine the discrimination resulting from the misconceptions created by the model minority stereotype. This research has shown that Asian Americans suffer various forms of discrimination. In school settings, Bunzel and Au (1987) discovered that more White Americans than Asian Americans are admitted to Ivy League universities when there were no differences in academic and nonacademic qualifications. This appears to be largely due to the policies and preferences of admissions officers. The misconception based on Asian American as a model minority impairs Asian American students' access to important resources and services, such as educational programs that help students with academic difficulties, governmental financial and social programs, and other opportunities for higher education (Wong and Halgin, 2006).

In work settings, researchers have found that Asian Americans are subjected to various forms of discrimination. Chief among these is the glass ceiling (Bell, Harrison and McLaughlin, 1997). For example, Tang's (1997) study indicated that the percentage of Asian Americans who were assuming managerial roles was lower than the percentage of their White and Black counterparts. Such discrimination against Asian Americans is further supported by other empirical evidence. The Census Bureau reported in 2002 that Asian Americans make less money than whites with the same educational achievement.

The perception of Asian Americans as a model minority can put Asian Americans in a vulnerable situation when they face racial harassment and discrimination. Delucchi and Do (1996) found that students and administrators treated racist incidents differently based on individuals' ethnic backgrounds. When the incidents involved African Americans, the students

and administrators were more likely to explicitly denounce the incidents as racist. In contrast, when the incidents involved Asian Americans, the students and administrators showed more indifference and were less likely to identify the incidents as racists.

The perception of Asian Americans as a model minority also obscures an accurate examination of Asian Americans' psychological well-being. The widespread belief that Asian Americans are immune to mental health problems is based on no empirical evidence. In fact, many studies have demonstrated that Asian Americans suffer from significant psychological distress and anxiety (Lee and Ying, 2001). A recent study revealed that Asian Americans have rates of depression and anxiety comparable to rates among White Americans (Gee, 2004). Foreign-born Asian Americans even experience higher levels of intrapersonal and interpersonal stress than Whites (Abe and Zane, 1990), probably due to language difficulties, miscommunication, alienation and cultural identity confusion (Yang, 2004).

Interracial Contact

As the U.S. is a country with diverse ethnic groups and populations, individuals in other racial ethnic groups, as well as Asian Americans themselves, may be consciously or subconsciously affected by media stereotypes, thus influencing their judgments and behaviors in the interracial contact with Asian Americans.

Sheriff (1962) observed in his experimental study that if two groups are engaged in competitive relations, stereotypes of each other tend to be negative. The intergroup competition may lead to psychological effects, causing hostility and denigrating stereotypes between the members of the two groups, and self-glorifying or self-justifying attitudes toward the ingroup (Sheriff, 1962). Therefore, it seems that the influence of the media stereotypes on intergroup

relationship is uncertain. It is possible that the negative consequence of the stereotype may be exaggerated if the intergroup relationship is intense.

Intergroup Contact Theory

Allport (1954) proposed that positive effects of intergroup contact occur only under four key conditions: (1) equal group status within the situation (2) common goals (3) intergroup cooperation and (4) the support of authorities, law or custom. The positive effect of intergroup contact has roots in the equal status that both groups expect and perceive (Cohen and Lotan, 1995; Cohen, 1982; Riordan and Ruggiero, 1980; Robinson and Preston, 1976). Jackman and Crane (1986) discovered negative effects from contact with outgroup members of lower status. High intergroup anxiety and threat can impede both contact and its positive effects (Islam and Hewstone, 1993; Stephan, 1992; Stephan and Stephan, 1985, 1989; Wilder, 1993a, b; Wilder and Shapiro, 1989). According to intergroup contact theory, attainment of common goals must be an independent effort without intergroup competition (Betterncourt et al., 1992). However, the media depiction of Asian Americans as model minority creates the illusion that Asian Americans possess a status superior to that of any of the other ethnic minority groups. McGowan and Lindgren (2006) argue that the model minority stereotype reinforces the American Dream and implicitly blames other minority groups for their problems. Chew (1994) asserts that Asian Americans' alleged stereotype is used "to demoralize or to anger other minority groups and disadvantaged people" (p. 70-71). Specifically, the model minority stereotype implies that other racial/ethnic minorities would succeed if they would follow the example of Asian Americans (Wu, 2002). Therefore, the portrayal of Asian Americans as model minority might increase intergroup competition and the perceived unequal status among racial/ethnic groups.

Realistic Group Conflict Theory

Realistic group conflict theory refers to the notion that prejudice and resentment may occur when groups come into direct competition with each other for limited resources, or when the legal, political, economic and physical or material well-being of a group is jeopardized in an intergroup context (Bobo, 1983; Levine and Campbell, 1972; Sheriff, 1966).

Stereotypes can be both positive and negative, correct and incorrect, or simple and complicated (Kanahara, 2006). Due to the ambivalent nature of stereotypes, the seemingly positive stereotypes actually generate mixed feelings of simultaneous respect and resentment. Several studies have substantiated that attitudes and emotions toward Asian Americans are also ambivalent. Endorsement of the positive stereotype of Asian American elicits both positive and negative attitudes and emotions towards them (Cuddy et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002; Ho and Jackson, 2001; Lin et al., 2005; Glick and Fiske, 1996, 2001a). For example, Ho and Jackson (2001) found in their study that people who identify Asian Americans with the model minority stereotype (intelligent, ambitious, obedient) expressed respect and admiration towards Asian Americans but also reported feeling hostile and jealous. In addition, Asian Americans who are seen as intelligent, industrious, progressive and shrewd are perceived to be unsociable at the same time (Lin et Al., 2005).

Most socio-economically and professionally successful minority groups (e.g., Asians, Jewish and career women in the United States) are stereotyped as competent but cold and may be perceived as a threat to the status and stability of the majority (Insko and Schopler, 1998). As a result, the portrayal of Asian Americans as diligent and successful in their economic and educational endeavors could engender group threat and competition (Insko and Schopler, 1998). In other words, negative attitudes and emotions may result from the model minority stereotype because Asian Americans pose a realistic threat to the success, status or welfare of other groups.

Therefore, the perception of overwhelmingly positive characteristics of Asian Americans inevitably induces unfavorable social comparisons (Festinger, 1954), which may generate feelings of competition, threat, and prejudice (Esses, Jackson and Armstrong, 1998; Sherif and Sherif, 1979; Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

Consequently, prejudiced individuals from other ethnic minority groups are more likely to interpret the desirable competence characteristic as being competitive with the ingroup, and thus perceive the characteristic unfavorably (Lin et al., 2005). Likewise, some researchers pointed out that the perception that high-status minority groups are competing with mainstream society for finite resources can result in envy, anger, and harassment (Cuddy et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002).

The Impact of Media Priming on Interracial Contact

Media scholars have raised concerns regarding the impact of the stereotypical portrayal of racial/ethnic groups. Much quantitative research has examined the influence of racial/ethnic stereotypes in the media on viewers. Results from such studies have indicated that exposure to racial/ ethnic stereotypes in the media can, at least in the short term, influence real-world evaluations of minorities (Dixon, 2006, 2007; Givens and Monahan, 2005), provoke stereotypic responses (Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000), and guide intergroup outcomes (Fryberg, 2003; Mastro and Stern 2003). For example, Adams, Hall and Ashburn (1997) found racialized depictions of crime about Blacks resulted in differential attributions for the behavior such that dispositional explanations are provided for Black perpetrators, whereas situational explanations are provided for White defendants.

Many studies have sufficiently suggested the potential of the media to prime a variety of ethnic and social group stereotypes and influence individual perceptions towards these groups (Power, Murphy and Coover, 1996; Roskos-Ewoldsen et al., 2002). Media priming refers to the

effects of the certain media images on audiences' subsequent behaviors or judgments related to the images (Rosko-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen and Dillman-Carpenter, 2002). The concept of media priming was initially used to examine the priming effects of violent television viewing on young boys' aggressive behaviors (Josephson, 1987). The research on priming has been recently extended to media priming and stereotypes (Rosko-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen and Dillman-Carpenter, 2002). For example, Power et al., (1996) found that reading stereotypical information in a newsletter about African Americans or women influenced audiences' subsequent judgments and perceptions of irrelevant media events concerning the target group.

The model of media violence priming suggests that the depiction of violence in the media activate hostility- and aggression-related concepts that increase the likelihood of aggressive behaviors or interpretations of others' behaviors as being aggressive or hostile (Rosko-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen and Dillman-Carpenter, 2002). If this model is applied to Asian Americans' media stereotype as model minority, the depiction of Asian Americans as intelligent, well-educated, ambitious, competitive, hardworking, wealthy, etc., is likely to activate the concept that Asian Americans are academically and socioeconomically superior to other ethnic minorities in audience's memory. Under this circumstance, audiences are likely to perceive and judge Asian Americans as a model minority in later events and contact related to Asian Americans.

A number of researchers have blamed the media for priming racial stereotypes among majority group members that lead to undesirable outcomes in an interracial contact. Priming in this context means the process through which information has been recently activated by media consumption (Bryant and Oliver, 2009). Nevertheless, the influence of a media stereotype is not always negative. Other researchers have found that exposure to counter-stereotypes in the media promotes more favorable race-based judgments (Bodenhasen et al., 1995). Studies have

suggested that racial/ethnic stereotypes in the media generate the greatest effect on viewers when real-world experiences are consistent with media messages or when audiences lack an adequate amount of knowledge and information to form their judgments (Fujioka, 1999; Tan, Fujioka and Lucht 1997; Mastro, Behm-Morawitz and Oritz, 2007). Consistent with such findings, Mastro and Tropp (2004) also argued that the effects of the media on forming stereotypes of an ethnic group are moderated by the increase of interracial contact. Their study demonstrates that prior contact, especially in close and meaningful relationships with another ethnic group, can boost positive evaluations of the outgroup both in interpersonal interactions and perceptions of television portrayals. Consequently, it is crucial to investigate how other ethnic minorities perceive, endorse and apply the Asian American women's model minority stereotype and whether prior interpersonal contact with Asian American women would reduce the effect of media stereotypes compared to absence of interpersonal contact.

Research Questions

Social Identity theory (SIT) suggests that individuals hold positive views of the favorable characteristics of their own group. SIT also holds that group members have corresponding unfavorable views of other groups because of the reinforcement of media images (Mastro and Behm-Morawitz, 2005). Wong and Halgin (2006) found that Asian Americans who perceive their self-identity intertwined and consistent with group identity respond positively to the perception of themselves as members of the model group. In contrast, those who view the label negatively are unwilling to be tied to the group image as model minority because they dislike the pressure to achieve expectations and the marginalization from mainstream society. Other scholars also argued that the internalization of the model minority stereotype is potentially harmful to Asian Americans (Tang, 2007; Rosenbloom and Way, 2004; Ying, Lee, Tsai, Hung,

Lin and Wan, 2001; Kim, Gonzales, Stroch and Wang, 2006). Based on previous studies, the initial research question for Asian/Asian American women in this study was formed:

RQ1: How do the model minority media stereotypes in prime-time television influence Asian/Asian American women's self-perceptions in terms of gender role, academic performance, career achievement and racial identity?

According to cultivation theory, heavier exposure to television would make the audience identify social reality more with what has been reflected in the television programs (Gerbner and Gross, 1976). Zhang's (2010) study demonstrates that people's perceptions towards Asian Americans are consistent with media stereotypes that they are perceived as most likely to achieve academic success. At the same time, they are also perceived as the least desirable groups to initiate friendships. Therefore, a research question was proposed to investigate the level of endorsement and consistency with model minority stereotype that other racial-ethnic groups demonstrate:

RQ2: How do women from other racial-ethnic groups perceive the model minority media stereotypes of Asian/Asian American women in terms of gender role, academic performance and career achievement?

Realistic group conflict theory posits that prejudice and resentment may occur when groups come into direct competition with each other for limited resources, or when the legal, political, economic and physical or material well-being of a group is jeopardized in an intergroup context (Bobo, 1983; Levine and Campbell, 1972; Sheriff, 1966). As a result, it is essential to explore the potentially negative intergroup attitudes and emotions that arise from the positive qualities of model minority stereotype:

RQ3: Do model minority media stereotypes contribute to intergroup threat and competition in terms of education and profession?

The role of interpersonal contacts and interaction with media effects in forming and evaluating model minority stereotype are also examined in the current study. In light of previous research findings that prior contact, especially close interracial contacts can reduce the negative impact of media stereotypes and enhance positive evaluations of television portrayal (Mastro and Tropp, 2004). Therefore, a research question investigating the relationships between exposure to model minority media stereotype and interracial contact was proposed:

RQ4: What is the relationship between prior interaction with Asian/Asian American women and the influence of the model minority media stereotypes on interracial contact?

These questions will be investigated using focus group methodology.

CHAPTER 3 - Methodology

This chapter will introduce the methodology used in collecting data in order to answer the four research questions. Participant selection, media stimulus and data collection procedures are explained in detail.

Use of Focus Groups

Focus groups are a form of group interview and discussion used to generate data (Kitzinger, 1995). Focus groups are part of an ethnographic approach, which aims to describe a culture or phenomenon instead of reaching quantitative conclusions (Spradley, 1979). Participants are unfamiliar with one another and are selected because they share certain characteristics relevant to the study's questions (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Group interaction is a crucial part of the method. Participants are encouraged to talk to one another and comment on each others' experiences and points of view (Kitzinger, 1994). The method is particularly effective for exploring participants' knowledge and experiences and can be used to investigate not only what people think, but how they think and why they think that way (Kitzinger, 1995).

The first rationale behind using focus groups discussion for the current study is based on the fact that focus groups were originally used within communication studies to examine the effects of films and television programs (Metron, Fiske and Kendall, 1956). Hence, it is appropriate to use focus group interview, since the current study aims to explore the influence of model minority stereotype in prime-time television.

Second, previous studies examining the impact of racial/ethnic stereotypes in the media used mainly quantitative methodology, particularly content analysis, where individual differences were not measured. However, interpretations of the model minority stereotype could vary significantly based on different individual experiences. In addition, the quantitative methodology

might lead participants to perceive the model minority stereotype in a fixed way that would leave no space for individual encounters. In a focus group interview setting, participants are able to provide more detailed feelings, emotions and personal stories, which are profoundly important for research.

The third reason for using a focus group study is that some studies that examined the perceptions of audiences towards minority media stereotypes use mostly White participants (Banaji, Hardin and Rothman, 1993), regardless of the fact that audiences from other racial groups might perceive and respond to the media images differently. Pre-existing differences in beliefs and values among ethnic groups may contribute to variations in perceptions. Many scholars have claimed that perceptions of Asian Americans from the perspective of other groups are fundamentally different from the perceptions of most other racial minority groups (Fong, 1998; Lee, 1996; Tuan, 1998). Intergroup relations research has predominantly focused on African American and White issues while frequently neglecting groups in the “middle” of the race spectrum (Jones, 1997; Kohatsu, 1995). Although research concerning the relationship between Asian Americans and African Americans is numerically lacking, studies suggested that African Americans view Asian Americans with much of the same stereotypes and negativity as do Whites (Cummings and Lambert, 1997; Guthrie and Hutchinson, 1995; Ryan, Judd and Park, 1996). As a result, it is crucial for this study to examine the perception gaps among participants with different ethnic backgrounds. The focus group discussion method created an atmosphere in which participants with different racial/ethnic backgrounds could express and share their opinions.

Furthermore, previous research has not looked at the gender differences in the influence of media stereotype on racial perception and attitudes. It is highly likely that the perceptions and

attitudes, as well as interracial contact experiences, differ significantly based on gender. Hence, the study will exclusively explore females' perceptions and attitudes toward model minority media stereotype. Focus group discussion provides convenience and opportunities for a gender-specific environment.

Focus groups were also preferred to in-depth interviews in the current study for the reason that focus-group discussion can foster a social-oriented atmosphere for participants to talk about model minority stereotype that is more natural and laid-back in nature than an artificial experimental setting (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Focus group discussion format can encourage participation from those who are reluctant to participate in a one-on-one interview because they feel intimidated by the formality and isolation of the situation (Kitzinger, 1995), as well as the pressure to respond in a timely manner. Meanwhile, focus group discussion allows the “flexibility to explore unanticipated issues as they arise in the discussion” (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Therefore, the limited boundaries and dynamic interactions can facilitate the stimulation of new and unique perspectives in regard to the model minority stereotype of Asian American women in prime-time television.

Participants

Participants for the focus groups were recruited from a large Midwest university. In total, 21 female students ranging in age from 19 to 29 years old, with varying academic majors, participated in focus group discussions. The education backgrounds of the participants ranged from undergraduate student to graduate student to Ph.D. candidate. Five focus groups were conducted for the purpose of this study, including: Asian-born women, American-born Asian women, African American women, Hispanic women and White women. Specifically, the Asian-born women group consisted of seven female students from the China mainland, Taiwan, Japan

and Korea; the American-born Asian women group consisted of four female students including two Chinese Americans, one Korean American and one Filipino-Chinese American; the African American women group consisted of six African American female students; the Hispanic women group consisted of six Mexican American female students; and the White women group consisted of seven White female students. Participants were recruited verbally and through e-mails, using a variety of methods: 1) announcement in class, 2) friends and acquaintances 3) volunteers. Participants were given small souvenirs as incentives for participating in focus group discussion.

Data Collection Procedures

The study was conducted in a multi-media classroom on campus. Participants were asked to read and sign a consent form before starting the discussion. The focus group discussion process was audio taped for data collection and participants were not asked to state their names.

Participants were firstly asked to state their impressions about Asian/Asian American women and recall the media images. Afterward, the concept of the model minority stereotype was explained for participants to better comprehend the research goal and provide more meaningful information. The definition of model minority stereotype as presented to the focus groups was: 1) Asian Americans are intelligent, competent, self-disciplined and competitive. 2) Asian Americans are well-educated and have excellent academic performance. 3) Asian Americans are hardworking, career-oriented and have higher socio-economic status compared to other racial-ethnic groups. 4) Asian Americans are highly adaptive to American life and American culture.

The word “stereotype” was eliminated during the explanation to avoid a priming effect on participants. Participants were then asked to recall the TV characters of Asian American women that represent a model minority. Two video clips used as stimulus were played and participants

were asked to discuss their perceptions and other related questions regarding the model minority media image of Asian American women in the video clips. Open-ended questions were asked by a well-trained moderator based on the interview guideline. Two observers were present to take notes and check the recording device.

Stimulus

Because some participants might have a hard time recalling images of Asian American women as the model minority, two prime-time television clips in which the main characters reflect model minority characteristics were shown to the participants during the focus group discussion. The video clips were shown to the participants after recalling media images of Asian American women, particularly a model minority media image.

There are several reasons to provide media stimulus. First, participants might lack media exposure to the prime-time television featuring Asian American women due to underrepresentation, as well as selective exposure to or lack of interest in certain TV programs. The criteria for character selection are: (1) hardworking, career-driven and competitive (2) highly intelligent and well-educated; (3) economically successful with high status jobs (4) highly adaptive to American life and American culture. Overall, the chosen characters in video clips from different prime-time television programs were meant to indicate Asian Americans as a model for all groups, especially other minority groups, who have overcome racial barriers to achieve success.

The first character selected to be shown to the focus groups was Mia Mason, played by Chinese American actress Lucy Liu in the television drama *Cashmere Mafia* on ABC. Mia Mason is characterized as a confident, intelligent, competitive and career-oriented Asian American woman who works at Barnstead Media Group as a publisher. The second character

selected was Dr. Christina Yang, played by Korean Canadian actress Sandra Oh in the medical drama television series *Grey's Anatomy*. Dr. Christina Yang is characterized as a highly competitive, driven, ambitious and unsympathetic surgeon. Her academic background includes an M.D. from Stanford University and a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley.

The short video clip from *Cashmere Mafia* is about Mia's competition with her fiancé Jack for an executive position in the same company. After Mia wins the competition and the position as a publisher, Jack breaks up with her. The second clip from *Grey's Anatomy* mainly talks about Dr. Christina Yang being excessively competitive, and she is criticized by her supervisor for lacking basic human decency. This clip also shows Dr. Yang's refusal to admit her inability to change a baby's diaper, due to her pride in having obtained degrees from Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley.

Data Analysis

Each focus group discussion was recorded with a digital or analog tape recorder. The digital recording files and audiotapes of five focus groups were then transcribed by the author, using interpretive techniques. Marshall and Rossman (2006) argued that raw data have no inherent meaning, and interpretive procedures must be used to bring meaning and coherence to the themes, patterns, categories and displays that are presented to the reader. As Patton (2002) noted, "Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of the findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order" (p. 480). Transcript files recorded from the focus groups were reviewed by the moderator and two observers who are graduate students to ensure the completion and accuracy of the discussion.

The descriptive transcripts of participants' responses were segregated and organized into logical and meaningful segments based on research questions. Most salient and grounded categories were identified. These categories are ensured to be internally consistent but distinct from one another (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Color dots were used in the coding process. Following Tucker's (1996) example, color coding method is adopted in the analysis of the transcripts. Different colored dots were placed on transcripts based on the identified categories.

Data Validation

Several factors were taken into account to ensure the validity of the findings. Due to the complexity and variety of group discourse, an agreement among coders was set up as to core concepts or themes of substantive importance, with the idea that the level of agreement should indicate a basic consensus among raters (Kidd and Parshall, 2000). When analyzing data, three coders — the moderator and two observers — were responsible for taking notes reach agreements about each category to ensure the accuracy of data interpretation. In addition, the current study used college students as participants because using college-aged participants increases internal validity by eliminating alternative interpretations of the results based on education level and occupation difference (Hetsroni and Tukachinsky, 2006). However, race difference is included since perception gaps among varied racial-ethnic groups are critical to the findings of the study.

Researchers argue that member validation is fundamentally important to data and findings. Member validation refers to a cycling of data back through participants to ensure accuracy in terms of weighting, evaluation and reconstruction (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002; Fortner and Christians, 2003). Member validation check was conducted in the study by asking the same questions on different days, therefore ensuring the accuracy of understanding of the questions

and consistency of the answers. Techniques such as repeating participants' arguments and proposing for further clarification were adopted during the focus group discussion.

CHAPTER 4 - Finding

In this chapter, findings and discussion are incorporated to present them in a more informative manner. Transcription of the recorded material is presented based on the order in which research questions were asked and are then substantiated by supporting statements from individual participants.

RQ 1: Self-perception of Asian and Asian American Women

The first research question examines the perceptions of Asian and Asian American women regarding their own media image as a model minority and relevant impact of the image on their self/gender identity as well as racial identity. Analysis of transcribed focus group interviews indicated that the self-identified compatibility with the model minority stereotype essentially determines participants' positive or negative attitudes toward the stereotype. The differences in perceptions among Asian-born women will also be discussed in the following session.

Self-identification with Model Minority Media Stereotype

As observed in the focus group discussion, the participants from both Asian-born and American-born participants have diverse personalities, interests and future goals, regardless of the similar racial background. Thus, their reactions to the model minority media portrayal of Asian women are distinctively different after watching the video clips from *Cashmere Mafia* and *Grey's Anatomy*, based on the level of self-identification with the image.

In the Asian-born women group, more participants indicated that they did not identify with the model minority stereotype, because some consider the model minority image to “reflect Americans' perspective of Asian women,” which might differ from what Asian women are really like. Other participants also indicated that “this [the model minority stereotype] media image is

more gear towards Asian American women who were born and raised here.” In contrast, the majority of the American-born participants considered the images as “fairly accurate portrayal of Asian American women.” From their perspective, Asian American women are “competitive, ambitious and controlling,” consistent with the characters in the video clips. One participant expressed her identification with the model minority image by saying, “I can definitely see myself resembl[ing] the characters. I am goal-oriented and driven no matter who my competitors are. I think I want to be as career-oriented, intelligent and competitive as Mia and Christina in the video clips.”

Another participant commented that, “I have seen a lot of Asian girls who are like them [the characters], of course including me, [who] are overachievers and want to be in charge of their own lives.” These participants showed a strong inclination toward and recognition of Asian American women as a model minority in the media.

However, some American-born participants also demonstrated their incompatibility with the model minority characteristics. Some participants questioned the objectivity of the image:

I think Dr. Christina Yang is probably very proud of what she has achieved. But, I actually don't see myself resembl[ing] any of the characters in the video clips. I am telling you...I am not competitive at all. I just don't like conflict or confrontations and I would let other people win if they want to: “Okay, okay...you win.”

As we can see, the model minority stereotype does not apply to every Asian-born woman or American-born Asian woman. However, American-born participants tended to identify more with the model minority stereotype compared to Asian-born participants, which reflects that the model minority stereotype in American prime-time television might be perceived to be more Asian American women-oriented.

Self-perception of Gender Roles

The model minority stereotype emphasizes Asian Americans as intelligent, competitive, ambitious and hard-working, which inevitably contradicts another prevailing stereotype of Asian women being submissive, docile and family-oriented. One participant pointed out the potential reasons for this particular perception:

I think the reason why they have such perception is because maybe Asian women are soft-spoken, not super outgoing and loud as American girls can be. Also, the whole concept of Asian women being submissive has something to [do] with American idea of traditional family is to have a stronger male role because that's what the American traditional family is.

In the Asian-born women group, some participants were very critical of the gender representations in the model minority stereotype, while others showed support. For example, one Japanese participant commented on the character of Dr. Christina Yang: "That's definitely not me. I love taking care of babies; I care about family more than my work." Conversely, one Korean participant stated that the self-perception of her gender attributes and roles were similar to the characters. Other participants indicated their desire to balance career and family life. The importance of family was heavily mentioned even by Asian-born participants who were supportive of the portrayal of Asian American women being competitive and career-driven.

The situation holds true in American-born group, in that their perceptions of gender roles in the model minority stereotype differ from person to person. But many Asian American participants observed that the characteristics of the model minority stereotype are inherently opposed to the normative and traditional gender expectations of womanhood and motherhood. Behaving according to the model minority stereotype seems to stand in the way of Asian American women's pursuit of family life. Therefore, Asian American participants stressed that

career and family are mutually exclusive, forcing them to choose one over the other. The participants articulated their mixed feelings about the gender roles of the characters in the video.

For example, one participant suggested:

It is so silly for that guy to break up with Lucy Liu because he is expecting a stay-home wife and everything...but too sad, it happens all the time. I think as an Asian American woman, I want to pursue my own goals and dreams. Not to say that [a] relationship is not important, [but] I feel my future is probably more important than my relationship because I want to have control over my life.

Interestingly, although the characters in the video clips presented tend to highlight various positive characteristics of Asian American women as a model minority, the characters also experience role conflicts. For instance, one participant provided unique insight that:

I really love the character of Christina, she has strong personality and [she is] very competent. However, I think she is in a really difficult position because obviously many people have problems with her being too competitive and she cannot even handle the diaper despite of all the fancy degrees she [has] got.

The encounter of model minority characteristics with normative gender expectations indicates the complexity of Asian American women's image in prime-time television, which somehow reflects the obstacles that Asian and Asian American women undergo in pursuit of a balance between career and family.

The Pressure of Being Perceived as a Model Minority

The model minority stereotype stresses the extraordinary academic and career achievements of Asian Americans, putting enormous pressure on Asian Americans. All the participants in both focus groups expressed varying amounts of stress because Asians are labeled as academic

overachievers. The pressure to be a model minority is reinforced in the media, in school and at home. However, Asian-born participants demonstrated fewer struggles with racial identity than American-born participants under the influence of achieving model minorities.

Pressure from the media

American-born participants mentioned that the characters — Dr. Christina Yang and Mia Mason — are “intelligent,” “well-educated,” “competitive” and “successful,” which push them to believe that they belong to groups these women portrayed in the media. Therefore, from their perspective, it is not “surprising” to see the video clips depicting Dr. Christina Yang from *Grey’s Anatomy* as an academic overachiever who obtained degrees from multiple Ivy League schools because “the portrait is actually believable” among audiences with different backgrounds.

However, the focus group discussions indicated that Asian-born participants are less affected by the model minority media images in prime-time television compared to Asian American women. The perception is due largely to the fact that many Asian-born participants consider the model minority media portrayal to focus more on the image of Asian American women rather than Asian women who were born in Asian countries. Considerably more Asian American participants perceived the model minority media image to be an accurate portrayal of Asian American women. Interestingly, some American-born women perceive Asian-born women as being more submissive, dependent and tender, consistent with the traditional media stereotype of Asian women in American media. In this case, the model minority media stereotypes might impose more pressure on Asian American women to strive for educational and occupational success.

Pressure in school

In a school setting, Asian-born and American-born participants demonstrated that they are subject to a double standard, being treated differently by their American classmates and teachers in terms of academic performance. Asian and American students often encounter abnormally high expectations from classmates and teachers, which creates an intense and stressful school environment that directly relates to low self-esteem and deteriorating academic performance. For example, one Asian American participant noted:

I [felt] a lot of pressure in high school. All my teachers expected [the] best scores from me and all my classmates were also expecting me to get the best scores. If I failed their expectations, they would react so surprised like, “Oh my gosh, no way.” So I [felt] really stressed and frustrate[ed] about how everyone looked at me as a failure when I messed up.

Asian-born participants predominantly suffer from a double standard in college since many of them did not attend high school in the U.S. One participant said: “I have to get all A in my classes because I am Asian.”

Participants from both groups indicated that the people from other racial groups automatically assume Asians to be book smart, and adept at math and science. Therefore, Asian and Asian American students are always expected to excel in all scientific classes and competitions. Comments such as, “If you are not good at math then who else is?” frequently bother the majority of the participants in the focus group, especially for those who happen not to be interested in or do poorly in hard sciences. The words “detest” and “hate” appeared among comments made by several participants from both groups relating to math. In particular, one participant expressed her agony that:

My professors, classmates and all my American friends often expect me to be good at math, extremely smart and they think I am supposed to know everything. But I am actually not as knowledgeable and smart as they expect me to be.

Some Asian American participants mentioned that the stereotype of Asians as “science geniuses” has been deeply ingrained in their minds that they can’t help but apply the stereotype to every single Asian regardless of individual differences. Meanwhile, Asian-born participants also indicated that race becomes the single factor for American students to judge the selection of their majors, saying that, “Many Americans think it is normal for me to major in computer science because I am from China.”

Participants from both groups claimed that the abnormally high academic expectations in school inevitably result in a “confidence and self-esteem crisis,” which profoundly hinders academic performance and psychological well-being of Asian/Asian American students. One Asian American participant noted:

I remember my last year in high school...I was taking calculus. The first semester I did decently well. I was at the top of the class, but my teacher was still not satisfied with my grades....And the next semester my grades in that class went straight down because I got really stressed out.

On top of incredible frustration experienced by Asian American students, the distorted perception of Asian Americans is also likely to jeopardize their positive interactions with friends in school. Several participants mentioned that some of their classmates who wanted to hang out with them just because they could sit beside them during a math or chemistry test.

Pressure from parents

During the focus group discussion, a consensus was reached in both groups that, beyond the influences of media and school, parents are among the most powerful factors driving participants to acquire model minority characteristics. The majority of the American-born participants' parents were early immigrants who came to America years ago from different Asian countries hoping to achieve their American dreams. Therefore, the participants' parents worked extremely hard for the sake of better jobs, living conditions and higher socio-economic status, as well as better educational opportunities for their children. One participant whose parents are immigrants from the Philippines and China stated:

My parents started from scratch when they first came to the country. I feel like Asians from my parents' generation are super ambitious, determined and competitive, because they knew that they have to work three times harder than everyone else to achieve success in America. They have gone through a lot.

Having tasted the bitterness of surviving and achieving success in the United States, participants' parents project enormous expectations on their children and expect that the children will work as hard as they did and exceed what they have accomplished. For instance, one participant mentioned that: "My parents pushed me really hard to do well in school and go to good universities."

Therefore, Asian culture is another critical component in interpreting the incredibly high expectations from parents. Asian children are culturally shaped to endure overwhelming amounts of pressure to live up to their parents' expectations. One Asian American participant asserted that the situation applies to her as well, even though she grew up in multi-cultural family:

I have an American father and my mother is Chinese. All my Chinese friends will think that I will not have equal [amount] pressure as they do from their parents because my

Dad is American. But the truth is both of my parents are “Asian parents,” [in] that they are very strict with me, just like the parents of my other [Asian] friends.

Asian culture particularly values “face,” which refers to a good reputation in front of one’s peers. The academic achievement and career success of Asian children are critically and directly linked to family reputation and honor. Consequently, attending a great school or having a decent job is a big boost in the self-esteem and prestige of their parents. In contrast, the Asian children who fail to live up to their parents’ expectations would likely subject themselves to more pressure or major disappointment from their parents. This phenomenon is illustrated by one participant’s family experience:

I went to a community college and during my first two years, my family is not very happy about my choice. They feel like I am dishonoring them by going to community college. On the contrary, my brother is a perfect student in my parents’ eyes and they really want me to catch up with my brother.

In Asian families, parents have formidable power in shaping their children’s personalities according to their desires. Hence, Asian parents have significant impact on their children’s choice of schools and academic major selection, as well as career path. Asian-born and American-born participants both expressed their willingness to obey their parents and “make them happy.” One Asian American participant observed that many of her friends are pushed toward getting advanced degrees, especially in the field of medicine and engineering. The participant said, “I feel a lot of my friends are doing this because of their parents.” Similarly, another participant expressed her fear of dropping out of school or switching her architecture major to something more fun would severely disappoint her parents and thus she gave up

exploring her real interest and stuck with her architecture major. Still another participant expressed her feelings about confronting her parents' expectations:

For me personally, as a result of my parents pushing me too much, that kind of makes me an underachiever. Because they always give the pressures and expectations...a lot of times I feel like I am doing for them. But then it came to a point when I stop[ped] doing it and stop[ped] pushing myself to do it for the sake of their happiness because I want to do whatever I want.

The participant continued to explain why Asian American students are extremely obedient and deferential to their parents in terms of making education-related decisions. Unlike White Americans, many Asian families pay for their children's tuition and therefore Asian Americans children are financially dependent on their parents.

As a result, parents serve as a driving force to facilitate the reinforcement of the model minority stereotype. Asian Americans might be more resistant to internalizing the model minority media image, however, the pressure from parents seems irresistible to many Asians and Asian Americans, consciously or unconsciously driving them toward the model minority stereotype. It also seems as though the parents of the participants from both groups push them equally hard, regardless of where they were born and what cultural environment they grew up in.

Influence on Racial Identity

Growing up with the combination of Asian culture and American culture creates numerous struggles with racial identity. Asian Americans face many challenges in striking a balance between the two cultures. The model minority media stereotype frequently portrays Asian Americans as being highly adaptive to American culture, which increases the confusion of Asian Americans between inheriting Asian culture and assimilating into American culture. Many Asian

American focus-group participants also demonstrated an overwhelming cultural influence and pressure to practice Asian cultural traditions from their parents. Inevitably, tensions emerge between Asian Americans who identify more with American culture and their parents who impose Asian traditions on them. For example, one participant said:

My parents have a lot of cultural influence on me. For instance, I am not allowed to sleepover anywhere even though I am 23. I live in America but I argue the most with my parents because they want me to keep my Filipino traditions in America. I feel [like it is] so hard to do that [keep Filipino traditions]. I just want to be American, but my family always tells me to keep my Filipino traditions and they pushed it so hard. It is really difficult not to fight with your parents and also listen to them at the same time. Of course, I want to keep my traditions but I think I can make a better decision by finding a cultural balance. But my parents don't want to compromise at all.

Language use is also a crucial component in the struggle for racial identity struggle of Asian Americans. One participant said, "My parents don't know much English, I spoke English at school and when I go home I have to switch to Hmong [an Asian language], which is hard." A participant whose father is American revealed that her unique racial identity experiences, explaining that her "Americanized face" put her in a cultural-oriented dilemma:

Because I don't have the typical Asian look and that's very difficult for me to find my own place cultural-wise. Actually I feel more close to Asian cultures and I feel more comfortable being with Asians even though my dad is an American. But because I look different, so many Asians think I don't totally fit into Asian culture. At the same time, I don't feel [like I] completely fit into American cultures because I don't feel with Americans culturally but face-wise, yes [laughs]..

However, Asian-born participants' racial identities in America were less affected by the model minority media stereotype because they grew up primarily with Asian culture. Meanwhile, they feel less pressured to assimilate into American culture because they are "not American citizens." Consequently, American-born participants experience various obstacles with their racial identities under the influence of multiple cultural environments than Asian-born participants.

Perception Matrix between Groups

Focus groups discussed how audiences with varied backgrounds would likely perceive the model minority media image of Asian/Asian American women. The majority of the participants indicated that audiences from other racial-ethnic backgrounds would perceive Asian/Asian American women as a model minority consistent with the media portrayal after exposure to the images. For example, one participant pointed out that, "[Individuals belonging to other racial-ethnic groups] probably see us the way media portrays in the video clips." Another focus group member made similar comments, saying that, "They probably think [of] Asian American women as overachievers, competitive, [who have] every characteristic of model minority, because that's what they see in the media...Asian American women adapt to that."

The previous discussion demonstrates participants who identify with the model minority attributes hold the belief that audiences from other racial-ethnic groups will be inclined to endorse the model minority media portrayal of Asian American women. Moreover, one participant in particular claimed that, "If the media shows a lot of this kind of image [model minority media image], other people might think it is true."

When asked about how the characters in the video clips affect their perceptions of other Asian/Asian American women, one participant noted, "I see them like the characters [in the

video clips] who are intelligent, ambitious, competitive and career-oriented.” The participants who identified with the stereotype emphasized how they resemble the characters, stating, “I am like that too.” The members who do not identify themselves with the model minority stereotype are more likely to indicate their perception of other Asian American women as model minority, saying things like, “I know a lot of Asian American girls who possesses many model minority characteristics, such as my sister. She is a straight A student and she is going to [an] Ivy League school.”

Therefore, media portrayals of Asian American women as a model minority not only motivate Asian and Asian American women to see themselves as a model minority, but also evoke perceptions of other Asian American women as a model minority.

RQ 2: Perception of other racial-ethnic groups

The second research question investigates how White, African American and Hispanic women perceive the model minority media image of Asian American women before and after watching the video clips. Specifically, this research question seeks to investigate the endorsement level and consistency with the model minority media stereotype in terms of gender role, academic performance and career achievement. Moreover, how perceptions vary based on racial-ethnic background were analyzed.

Recall of Asian Women’s Media Stereotypes

Stereotypes about Asian women are pre-existing and deeply ingrained in people’s consciousnesses. Stereotypes are crucial in facilitating the formation of perceptions and attitudes towards Asian women, especially for individuals from other racial-ethnic groups. In focus group discussion, participants from White, African American and Hispanic groups were initially asked

to describe their impressions about Asian American women. There are two prominent trends that are co-existing and distinctly different.

To illustrate, descriptions that were frequently mentioned such as “smart,” “intelligent,” “scholarly,” “good at math,” “diligent” and “successful,” strongly reflect the model minority stereotype of Asian Americans. In contrast, another set of attributes, such as “submissive,” “subservient,” “quiet and shy,” “domestic” and “conservative,” demonstrate the prevalence of more gender-specific stereotypes of Asian women. In addition, several participants indicated their admiration of the self-presentation and external appearance of Asian women saying that they are “stylish,” “fashionable,” “put together” and “beautiful.”

Participants across different racial-ethnic groups indicated that their perceptions of Asian American women were primarily derived from media, specifically movies and prime-time television. The participants used mass media to gain insights about the Asian American ethnic group in terms of social characteristics, gender roles, and academic and career achievement. Coincidentally, the media stereotypes recalled and discussed by the participants in the three groups were favored the two major trends of impressions about Asian American women mentioned earlier. This lends support to the immense power of mass media, and suggests that mass media determine how women from other racial-ethnic groups look at Asian American women. Some participants automatically think of the model minority media image of Asian American women such as “competent,” “competitive” and “intelligent.” For example, one African American participant noted, “You can see the image all the time that there are many Asian American scientists. They are technology-savvy and intelligent. In the movies, you can see a lot of Asian computer experts and similar stereotypes.”

Likewise, another member responded immediately that, “I think media often depicts Asian American women as lawyers or doctors and [they are] good at whatever they do”.

Aside from being perceived as intelligent and successful in science-related occupations, many other participants noted Asian American women’s traditional gender portrayals in mass media such as “sex object,” “family-oriented,” “accessory to man” or “housewives.” For example, one Hispanic American participant said, “I think Asian women portrayed in the movies are either very submissive and obedient, or hyper-sexualized and exotic. They do everything their husbands and sons said and they don’t have any voice.”

In contrast, some participants suggested that media images of Asian American women are not so memorable. These same participants had considerable difficulty in recalling any Asian American TV characters. Some participants from Hispanic and African American groups also mentioned that Asian American women are underrepresented in the media, which contributes to the difficulty in remembering female Asian American characters. One African American participant noted:

I can hardly recall any of Asian American women characters on TV because I think they are underrepresented as the main character in the TV shows. It seems like that everyone knows about the media stereotypes of Asian women but I just cannot remember any specific characters on TV.

Another African American participant shared her idea about underrepresentation of Asian Americans in the media: “You don’t often see many Asian American women in the media. Maybe it is the barrier that has to be crossed to get more minority women in the media”.

Before watching two video clips which contained mass media depictions of Asian American women as a model minority, participants were asked to recall the characters of Asian American women in prime-time television that reflect model minority characteristics. Two-thirds of

participants from the three focus groups mentioned Dr. Christina Yang from *Grey's Anatomy*, including both participants who watch prime-time television frequently and those who rarely watch TV. There was widespread agreement that Dr. Christina Yang exhibits almost every characteristic of the model minority stereotype. During the discussion, participants from various groups declared admiration for the irresistible charm of the character. For instance, one White American participant stated that:

I don't watch too much TV, but Dr. Christina Yang from *Grey's Anatomy* is the only one that I can think of [model minority depiction of Asian American women]. She is the one who definitely meets the standard of model minority.

The high recall rate and popularity of Dr. Christina Yang among focus group members indicates that *Grey's Anatomy* plays an indispensable role in how women with varied racial-ethnic background perceive Asian American women. It also demonstrates the prevalence of Asian American women's media depiction as model minority among a wide range of audiences.

Perception of the Model Minority Media Stereotype

In order to examine the perceptions of Asian women's model minority more concretely and accurately, participants in White, African American and Hispanic groups were asked watch two short video clips from American television series *Cashmere Mafia* and *Grey's Anatomy*, in which there are explicit manifestations of model minority characteristics. The participants were actively engaged in lively discussion regarding the portrayal of Asian American women in the video clips. The discussion ranged from gender role and academic performance to career aspiration and achievement.

Perception of gender roles: traditional vs. non-traditional

Generally, the two characters received many positive responses from the participants across focus groups that found the depictions agreeable. One African American participant stated that, “Both of the [Asian] characters are very strong, smart and independent and they showed empowerment of minority women.” Another Hispanic American participant commented on the character Mia Mason, saying that, “she is definitely driven, confident and she works really hard to climb the corporate ladder.”

Despite favorable feedback, the majority of non-Asian participants perceived the characters to be “non-traditional portrayal[s] of Asian American women” because the characters overtly challenge the excessively saturated typical stereotype of Asian women in the media. Two White American participants argued that the images in the video clips are very different from the typical stereotype of Asian American women being “wifely, submissive and highly-sexualized.” Other participants also pointed out that the character of Dr. Christina Yang defies the typical stereotype of Asian American women because she is “strong-willed, domineering, opinionated, competitive and self-centered.” The non-stereotypical portrayal of Dr. Christina Yang does not meet normative expectations of how an Asian woman is supposed to act. Some expect Dr. Christina Yang to be smart as depicted, but more “soft, vulnerable and passive.” One White American participant expressed her opinion regarding the contradictions of gender roles between Asian American women’s typical stereotype and the model minority stereotype in the following way:

I think the media often stereotypes Asian women to be family-oriented and dedicated to building family relationship. However, the portrayal of Asian women in the video is a reversal against the traditional family values such as family and motherhood come first before career.

Another White American participant noted the negative impact of the typical media stereotype of Asian women on audiences, suggesting:

From my point of view, the portrayals of Asian American women in the video clips are [the] minority [and] that normally they are depicted differently from this. And normally stereotypes keep people from believing this is what Asian American women are capable of.

Although the media try to alter the stereotypical portrayal of Asian women by attaching the seemingly favorable characteristics of model minority to them, some participants have indicated the drawbacks of flattering stereotypes reflected through the characters. One participant sharply pointed out that Dr. Yang's failure to change a baby's diaper indicated her poor maternal performance and capabilities regardless of her career achievement. Another African American participant reasoned that the model minority stereotype might put Asian American women in an inferior position relative to men by going against the gender norm:

Her [Mia Mason from *Cashmere Mafia*] fiancé called off the wedding because she got the job he wanted shows the societal norm that women are supposed to give up their own desire[s] for families. Therefore, the image [model minority] made her look like she is power hungry and didn't care about having a man in her life.

In addition, participants also revealed that the typical stereotype and the model minority stereotype are inextricably associated with each other. The emergence of the model minority stereotype in the media does not necessarily fully substitute the stereotypical perceptions of Asian women acquired from the traditional stereotype.

Two participants claimed that both characters are still in the submissive positions because neither of them tried to stand up for themselves. For example, one participant noted that, "Mia

Mason made some efforts to prove her as successful, yet the video ended with her being emotionally defeated due to the denial of her fiancé.” Her comments were immediately supported by another White participant, who said:

She didn’t stand up for herself and she was still trying to care for her fiancé when he was breaking up with her. If I were her, I would feel it doesn’t make any sense to break the engagement because I got this position.

A Hispanic American participant provided similar insights about the gender role of the character by saying that, “Mia has some drive, but it seems that she is willing to give up her career for her marriage and family because she told him [her fiancé] that she also wants to be a stay-home wife and mom.”

What’s more, Dr. Christina Yang’s character is also perceived as submissive to a certain degree in spite of her self-presentation as a strong woman. One participant observed that Dr. Christina Yang was very deferential to the character of an older male doctor and did not want him to know that she was having problems with changing the diaper, which shows her obedience to authority.

Model minority media images have changed the way people from other racial-ethnic groups typically perceive Asian American women. While non-Asians are able to see more diversity and positive aspects of Asian American women, their observations strongly indicated that the most common and predominant media portrayal of Asian women is still the subservient and sexualized geisha girl image. For instance, one Hispanic American said, “The model minority images are different from the stereotypes of being submissive Asian American women. But on the other hand, I don’t think this [the model minority image] is representative of all Asians. Model minority image could be too extreme.”

The typical media stereotype is considerably more influential on audiences' perceptions towards Asian women due to the number and history of such media representation. For example, one African participant noted, "Dr. Christina Yang is a very educated, strong and independent woman. However, this hasn't changed the predominate stereotype of Asian American woman being submissive and domestic." Therefore, non-Asian audiences tend to be receptive to the reversed and non-traditional gender role of Asian American women presented in the media as a model minority. Nevertheless, the persuasiveness and believability of this gender representation is called into question because of the deeply ingrained traditional gender roles in a more pervasive stereotype of Asian American women.

Perceptions of education level and academic performance

One of the critical characteristics of the model minority stereotype is academic excellence and high education level. As some participants mentioned earlier, the mass media usually highlight the outstanding academic achievements of Asian Americans. For example, in one of the video clips, the character of Dr. Christina Yang deliberately emphasized that she had a M.D. (Doctorate of Medicine) from Stanford University, graduating first in her class, and a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. The concentration on the higher education level of Asian American television characters has largely promoted and magnified the impact of the model minority stereotype. One participant talked about the media representation of Asian Americans being intellectually and academically superior by saying, "I think the media portrays Asian Americans either being really smart or incredibly devoted to studying and homework stuff, always try to get a high education degree."

All participants across multiple groups revealed relatively high expectations of Asian Americans' educational background. Many ethnic minority participants indicated that Asian

American students' academic performances are perceived to be "above any other minorities as well as White." A Hispanic participant expressed her perceptions of academic degrees obtained by Asian Americans: "If I see Asian Americans, I would think they at least have a bachelor degree. I wouldn't think that they only have high school education level." Another White participant who was working toward her Ph.D. in sociology commented: "I would automatically think that most of them [Asians] are well-educated, probably more educated and [have] better grades than myself." In contrast to the mindset that "Asian Americans are naturally talented and are supposed to do better than other races," some participants offered unique perspectives on Asian American's extraordinary educational accomplishments. They asserted that diligence and perseverance are the key factors underpinning the phenomenon. For instance, one participant noted that, "I don't know if I assume them to be smarter, but they tend to take more advantages of their talent." Likewise, another White participant from the same group explained:

I see their education as pretty much on par with anyone who is well educated, but their dedication to education is what separates them apart from the rest of racial groups...I grew up knowing and hearing that Asians work much harder than we did.

Interestingly, many participants noted the cultural environment and parental influence on Asian American students' academic endeavor and success. One of the potential reasons brought up among focus groups is that, "Asian culture and parents place enormous emphasis on academic performance, pushing them [Asian Americans] to be more academically trained." One White participant shared the following story about a former Asian classmate:

I used to have a friend back in middle school. Her father would not let her go to bed before 10:30 because she had to work on homework and study until 10. And she was

always really tired because she was not allowed to sleep no matter how many times she told her dad how much she needed [to sleep].

Numerous studies have reported the media overwhelmingly portrays Asian Americans as technologically savvy, mathematically talented and excelling in the field of science (Paek and Shah, 2003; Taylor and Stern, 1997). This particular media depiction of Asian Americans contributes to the perceptions of limited areas of academic fulfillment. Many focus group participants automatically assumed Asian Americans are, “smart and good at math and sciences.” The overwhelming emphasis on Asian Americans’ academic excellence in specific areas is likely to overshadow the perceptions of their achievement in other spheres. For example, one Hispanic participant noted:

I have the perception that they [Asian Americans] perform more in the sciences such as engineering, computer, physics and math, but not so much in arts. For example, Dr. Christina Yang is a doctor, so she is more science-oriented. But it is interesting to see Mia portrayed as a magazine publisher that not so many Asians are in this field.

Overall, few participants doubted the academic capability of Asian Americans. Generally, participants suggested that they perceive Asian Americans to be academically fulfilled, but their perceptions are confined in the field of math and sciences.

Perception of work ethic and career achievement

Asian Americans are stereotyped as industrious, career-driven and possessing relatively high socioeconomic status compared to other racial-ethnic groups in the media (Taylor and Lee, 1994). The current study has found that the perceptions of Asian American women’s work ethic and career achievement are in line with such media portrayals. Many participants perceive Asian American women as having elevated career aspirations and a superior work ethic compared to

those belonging to other racial-ethnic groups. One African American participant commented on the character of Dr. Christina Yang, saying:

You always hear about Asian Americans who are extremely hardworking and they have strong desire and determination to win and they got what they want. Just like Dr.

Christina Yang, she works really hard and she always wins.

Asian American women are also expected to have high status and prestigious jobs, such as doctors or business professionals. Some participants suggested that the reason why Asian American women are perceived to have successful careers compared to other racial-ethnic groups is because, “Asian Americans have [a] higher education[al] background and they do work harder than many other racial-ethnic groups.”

Numerous studies (Delener and Neelankavil, 1990; Yim, 1989) have indicated that the media predominantly depict Asian Americans as technologically savvy and successful in the areas of computer technology, engineering and sciences, which lead audiences to perceive that there are more Asian Americans in these fields and they are more accomplished in these areas. During the focus group sessions, this kind of perception was widely evidenced. For example, one participant suggested that, “Asian Americans are highly competitive in the job market, especially in the areas of sciences.”

During focus group discussion, work ethic and career drive were traced back to early Asian immigrants. The idea was mentioned that Asian Americans’ work ethic is cultivated by their family members who strive to pursue the American dream. Meanwhile, as a minority group, the older generation of Asian Americans tried to conform to the norms in America, and thus had to work hard to obtain success. As one White participant stated:

I think if your family is originally from Asia and you have the opportunities to come to America, you are likely to have the mindset to work harder because not everyone has the opportunity to be here. Perhaps that is the incentive for Asians to achieve educational and occupational success.

However, the media stereotype of Asian American women's work ethic sparks unfavorable attitudes and perceptions toward them as reflected in the discussion of the characters in the video clips. For example, Dr. Christina Yang was perceived negatively as a competitive overachiever in the hospital. Two participants, the first African American and the second White, suggested that:

Christina is very dedicated to her job and obviously, [she is] highly competitive and then she becomes a very mean and unsympathetic person, you know...which is not good for anyone, especially a woman.

I think the negative consequence of being perceived as hardworking and competitive is Asian American women are likely to be considered as over-ambitious and cold. Like Christina was accused of lacking humanity.

In sum, participants generally perceived Asian American women to be competitive, ambitious, successful, career-driven women who possess an outstanding work ethic and high-paying jobs. Nevertheless, the perceived superior work ethic and successful career achievement concurrently triggers unfavorable perceptions toward Asian American women.

Perception Gaps across Groups

The current study investigates the differences in perceptions of Asian American women among female participants with varied racial-ethnic backgrounds. Several trends were identified to demonstrate the perception gaps across diverse groups. For instance, whereas African

Americans and Hispanics shared numerous similarities in their perceptions of Asian Americans, White perceptions differed from that of African American and Hispanics.

Specifically, the study found that African American and Hispanic women are more aware of the fact that the images of Asian Americans are overwhelmingly stereotyped in the American media whereas White women were less aware. One African American participant explicitly noted that widespread media depictions of Asian women as experts in Kung-Fu or being good at math might be inaccurate and stereotypical images, which do not necessarily apply to all Asian Americans. African American and Hispanic women also showed considerably more understanding regarding the negative outcomes of Asian American women's media stereotypes. Other racial minority group participants also expressed experiencing enormous discomfort stemming from their own group's inaccurate depiction in mass media, which they suggested contributes to distorted and undesirable perceptions of them. One African American participant described the stereotypical mediated portrayal of African American women as "loud, obnoxious and hav[ing] a lot of babies." Another Hispanic participant talked about the media stereotype of Latinas, stating that "The media always portray Latinas as undereducated and they got pregnant at a very young age. They always sacrifice for a guy and being promiscuous. But I am going completely opposite direction of the stereotype for Latinas."

The media play a critical role in creating, reinforcing and magnifying the stereotypes of minority women, which put them in the equally inferior positions. Consequently, negative media depictions serve as a catalyst for minority women to be more firmly bonded on this issue. For example, one participant mentioned the similarities between negative media portrayals of Asian American and Hispanic women:

I think the media doesn't portray every aspect of us. Both of us are seen either one way or the other. Hispanic women are portrayed either stay-at-home or as fiery angry women. The same with Asian American women that they are depicted either as submissive and wifely or very power hungry.

This higher level of understanding leads to more positive evaluations of the model minority image of Asian American women, compared to White women's perspectives. Nonetheless, both groups perceive that the portrayals of the two characters in the video clips represent the empowerment of minority women and that media are the most accessible channel to enhance the positive image of minority women. Some participants even expressed their optimistic outlook on media portrayals of minority women:

They [the model minority media image] are actually good stereotypes for everyone to see. Everyone watches TV, if they see something like this on TV, they will believe that women can be powerful and have prestigious jobs such as a magazine publisher and doctor, especially minority women.

Conversely, participants in the White focus group tended to diminish the race factor when evaluating the model minority of Asian American women. Overall, Whites were prone to perceive the experiences of Asian American women as more gender-specific instead of racial- or ethnic-specific. For example, after watching the cancellation of Mia's wedding in the first video clip, one White participant argued that, "It seems like this situation could happen to any woman. They are not exclusively Asian, but all [are] women." When expressing perceptions concerning the gender role depiction, one White participant asserted that women are either portrayed as career-driven women or traditional housewives and that race is not a prominent factor.

The same notion is also revealed in perceptions of Asian American women's career aspirations and achievements. Some White participants perceived that Asian American women are just like any other women who want to be educated and have good jobs. Therefore, it seems that there were overwhelmingly more White participants who believe that women in general are negatively portrayed in the media regardless of the woman's racial or ethnic background.

RQ 3: Intergroup Perceptions of Threat and Competition

The positive characteristics of the model minority stereotype are likely to induce negative emotions and attitudes from other racial/ethnic groups, because the perceived excellence and competitiveness of Asian Americans are considered to be a threat to the ability of other racial/ethnic groups to obtain the benefits of legal, political, and economic well-being. The third research question examines whether White, African American, or Hispanic participants experience a sense of competition and threat by Asian Americans, as realistic group conflict theory predicts.

Realistic group conflict theory implies that jealousy and negative attitudes might also emerge from racial minority groups due to the perception of Asian Americans as a model minority (Glick and Fiske, 2001a; Sherif, 1966). Racial minority groups have relatively less access to various social resources compared to the majority group, and hence competition among minority groups is fierce. Interestingly, all the participants in Asian American focus group held the belief that people from other racial-ethnic groups might feel threatened by Asian Americans to a certain degree, especially after exposing participants to the model minority media image. For instance, one Asian participant said: "they [other minorities] probably feel jealous and threatened in terms of competitive job market and limited admissions to good universities." Similarly, the majority

of White participants said they feel pressured or threatened when competing with Asian Americans in terms of educational and employment opportunities.

Overall, the majority of White participants have demonstrated enormous reluctance and fear to compete with Asian Americans, especially in the competitive job market. As participants noted, they feel less competitive in terms of education level and work ethic, which are crucial requirements to obtain a decent job. One participant said, “I don’t want to compete with Asians because I don’t think I can work as hard as they can”. Other participants mentioned that Asians and Asian Americans have “bilingual advantages” that add to their competitiveness.

On the contrary, the current study reveals no threats or jealousies toward Asian Americans among participants from both African American and Hispanic group, many of whom claimed they do not feel threatened by perceived excellence of Asian Americans. In fact, the majority of racial minority participants indicated that they feel threatened and intimidated by White competitors, and they feel more comfortable competing with “other minority individuals.” For example, one Hispanic participant noted:

I don’t feel threatened [by Asian Americas], it is the equal field. I think the only time I do feel like that [threatened] is White competitors. I don’t know if we are socially biased to think that way but the other minorities have never been the competition problem. If any minority individual got a job I would feel happy and congratulate on him/her. But I would question if it is a White person who got the job. Overall, I feel threatened by a White competitors compared to other minorities.

One African American participant expressed the reason she felt more threatened by a White person is because White competitors have many advantages over minorities in a job interview, especially if the workplace in question already lacks ethnic diversity. Instead of being

threatened by Asian Americans for the fear of competition, many minority participants seemed supportive of Asian Americans' achievements, because they fully understand the difficulties minorities face to achieve success in America.

For instance, one participant said: "I think we are both minorities and our families and ancestors are all immigrants who came to the States, and it is hard for [all of] us to strive for excellence." Other participants also embraced the notion that all minority groups have their own problems assimilating into American culture. As a result, to them, there seems to be very little competition between minority groups.

As a result, the focus group discussions involved in the current study indicate that Asian Americans' adaption to American culture and prominent educational and economical achievement poses a threat to White Americans when competing for employment opportunities and other social resources. However, the perception of threat and competition was not detected among African American and Hispanic participants due to the relatively equal status with Asians as racial-ethnic minorities in American society.

RQ4: Media Influence on Interracial Contact

The fourth research question examines how the endorsement of the model minority media image among audiences with varied ethnic backgrounds affects their interaction and personal contact with Asian American women. Additionally, this research question also explores the influence of close contact experiences with Asian American women on individuals' judgments of the model minority stereotype.

From the Asian/Asian American women's perspective

The majority of Asian American women claimed that their close friends are mostly Asian Americans, or White Americans who embrace diverse cultures and who have a better

understanding of Asian cultures. Many of these Asian participants said they currently live in largely Asian communities and therefore spend most of their time with Asians. For example, one Asian American participant described the racial-ethnic background of her close friends:

Most of my friends they are either Asian or they are White who have lived in Asia, or they are originally from the country that is not America. So, most of my close friends are the ones who have international experiences and who have experienced living in two cultures.

Thus, participants in the Asian American group predominantly have closer interactions and friendships with individuals belonging to their own racial-ethnic group. The phenomenon probably stems largely from common cultural bonding and Asian Americans' self-perception of how people from other racial ethnic groups perceive themselves. Most Asian American participants believe that the model minority media stereotype might increase alienation from other minority groups. One Asian American participant suggested that:

Maybe they [individuals from other racial-ethnic groups] will feel uncomfortable to be friends with some overachievers, especially guys. They don't want someone who is above them. Some people might make assumptions of Asian America women based on the media images. For instance, a guy used to tell me that he thought Asian American girls should play the piano more than play the sports.

Although people from other racial-ethnic groups might feel a little intimidated by Asian American women who are "smart and competitive," one participant argued that, "people who know about me will not be heavily influenced by these media images compared to the ones who just meet me on the street." Thus, Asian American participants stressed the importance of personal contact in the effects of model minority media stereotypes.

From the Perspective of Other Racial-ethnic Groups

Generally, the focus group discussion supports the prediction of cultivation theory that media images of Asian American women have stronger influence on individuals who do not have direct interpersonal experiences with Asian Americans. In other words, those participants who lacked close contact or meaningful relationships with Asian American women demonstrated higher levels of consistency with mass media portrayals of Asian American women. For example, one participant noted that, “I don’t have many opportunities to know many Asian American women when I was growing up, so I get to know them mostly from media and other people.” With the absence of personal contact, media become the most accessible source for other racial groups to gain knowledge about Asian American women.

For example, one Hispanic participant argued that the role of mass media related to racial minority stereotypes suggesting that, “people already have their mindsets about people from other racial-ethnic groups. It’s hard to change people’s perceptions but media images will definitely reinforce what they already think of Asian American women.” As a result, when individuals acquire the model minority stereotype from interpersonal settings, such as school, their exposure to the model minority image in the media would further reinforce their perceptions of Asian Americans. At the same time, the model minority media stereotype can influence audiences in a positive way, insofar as it facilitates interactions between Asian Americans and other racial minority groups. For example, one African American participant said:

It could definitely influence the way I perceive them and interact with them [Asian American women]. Maybe after watching the video, I would not be so afraid to talk to the Asian[s] on the street. And it would be easier for me to approach Asian group...So I think people will have [a] better chance to know Asian American women if they are in

more prominent roles. Because once you start seeing more of these [model minority image], they become normalized and people will feel easier to interact with Asian Americans.

The current study has shown that participants across all three groups argued that increasing interactions with Asian American women would significantly reduce the influence of media stereotypes on their perceptions of Asian American women. For instance, one participant suggested that, “I think the more personal interactions I have with Asian/Asian American women, the less the media stereotypes from various forms of media such as magazine and TV would impact my perceptions and interactions with them.” Participants who have personal contact with Asian American women tended to evaluate the accuracy of media portrayals based on their own experiences and knowledge, and thus seemed less likely to be influenced by the media. The participants built relationships with Asian Americans in various forms, such as neighbors, classmates, roommates, international friends and colleagues in student organizations. Researchers have argued that exposure to counter-stereotypes, or stereotype-disconfirming representations, may at times decrease prejudice (Dasgupta and Greenwald, 2001; Ramasubramanian and Oliver, 2007). Consistent with this argument, the focus group participants indicated that when they have experiences involving interaction with non-stereotypical Asian American women, they wind up thinking, “Oh, my friends do not fall into that category.” For example, one participant described her friend in high school as a counter-stereotypical Asian American woman:

She is so talkative and super extroverted. She is smart, but it is weird that she was really bad at math and she is not studying all the time and obsessed with the grades like the stereotype says. So the situation is different person to person.

Additionally, African American and Hispanic participants generally demonstrated more negative attitudes toward media stereotypes of minority women compared to White women. They criticized stereotypical media portrayals of minority women as detrimental to interracial contact. One participant stated that, “The media plays an important role to present minority women. The one-dimensional and negative media portray [al] of minority women will have a bigger influence on the people who do not have interactions with them beforehand.”

As a result, the media stereotypes of Asian American women are more influential on the perceptions of audiences when interpersonal, interracial contact does not occur. Conversely, long-term and quality personal contact with Asian American women contributes to a weakening of the effects of media stereotypes.

CHAPTER 5 - Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter provides detailed discussions in the order of research questions. Implications and limitations of the study will be addressed. This study has increased general knowledge about how the model minority media stereotype influences Asian and Asian American women's perceptions of themselves and of the perceptions of individuals with various racial-ethnic groups towards the model minority stereotype of Asian American women.

RQ1: The Influence on Asian/Asian American Women

Social identity theory (SIT) can be applied to media effects studies either to interpret how social identity offers incentives for television viewing (Harwood, 1997, 1999; Mastro, 2003; Zillmann et al., 1995) or to explain how the media content affects social identity (Duck, Hogg and Terry, 1999; Duck, Terry and Hogg, 1998; Morton and Duck, 2000; Tarrant et al., 2001). SIT suggests that individuals are more receptive of media content that boosts the positive and favorable characteristics of their group (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). However, an individual's receptiveness to such media content relies on his or her willingness to conform to their specific group identity.

The study supports the notion of SIT that Asian and Asian American women who identified with the model minority stereotype perceive the model minority media images positively and favorably. Numerous studies demonstrate that audiences relate to media characters better that are similar to themselves (Greenberg and Atkin, 1982; Knobloch, Callison, Chen, Fritzsche and Zillmann, 2005). Television ratings explicitly show that viewers prefer to expose themselves to media content that features people belonging to their ingroups (Oliver et al., 2000; Waisbord, 2004). In this study, Asian and Asian American women who regard themselves as resembling the characters in the video clips consider this media image coherent with their self-identity, which

favorably enhances their self-esteem and self-worth. However, Asian and Asian American women who did not identify with the model minority stereotype hold less positive attitudes toward the model minority media image due to the incompatibility between self-identity and the group identity. In this circumstance, the model minority media image is less persuasive to those who found more discrepancies between the model minority characters and their self-identity. Interestingly, the study found that Asian-born women are less likely to identify with the model minority media stereotype due to the general perception of the image being geared toward Asian American women. However, Asian American women tend to identify more with the model minority. Therefore, the model minority media stereotypes have a greater influence on Asian American women.

Media's stereotypical depiction of racial groups might impact media consumers' perceptions. Cultivation theory has found media to be influential on individuals' lives, including their self-perceptions and perceptions of others (Harrison and 2006; Stroman and 1986; Ward, 2004). Hence, the target groups themselves are also susceptible to the media stereotypes. Asian and Asian American women are also media consumers being exposed to media stereotypes geared toward them. Under their parents' substantial influence, repeated exposure to the model minority media image makes the stereotype even more accessible in their consciousnesses, which in turn pushes them further to accept the label of model minority. The current study indicates that after the exposure to the images, the majority of Asian American women consider themselves similar to model minorities portrayed in the media, and they believe that they are supposed to do whatever it takes to achieve the ideal standard of a model minority. Furthermore, Asian and Asian American women perceive that the model minority media stereotype has an effect on other Asian and Asian American women, motivating them to acquire the attributes of

the model minority stereotype. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many Asian Americans overwhelmingly accept some form of stereotype about Asian women, which even undermines the interactions and relationship building with other Asian Americans (Mok, 1998). In this case, the model minority stereotype will be further promoted and strengthened by the ingroup members as a norm, contributing to higher level of internalization among Asians and Asian Americans, and those who do not conform to the group identity are greatly marginalized.

Previous studies have demonstrated that Asian Americans experience feelings of shame and depression resulting from the internationalization of the model minority stereotype (Chu, 2002; Kim, Gonzales, Stroch and Wang, 2006). Consistent with the previous findings, the current study indicates that Asian and Asian American women admit to feeling enormous pressure to achieve academic and career goals due to the high educational, occupational and economical expectations of the model minority stereotype. The pressure to become a model minority comes from the media, school and parents. The media depiction of Asian American women as a model minority reinforce the model minority stereotype and pushed them further to be one of the models. The internalization is directly linked to a decline in academic performance, depression and conflicts involving future goals. Additionally, the pressure to achieve the characteristics of the model minority results in tremendous conflicts for Asian American women in performing traditional gender roles such as wives and mothers, because the attributes of the model minority stereotype greatly challenge the traditional and normative gender roles.

A growing number of studies have found that Asian American children often encounter the struggles between complying with the dominant cultural norms while managing to retain their traditional cultural heritage. This strain can have a significant impact on individuals' psychological adjustment (Helms, 1995; Nguyent, Messe and Stollack, 1999; Tang, 2007).

Identity confusion becomes even more pronounced when expectations from home and outside of home are different. Asian American children are found to shift their identities to live up to diverse expectations across diverse interpersonal context (Yeh, Ma, Madan-Bahel, Hunter, Jung, Kim, Akitaya and Sasaki, 2005). Consistent with previous findings, the current study shows Asian American women who were born and raised in the U.S. struggle tremendously with their racial identity due to the complexity of coping with both Asian and American cultures under the pressure of their parents and the society they live in. They constantly felt perplexed and emotionally drained when striving to achieve a balance between American mainstream culture and Asian cultural expectations. The model minority stereotype reinforced in the media, at home and in school imposed enormous pressure on Asian Americans to achieve overall success. Those who identify more with American culture are encountering more hardships when their Asian parents force the expectations in line with the model minority stereotype on them. Conversely, Asian-born women are less affected by the model minority stereotype in terms of racial identity because they were more closely attached to Asian culture.

RQ2: Perceptions among Women of Diverse Racial-ethnic Backgrounds

Television has become “the primary common source of socialization and everyday information.” (Gerbner and Gross, 1994, p.18) and thus heavy consumption of television contributes to the ideology of social reality consistent with media construction (Gerbner et al., 1980). The findings of the current study support the theoretical predictions of cultivation theory that the consumption of television contributes to the acquirement of ethnic minority media stereotypes. The study indicates the high prevalence of the model minority stereotype in prime-time television. The model minority media images were found to be highly accessible in individuals’ memories through examining the recall rate. The high level endorsement of the

media stereotype profoundly influences the construction of the participants' perceptions and knowledge about Asian and Asian American women. Specifically speaking, heavy prime-time television viewers who can effortlessly recall the model minority media stereotype are more likely to perceive Asian and Asian American women as a model minority.

Previous studies found that Whites, African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans perceive Asian Americans as being more academically and occupationally successful than other minority groups (Wong et al., 1998). In line with this finding, women from diverse racial-ethnic groups perceive Asian American women as having a high level of education, prestigious jobs and a superior work ethic. These reflect the consistency of their perception with the media portrayal of Asian American women as a model minority in prime-time television.

Participants in the study indicated that media are not the exclusive channel to gain perceptions of the model minority stereotype of Asian Americans. Social settings including school, community and workplace can also be sources for acquiring the model minority stereotype. Therefore, media facilitates and reinforces the recognition and acceptance of the model minority stereotype. The stereotype content model (SCM) implies that competence increases as warmth decreases in a stereotype perceived in an intergroup context (Fiske et al., 2002). The media depiction of Asian American women as intelligent and competent also results in them being stereotyped as cold and unsociable (Glick and Fiske, 2001b; Jost, Burgess and Mosso, 2001; Lin et al., 2005). Predictably, following the SCM pattern, women from other racial-ethnic groups have pointed out the contradictions of being a woman and being a model minority. They argued that an intelligent, competitive, competent and career-driven Asian American woman is unlikely to be successful in fulfilling the roles of wife and mother due to lack of warmth and nurturance.

Surprisingly, the traditional media portrayal of Asian American women as being submissive, docile and family-oriented, which has been represented in American media for a long period of time, has become a mainstream media image of Asian women among a vast array of audiences. Since the model minority media images of Asian American women are fairly new and limited compared to the traditional stereotype, many participants regarded the model minority stereotype as a counter-stereotype, which is exceptional and unrepresentative of Asian American women. Researchers (Hewstone, Hopkins and Routh, 1992) argued that when a counter-stereotype is strongly inconsistent or disconfirms a stereotypical portrayal, instead of discouraging the use of stereotype, it actually perpetuates the use. In line with this argument, this study demonstrates that participants were more convinced of the traditional media stereotype of Asian American women, yet consider the model minority stereotype as an extreme representation of Asian American women. In summary, the impact of model minority stereotype — Asian American women as intelligent, competitive, hardworking and career-driven — is remarkably reduced due to the traditional stereotype of Asian American women as submissive, docile and family oriented.

The study examined the difference in perceptions among women with varied racial-ethnic backgrounds, indicating that African American and Hispanic women are more supportive of the model minority media stereotype of Asian American women when compared to White women. Furthermore, African American and Hispanic women are more aware of the negative consequences of racial/ethnic media stereotypes on perceptions toward minority women when compared to White women. This phenomenon is probably attributed to the relatively equal social status of minority women and the fact that all minority women are the target groups of stereotypical media portrayal. Consequently, women from other ethnic minority groups regard the positive characteristics of the model minority media stereotype as empowerment of minority

women, which suggests that the media depiction of minority women is progressively moving in a better direction.

RQ3: Intergroup Relations

Realistic group conflict theory argues that when social resources are employed to meet the needs of two or more groups, conflict, prejudice and discrimination will occur between groups who desire the common resources (Sherif, 1966). Ho and Jackson (2001) found that individuals from various racial groups reported negative emotions such as threat, anger, hostility, resentment and fear of Asian American's positive characteristics as model minority. However, the findings of this current research are slightly inconsistent with Ho and Jackson's results. In this study, the majority of White Americans indeed feel threatened and unwilling to compete with Asian Americans for limited social resources including admission to colleges and employment opportunities. This negative perception results largely from the achievement and work ethic of Asian Americans reflected in the model minority. This finding reflects the argument that the model minority stereotype is inseparable from another stereotype (Yellow Peril) and that the two stereotypes are inherently associated with each other (Kawai, 2005; Shim, 1998). Some studies have demonstrated that early Asian immigrants were stereotyped by the mass media as Yellow Peril, referring specifically to Chinese immigrants perceived as having the qualities of "immorality, treachery, unscrupulous competition, and subversive intent" (Maykovich, 1971, p.448). Additionally, some studies have suggested that mass media accentuate the alleged cultural, economic and political threat posed by the "yellow race" to the White Christian culture (Kawai, 2005). One Asian critical scholar has also argued that when Asian Americans become "too model," they will be regarded as "honorary Whites" or as a minority group attempting to "Out-White the Whites" (Suzuki, 1989).

On the contrary, negative emotions such as threat, jealousy and fear of competition were not found in other ethnic minority groups. Cook (1978) asserts that the equal status contact or the contact situation required in achieving a joint goal will contribute to favorable attitudes in the intergroup context. Participants from African American and Hispanic groups revealed that not only do they not experience feelings of threat and jealousy, but they also feel comfortable and self-assured when competing with any other minorities, including Asians, because of the equally inferior group status compared to White Americans. Instead, African American and Hispanic women experience threat, jealousy and even anger when competing with White Americans, who have more access to social resources than any minority groups.

RQ4: Media Effects on Interracial Contact

Mass media play an important role in the formation of public opinion and impressions. The effects of mass media on acquiring racial-ethnic stereotypes are stronger among individuals with little or no direct interpersonal contact with members of that group (Armstrong, Neuendorf and Brentar, 1992). Cultivation theory suggests that heavy television viewers are more likely than light television viewers to possess perceptions and beliefs that reflect television messages, especially regarding topics of which the viewer has little real-life experience (Gerbner and Gross, 1976). Hence, individuals who consume a lot of prime-time television featuring Asian American characters can more easily recall the characters of Asian American women, and are prone to develop the perceptions consistent with the media stereotype, especially when close contact with Asian American women is lacking.

However, a previous study pointed out prior contact — especially in close and meaningful relationships with another ethnic group — can enhance positive perceptions of outgroup members both in interpersonal interactions and in response to television depictions (Mastro and

Tropp , 2004). This observation was verified by the findings of the current study that the effects of the model minority media stereotype were mitigated by the close interactions between individuals from other racial-ethnic groups and Asian Americans. In other words, women who have built long-term and meaningful relationships with Asian American women are less likely to be affected by the model minority media stereotype or other stereotypes of Asian American women. Moreover, they are more critical of media's representation of Asian American women as a model minority when they happen to encounter Asian American women who defy this stereotype. For instance, when women from other racial-ethnic groups meet an Asian American woman who disconfirms the model minority stereotype, they will scrutinize the model minority media image of Asian American women more carefully.

Implications

The current study has numerous significant implications which may help other racial-ethnic groups and Asian Americans themselves see the influential power of media stereotypes and how they affect every aspect of an individual's life, both as a target and a non-target of the media stereotypes. Moreover, the study also provides valuable information and strategies to reduce the negative influence of racial-ethnic media stereotypes among audiences.

As we can see, the model minority stereotype can generate both a positive and a negative influence on Asian Americans. First among the positive implications of the model minority stereotype is that Asian Americans are more likely to be accepted into mainstream culture when exhibiting model minority qualities such as hardworking, self-disciplined, crime-free and assistance-free.

Second, the model minority stereotype provides Asian Americans an incentive to succeed in America. Asian Americans can trick themselves in believing that they really are what the model

minority says they are after constantly and repeatedly receiving confirmation from media portrayal, parents, peers and teachers in school. Under this circumstance, the model minority stereotype will have a positive impact on their academic performance and career achievement. Therefore, the model minority stereotype can contribute to higher self-esteem and self-confidence of Asian Americans who are motivated and determined to succeed in America.

Third, in Asian culture, people place extreme value on their faces, meaning reputation among their peers. This reputation is directly associated with one's honor and self-esteem. The study indicates that Asian Americans' educational and occupational achievement will strengthen family relations by honoring their parents. In addition, the model minority stereotype remarkably enhances the reputation of Asian Americans in American society, and as a result, they receive respect and admiration from other racial-ethnic groups. For example, Asian American women's model minority media image is strongly supported by many African American and Hispanic women, who are also empowered by "model minority" attributes such as intelligence, competency and being career-driven that break down the barrier of the stereotypes of all minority women. Minority women face unique obstacles stemming from both race and gender issues when achieving success in the United States. Therefore, the media representation of Asian American women as a model minority sets a good example of the positive media image for minority women, which gives hopes to other ethnic minority women who are eager to see the media empowerment of their groups.

However, the seemingly positive model minority stereotype can also generate negative societal outcomes. The major problem with the model minority stereotype is that the stereotype homogenizes the Asian American population, masking the diversity within Asian American communities due to social class, religion, language, ethnicity, migratory status, length of

residence, and education (Dandy and Nettelbeck, 2001; Louie, 2001; Sandu, 1997; Yang, 2004). The reinforcement and internalization of model minority stereotypes pose numerous undesirable consequences in the Asian American community.

Some Asian Americans consider that the labels generated by the model majority stereotype will alienate them from mainstream society and result in the undesirable perception of being unsociable. Furthermore, the model minority stereotype might undermine the psychological well-being of Asian Americans who internalize the stereotype, especially when they are forced to perform as a “model” under the pressure of their parents and peers in school. The present study has indicated that the pressure to meet the standard of model minority is significantly associated with depression, confusion and low self-esteem. Tomiki (2001) asserts that the cost of achieving the model minority stereotype may lead to deteriorating parent-child relationships and a growing likelihood of depression and anxiety due to parental pressure to achieve academically. The pressure to conform to the model minority stereotype will also result in considerable racial identity confusion and struggle when functioning in multiple cultures.

The model minority stereotype masks the actual professional needs and desires of Asian Americans (Tang, 1997). In addition, the model minority stereotype of Asian Americans’ accomplishments in professional jobs in science and engineering contributes to occupational segregation (Leong and Serafica, 1995). As a matter of fact, many Asian Americans aspire to occupations of tertiary qualifications (Dandy and Nettelbeck, 2002). Asian women are three times more likely than white women to be engineers and doctors (U.S. Census, 2000), however, they are 30% less likely than Whites to be in women’s traditional occupations, such as school teachers, librarians and secretaries (U.S. Census, 2000). Consequently, the misleading perceptions originating from the model minority stereotype might result in career ceilings for

Asian and Asian American women, in which the areas of their professions are strictly constrained. The deviation from traditional women's occupations and limited career choices is likely to induce confusion and conflict in gender roles and normative gender expectations.

The misconception stemming from the model minority stereotype is that the superior status of Asian Americans in terms of education and career achievement indicates that Asian Americans do not need medical, educational and financial assistance from the government or social organizations. As the United States Commission on Civil Rights (1980) stated, "If a minority group is viewed as successful, it is unlikely that its members will be included in programs designed to alleviate problems they encounter as minorities" (p. 19). Therefore, the glamorous image of the model minority stereotype may cause Asian Americans to be perceived as "successful" and "problem-free" and not in need of social programs designed to benefit disadvantaged minorities, such as African Americans and Hispanic Americans (Ho and Jackson, 2001). Thus, the model minority stereotype has inaccurately masked the discrimination against Asian Americans, creating the illusion for other minorities that Asian Americans experience little racial discrimination compared to them. The model minority stereotype blinds the public to the problems experienced by Asian Americans, which hamper their access to resources and services (Wong and Halgin, 2006). Some ethnic minority individuals in the study explicitly stated that they never hear the issues about discrimination against Asian Americans. This misleading and detrimental perspective may contribute to the unequal distribution of social resources among racial-ethnic groups.

Given the vital role of the media in representing, promoting and perpetuating positive media image of Asian American women, this study proposes several necessary changes in media's depiction of Asian American women. First, increase the representation of Asian American

women in the media. The underrepresentation of Asian American women is the key component that contributes to the homogenous and stereotypical portrayal of Asian Americans in the media.

Second, the media can show the diversity of Asian American women by putting them in different television shows and programs. Meanwhile, the media should portray different types of Asians who exhibit distinctively different personalities and backgrounds. Some participants have noted that when they are exposed to multi-dimensional media images of Asian American women, they are less likely to make stereotypical assumptions of Asian American women. One participant in the study has noted that:

The model minority images are confused with other stereotypes that we are familiar with such as submissive and docile. It is getting very complicated and confusing about what you are supposed to think or act. So you don't want to make assumptions either way.

It would be extremely difficult to eliminate all racial-ethnic stereotypes in the media, so increasing the number of multi-faceted stereotypes would be the next logical solution, and would actually help the viewers to start fresh when interacting with Asian/Asian Americans. Multi-faceted nature of minority stereotypes would reduce the media's effects on people's perceptions toward the targeted racial minority groups.

Additionally, instead of constantly exaggerating the glorious achievement of Asian Americans, the media could show the difficulties and hardships that Asian Americans are going through in the society more frequently.

Limitations and Future research

There are several limitations and weaknesses in this study that are worth noting. The first limitation concerns the use of the convenience sample from a state university in the Midwest.

The use of college students as participants undermines the ability to completely generalize the findings, because their perceptions are not representative of all populations. The findings are more reflective of the perceptions of well-educated college students as opposed to the general public. Results could have been different if the participants did not have college educational backgrounds.

In addition, the selection of samples might be geographically constrained due to the relatively small Asian population in the location where the study was conducted. Therefore, future research could be carried out in another place where there is a larger Asian community. The larger Asian American population could increase the opportunities of interracial contact, which might affect people's perceptions and judgments of the model minority media stereotype.

The selection of media stimuli from prime-time television dramas may not have comprehensively reflected all the characteristics of model minority stereotype simultaneously. Future research can be conducted using other characters in different prime-time television programs to replicate the findings.

The current study is limited by participants' gender that only investigated women's perceptions of the female characters which reflected the model minority stereotype. Further research can explore the perception of male participants toward Asian American women's model minority media images or both genders' perceptions of Asian American men's model minority media images in prime-time television.

The weakness of focus group discussion method is that it cannot generate cause-effect relations. This study does not directly test the influence of the media on people's racial-ethnic perceptions because, as the participants mentioned in the study, classmates, friends, co-workers and acquaintances might be other sources of their perceptions of the model minority stereotype.

Moreover, the moderator might introduce biases into the process by asking leading questions which impact participants' perceptions. The data might be subjectively organized and selected when presenting the findings which may undermine the validity of the research. Consequently, future research should incorporate survey or other quantitative research methods with focus group discussion in order to increase the internal and external validity of the research.

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Appendix A - Interview Guide (Asian-born)

1. Without starting your name, please briefly introduce yourself using a few sentences (your personality, interest and future goal).
2. How do you think other racial-ethnic groups (White, African-American, and Hispanic) perceive Asian women?
3. What do you think about American-born Asian women? What's your impression about them?
4. How do you think American media portray Asian women? What media images of Asian women call you recall in the American media?
5. How frequently do you watch Prime Time TV? What Asian/ Asian American female characters can you recall from the any primetime TV series and what do you think about them?

The interviewer will then explain the meaning of model minority and background information in simple words and ask the following questions:

6. Among all the characters, can you recall any of them which reflect Asian American women as Model Minority?

The interviewer Show the participants the video clips

7. What do you think about the media portrayal of Asian women in the clips? Do you think the portrayal of Asian women accurate or inaccurate in the video clips?(e.g.: gender role, career aspiration and education level
8. Do you think you are different or similar compared to the women in the video clips in terms of? And do you want to be like them?
9. Have you ever experienced any kind of discomfort or pressure from being perceived as a model minority? (e.g.: in terms of gender role, academic performance, career achievement and racial identity)
10. What perceptions and attitudes do you think other racial groups (African American, Latina, White) hold towards Asian women's model minority media image after watching the same video clips?
11. Do you have friends from other racial ethnic groups? Have you experienced any difficulties making friends or interacting with people from other racial-ethnic groups?
12. How do you think these media images of Asian women we have watched in the video influence the way women of other racial groups interact with Asian women? What any personal experiences have you had with other racial groups?
13. What do you think media should do in order to present a better image of Asian women?

Appendix B - Interview Guide (American-born)

1. Without starting your name, please briefly introduce yourself using a few sentences. (your personality, interest and future goals)
2. How do you think other racial groups perceive Asian American women?
3. What prime-time TV series have you watched in the last 10 years? And how frequently do you watch Prime-time TV?
4. How do you think American media portray Asian American women? What media stereotypes of Asian women call you recall?
5. What Asian American female characters can you recall from the TV shows and what do you think about them?

The interviewer will then explain the meaning of model minority and background information in simple words and ask the following questions:

6. Among all the characters, can you recall any of them which reflect Asian American women as Model Minority?

The interviewer Show the participants the video clips

7. What do you think about the media portrayal of Asian American women in the clips?
8. Do you think you are different or similar compared to the women in the video clips? And do you want to be like them?
9. Have you ever experienced any kind of discomfort or pressure from being perceived as a model minority? (e.g.: in terms of gender role, academic performance, career achievement and racial identity)
10. What perceptions and attitudes do you think other racial groups hold towards Asian American women's model minority media image after watching the same video clips?
11. Do you think the model minority stereotype apply to other Asian American women?
12. Do you think the model minority media image influence the way you perceive other Asian American women?
13. How do you think these images influence your interaction with women of other racial groups? What any personal experiences have you had with other racial groups?
14. What do you think media should do in order to present a better image of Asian American women?

Appendix C - Interview Guide (African American and Hispanic)

1. Could you please briefly describe your impressions of Asian/Asian American woman using a few words or sentences?
2. Why do you perceive Asian/ Asian American women this way?
3. What prime time television shows have you watched in the last ten years? And how frequently do you watch primetime TV?
4. How do you think American media portray Asian women? What media images of Asian women can you recall?
5. What Asian American female characters can you recall from the primetime TV and what do you think about them?

The interviewer will then explain the meaning of model minority and background information in simple words and ask the following questions:

6. Among all the characters, can you recall any of them which reflect Asian American women as Model Minority?

The interviewer will show the participants the video clips

7. What do you think about the media portrayal of Asian American women in the clips?
8. How do you perceive Asian American women after watching the clips? (e.g.: in terms of personalities, gender roles, academic performance and career achievement)
9. As a minority group in the United States, have you ever experienced any feelings of competition, threat or jealousy by Asian Americans' perceived excellence and superiority?
10. How do you think these images influence your interaction with Asian/ Asian American women? What any personal experiences have you had with Asian/Asian American women?
11. What do you think media should do in order to present a better image of minority women?

Appendix D - Interview Guide

1. Could you please briefly describe your impressions of Asian/Asian American woman using a few words or sentences?
2. Why do you perceive Asian/ Asian American women this way?
3. What prime time television shows have you watched in the last ten years? And how frequently do you watch Prime Time TV?
4. How do you think American media portray Asian women? What media images of Asian women call you recall?
5. What Asian American female characters can you recall from the primetime TV series and what do you think about them?

The interviewer will then explain the meaning of model minority and background information in simple words and ask the following questions:

6. Among all the characters, can you recall any of them which reflect Asian American women as Model Minority?

The interviewer will show the participants the video clips

7. What do you think about the media portrayal of Asian American women in the clips? (Do you think these images accurately reflect Asian American women?)
8. What are your perceptions of Asian American women after watching the clips? (e.g.: in terms of personalities, gender roles, academic performance and career achievement)
9. Have you ever experienced any feelings of competition, threat or jealousy by Asian Americans' perceived excellence in terms of education and social economic status reinforced in the model minority media stereotype?
10. How do you think these images influence your interaction with Asian/ Asian American women? What any personal experiences have you had with Asian/Asian American women?

Appendix E - Informed Consent Form

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT

PROJECT TITLE: MODEL MINORITY STEREOTYPES OF ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN AMERICAN MEDIA: PERCEPTIONS AND INFLUENCES AMONG WOMEN OF DIVERSE RACIAL-ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS

APPROVAL DATE OF PROJECT: March 26 2010
PROJECT: March 26 2011

EXPIRATION DATE OF

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: CO-
INVESTIGATOR(S):

Louise Benjamin, Professor
Nancy Muturi, Assistant professor
Joye Gordon, Associate professor

CONTACT AND PHONE FOR ANY
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IRB CHAIR CONTACT/PHONE
INFORMATION:

Rick Scheidt, Chair of Committee (785) 532-3224
Jerry Jaax, University Research Compliance Officer (785) 532-3224

SPONSOR OF
PROJECT:

N/A Graduation Thesis

PURPOSE OF THE
RESEARCH:

This research is being conducted by a graduate student in the Miller school of Journalism and Mass communication, K-State for the purpose of master degree thesis. The study examines the influence of Asian American women's media image, which displays

model minority traits such as intelligence, competent, competitive and ambitious. Specifically, the study investigates how Asian American women's model minority media imaged influence Asian/Asian American women's self-perception in terms of social characteristics, academic performance, career achievement and racial identity. The study also aims at exploring the perceptions and attitudes of other racial groups towards Asian American women's model minority media image, as well as the influence of the image on interracial contact

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

The study utilizes qualitative methodology of focus group discussion. 4-8 participants coming from same ethnic background will be assigned to one group. They will be asked to discuss several questions before and after watching several video clips from different prime-time television shows. They will be asked to express perceptions and attitudes towards stereotypes of Asian American women as well as Asian American women's media images. Relevant personal experiences will be welcomed. Participants will be rewarded with stationery items for participating in this study. The discussion will be audiotaped.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:

If you don't feel comfortable expressing your opinions under the circumstance of audio recording, you can write down your thoughts on the paper provided in front of you.

LENGTH OF STUDY:

Your participation in this focus group will last approximately one hour.

RISKS

There are no known risks. Participants will learn about the study

ANTICIPATED: objectives before participating. And participants may stop participating in the study at any time. No physical injury is anticipated.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: **No short-term benefits to the participants from this study. However, participants will be made aware that any information provided will contribute to well-rounded and accurate portrayal of Asian American women's media image in prime-time television and help reduce racial prejudice against Asian Americans by other racial group**

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: No names will be audio or video recorded. Actual names will not be revealed in the thesis. Participants will be assured that any information they provide will be used exclusively for the purpose of this study.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS: N/A

PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS: **Make sure participants are 19 and above in order to participate in the study.**

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

Participant Name: _____

Participant _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

