Emma Paulson

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Being Yellow On and Off Screen:
A Theory on the Racist Project of the Model Minority in the United States through a
Media Culture Lens

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Please direct your correspondence to: Emma Paulson, epaulson@pugetsound.edu,
Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Washington 98416
Abstract

Asian Pacific Islanders (API) are an under-researched and under-theorized group within sociology. Both in academia and popular representations, the conversation can be reduced to the black and white binary. While productive, the binary no longer represents the racial composition of the United States. Through examination the Model Minority Myth, this thesis works toward establishing a theoretical framework to better understand the role symbolic images and cultural production plays in (re)producing race in America. I begin with characterizing and locating API on screen, then contextualize their history through immigration and the Model Minority Myth. After considering the limited role of API in the foundations of race theory, I argue that the Model Minority is a racist project (Omi and Winant 2015), an exertion of the symbolic base of racial power (Turner 1995). After proposing two ideal types of the Model Minority on screen, I applying the framework to form a better understanding of the Model Minority. The final portion considers possible consequences of the Model Minority as a racist project on lived experiences of the API community and the racial hierarchy in the United States.

Introduction

Following nominations for the 88th Academy Awards in 2016, April Reign saw a problem and took to Twitter to talk about it. For the second consecutive year audiences and critics alike were blinded by the blatant whiteness twenty nominees for Best Actor, Actress, Supporting Actor, and Supporting Actress. To many, the irony was not lost that the Academy chose black comedian Chris Rock to host and diverse members as presenters (Ryan 2016). Non-white actors fare little better on the small screen; within the past year, two stars of the rebooted CBS series Hawaii Five-0, one born in South Korea and the other of Korean descent, left the show after the company failed to raise their salaries to match their white co-stars. As Deggans (2017) points out, it's a pattern viewers can see across all CBS shows, a white male lead is surrounded by a diverse
cast of *supporting* characters, roles that rarely, if ever, are allowed the nuanced, three-dimensional characterization that lead white characters receive. Across television and film absence of racial diversity is as consistent as *Will and Grace* getting nominated for a Golden Globe but failing to win (D’Zurilla 2017)\(^1\). While the non-white population of the United States has increased from 16.5% to 36.3% between 1970 and 2010, images on the big and small screen alike continue to be overwhelmingly white, making it a poor representation of the demographic composition country as it stands today.

With the changing landscape of American racial demography, diverse television and film roles that properly represent a wide range of racial experiences are vital to cross-racial understanding because filmed entertainment is central to learning, culture building, and socialization processes (Ford 1997; Gridstaff and Turow 2006; Khana and Harris 2015; Ho 2016; Mastro 2015; Mastro and Greenberg 2000). Movies and television programs can be consumed with the simple swipe of the screen and greater access presents us with a beautiful opportunity to experience the world through the eyes of others. Stories on screen such as the *Harry Potter* franchise, *Forrest Gump*, *Grey’s Anatomy*, *Game of Thrones*, and others provide audiences with entrance into fantastical worlds and portraits of personal and professional lives; these narratives provide cultural touchstones and collective experiences that can transcend space and time. Despite the tempting troposphere of Tinseltown, non-conforming stories that are outside of the official Asian Pacific Islander (API)\(^2\) narrative of the Model Minority could be absent, and

\(^1\) According to the *LA Times*, as of 2018 the show and its cast and crew have been nominated 29 times of the course of nearly 2 decades but have yet to win a single Golden Globe. The Primetime Emmy Awards have been kinder to the comedy show, with a 19% success rate.

\(^2\) The U.S. Census Bureau relies on self-identification to determine race. I use the term API as a to include those who select “Asian” or “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander” on Census surveys. Further justification is found later in the text.
This thesis seeks to better understand race by contributing to scholarship focusing on the API experience in the United States. Through examining the Model Minority myth, this theoretical framework seeks to form a better understanding of the role symbolic images and cultural production plays in producing and reproducing race in the United States. I begin with looking at API representation on screen, then move towards characterizing the Model Minority, then locate API in academia and filmed entertainment. Next I move towards an understanding of historical API immigration and how it has influenced the construction of the Model Minority. After clarifying the limited role of API in the foundational black/white, I move towards applying theories of power and racist projects to the Model Minority typified on screen. Finally I consider the implications of the Model Minority on API lives and in the racial hierarchy. Most importantly, this theoretical framework allows theorists, researchers, and the public alike to examine the role of API and the Model Minority in the current American racial hierarchy. The ultimate goal of this work is to reassert the importance of racial images and representation in regards to API. It looks towards future research that may explain the function of the Model Minority within the racial structure and how conflicts between lived experiences of API and media representations conflict to create violence against APIs and strengthen racial power as a whole.

**Asian Pacific Islanders On Screen**

Statistically, the underrepresentation of API on screen varies by medium. According to the 5th annual Hollywood Diversity Report (Hunt, Ramón, Tran, Sargent, and
Roychoudhury 2018), the closest to proportional representation API earn is in broadcast scripted shows during the 2015-16 season, where they are underrepresented by 1 point\(^3\). In film, API receive less generous treatment, accounting for only 3.1% of film roles; they fare unmistakably worse in cable shows where API comprise 2.6% of character roles (Hunt, Ramón, Tran, Sargent, and Roychoudhury 2018)\(^5\). Additionally, within the top 100 films released in 2016, nearly half fail to include an API character, and within that, women continue to be underrepresented (Smith, Choueiti, and Pieper 2017). Other studies, such as the USC Annenberg Media, Diversity and Change Initiative (Smith, Choueiti, and Pieper 2017) make more conservative estimates in terms of the film disparity, but these quantitatively modest margins of erasure continue to be exceedingly harmful to the API population. Not reaching statistical equality that proportionately reflects their size in the greater American population, implies that API stories and histories have not contributed to the narrative of the United States. Art can’t imitate life when art doesn’t account for the millions of yellow bodies in America that are denied a voice in popular entertainment media. The numerical underrepresentation and invisibility of API on screen compared to black and white characters can be considered a method of denying their existence and role in shaping America.

While the statistics indicate the quantity of underrepresentation, API could be considered doubly rendered invisible by the quality of their characterization. Statistics

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3 Census Bureau estimates put the API population at 6% when combining Asian alone and NHOPI alone whereas Hollywood Diversity Report estimates place the “Asian” representation at 5% in broadcast television.

4 Broadcast shows are the free, over-the-air programs distributed and aired by the ABC, NBC, and CBS (also known as the Big Three) and smaller channels such as the CW and Fox.

5 The Latinx population is most severely statistically underrepresented as they comprise approximately 18% of the greater United States population but only 2.7%, 6%, and 5.6% of film, broadcast, and cable roles.
neglect the dimension and depth such characters are given. The API racial stereotypes such as the Model Minority, the Yellow Peril, and the Perpetual Foreigner, exemplify the unidimensional presence of API characters. Though color-blind America, protests explicitly racialized characters in television and film the Model Minority remains alive and well. As a center for cultural production and an element of the symbolic base of racial power, it is the imperative of television and film to perpetuate racial imagery. Limited opportunities and racial stereotyping is still prevalent and continues to affect behavior directed at racialized individuals and collectives (Ford 1997; Holte 1984; Hillenbrand 2008; Ho 2016; Mastro and Greenberg 2000; Rajgopal 2010). As Sandra Oh explains, “it took me 30 years to get this call [to be a lead]…as an actress of color… you just to see how deep the belief system had run into me,” reflecting her shock after being offered the lead role after decades of limited, stereotypical roles. The Model Minority is a prominent example of the hollow stereotypes that API actors and actresses have encountered when trying to secure representative roles.

**The Model Minority**

Asian Pacific Islander refers to individuals and communities of Asian or Pacific Islander descent, which includes, but is not limited to, those who have migrated or originated from the greater Asian continent and system of Pacific Islands (Hawaii, Samoa, Guam etc.). By using a large umbrella term, it inherently obfuscates the ethnic and cultural differences between Asian Indians and Samoan and Japanese, however, as Spickard (2007) points out, historically, Pacific Islanders have formed coalitions and been incorporated into the greater Asian without any recognition. Therefore, API is selected not only to provide Pacific Islanders space and recognition within the pan-ethnic
coalition, but also to remind China cannot be equated to Asia. Choosing to use the term API is intended to refer to the broader experiences, backgrounds, and histories of immigrants who might be classified as racially by others as the same.

Contained within the broad classification of API as it is defined above, is the Model Minority. The Model Minority has functionally pointed to Chinese and Japanese who are intelligent, wealthy, and successful in the capitalist system of the United States. Therefore, when the specific term Model Minority is used, it references those who phenotypically present as Eastern Asian and are expected to perform highly academically and socioeconomically in the United States. The Model Minority can, in some ways be expanded, to the Asian Indian population. However, applying the doctrine of common sense racism, there are some fundamental differences in which Asian Indian and Pakistani are perceived compared to East Asian (Haney López 2003). That is to say, when presented with the phenotypic Indian American, people tend to categorize them racially as brown or Latinx rather than yellow or Asian (The Late Show with Stephen Colbert 2016). Accordingly, this analysis attempts to reconcile the homogenous image the Model Minority, API’s diverse origins and backgrounds, and popular conceptions of what an Asian is while incorporating the practical experiences of yellow experience in a black and white world.

The history of the current iteration of the Model Minority myth in the United States spans mere decades. A term originally coined in the 1960’s, the Model Minority has been used specifically to refer to the success of Chinese and Japanese in the United States after a pair of articles in prominent news outlets valorized the achievements of

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6 British actor and musician Riz Ahmed describes the different cultural definitions of Asian in an interview with Stephen Colbert. He recalls often being approached and spoken to in Spanish, being mistaken for a Latino, whereas in the United Kingdom, Asian is much more associated with Pakistani and Asian Indians.
Asian immigrants (Ang 2012, Chou 2008, Kawai 2005). Revived in the 1980’s, the Model Minority began to be used more specifically to reference East Asian high educational attainment and high socioeconomic status; since then, the image of “Those Asian-American Whiz Kids” have become ubiquitous (Time 1987). As time has passed, racialized undertones become associated with the ascription of Model Minority, “traditional Confucian values” such as respect for authority, focus on collectivity, diligence, thrift, single-mindedness etc. become fundamental to rationalizing API upward mobility (Chou 2008: 222, Dhingra 2003, Ho 2016: 65, Rajgopal 2010, Said 2003, Sun 2006). Young students and professionals recall many an experience confronting assumptions of intelligence, skill socio-economic status, and cultural values solely due to ascriptions of their race (Dhingra 2003; Lee and Kyle 2016; Lee and Zhou 2015; Wu 2002). Due to the continued its influence on behavior the Model Minority is and continues to be a guiding force in ascriptions of a narrow set of characteristics to yellow bodies.

While the Model Minority contains a stereotyped promise of economic success in the United States and assimilation into American culture, there is another side to the lived experiences of API in the United States (Ang 2011; Chou 2008; Dalisay and Tan 2009; Kawai 2005; Lee and Zhou 2015). Within the umbrella term of API in the United States, there is a range of citizenship status, socio-economic status, nation of origin, educational attainment, and that does not even scratch the surface of the individual psychology behind each human being. Despite the practical heterogeneity within the API experience, the Model Minority remains a salient impression of API in America and influences behavior in a tangible way. Respondents in Lee and Zhou’s (2015) study, as well as other research, express stress, anxiety, and depression surrounding pressures
to conform to the narrow set of behaviors attributed to the Model Minority (Dhingra 2003; Kim, Wang, Deng, Alvarez, and Li 2011; Lee and Kyle 2016; Ocampo 2016; Trytten 2013). Thus, the Model Minority fails to accurately represent the API experience insofar as it is unsuccessful in accounting for the refugee experiences, or those who do not choose higher education as their path in life, or those who do not have prestigious, well-paying jobs. What factors have allowed the Model Minority to remain a salient image in America’s cultural imaginary and what role might it play in the preserving or dismantling the current racial hierarchy? By finding the space where API exist in theory and practice, we can make more sense of how they are positioned relative to other groups in the racial hierarchy. It is only once we know where API and the Model Minority are that one can move towards what their role is.

Finding Space

To begin to answer these questions, we must acknowledge that the image of the Model Minority, by virtue of being a stereotype, is inherently one-dimensional. From this springs the multi-dimensional problem of being yellow in the United States insofar as the lived experience does not conform to the ideal types and stereotypes the myth represents. Both in popular and conventional academic discourse, race is tends to be discussed in black and white, quite literally; macro race theories such as color-blind racism, racial formation, and critical race theory only address the topic in such a way (Alexander 2012; Bell 1980; Bonilla-Silva 2014; Dalisay and Tan 2009; Delgado and Stefancic 2012; Ford 1997; Holte 1984; Khanna 2015; Mastro and Greenberg 2000; Melamed 2011; Omi and Winant 2015; Ryan 2016). Some scholars have tried to introduce other voices such as Latinx or API, however, the dominant conversation remains in
the binary (Ang 2012; Bonilla Silva 2004; Dhingra 2003; Lee and Kyle 2016; Lee and Zhou 2015; Shah 2008, Wu 2002). The significance of growing diversity within the non-white population in the United States is obscured relative to divergent lived experiences— and this issue only becomes worse as the country approaches a majority-minority demographic (Mastro 2015). Because of their absence from most influential modern race theory and unique racialization and experiences from those of blacks, API exist in a liminal space, neither black nor white (Bonilla Silva 2004; Dhingra 2003; Lee and Kyle 2016; Lee and Zhou 2015; Wu 2002). They are celebrated because of their “success” in the United States as the Model Minority while also continuously othered as a foreign presence.

Unfortunately, the conversation of race in tv and film tends to mimic the discourse in dominant race theory such as color-blind racism (Bonilla Silva 2014) and racial formation (Omi and Winant 2015) insofar as the discussion remains in its pre-Technicolor days of black and white. The filmed entertainment sector, which includes production, distribution, and exhibition of television programs, films, and home videos through theaters, streamed video on demand (SVOD), television subscriptions, and other avenues, is ever expanding. In 2017 the industry generated over $240 billion in the United States, and at the center of it all is the shining mecca of Hollywood (Selectusa.gov 2018). The filmed entertainment industry is an important, but often overlooked avenue method of disseminating of information, attitudes, and cultural messages, because it serves as a proxy for substantive interracial interaction and because of the sheer number of people such content is viewed by (Mastro 2015). To not have API well represent-
ed in television and film can be an invalidation of their existence and experience within the United States.

Invalidation of experiences alternative to Model Minority myth can lead psychological, economic and symbolic harm to diverse API experiences. Additionally, assumptions of Model Minority authenticity can play a role in maintaining the racial hierarchy as it benefits racial power insofar as it creates a false sense of non-white success in America. It is within this black/white binary that is reified in media culture and academic discourse that the purpose role of API and the Model Minority in the United States racial relations begins to become clear. From a structural perspective, race is simply a formation of power relations, therefore power is instrumental in understanding the ways in which the racial hierarchy is maintained and the consequences of the racial hierarchy on non-white bodies. Television and film are used to create and maintain cultural images critical to maintaining racial power. By attempting to compose a more comprehensive perspective, theorists can finally move towards a more thorough understanding of race relations in the United States. Through focusing primarily on the API community, their placement within the greater racial landscape of the United States, and the way in which the homogenizing Model Minority Myth is used to enact symbolic racism on the greater API population it hypothetically represents. Using this theoretical framework presented in this argument, steps can be taken to deconstruct the racial binary and move towards a better model and understanding of how race operates in the United States with specific attention to non-black racial minorities.

History of Asian Pacific Islander Immigration into the United States
Thus far, the presence and experience of API in the United States has been discussed in the abstract, however, they possess a storied history of immigration and settlement shaped by legal policy. In the early 1800’s, many young, single Chinese men migrated from their homes in hopes of gaining economic prosperity (Lee and Zhou 2015). They were drawn into menial labor on the railroads but the mid-century California Gold Rush offered opportunities to strike it rich. However, the Chinese immigrants’ position was perilous, because in Europe, a rhetoric of the yellow peril was being spread by Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany (Kawai 2005)7. Similar sentiments were brewing in the United States due to a failing economy, therefore, in 1882, the United States government decided to act in the form of the Chinese Exclusion Act. This legislation effectively barred all migration from the China in one fell swoop, proving to be the first piece of immigration policy that specifically targeted a racial group and cementing the racialization of yellow bodies (Devgan 2014, Kim 2004). Chinese laborers were seen as too much of a threat, physically and economically, to the supremacy of white America.

While Chinese were prevented from entrance, following 1882, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Asian Indians made their way through the Pacific Islands and to the contiguous United States in search of work. Yet, discriminatory legislation did not stop there. Historical laws against hiring API labor were already on the books making it difficult to find even low-level work, and in 1917, the nail in the coffin for Asian immigration was put in place (Devgan 2014). Because of immigration bans, anti-miscegenation laws, and the sex-imbalance of original migrants, the growth of API in the United States remained modest and established patterns of ethnic inclusivity in the form of ethnoburbs

7 For more reading on the stereotype of the Yellow Peril, see Yellow Peril!: An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear by John Kuo and Wei Chen (2014).

Thus, API were systematically denied entry into the United States for little reason more than being racialized and their small population remained hidden. Everything changed in 1965, however, when the Immigration and Nationality Act (also known as the Hart-Cellar Act) proved to be one of the most broad immigration reforms in American history. Through national quotas that effectively lifted previous restrictions and emphasizing family reunification, the color of the United States changed as migrants from across the globe came gained means of legal entry (Bonilla-Silva 2004, Chung and Chang 1998, Kim 2004, Sexton 2010, Shah 2008). Refugees, primarily from Vietnam, also came in great number following the immigration reform (Devgan 2014, Lee and Zhou 2015). Refugees added to the growing number of API establishing themselves in the United States for the long term and therefore making the API population the largest growing foreign-born population in the United States. Between 2000 and 2015, the API in the United States grew by 72%, proving even greater than the “wave” of Latin American immigrants that demonstrate a need to build a wall (López, Ruiz, and Patton 2017).

According to the most recent Census Bureau (2017) estimates, those who identify as API alone comprise 6% of the United States population, or over 19 million people. However, of those 19 million, there are nearly 20 different ethnicities or national origins, all from varying socio-economic or class backgrounds. As mentioned above, Vietnamese, as well as Laotian and Cambodian, refugees in the 1970’s brought with them very different economic capital compared to the educated Chinese and Korean voluntary immigrants that made their way across the Pacific Ocean at the same time (Devgan
The structural differences between voluntary immigrants and refugees may contribute to the distinction between Vietnamese as collective black and Filipino as honorary white within Bonilla Silva’s (2004) system of tri-racial stratification. Additionally, the 6% does not account for those who identify as mixed race, a large catch all category implemented in 2000 account for more frequent miscegenation, therefore, the statistic is under-representative both statistically and descriptively of the API population.

API in the United States have many long, disparate histories and their population is currently growing rapidly, possibly even more rapidly when accounting for those who identify as mixed race. Despite the legacy United States immigration policy has for discriminating against segments of the API community, after the 1960’s the population has stabilized. Their continued presence has allowed for the racialization and stereotyping over the past six decades through the homogenizing Model Minority myth. The API community’s consistently growing size due to immigration and established families, along with new media celebration of economic success, and has made them a population impossible to ignore. As a flourishing non-white segment of United States demography, racialization created a logic surrounding their existence in the form of the Model Minority.

**The Historical Formation of the Model Minority**

Given that there are dozens of ethnicities and national origins included within the broad term of API, the potential for symbolic violence of the homogenizing Model Minority may become clear. When analyzed as a racial stereotype, the symbolic power of the Model Minority exerts could serve to confine the API other to a very limited set of atti-
tudes, values, and behaviors as scholars Lee and Zhou (2015), Lee and Kyle (2016), Dhingra (2003), and Ocampo (2016) have pointed out (Said 2003). While the Model Minority is a myth, all of the best untruths have a core of verity. Demographic factors such as hyperselctivity, elements cultural dissonance between home and host countries, and other API stereotypes such as the Model Minority, the Yellow Peril, and the Perpetual Foreigner converge to create the bones on which the Model Minority is built on (Bonilla Silva 2014; Lee and Zhou 2015; Ocampo 2016).

Hyperselectivity

During the 1980’s a specific, neoliberal economic view of success was reflected in the reconfiguration and refinement of what it means to be Asian. For voluntary immigrants from Asia and the Pacific Islands, the principle of hyperselectivity leads to a skewed image of API characteristics (Bonilla Silva 2014; Lee and Zhou 2015). The Hart-Cellar Act was framed specifically to encourage highly qualified, educated families to migrate, therefore through immigration policy the United States actively sought out API populations that already had the economic resources and social to have a successful transition into the American capitalist system. Push factors such as increased professional job opportunities, advantageous educational environments, greater political stability, etc. also contribute to (Lee and Zhou 2016; Ocampo 2016). While over half of young API have earned a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree compared to less than a third of all Americans, when comparing these statistics to their API nation of origin, those who are high achieving in the United States are also high achieving in their home countries. For example, over 25% of Chinese in the United States hold a Bachelor degree or higher, however in their home country a less than 10% hold an equivalent level
of higher education, therefore compared to their coethnics in their home countries, college educated Chinese in the United States would also be exceptional Chinese in China (Lee and Zhou 2016: 31)

The Success Frame

Combined with factors of hyperselectivity, there is an cultural ideology surrounding work and success specific to the incoming API immigrant population. Lee and Zhou (2015) term this the success frame and point out in their research that the Chinese- and Vietnamese-American individuals they interviewed were given a very different success frame at home than at school. Under a subject-centered approach, it can be seen that in general, Chinese and Vietnamese parents tend emphasize hard work over natural ability and education as the path to a narrowly defined, meritocratic, high-status job such as doctor, engineer, or lawyer. American high schools, for Chinese particular, are largely considered to be easier than their Chinese counterparts, therefore college is seen more as expected and an advanced graduate degree essential to success. When looking for ideas of what success means outside family imposed expectations, API tend to not compare themselves to the white, middle class narratives, but rather look to co-ethnic stories of success from friends, family, and on screen (Lee and Zhou 2015). Due to family socialization and coethnic reference points, young API adults of 1.5 or 2nd generation are pushed to achieve different, higher, skewed standards and narrow frames of the Model Minority compared to their white, middle class peers. Thus, by striving to fulfill expectations established by family and assumed by peers and teachers, young API implicitly perpetuate the image.

Other Racial Stereotypes
The demographic, cultural, and intergenerational characteristics of the large and growing fresh immigrant API community creates the basis for the myth of the assimilable, educated, professional Asian. As the Model Minority, it is a given that while API are seen to be successfully assimilated into American culture, they remain an explicitly named other; it is plausible API’s foreignness could become literally inscribed on their person through the racialized stereotype Model Minority. This could contribute to the racialization of Perpetual Foreigner stereotype as it connects to the API community (Lee and Kyle 2016; Dhingra 2003; Rajgopal 2010; Wu 2002). Dhingra’s (2003) respondents report feeling “labeled by Whites as physically different and as un-American despite their equal fluency with Whites in mainstream culture” (124). Applied to API as a racial stereotype, links between “Confucian values” or Orientalized culture conceivably contribute to the distinction between a the success of foreign API and a legitimate American.

One last racial stereotype that has the possibility of contributing to the formation of the Model Minority is the Yellow Peril. As mentioned above, the Yellow Peril was prominent in the late 1800’s when the young, single, male Chinese labors were considered a social and economic threat to the (white) state. Dhingra (2003), Kawai (2005), and Hillendbrand (2008) point to the revival of the Yellow Peril and the Model Minority “in the 1980’s under the global and local context that the United States had trade negotiations with Asian nations” (Kawai 2005: 111). Logically, if another race or people from a rival nation were doing well by the economic standard of success in the United States,  

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8 For more reading on the Perpetual Foreigner, see *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White* by Frank Wu. Additionally, studies such as “Accent, Perpetual Foreigner Stereotype, and Perceived Discrimination as Indirect Links Between English Proficiency and Depressive Symptoms in Chinese American Adolescents” by Kim et. al. also discuss the psychological presence of the Perpetual Foreigner.
they would pose a threat to the material advantage of white Americans. Consequently, the Orientalized “Confucian values” are flexible in order to symbolically neutralize the capabilities and accomplishments of API. Evidence of the attempted neutralization of API economic capability may be seen in the symbolic nullification of the economically threatening Model Minority where reframing traits such as diligence, respect for authority, single-mindedness, and quietude as passivity, weakness, lack of creativity, and inhuman (Lee and Kyle 2016; Lee and Zhou 2015). Thus, the foreign traits ascribed to the Model Minority that indicate success in the American capitalist system also ensure that they remained an alien other.

While the Model Minority has a core of truth to it, it applies only to very select members of the American API community. Largely comprised of characteristics from the voluntary immigrant population, the prominent image of Model Minority projects an aura of alien otherness that succeeds in the United States. This myth, however, does not account for the differences between early generation immigrants or children of immigrants and the API population that has lived in the United States for as long as their grandparents can remember. Despite the misrepresentation of the API through the Model Minority, the image of a high achieving, smart, “Confucian” Asian remains powerful as API regularly encounter their own racialization, in part due to the power race exerts through control of symbolic power in television and film (Lee and Zhou 2015; Dhingra 2003). The salience of the Model Minority could in part, be due to how race exerts power through television and film.

The Model Minority as it is understood today has its roots in the principles of hyperselectivity, cultural attitudes surrounding work and success, and the convergence of
the Yellow Peril and Perpetual Foreigner. Hyperselectivity argues factors such as immigration policy, greater professional opportunities, and favorable educational conditions lead large segments of already educated and qualified immigrants to seek entrance into the United States to account for some of the demographic factors. Additionally, immigrants often bring with them attitudes that presuppose hard work leads to narrow definitions of success. The Yellow Peril and Perpetual Foreigner neutralizes the potential economic threat of the Model Minority by othering API as foreign and reconfiguring “Confucian values” into passivity and weakness.

Major Race Theories

To move towards an awareness of how the Model Minority Myth in television and film affects the lived experiences of the API community and the greater racial landscape in the United States, an understanding of prominent race theory and how it operates theoretically and practically must be gained (Alexander 2012; Bell 1980; Bonilla-Silva 2004; Bonilla-Silva 2014; Delgado and Stefancic 2012; Haney López 2003; Melamed 2011; Omi and Winant 2015). Scholars across the literary, social, and legal fields alike have worked to reconstitute understandings of race that account for its resilience in both practice and concept.

Currently is generally understood and accepted in academia that race is not “real” insofar as it has no biological basis, but it is an experienced phenomenon that informs actions, guides policies, and has life and death consequences (Bonilla-Silva 2014; Delgado and Stefancic 2012; Haney-López 2003; Melamed 2011; Omi and Winant 2015)\(^9\). That is to say, there is no biological race determinant that categorizes

\(^9\) There remains a portion of the academic community that maintain that race has an important genomic component. For further reading please see “The Genomic Challenge to the Social Construction of Race” by Shiao, Bode, Beyer, and Selvig published in 2012.
individuals into different racial groups based on gene expression; there are no cultural differences that operate to definitively mark a person as one race or another. While there is no truth to race considering it has no biological or cultural basis, most scholars also agree that people treat race as if it was real in practice (Bonilla Silva 2014; Haney-López 2003; Omi and Winant 2015). As a social construct, race is not real, but as a discourse, race has lived consequences for people on the individual and community level (Bell 1980, Bonilla-Silva 2014, Delgado and Stefancic 2012, Haney López 2003, Omi and Winant 2015). Racism is not an personal attitude or belief; racism is not purely ideological; racism is not a psychological phenomenon. Instead, racism is a structure that ascribes characteristics based on phenotypic presentation, therefore conditioning life opportunities.

Understanding these previous conceptions of race and using a wider lens to examine the issue, race theorists push for a more systematic understanding of race and racism that accounts for its social formation and lived consequences (Alexander 2012; Bonilla-Silva 2014; Haney López 1994’ Melamed 2011; Omi and Winant 2015). Analyzed historically from a structural perspective Omi and Winant (2015) explain how race is the colonial result of a capitalism and white supremacy in the United States, therefore race was not conceived of before then. Instead, the categorization of people into races, worthy/unworthy, free/slave, black/white and the resulting racist justification of the plantation system in colonial America was developed in order to continue economic exploitation. Therefore, the racialization of blacks as unevolved, less intelligent, and more primitive is a result of the slave system of labor, not the cause of it. With an ideological justification for the material benefit of white, land-owning males, the government run by
white land-owning males used their power to codify their economic, social, and political privileges through racist projects.

Through the lens of Turner (1995) and Gramscian hegemony, racist projects can be understood as the diverse methods racial power uses to maintain its material, political, and social advantage and exert power. Racist projects are implemented across the four bases — symbols, incentives, administration, and coercion — in order to consolidate and centralize power in the interest of white supremacy (Turner 1995: 78). Symbols not only to mark the other or non-white, but also to create a widely known shorthand that allows for the ascription of moral, personal, and behavioral characteristics. Those ascribed to a race are then held to the standard of action, all behavior judged against an abstracted image of what has been socially determined through scripts or performative convention (Haney López 2003). If a black man does well for himself, stays out of gangs, earns a graduate degree, has a professional career, it is seen as a great feat worthy because socially he is still judged in how he defied the odds and did not become one of the many black male bodies imprisoned for drugs. Through this example, the other bases of racial power can be observed, such as administrative and coercive. As described by Alexander (2012), the War on Drugs was a well-tuned concert of money and guns (economic incentives) given out to law enforcement to enforce racially-coded drug laws that targeted black men. Thus the campaign against crack cocaine can be seen as a well coordinated racist project across all the symbolic, incentive, administrative, and coercive bases of power (Turner 1995).

From this perspective of racist projects and power dynamics, Bell’s (1980) theory of interest convergence in the infamous Brown v. Board legal case becomes an exam-
ple of a racist project through the base of administration in which a theoretical win for blacks during Jim Crow also served to preserve the longevity of white supremacy. Bonilla-Silva (2014) points to color-blind racism as the symbolic embeddedness of racially coded attitudes and behaviors. A social discomfort of overtly racist views that was the result of Civil Rights Movement and World War II has become translated into racially coded color-blind frames of abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization (Bonilla Silva 2014: 74). Semantic maneuvers where the word black isn’t uttered, but is understood, support the color-blind frames by denying the existence of race but maintain the meaning and behaviors surrounding it. Haney López (2003) similarly points to the idea of common sense racism, or racism as a learned behavior deemed normal because of the supporting administrative and symbolic norms that form American culture. These logics present the illusion of a race-neutral society in which a meritocracy is alive and thriving, however, conceal the inescapable truth that race continues to be a factor in the lives of each individual in the United States.

Weaknesses in Race Theory

There are theoretical shortcomings with the way in which race is handled in conventional academia considering there wider range of racial experiences than simply black and white. Omi and Winant (2015) point to colonial “conquest [as the] first…racial formation. Together with African slavery it produced the master category of race” (114). This primary failure is that the foundations of race theory as, quite literally, black and white, continue to have influence. The historical approach in which many scholars approach race is partially to blame for the construction of the black/white binary, as blacks have had a longer presence in the United States than any other minority; after all the
basis of the binary was due to the basic division between slave and free in the colonies (Alexander 2012; Bell 1980; Omi and Winant 2014). Theorists do not, however, account for the change over time in racial composition of the United States since the original racial divide, meaning that new categorizations such as Arab American, Asian Pacific Islander, Latinx, etc. are left out of the conversation. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2012), within the critical race theory (CRT) school of thought, there are subgroups such as Asian critical race movements and queer critical race theory. However, Bell’s (1980) foundational work with interest convergence that serves as the basis of CRT focuses solely on the black/white binary. Bonilla-Silva (2014), himself neither black nor white, does frame color-blind racism as “the mechanisms and practices from keeping blacks and other racial minorities ‘at the bottom of the well’” (3) But the major evidence he provides are presented as black-based issues such Jim Crow and black homeownership. Within race theory, non-black/white based studies are considered to be niche area studies, thus nullifying their legitimacy as critical within the larger scope of the racial hierarchy.

The production and reproduction of the black/white binary is not a negligible, semantic theoretical debate; by framing race as a black and white issue that is only discussed on the binary, it necessarily devalues the racialized experiences of other populations. While immigration and border studies investigate the experiences of Latinx have increased, examination into the largest growing racial minority population remains minimal (López, Ruiz, and Patton 2017). By excluding API from the conversation about race, it is effectively telling the millions of immigrant and native-born API people in the
United States that they do not exist, that their experiences do not, and that they do not matter.

**Moving Away from the Binary**

Despite this failing in race theory, some theorists have attempted to create space for non-black narratives within critical academia. Of prominent race theorists, Bonilla-Silva (2004) is one of the few who has specifically provided an amendment to incorporate and account for the growing non-white non-black population. His “Latin-Americanization thesis” posits that the United States race relations will become more Latin America with race as an intricate but well defined spectrum based on a combination of phenotype, cultural practices, and blood quanta. As a step towards this theory, he proposes a new system of tri-racial stratification in which there exists general categories of white, honorary white, and collective black (Bonilla Silva 2004: 933). Within the honorary white category is Chinese-, Japanese-, Korean-, Asian Indian, and Filipino Americans; the conventional American success story of the Model Minority. Within the collective black, however, there are Vietnamese-, Hmong-, and Laotian Americans, communities who tend to match the identify themselves and be considered as API, but are nonetheless left out of the Model Minority narrative because of mitigating factors such as socioeconomic status, academic achievement, and profession (Bonilla Silva 2004). From this simple system of racial stratification, cracks within the homogenous image of the Model Minority are already evident.

In terms of specific attention to the API community, scholars such as Dhingra (2003), Lee and Zhou (2015), Shah (2008), and Wu (2002) have attempted to bring the distinctly API experience into academic literature. Works such as these focus on the
problematic racial black/white binary, then pose the question of where yellow fits in through anecdotes drawn from personal experience and interview subjects. As a whole, API focused race literature draws heavily from Said (2003), who set foundational work regarding the racialization of API in the United States through the concept of Orientalism. His post-colonial, historical perspective on the construction Orientalism, claiming that it is “a thought style based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’” (Said 2003: 2). While orientalization has distinct characteristics when tracing the Franco-British history compared to the American history, the racialization of API is ostensibly an exercise of power. Projects of understanding “the Orient” were and continue to be based around ethnocentric assumptions of white supremacy, therefore the Orient is constructed in a way that benefits the current seat of power. Thinking of Omi and Winant’s (2015) idea of racist projects and Turner’s (1995) conception of power bases, the intellectual enterprise of constructing an othered Orient is a racist project uses power from all four bases to maintain the racial hierarchy. Through controlling the symbolic base by focusing Orientalism into the simultaneously precise and ambiguous Model Minority, racial power is able to hold the API accountable to a narrow set behaviors that not everyone can fulfill.

**The Model Minority Typified On Screen**

Comprehensive data involving the characterization of television and film roles by race are unavailable, especially for recent years, therefore, two ideal types are best to apply the Model Minority to API on screen. The following examples are both from television because of their greater proportion of roles, however, once the omnipresence of Model Minority characteristics in API characters is realized, evidence of its presence in
film is also evident. First, turn to the ideal type of Dr. Cristina Yang on the medical drama *Grey’s Anatomy*. While no longer on screen, Cristina became a staple of American television with the inception of *Grey’s Anatomy* in 2005 and remained so for nearly a decade until her exit at the end of the season 10 (2013-14). Played by Sandra Oh, an actress of Korean descent who exemplifies the phenotypical East Asian, Dr. Yang is presented as an impeccable archetype of the Model Minority (Ono and Pham 2009). When introduced as a surgical intern, she has the formal signifiers of Model Minority characteristics of intelligence, high status profession, economic success, diligence, and single mindedness (Rhimes 2005). The medical profession in and of itself implies high educational attainment, and Cristina later reveals she earned her M.D. from Stanford where she graduated first in her class therefore portraying her as hard working and highly intelligent. Being able to afford to go to college, and earn three degrees also indicates that her family is stable enough to support her financially. As a surgeon, her profession also confers onto her individual person high social status and economic stability. Additionally Oriental, foreign values are also imposed on Cristina to complete the racialization of her as alien yellow body. She is portrayed as dedicated and brilliant but single poor with patient-oriented bedside manner and struggles with interpersonal relationships, thus exhibiting both sides of the Confucian values ascribed to the Model Minority.

Oftentimes now, however, the connection on television between API and the Model minority is much more subtle. The of insidious, deep seated image of the Model Minority is typified through Glenn Rhee in the AMC cable television show *The Walking Dead* (Ho 2016). A fan favorite character, Glenn was a series regular from season 1
(2010) through season 7 (2016-17), however he was dramatically killed in the first episode of season 7. As a zombie apocalypse drama, *The Walking Dead* seemingly leaves little room for circa-1980’s Model Minority characteristics such as high educational attainment, intelligence in STEM, and high socio-economic status. Nevertheless, the racialized aspects of the Model Minority remain. Perhaps the most notable example is the character description from AMC “Which Character Are You?” quiz that conveys the impression the audience should get from his character.

*Quick-witted and dexterous, you are loyal to your surrogate family and take risks on their behalf, risks that would intimidate others. You are confident in your ability to plan and execute complicated schemes because you can think on your feet to get out of unforeseen scrapes.* (Ho 2016: 64)

Buzzwords such as quick-witted, dexterous, and able to execute complicated schemes convey traits of intelligence and skill, while loyalty to a surrogate family implies group mindedness and collectivity. While not explicitly stated, respect for authority is also subtly embedded in the character description. There is no mention of Glenn in a leadership role within the group, but loyalty to the group, by extension entails trust and belief in the leader’s decisions. Furthermore, as a group-loyal risk taker, Glenn’s only purpose and relation to the group is in terms of “taking risks on their behalf,” therefore his value is contingent how his intelligence, dexterity, and problem solving can benefit survival in a zombie post-apocalyptic world. While not immediately evident, the blurb sends a strong message about the type of character producers want Glenn to be seen as, upon closer examination Glenn is also an ideal type of the Model Minority. As both an obvious and subtle image in television and film, the Model Minority can perpetuate this stereotype promise in greater American culture and have effects on the lived expe-
riences of API, and by doing so, possibly play a role in perpetuating the American racial hierarchy.

As evidenced by the ideal types provided by Cristina Yang and Glenn, Model Minority remains a prominent, but increasingly tricky and elusive, aspect of API characterization on screen. As an intelligent, driven, high status and economically stable doctor, Cristina overtly fulfills many of characteristics ascribed to the Model Minority. Glenn, on the other hand, is a more subtle rendering, his value in a zombie-apocalyptic world determined by his intelligence, skill, and contribution to group survival. Both characters demonstrate salience of the Model Minority through its deployment in different fictional settings.

By drawing on an inherently one-dimensional racial stereotype to form characters, television and film maintain the image of the “Success Story of One Minority in the U.S.” (Ang 2011, Chou 2008, Kawai 2005). Ono and Pham (2009) assert that the Model Minority is “today’s mainstream media stereotype” for API, therefore “Asians and Asian Americans [are] often typecast” (83). It has become the de facto rule of thumb to cast an API actor or actress as the Model Minority, meaning not only are Model Minority roles the only available for API performers, but API are the only performers who can play Model Minority roles. The Model Minority represented in television and film can hold substantial power in the United States, with the potential for durable impacts on in American social reality, not only for API, but also for the racial landscape and race relations.

**Implications of the Model Minority as a Racist Project**

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10 Ono and Pham (2009) note study in which over 60% of API characters with an identifiable job occupy professions (usually medical) that require advanced degrees.
The Model Minority is a prominent racial image in the United States. Through television and film, the Model Minority and all of its connotations has become normalized in the ideal types of Dr. Cristina Yang and Glenn Rhee, demonstrating the symbolic power of racialization. As ideal types, the two characters can be interpreted as a racist project used to maintain the privilege of those with racial power. The following sections examine the possible repercussions of this framework. To begin, this work focuses how configuring the Model Minority as a racist project could potentially lead to impacts on the API community specifically; then it turns to the possible role of the Model Minority as racist project in the greater American hierarchy.

*Reinforcing the Racial Hierarchy*

Some theorists have pointed out the "racial triangulation" or "contrast effects" that occurs when the Model Minority is contrasted with blacks in television and film (Ang 2012; Dalisay and Tan 2009; Kawai 2005; Kim 2004; Lee and Kyle 2016). By existing neither black nor white, the Model Minority could serve as a separate reference point to which blacks can be compared to in the United States. To avoid elements of classical racism through comparison of blacks to whites, it is possible the Model Minority and API serve as a intermediate of a high achieving demographic that approximates the white middle class standard (Ang 2012, Dalisay and Tan 2009, Kawai 2005). When contrasted with blacks on screen, API serve primarily to accentuate perceived black poverty, laziness, and criminality (Dalisay and Tan 2009, Ford 1997, Khana and Harris 2015). Therefore the racialized stereotypes of blacks are perpetuated and used to further rationalize racial policies and laws such as lending practices, redlining, drug enforcement, sentencing etc. that discriminate against black in America (Bonilla Silva 2014).
Beyond highlighting the stereotypical deficiencies ascribed to blacks, justifications for the success of the Model Minority could fall within the frames of color-blind racism. They serve as living proof that a non-white racial minority can succeed in the American capitalist system, therefore providing a counter example to claims that the United States is not a meritocracy. When graded on a scale of success that depends on educational attainment and upward socioeconomic mobility, assumptions of intelligence, graduate degrees, and high status professions is likely to prove the frame of abstract liberalism. Abstract liberalism could also be deployed to deny the power of race through the supposed precedent of API accomplishment. Simultaneously, as a minority, aspects of the frame of cultural racism can be applied through the assumption that Orientalized “Confucian values” enable Model Minority success. The perceived success of API could also allow individuals to minimize the importance of race in terms of economic and social mobility, because the overstated achievements of one racial minority are conflated with prosperity across all racial minorities.

Therefore, the Model Minority has the potential of greater implications within race theory and the system of white racial power. Through racial triangulation, it is possible API are used to emphasize the failure of blacks in America to succeed, thus perpetuating negative racial stereotypes about the black population. Additionally, due to success graded on an economic scale, the Model Minority may serve to reinforce the frames of color-blind racism, providing a success story counterpoint to activists and policy-makers arguing for equity on the basis of race. Within the system of racial power that exists in the United States today, the Model Minority could be incorporated into the power structure as mechanism to perpetuate racism.
**Dehumanization**

If Model Minority is considered as a racist project of symbolic power, its role could be to reinforce the current racial hierarchy in its most elementary form. Being reduced to a mechanism or tool in the larger racial order can be seen as an objectifying action because API are no longer considered people by racial power. Instead, the range of API experiences in the United States are reduced to the single narrative of the successful Model Minority. If this is the case, the reality of API experiences have become secondary to the perpetuation of racial power, meaning API have ceased to be human beings and are instead reduced to an image that is used as a weapon against other racial minorities as proof that non-white socioeconomic success in America is more than possible, it happens on a regular basis. This can be damaging because it not only continues the system of oppression that persecuted blacks, it also continues the system in which API are narrowly defined by the Model Minority and have been historically excluded and persecuted.

**Double Failure**

Beyond the greater theoretical discussion and implications for the United States racial hierarchy, if the image of Model Minority perpetuated in television and film there is the possibility of distinct, negative impacts on API real lives. As Ang (2011) states, the "model minority myth can mask certain forms of social violence because it marshals moral or ethical narratives in the social disciplining of racial minorities" (25). This alludes to the reduction of millions of life histories to a single, narrow, cohesive, narrative. The experiences of other API who do not, cannot, or will not fulfill it can therefore be continuously to be silenced. Audiences do not passively consume visual content, they
interact with it, they internalize it, they experience it (Barkin 2006; Grindstaff and Turow 2006). Therefore when “ethnic and mainstream media laud those Asian Americans who achieve the success frame”, it could create an illusion that socioeconomic prosperity and upward mobility is the most acceptable life and API can be living (Lee and Zhou 2015:175). For those who don’t fulfill the Model Minority, it proves an invalidation of their existence because they not have a place in the greater United States and also their racial and ethnic community. Failure, for an API, therefore is twofold as an socio-economic failure and a racial failure (Lee and Zhou 2015: 183). Struggling to adhere to high standards of success, or living with failure to do so, has lead to issues with anxiety, depression, self-esteem, identity, and greater mental health (Lee and Kyle 2016, Lee and Zhou 2015).

Professional Consequences

Additionally, ascriptions of the Model Minority onto API bodies also leads to tangible impacts in professional trajectories. Due to the reframing of Orientalized values, API are perceived as passive, emotionally distant, uncreative, etc., therefore within professional hierarchies, they experience the “bamboo ceiling” (Lee and Zhou 2015: 133). This means, that while the Model Minority is more likely to have a professional degree, they are less likely to occupy upper management or high-ranking corporate positions. For example, in the San Francisco technology industry, API dominate the lower ranks of workers, comprising nearly half of the overall workforce, however they hold less than a quarter of upper management positions (Lee and Zhou 2015: 137). The bamboo ceiling also can completely block API from certain professions, such as law, which is ironically is one of the high-status professions contained in the narrow success frame of some
immigrants. As a respondent shared with Lee and Zhou (2015), they had difficulty getting hired as an attorney because of the perceived passivity of API (131). Cases such as the bamboo ceiling can be interpreted as aspects of the Yellow Peril being re-established as the myth of the Model Minority presents a threat to white racial and economic power, thus also proving the negative influence the Model Minority can exert on API lives.

*Positive Effects*

However, despite the negative consequences of the Model Minority Myth, it does contain within a stereotype promise that may warrants some positive results. The primary, most obvious positive consequence of the Model Minority is the positive framing of academic accomplishments (Lee and Zhou 2015, Ocampo 2016). School is considered a gateway institution insofar as academic success correlates with success with positive job attainment, stability, salary, etc., and therefore socio-economic status (Lee and Zhou 2015). Through positive framing, confirmation bias, and internal attribution errors, teachers, professors, and administrators in the in school have a tendency to look more favorably on any mistakes that, if made by other students, would be attributed to a lack of intelligence or laziness. With API, however, mistakes are considered an exception, therefore allowing API to flourish within the American school system while also fulfilling the ascribed role of the Model Minority. Additionally, as a result of doing well in compulsory education, similar positive framing allows them to earn undergraduate and graduate degrees, therefore securing jobs in better paying professions and securing higher socio-economic status on average than the greater United States population. Ocampo (2015), describes how one interviewee of mixed black and Filipino heritage
was placed in advanced courses in high school once he projected his Filipino identity and socialized with Filipino coethnics. Through the Model Minority stereotype, therefore, a particular set of API reap the material and social benefits.

In summary, the Model Minority in could be considered a exertion of symbolic racial power (Turner 1995). Perpetuated by television and film (Ho 2016; Ono and Pham 2009), the image can provide many misguided understandings of the API population (Khana and Harris 2015; Ocampo 2016; Lee and Kyle 2016; Lee and Zhou 2015). Considering the Model Minority a racist project (Omi and Winant 2015) leaves the possibility of serious repercussions real people and race theory. Using this approach, the conflation that the Model Minority with the diverse API community can obscure varied socioeconomic backgrounds, countries of origin, and lived experiences, establishing a narrow set of behaviors that not all can or want to fulfill (Dhingra 2003; Lee and Zhou 2015; Ocampo 2016). The pressure of conforming to the stereotype can lead to increased anxiety, stress, and depression, while the characteristics ascribed to the stereotype itself can create a bamboo ceiling (Lee and Zhou 2015). In the greater context of race in the United States, the Model Minority can contribute to racial triangulation and color blind frames of American meritocracy (Bonilla Silva 2014). Celebrating and disseminating the story of Model Minority success may be interpreted as condemning blacks and other groups who have failed at socioeconomic prosperity. Therefore, the Model Minority myth conceivably contributes to the maintenance of American racial hierarchy.

**Conclusion**
Race and filmed entertainment are not a new topics to discuss in the United States (Hunt et. al. 2018; Smith, Choueiti, and Pieper 2017), nor within sociology (Khanna and Harris 2015; Mastro and Greenberg 2001). Sociological literature on this issue tends to focus on the representation of black characters in film and television (Dal-isay and Tan 2009, Ford 1997, Khanna 2015, Mastro and Greenberg 2000). The #oscarssowhite controversy spearheaded by Reign in 2016 focused primarily on the lack of black performers in the acting categories. Popular news articles of the time focused primarily on the lack of nominations for black-led films *Creed, Straight Outta Compton*, and *Beasts of No Nation*, while neglecting to address the contributions of non-black, non-white actors to the industry, primarily because other racial minorities struggle to earn screen time (Ryan 2016). Indeed this is partly indicative of the black/white binary that has been constructed in both academic and popular conceptions of race (Alexander 2012, Bonilla-Silva 2014, Delgado and Stefancic 2012, Ford 1997, Holte 1984, Mastro and Greenberg 2000, Melamed 2011, Omi and Winant 2015, Ryan 2016). Within the current social climate of the United States, the Latinx population has had much more critical theorizing and attention brought to their experiences, similarly, Muslim-Americans and Arab-American experience has been the subject of study in recent years. In contrast, comparatively little attention has been given to the experience of API experience, the fastest growing population in the United States (López, Ruiz, and Patton 2017).

Some theorists have attempted to bring the racialized experiences of API into canon theory (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Chou 2008; Haney López 2003; Lee and Kyle 2016; Lee and Zhou 2015; Wu 2002), however, the foundation of race theory remains in the
black/white binary (Bell 1980; Bonilla Silva 2014; Omi and Winant 2015). The power structure of white supremacy continues to enact racism on all racial minorities in the United States. White supremacy operates through the cultural (re)production of the Model Minority Myth in popular television and film; consequently, the API community has become an objectified tool used to maintain the current racial hierarchy. The API community is distinctly racialized however we remain neither black nor white, and by virtue of being so, remain silenced in the greater race conversation.

**Further Research**

While the intersection of power, racial stereotypes, and popular filmed entertainment remains a subject that needs closer examination, for rhetorical and theoretical purposes, this paper left much unexplored. In order to fully understand the nuances of its diverse members, there are countless more conditions of the neglected API community that need to be researched. Future avenues of empirical research are as far reaching and important, if not moreseo, as theoretical works such as this one.

While race has been the primary focus of this argument, it is difficult to call oneself a proper sociologist without acknowledging the role of intersectionality. More analysis of the gendered experiences of API must be conducted to understand the distinct existence of API men and API women. Investigations into gendered racial stereotypes of API can be examined both on and off screen, or even within the realm of reality television. API women in academia have the potential for being at greater risk for sexual assault and API men are met with being perceived as un-masculine and poor romantic partners (Cho 2003, Ho 2016, Rajgopal 2010, Robnett and Feliciano 2011). On the other side of the gender spectrum, there is also work to be done regarding the hyper-
sexualized image of API women in combination with the Model Minority. As Cho (2003) points out, this may leave API women in academia at greater for sexual assault, however as a woman and a racial minority, their voices are not heard. 

It is also important to acknowledge that despite being the growing population in the United States due to continuous immigration, API also have a significant community that are third, fourth, or greater generation and therefore socialized and encultured completely as Americans. For example, of the Japanese-origin population, only 27% foreign born (López, Ruiz, and Patton 2017). Consequently, the Japanese-American population has made a concerted effort to differentiate themselves from their Japanese counterparts across the Pacific and in the United States. As the cultural and experiential gap widens between incoming migrants and the already established API population, as Bonilla Silva (2004 and 2014) and Lee and Kyle (2016) suggests, more attention must be focused towards their divergent struggles.

Additionally, other perspectives looking at the television and film industry could be taken. This analysis looked at the final product of television programs and released films, taking a perspective of cultural production and symbolic power, however there are also economic and political approaches that could illuminate more about race and filmed entertainment (Grindstaff and Turow 2006). Taking a more Marxist perspective through the examination of production and distribution chains could prove fruitful in understanding the predominantly white perspective represented on screen.

While this argument proposes of a new understanding of the Model Minority in television and film as a racist project, empirical data to provide supporting evidence must be carried out. This theoretical framework, is just that, a theory. Methodologically,
content analysis could provide a rich source of data for future research in order to understand the characterization of API in television and film. Some works, such as Lee (2010) have taken narrow scope, looking at only two films, but a greater qualitative analysis can contribute to understanding how prevalent the Model Minority and other API racial stereotypes actually are in television and film. To understand the practical impact on lives, surveys and interviews with API identifying individuals provide the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of the impact of racial stereotypes on lives. It may also provide insight into television and film viewing patterns of API and attitudes towards the representation of API on screen. Finally, if possible, ethnography base in the production and circulation of television programs and films could provide insight as to the decision making processes behind what this argument has identified as limited characterization of API. The methods named above are only a few that could be implemented to confirm the theory presented in this work.

The fundamental point is, given the diverse experiences, life trajectories, and origins of the API, combined with the relatively small space they are given in academia and on screen, there is much research that can, should, and must be conducted to better understand race as it currently stands in the United States. Gone are the days of black and white, it is time to step into a new age of technicolor and embrace the emerging dynamic, chromatic portrait of the American race landscape.
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