

An enduring schema: the image of the Chinese in American prime time television dramas

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Abstract. This study implements an in-depth investigation about the image of the Chinese presented in American prime time television dramas. Content analysis was utilized to record the portrayal of the Chinese in terms of characteristics, demographic attributes, and fictional interactions with European-Americans. To compare different representations, comparable European-American television characters selected from data banks of the Cultural Indicators project were used. Findings derived from three kinds of statistical analyses lead to a consistent conclusion. This study provides an empirical evidence that the Chinese image is comparatively distorted.

1. Introduction

Television dramas are often a symbolic or manipulated reification of social realities and are usually produced and distributed by market-driven forces. Furthermore, television, a ubiquitous learning channel, presents a world of places, people, and roles that the audience might not experience in real life. According to studies of television viewing habits, American viewers start being exposed to broadcast messages as early as 3 to 4 years of age; and average viewers watch for more than six hours a day (Comstock, 1975; Gerbner & Signorielli, 1979). These facts lead to a concern over the saturation impact of a minority image system transmitted through television programming. This is why this study explored the image of the Chinese as represented in American prime time television dramas.

Regarding image representation, of particular concern to communication researchers is the impact of ethnic stereotypes. For one thing, television producers tend to capitalize on stable formulas, routines, and formats that have proven successful to sustain their track records. Television networks are also more likely to accept these products in order to convince their advertisers of their ability to capture the largest audience (Gitlin, 1983; Pekurney, 1982; Turow, 1992; Woll & Miller, 1987). Therefore, the stereotypes imbedded in those formulas and routines require scrutiny. In addition, the capacity of

stereotypes to legitimize the status quo (Lippmann, 1922) and to exercise the hegemonic potential in terms of ideology in a given society (Grossberg, 1984) are also worth considering. However, this study is not concerned with the absolute definition or depiction of the Chinese on the television screen, nor is it associated with the problem of falsity or image clichés of the portrayal. Instead, it emphasizes the inferences made from the comparisons between the Chinese and European Americans in the American society.

Scholars point out television's various functions of image representations, which include legitimation (Clark, 1972; Signorielli, 1983), reiteration of legitimacy and maintenance of established power and authority, and mainstreaming and resonance¹ (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 1980). Aside from these functions, researchers also indicated one of the most significant features of television dramas – a form that often lulls its viewers into a sense of reality (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Given the fact that the Chinese-Americans are a minority group in the U.S. (less than 0.7% of the whole population),² the problem of prejudice arises subsequent to using an image structure that could be unfairly created and maintained especially if the Chinese are always represented as negative or inferior. In addition, the television image of the Chinese in the long run may become a socially constructed 'reality', which therefore calls for a scrupulous examination.

The image of the Chinese as portrayed on television might influence the Chinese audiences within the American context. The dominant perspectives shown on television structures the image the Chinese have of themselves and their relations to the wider American society. A study of the self-image of Chinese-American adolescents indicates that overall they have a poorer adjustment potential compared to average American adolescents (Chen & Yang, 1986). Other studies also unveil the impact of American stereotypes towards the Chinese and of racial prejudice on the development of Chinese-Americans' self-concept (Sue & Kitano, 1973; Yee, 1973).

Chinese imagery as cultural commodity not only generates an impact in the U.S. but also in other parts of the world, thanks to the globalized marketing operation of media system (Tunstall, 1977; Turow, 1992). Hollywood-made television films are sold worldwide, enabling the global diffusion of the American version of the Chinese image to international viewers. Even though international image flow has not yet been studied extensively, we have reasons to concern the potential penetration of the American version of the Chinese image.

There is little literature systematically dealing with the representation of the Chinese in mass media. The majority of studies addressing this problem interpreted the Chinese image with selective evidence pertaining to certain motifs. For example, researchers discussed the inscrutable image of the Chi-

nese derived from the Charlie Chan series (Goldstein, 1980) and noted the differences between the Chinese stereotypes embodied in the films of Bruce Lee and Fu Manchu (Farquhar & Doi, 1976).

In a pioneer study of American-held Chinese images, Isaacs (1958) used various examples of Chinese images and interviews with representative Americans to provide a picture of the Chinese predominant in the U.S. until 1958. He also categorizes those images into six chronological periods, which coincide with the status of the relationship between China and the U.S.³ Prior to Isaacs, Jones' (1955) study on films about the Chinese also focuses on the interplay between these two countries. Jones' method of highlighting 246 films about Chinese and China remains the prototype for research on the Chinese image.

Recognizing the importance of historical roots of ethnic image in the U.S., Gardner (1961) investigated journal and magazine content relating to the Chinese from 1885 to 1915. He argues that this period is the crucial time span when the Chinese image took root in the American mind and the stereotypical image system that has remained remarkably consistent over the years was constructed. As scholars point out,⁴ there seems to be a distinction or discrepancy between the image of the Chinese held by people on the East Coast as opposed to Californians; intellectuals versus laborers; high-brow literature and popular fiction; and so forth. However, Gardner argues that the most dominant and mainstream perspective does not derive from the perspectives of a few elites. Rather, it is the cluster of stereotypical characteristics including the opium den, gang activities, cheap laborers, and contemptuous slurs that dictated the American image of the Chinese (Gardner, 1961, p. 182).

Miller (1966) traced the initial development of this image system even further back. He argues that there were three kinds of sources news media used most often to construct the American cognitive picture of the Chinese: traders, missionaries, and diplomatic reports. The valuable part of his book is on the investigation of the shaping process of the derogatory Chinese image and how it affected the legislation of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which institutionally departed from the so-called melting-pot concept. In addition, as Gardner, Miller refutes the hypothesis that East Coast Americans actually had opposed Chinese exclusion.

Paralleling Seiter's (1986) argument that the problem of stereotypes lies in its historical, economic and political dimension, Gardner's and Miller's historical investigations on print news media were valuable because they identified the factors conducive to the fabrication of the Chinese stereotype. The American history of the Chinese and the interrelationship between the U.S. and Chinese countries, therefore, would also help in deciphering the construction of stereotypes.⁵ To sum up the major sources that gave shape

to the Chinese images: (1) businessmen, travelers and missionaries' reports of China and of Chinatowns, (2) viewpoints of academic and literate authorities, (3) the foreign policies and economic interests of the U.S. in China, (4) American racism and zeitgeist of different periods,⁶ (5) inherent American/European Mongolian phobia, and (6) corruption of the Ching dynasty and the continuously turbulent situation in contemporary China.

In essence, there has been a fixed repertoire of Chinese images that has been repeatedly repackaged, exploited, and sold in mass media. However, a systematic investigation of television content regarding the Chinese and Chinese-Americans is urgently missing. This study aims to bridge the gap of knowledge about the image of the Chinese on television by undertaking a systematic content analysis of American prime time television dramas from 1976 through 1986. The investigation of the image centers on Chinese characteristics, demographic attributes, and interactions with Americans, most of which were compared with European-Americans of the same period.

2. Methodology

The sample for this investigation encompasses American prime time network television dramas (including ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX) that include Chinese characters from 1976 through 1986. The duration and the showing time of the sample are compromised due to the limitations of the source of the television scripts – the Annenberg Television Script Archive, where the most heavily represented data base in the on-line catalogue (TSAR) spans from 1976 through 1986 and only contains prime time network television scripts. Eighty television scripts that include Chinese-Americans and/or Chinese constitute the sample.

The unit of analysis is each Chinese character who has at least one spoken line in a given script. For each character, thirty items were coded.⁷ For the purpose of this study, *Chinese* is defined as any character with a recognizable Chinese ethnic background in the script, regardless of his nationality or citizenship.⁸ The reasons *Chinese* was defined in this fashion are, 1) the literature reviewed supports a Chinese-ethnicity oriented definition;⁹ 2) this definition would make the sample larger so as to attain a higher validity; and 3) most American audiences might have difficulty distinguishing Chinese-Americans from Chinese of other countries. On the basis of the literature reviewed, bowing to the realities of the sample, and improving the validity of this investigation, a broader definition of Chinese was adopted.

Aside from the sample of television scripts, a comparable group of European and European-American characters¹⁰ was retrieved from the computerized data bank of the Cultural Indicators,¹¹ which functions as a basis of

comparison with the Chinese characters. The Cultural Indicators data bank is comprised of decades of network television programs that have been systematically coded by trained coders. Retrieval period and showing time are the same as the Chinese sample. The reason for choosing Euro-American characters is because they are the dominant and most prestigious ethnicity group in American society.

The researcher was the main coder to read and record all of the television scripts. Another trained coder read and recorded ten percent (random-sampled) of the scripts to test the intercoder reliability. With one exception of the coding of occupational collar, all items in this study reach a 0.7 or higher standard of intercoder reliability.¹²

The statistical analysis began with the univariate descriptions of each coding item. In this part, as long as the data from the Cultural Indicators contained the corresponding variables, comparisons between the Euro-American and the Chinese are presented. In some cases, a comparable set of all characters retrieved from the Cultural Indicators are also presented. The second step is bivariate analysis, in which the correlations between the variables were examined. Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients were computed to detect any linear relation between any two coding variables. In addition, crosstabulation was conducted to examine the correlation between the variables with significant Pearson's coefficients.

Furthermore, this study explored the factors that contribute to or determine a Chinese character's fiction fate on television. Based on the correlation output, whichever variables are significantly associated with ending were included in the multiple regression model as independent variables. A general stepwise strategy was adopted to develop the model. In addition, due to multicollinearity among the independent variables, a commonality analysis was implemented to calibrate the unique contribution of each independent variable.

3. Findings

A. Univariate description and comparisons

The gender distribution of the Chinese in prime time television dramas is much more slanted than that of the Euro-American characters (81.6% male Chinese vs. 18.4% female Chinese, compared to 68.9% male Euro-American vs. 31.0% female Euro-American). The proportion of male versus female in the Chinese sample is also greater than that of the general sample¹³ (69.2% male vs. 30.5% female), the latter of which coincides with studies that found male

characters usually outnumber females by about three to one on television¹⁴ (Gerbner and Signorielli, 1979; Greenberg, 1980).

As for social age, Chinese shown on television tend to be older than the Euro-American; the percentage of the elderly Chinese in particular is much higher (by 15.5 percent) than that of the elderly in the Euro-American and the general samples. Furthermore, the Chinese are of a lower socioeconomic status than the Euro-American characters.¹⁵ Based on the results, the Chinese have more 'clearly lower' class people by 6.2 percent and have less 'clearly upper' class people by 4.7 percent.

There are few major Chinese characters on television, particularly compared to Euro-Americans. Additionally, the majority of Chinese characters are 'props,' who are not portrayed as having human feelings, affection, thought or even hatred; instead, in many cases, they function as tools, such as anonymous villains, gangsters, laundrymen, and waiters. Because the lower ranks of actors/actresses are 'extras,' according to Wong (1978), Chinese characters have been vertically stratified below Euro-American characters in terms of role importance. Besides, the industry tend to employ Euro-Americans to play Chinese characters or/and leading characters surrounded by Chinese in a Chinese context. As Paik points out, 'Charlie Chan', cast with white men, seems to have 'trained audiences to accept the idea that white men should play Asians if the role was big and the characters sympathetic' (Paik, 1971, p. 32). This phenomenon can be seen as early as in *The Good Earth*, in the Charlie Chan series (from early 1930s through 1980s), up to the latest *Kung Fu—The Legend Continues* television series.¹⁶ In view of this evidence, the latent meaning of this Caucasian masquerading of leading Chinese characters needs further investigation.¹⁷

Based on the outcomes of the distribution of character types and fictional fates, the Chinese are more likely to be depicted as inscrutable and sinister and tend to come to a negative end. Although the Chinese characters seem to have more or less the same opportunity of being assigned to good-typed roles and of having successful endings as do the Euro-Americans, the Chinese have significantly fewer shares of mixed/neutral character types and endings than the Euro-American characters and general characters.

Character types and endings of the Chinese are slightly on the downgrade along the categories from positive to negative, compared to Euro-American and average television characters who are more likely to belong to a neutral character type and to have a mixed ending. The reason Chinese have less mixed/neutral representations while they have more negative character types and endings might be due to the fact that most Chinese on television portray minor characters who are not granted well-developed and complicated per-

sonalities. Consequently, their representations look a bit more polarized and slanted toward the negative pole than Euro-American and general characters.

Regarding Chinese characters' occupations, most of them fall into the following ordered categories: illegal activities, health and service and business. As a matter of fact, the latter two categories are a little misleading because, overwhelmingly, most Chinese characters of the category of health and service are servants in restaurants or other servicemen instead of medical doctors or corporation managers.¹⁸ The most shocking outcome derived from the occupational breakdowns is that almost 36 percent of the Chinese characters are involved with illegal activities. None of the Chinese characters fall in the field of 'entertainment, art, sports and mass media', and very few fall in the category of 'government, courts, law, official authority'. This indicates that role segregation is practiced in the television world, paralleling the filmic property (Wong, 1978), in which certain roles are specially designated as Euro-American and thereby exclude Chinese from playing them.

Other characteristics of the Chinese in this television sample are reported briefly below: (1) most Chinese (76%) live in the U.S.; the foreign Chinese either belong to China (15%) or other countries (8%) including Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and Macao; (2) the majority of the Chinese characters are blue collar (66%); only one in five are white collar (22%); (3) 32 percent of the Chinese characters have overall friendly relationships with Americans; 38 percent have neutral relationship with Americans; 29 percent have overall hostile relationships with Americans; (4) 68 percent of the Chinese characters do not get help from Americans on screen; nearly 32 percent of them get help at least once; (5) 67 percent of the Chinese characters are not hurt by Americans, while 32% of the Chinese characters are hurt at least once by Americans; (6) 65 percent of the Chinese characters do not have American friends; 35 percent have at least one American friend; (7) 57 percent of the Chinese characters do not have any American enemies, while 42 percent of the Chinese have at least one American enemy; (8) nearly 23 percent of the Chinese characters commit violence toward Americans on television (20% non-fatal, 3% fatal); (9) 26 percent of the Chinese characters are victims of violence committed by Americans (22% non-fatal, 4% fatal); and (10) most Chinese characters' marital status (73%) cannot be recognized (the Euro-American's: 59%).

It is disturbing to note from the univariate findings above that the relationship between the Chinese and Americans fabricated by television is rather antagonistic and violent. Television viewers, without personal experience with the Chinese, and cultivated by these messages day in and day out, can hardly be expected to have an open-minded attitude toward them. Television viewers' pre-perceptions about the Chinese may well hinder them from com-

Table 1. Mean personality traits of Chinese and Euro-American characters

Personality traits (in five scale)	Chinese		Euro-American***	
	Mean*	SD	Mean	SD
repulsive/attractive	2.504	1.158	3.519	.765
weak/strong	2.734	.816	3.409	.685
powerless/potent	2.801	.804	3.436	.758
stupid/smart	2.988	.610	3.481	.672
unhappy/happy	2.590	.663	2.874	.570
poor/rich	2.898	.655	3.265	.662
dependent/independent**	2.719	.713	3.314	.814
obedient/disobedient**	2.945	.571	3.051	.540
aggressive/unaggressive**	2.789	.846	2.777	.594
irrational/rational	2.918	.490	3.290	.735

* Each mean was calculated from the codings on bipolar scales of five ranges, where 3 is the median.

** The output of the Euro-American characters was derived from 1991 and 1992 samples only (N=264).

*** All of the valid cases (from 1976-86, N=764; from 1991-92, N=264) are major characters. Because in Cultural Indicators, only major characters' personality traits were coded.

ing into contact with real Chinese, or otherwise factor into their relationships with Chinese.

Based on the results, the personality traits of the Chinese skew toward the negative to some extent (see Table 1), whereas there are only two negative depictions of average Euro-American characters (unhappy and aggressive). However, the Chinese are even more likely to be unhappy than the Euro-Americans, and Chinese and Euro-Americans display a similar level of aggressiveness. Generally speaking, Table 1 shows that images represented by the Chinese and the Euro-Americans are strikingly different. Also note that most standard deviation scores of personality traits of the Chinese are larger than those of Euro-Americans, indicating that the roles that the Chinese play are more polarized.

B. Bivariate analysis and comparisons

Based on the outcomes of correlation analysis, gender is related to other attributes of characters. For instance, gender is significantly related to social age, character type, ending, overall relationship with Americans, number of American friends, getting help from Americans, and romantic involvement with Americans. Second, character type and ending are important variables, for they both have strong correlations with a number of other variables related

Table 2. The correlations between some *Chinese* characters' recorded items and their personality traits

Personality trait	Gender	Socio-economic status	Character type	Ending
	male-female	upper-low	good-bad	good-bad
Repulsive-attractive	.5273***	-.1580*	-.6010***	-.6109***
Weak-strong	-.0750*	-.2896***	.3775***	.2832***
Powerless-powerful	-.1140*	-.3490***	.4088***	.3250**
Stupid-smart	.0858*	-.2108**	.0021	-.0546*
Unhappy-happy	-.1834*	-.2091**	.3802***	.2964***
Poor-rich	-.1127*	-.5715***	.2431**	.1696*
Dependent-independent	-.1404*	-.2850***	.2412**	.2033**
Obedient-disobedient	-.1198*	-.1724*	.2592**	.2572***
Aggressive-unaggressive	.3429***	.1418*	-.5939***	-.5405***
Irrational-rational	-.0074*	-.1968**	-.0722*	-.1138*

$n = 232$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

to Chinese's interaction with Americans. Therefore, gender, character type, and ending are focused in more detail.

Regarding gender, the Chinese females are more attractive and unaggressive than the males (see Table 2). Note that the extent of attractiveness associated with Chinese females is even larger than that with Euro-American females. Looking at socioeconomic status along with personality traits derived from both samples (Tables 2 & 3), the outcomes are consistent with logical inference. For example, the upper-class characters tend to be more powerful, strong, rich and independent. However, the correlations between personality traits and socioeconomic status among the Chinese are far more significant than that between Euro-Americans.

The most intriguing part of these two tables resides in the correlations between character type, ending, and personality traits. Good character-typed Chinese represented on television tend to be attractive, weak, powerless, unhappy, poor, dependent, obedient and unaggressive. The Chinese characters with successful endings are also more likely to possess these same personality traits as the good character-typed Chinese. To the contrary, the good Euro-American characters tend to be strong, smart and happy, although both groups of good characters are attractive, poor and rational. By the same token, those Euro-Americans who have good endings, unlike the Chinese, tend to be strong, powerful and happy; also, they are more likely than the Chinese to be smart and rational.

Table 3. The correlations between some Euro-American characters' recorded items and their personality traits

Personality trait	Gender	Socio-economic status	Character type	Ending
	male-female	upper-low	good-bad	good-bad
Repulsive-attractive	.2535***	-.0821* 7	-.3567***	-.2546***
Weak-strong	-.1282***	-.1084**	-.1612***	-.1865***
Powerless-powerful	-.1357***	-.1891***	-.0507	-.1503***
Stupid-smart	-.0672*	-.0894**	-.1522***	-.1938***
Unhappy-happy	-.0407	.0008	-.1585***	-.2894***
Poor-rich	.0098	-.7763***	.0874**	.0831*
Irrational-rational	-.0783*	-.0976**	-.3479***	-.3462***

n = 764; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Note: Because in the Cultural Indicators only the major characters' personality traits are recorded, the number of the sample is smaller than that of total cases.

Based on Tables 4 and 5, both in the Chinese and the Euro-American samples, the female characters are younger than the males. However, this tendency is slightly more significant in the Chinese sample (based on Gamma values). Examining character type by gender, the female characters have a slightly better chance of being designated good-typed roles. Once again, this trend is far more significant in the Chinese case than in the Euro-American case. The breakdowns of violence and ending by gender, according to Tables 4 and 5, disclose a similar scenario as well.

The female Chinese characters overall seem to have positive relationships with American characters in the dramatic plots. All of the relationship-driven variables are broken down by gender and presented in Table 4. These outcomes suggest that the female Chinese characters are more likely than the males to have generally friendly relationships with Americans, to have American friends, to receive help from Americans and to get involved romantically with Americans in the fictional television world.

In sum, variables such as social age, character type and relation with Americans have much to do with gender. The statistics demonstrate that television plots seem positively partial to Chinese women or discriminate against the Chinese men, especially compared to Euro-Americans. The implication of the phenomena might be due to the stereotypical mental schema that is at work in constructing these fictional plots. As Farquhar and Doi (1976) argued, Asian women in films have similarly been reduced to two categories: either the compliant, soft-spoken, and nurturing type or sex objects such as bar girls, prostitutes, and exotic mistresses. Both categories seem to fit the Chinese

Table 4. The Chinese's attributes by gender

Dependent variable	Gender				P value	Gamma
	male		female			
	n	%	n	%		
Social age						
adolescent	(7)	3.4	--	--	<.00001	-.72263
young adult	(15)	7.2	(22)	47.8		
settled adult	(140)	67.6	(23)	50.0		
elderly	(45)	21.7	(1)	2.2		
Character type						
good	(52)	25.2	(27)	57.4	.00009	-.49125
neutral	(75)	36.4	(11)	23.4		
bad	(79)	38.3	(9)	19.1		
Violence						
does not commit	(154)	73.7	(43)	91.5	.00882	-.58672
	(55)	26.3	(4)	8.5		
Ending						
success	(46)	24.5	(25)	56.8	.00013	-.50147
mixed	(63)	33.5	(10)	22.7		
failure	(79)	42.0	(9)	20.5		
Relation						
friendly	(58)	28.2	(25)	53.2	.00014	-.54027
neutral	(77)	37.4	(19)	40.4		
antagonistic	(71)	34.5	(3)	6.4		
American friends						
no	(147)	70.3	(18)	38.3	.00003	.58505
yes	(62)	29.7	(29)	61.7		
Getting help						
no	(158)	75.6	(17)	36.2	<.00001	.69074
yes	(51)	24.4	(30)	63.8		
Romantically						
not involved	(207)	99.0	(39)	83.0	<.00001	.91003
involved	(2)	1.0	(8)	17.0		

case and contribute to double discrimination of the Chinese. It also implicitly reflects the 'double standardized miscegenation system' (Wong, 1978) and 'sexualization of racism' (Hernton, 1965), which has been practiced in the television world.

Table 5. The Euro-Americans' attributes by gender

Dependent variable	Gender				P value	Gamma
	male		female			
	n	%	n	%		
Social age						
child & adol.	(515)	6.5	(376)	10.5	<.00001	-.26929
young adult	(1256)	15.8	(931)	26.1		
settled adult	(5993)	75.4	(2149)	60.2		
elderly	(184)	2.3	(111)	3.1		
Character type						
good	(2253)	30.4	(1268)	38.0	<.00001	-.23080
neutral	(4115)	55.5	1901	57.0		
bad	(1053)	14.2	(167)	5.0		
Violence						
does not	(6216)	77.7	(3213)	89.3	<.00001	-.40915
commit	(1781)	22.3	(386)	10.7		
Ending						
success	(2000)	27.3	(917)	28.1	<.00001	-.11571
mixed	(3650)	49.9	(1894)	57.9		
failure	(1671)	22.8	(458)	14.0		

Aside from these, violence was examined along each category of character type and ending. The outcomes indicate that the Euro-Americans commit slightly more violence than the Chinese. It is worth noting that among the characters who commit violence and also fall into the category of good characters or have successful endings, the Euro-Americans outnumber the Chinese by 9.1% and 16.8% respectively. On the other hand, the associations hold stronger between violence and character type, and violence and ending among the Chinese (based on the Gamma values). One possible interpretation of the finding is that it is more socially acceptable for Euro-Americans to use violence and retain their good character-typed roles simultaneously, and eventually become successful. This finding supports Gerbner and Gross's (1976) proposition that violence functions as a demonstration of social power.

C. Multivariate analysis and comparisons

In this section, ending is taken as a dependent variable, and other variables sifted from the findings above will be independent variables. The task of the multivariate analysis is to investigate whether, and to what extent, these independent variables are important, in terms of contribution they make to a

Table 6. Regression model of predictors of the Chinese characters' ending

Variables	b	SE (b)	BETA	t	Sig t	Unique to IV
Character type	.491185	.069849	.414552	7.032	<.0001	.08452
Relation	.248632	.077122	.203384	3.224	.0014	.01776
Enemy	.205235	.052402	.195878	3.917	.0001	.02622
Help	-.177945	.075875	-.125513	-2.345	.0198	.00940
(constant)	.299911	.218190				

R square = .57099; Adjusted R square = .56416; F = 83.51766; df = 4; Sig F < .0001.

character's fate on television. Accordingly, all of the variables with significant associations with ending were chosen from the correlation output to test whether they contribute to the variance.

Four significant independent variables emerged in the regression model after using a stepwise method of regression analysis. Character type, general relationship with Americans, number of enemies, and receiving help from Americans were selected as explanations for the dependent variable with statistical significance (see Table 6). The equation of the regression model is presented below:

$$\text{Ending} = .2999 + .4912 \times \text{Character Type} + .2486 \times \text{Relation} \\ + .2052 \times \text{Enemy} - .1779 \times \text{Help}$$

This equation model indicates that, all other factors being equal, a Chinese character playing a bad character-typed role leads directly to a .4912 greater chance of having a bad ending. Second, regarding the overall relationship with Americans, Chinese characters who are antagonistic toward Americans have a .2486 greater chance of bad endings. Third, a single American enemy adds a .2052 increase in the odds of failing. In addition, other things being controlled, being helped once by any American results in a .1779 increase in the odds of having a good ending. The relative importance of the independent variables can also be seen from the regression model table below.

There appear to be some correlations among the independent variables, as we detected from the correlation results and the output of collinearity tolerance testing, which give cause for concern about multicollinearity among the independent variables. Therefore, the following part examines the net contribution of each independent variable toward the regression model as a whole. Based on Table 6, the exclusive contribution of each independent variable to the whole regression model is rather trivial. The largest net contribution comes from character type (.0845). However, it is worth noting that the regression model can explain roughly 57 percent of the variance of a Chinese character's

ending. This interesting phenomenon suggests that there exists a substantial overlap of shared contribution among the independent variables.

Utilizing the comparative regression model of the Euro-American sample, we found that character type plays a far more crucial role in determining Euro-Americans' fate than that of the Chinese. Based on the regression model (with limited choice of independent variables), character type per se can explain almost 34% of an Euro-American character's ending; while affiliating with other independent variables, character type contributes to slightly more than 36% of the explanation of the Euro-American characters' endings. It is surprising that committing violence is one of the independent variables that determine Euro-Americans' endings with statistical significance, despite the fact that its unique contribution is low.

Based on this comparison, it is evident that, for a Chinese, good character type alone cannot guarantee his success. Only when it is accompanied with other factors, such as being helped or having good relationships with Americans, can a Chinese character be assigned a good ending on television. Therefore, the morality formula of American television dramas – 'all's well that ends well' and 'a bad penny always comes back' – does not necessarily apply to the Chinese. Chinese characters need to obtain 'social supports and consent from Americans to survive in the television world.

4. Discussion

Based on the prime time network television scripts that contain Chinese characters and the data set of the Cultural Indicators from 1976 through 1986, analyses and comparisons of univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistics were made. Based on the interpretations of the statistics, the image of the Chinese in American prime time network television is framed in an inferior and slanted structure when compared to the portrayal of the Euro-American. The analyses also demonstrate that whether in terms of demographic attributes, representation of personality traits, or patterns of social interactions with Americans, the portrayal of the Chinese is misrepresenting and misleading in the 'show-and-tell' machine.

After obtaining a scenario of the portrayal of the Chinese in television, it is worth investigating why the image of the Chinese in America has been represented negatively in the past and why this slanted image continues to infest television dramas in the same fashion. Some productive bias against the Chinese representation in the mass media industries at large may be at work in the case of television film production: (1) the lack of sensitivity, awareness or even interest in comprehending the Chinese and their culture; (2) the market-driven strategy that is capitalized in the production mechanism

of mass media; (3) rooted routines, rules, and formulas that traditionally make the largest possible profits, i.e., the most economical way to produce the content (about Chinese); (4) unequal access to the positions and opportunities in the production or/and distribution agents; (5) the (incorrect) expectations and biases of the public, who encourage the production firms to cater to their interests and desires (Turow, 1992).

In addition, some have argued that it is the dominant ideology or the ideology of liberal capitalism that structures the mass-produced cultural commodity/artifact (Gitlin, 1979; Williams, 1980). They argue the hegemony is sustained by being 'continually reproduced, continually superimposed, and continually to be negotiated and managed, in order to override the alternative and, occasionally, the oppositional forms' (*ibid.*). Thus, the process of hegemony is not the same as the traditional function of superstructure. Instead, it is endlessly 'absorbing and domesticating' conflicting definitions of reality and demands on it, and the outcome of which is deeply saturated in the consciousness of a society in a way that seems fundamental (*ibid.*). Can or cannot the production of the enduring image of the Chinese in American media industries fit the explanation above?

From a number of studies about television program production (Cantor, 1971, 1980; Crane, 1992; Gitlin, 1983; Turow, 1984, 1992), it seems quite difficult to change the existing 'routines' or 'formulas' that constitute the pith and marrow of the stories. These routines and formulas are long-term consequences derived from the television production industry's endeavor to sustain in rapport with their clients - advertisers and advertising agents. After all, television programs deliver audiences to advertisers (Brown, 1972). Due to concerns over profits and fear of the consequences after opening the floodgates for other similar demands, television producers are not likely to change the formulas and routines under the pressure of any advocacy group (Montgomery, 1981, 1986; Turow, 1984). What the network and production company officials are willing to hear or accept, however, are the 'public demands that do not really call for a reallocation of resources or a restructuring of activities,' i.e., the change belongs to the margins of a project (Turow, 1984, p. 153). As a minority group in the U.S. with limited power clout, the Chinese are far less likely to be the target audience that network producers crave to reach so as to attract advertisers. Therefore, although there are some advocacy groups struggling for fair representation in mass media,¹⁹ the outlook is grim. The only way to change the enduring schema of Chinese on mass media is probably to call for more Chinese-Americans to participate in media production, whether actively joining the major production firms or working independently.

Notes

1. 'Mainstreaming' was defined as the cultivation of general concepts of social reality; 'resonance', the amplification of issues particularly salient to certain groups of viewers (Gerbner et al., 1980).
2. Based on 1990 census data.
3. The chronology of the American images of the Chinese is as follows: The Age of Respect (18th century), The Age of Contempt (1840-1905), The Age of Benevolence (1905-37), The Age of Admiration (1937-44), The Age of Disenchantment (1944-49), and The Age of Hostility (1949-).
4. For instance, Coolidge (1909) pointed out that the anti-Chinese movement and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 were due to the then economic and social context of California. The 'California thesis' dominated the explanation of anti-Chinese movement in literature.
5. Aside from Gardner and Miller, Wu (1982) provided with a similar account.
6. For example, as Miller pointed out, because of the fear of slavery in the 1850s and the prevailing 'coolie' image of Chinese immigrants, newspapers opposed the Chinese immigration.
7. The items include gender, social age, citizenship, socioeconomic status, role type, occupation, occupation collar, character type, ending, overall relationship with Americans, number of American friends, number of American enemies, help they get from Americans, abuse they receive from Americans, violence they commit toward Americans, violence they suffer from Americans, winning in any violence scene with Americans, any romantic relationship involving Americans, the ending of the romantic relationship with Americans (if any), marital status, and ten evaluations of personality traits in five bipolar scales.
8. When the coders encountered any Asian American in the television scripts who cannot be recognized instantly as a Chinese, the default rule is as follows. The character who has any two of the characteristics below shall be considered a Chinese: (1) The character can speak Chinese (including any kind of Chinese dialects); (2) The character is living in any Chinese community; (3) The character shown performs evidently Chinese cultural activities.
9. As scholars point out (Fairbank, 1974; Gardner, 1961; Hamamoto, 1994; Miller, 1966), two kinds of Chinese images from across the Pacific cloud and obscure each other, and therefore should be considered simultaneously.
10. For the sake of convenience, I will use the term of 'Euro-American' instead of the full name 'European and Euro-American' throughout the thesis, unless otherwise noted.
11. The Cultural Indicators is a research project on trends in television content and viewer conceptions of social reality, administered in the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania. This study used the coded data bank of television content from the Cultural Indicators.
12. If α of the coding item reaches 0.7, based on Krippendorff's formula (1980), the data of this coding consequence can be considered reliable.
13. The general sample consists of all characters retrieved from the same period in the Cultural Indicators.
14. Greenberg's (1980) investigation of the prime time television shows from 1977 to 1978 found that males represented 71% while females represented a 29% share of all the characters. What Gerbner and Signorielli (1979) calculated from 1969-1978 prime time characters is similar to Greenberg's finding, where 74% of characters are male, 26% female.
15. Note that the coding instrument is rigid regarding evaluating a character's socioeconomic status. For instance, only if the character is shown as having a large mansion or a big enterprise in the script, can the coders code the character as a 'clearly upper' class person.

16. As a matter of fact, Dr. Fu Manchu, has never been played by Chinese. The recent revival of the Charlie Chan series, according to Woll and Miller (1987), *Charlie Chan and the Curse of the Dragon Queen* (1981), features Peter Ustinov as Chan and Angie Dickinson as the Dragon Queen. *The Fiendish Plot of Fu Manchu* (1980) again utilized Sax Rohmer's hackneyed stereotype of Chinese, portrayed by a Caucasian actor. In *Kung Fu—The Legend Continues*, the protagonist is still played by David Carradine.
17. As Woll and Miller pointed out (1987), although white actors played the leading roles of Afro-Americans, Jews, and Hispanics as well, the masquerade phenomenon continued for a much longer time for Asians.
18. For the sake of comparison with the Euro-American sample, the occupation categories from the Cultural Indicator were borrowed.
19. For example, 'Asian Americans for a Fair Media' (AAFMM) tries to reduce the stereotypes of Asians portrayed in mass media.

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