BEYOND SUZIE WONG? AN ANALYSIS OF SANDRA OH’S
PORTRAYAL IN GREY’S ANATOMY

Norma Jones, B. A.

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APPROVED:

Karen Anderson, Major Professor
Suzanne Enck-Wanzer, Committee Member
Brian Lain, Committee Member
Jay Allison, Chair of the Department of Communication Studies
James D. Meernik, Acting Dean of the Toulouse Graduate School

In my study, I examine if and how Sandra Oh’s portrayal of Dr. Cristina Yang in *Grey’s Anatomy,* a primetime network drama, reifies or resists U.S. mediated stereotypes of Asian American females. I situate my intercultural study in an interpretive paradigm because I am want to explore how the evolving characteristics of existing the Asian American female mediated stereotype as they influence Asian American female identity. Additionally, I trace the historical development of Asian and Asian American stereotypes yellow peril to the model minority; and from Dragon Lady, Lotus Blossom, Geisha, and Suzie Wong. From my textual analysis, I suggest that when portrayals simultaneously reify and resist characteristics of existing Asian American stereotypes, they may help to breakdown perceived binaries of existing Asian and Asian American stereotypes.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Stereotypes of Asians in United States culture are rooted in the mid 1800’s, when Chinese immigrated to the U.S. to work the gold rush in northern California (Abreu, Ramirez, Kim, & Haddy, 2003; Hoppenstand, 1992). As stereotypes evolved over time, the development of Asian American identities was based on both political and physical cues (R. G. Lee, 1999; Ono & Pham, 2009) and were influenced by stereotypes of yellow peril and the model minority (R. G. Lee, 1999; Hoppenstand, 1992; Marchetti, 1993; Ono & Pham, 2009; Mok, 1998; Tajima, 1989). However, the identities of Asian American females were complicated by gendered notions and more complex multi-layered stereotypes developed, including: Dragon Lady, Lotus Blossom, Geisha, and Suzie Wong (Cho, 1997; 1999; Marchetti, 1993; Ono & Pham, 2009; Shah, 2003)

Asian American stereotypes were reinforced and at times developed by mainstream media and evolved in coordination with societal and political conditions (Cho, 1997; Marchetti, 1993; Mok, 1998; Suzuki, 1989). Allport (1979) argued that stereotypes are exaggerated beliefs or fixed markers and preconceived notions that act as a “screening or selective device to maintain simplicity in perception and in thinking” (p. 192). Mainstream media, particularly television, is an influential source of stereotype creation and reinforcement (Anderson & Harwood, 2008; S. Lee, 1996; Mok, 1998; Ono & Pham, 2009; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Suzuki, 1989; Zhang, 2010). Despite the importance of television in reinforcing cultural stereotypes, little research has explored the representations of Asian American females in U.S. television roles (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Ono & Pham, 2009; Patton, 2001; Pegues, 2008; Shimizu, 2007). In general, Asian American females are significantly underrepresented in mainstream
U.S. media (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Mok, 1998; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Yuan et al., 2005; Zhang, 2010). Previous research on television and film portrayals have argued that when social groups are underrepresented, the few existing portrayals become more important in the development of stereotypes for that group (Brooks & Hébert, 2006; Holtzman, 2000; Patton, 2001; Taylor & Stern, 1997). I seek to explore the portrayal of Sandra’s Oh’s character Dr. Cristina Yang in the primetime network drama, Grey’s Anatomy (2005-). My goal is to understand if and how Oh’s character on the popular television series reifies and resists existing stereotypes of Asian American females in a U.S. context.

Why Asian American Stereotypes Matter

Understanding stereotypes of Asian American females as portrayed in the media allows researchers to better understand the development of Asian American identity. In order to understand the importance of Asian American stereotypes, the formation of Asian American as a cultural group must be first clarified. R. G. Lee (1999) contended that Asian Americans are organized by a common ancestry that is concerned with biological, physical, and reproductive factors. Asian Americans are marked by biological and observable features such as eye shape, eye color, hair texture, and skin color. However, Ono and Pham (2009) posited that Asian Americans are not just determined by physical features but, are a “loose concatenation of people who claim the moniker to represent themselves” (p. 9). In other words, Ono and Pham (2009) define Asian American as self-description instead of a biological identification based merely on physical traits. Ono and Pham (2009) clarify that Asian Americans as a cultural group include individuals living in the U.S. from various Asian ancestries such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, Thai, Mein, and Hmong. Thus, Asian American is broadly defined and
spans a large geographic designation with a broad range of cultures (R. G. Lee, 1999; Ono & Pham, 2009).

In addition to ancestry and physical markers, Asian American is also a political term of identification that marks Americans of Asian descent as non-white (R. G. Lee, 1999; Nakayama, 1997; Ono & Pham, 2009). R. G. Lee (1999) added that race is also an ideology, justified by a biological language that serves to legitimize and normalizes social inequalities. As a means to resist structural oppression, Ono and Pham (2009) further defined Asian Americans as political self-description to challenge ideology, racism, and social discrimination. So, in addition to self identification, Ono and Pham (2009) define Asian American as signifying “both the history and the present of Asians and Asian Americans in the Americas, their struggle against oppression, and the collective and collaborative organizing efforts to fight such oppression across racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual identities, and across other collectives” (p. 9). Thus, Asians Americans are identified by physical, ancestral, and political markers.

Nakayama (1997) noted that the Asian American identity is “tied to the ways in which others speak” (p. 27). In other words how Asian Americans perceive themselves is linked to how Asian Americans are treated as a cultural group. Stereotypes are the most common form of cognitive structure used in the perception process (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981). Individuals use stereotypes to make assumptions or predictive generalizations about an individual based on knowledge about cultural groups to which the individual belongs (Hamilton & Trolier, 1986). As previously noted, Allport (1979) suggested that stereotypes are selective screening devices to allow for simplified perceptions. Stereotypes influence identity and behavior of cultural groups (Anderson & Harwood, 2007; Mok, 1998; Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999, Taylor & Lee; 1997; Zhang, 2010). For example, scholars (Mok, 1998; Taylor & Lee, 1997) have argued that
Asian Americans may feel pressure to assimilate to societal expectations and internalize stereotypes. Taylor and Lee (1997) added that the stereotypes may influence Asian Americans where “self-esteem is closely linked to SAT scores, grade point average, and the university he or she attends” (p. 244). Thus, Asian American self esteem may be influenced by pressures to conform to stereotypes.

Furthermore, scholars (S. Lee, 1996; Mok, 1998; Ono & Pham, 2009; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Suzuki, 1989; Zhang, 2010) have contended that media produce, circulate, and reinforce Asian American stereotypes. Patton (2001) added that Asian Americans as an ethnic minority in the U.S. “are often trapped and controlled by stereotypical and marginalizing representations” (p. 236). Mok (1998) noted that Asian Americans feel invisible because they are underrepresented in mainstream U.S. media. Additionally, Taylor and Lee (1997) found that Asian Americans are rarely represented in social and family settings in U.S. advertising. Thus, the few limited and stereotyped portrayals that do exist are especially influential (Brooks & Hébert, 2006; Holtzman, 2000; Patton, 2001; Taylor & Stern, 1997). For example, Zhang (2010) argued that existing media based stereotypes of Asian Americans have influenced U.S. students to reject Asian Americans as social peers. Also, Taylor et al. (2005) suggested that the lack of portrayals of Asian Americans in family and social settings may influence U.S. audiences to perceive that Asian Americans are solely focused on their careers. Hence, media representations are important to consider when examining Asian American stereotypes and identities.

Additionally, researchers (Kawai, 2005; R. G. Lee, 1999; Ono & Pham, 2009) have posited that Asian Americans are stereotyped as simultaneously Asian and American. Additionally, Palumbo-Liu (1999) used the term Asian/American to denote the and/or status of Asians living in the United States. Nakayama (1997) added that Asian Americans are marked as
“forever foreign” (p.26). Kawai (2005) contended that Asian Americans are marginalized because as a cultural group they are not perceived as fully Asian or fully American. So, Asian Americans are perceived as both domesticated as well as foreign and exotic (Kawai, 2005; R. G. Lee, 1999; Ono & Pham, 2009). R. G. Lee (1999) added that that Asian Americans are coded as assimilated and alien outsiders that reside within U.S. American society. Asian Americans are considered alien “no matter how long they may have resided in the United States nor how assimilated they are” (R. G. Lee, 1999, p. 4). In order to better understand positioning of Asian Americans as domesticated foreigners, a clarification of the common Asian American stereotypes is useful.

The first Asian American stereotype, yellow peril, is based on a history of fear of conquest (Chung, 1976; R. G. Lee, 1999; Hoppenstand, 1992; Marchetti, 1993; Ono & Pham, 2009). Many scholars (Chung, 1976; R. G. Lee, 1999; Hoppenstand, 1992; Marchetti, 1993) have argued that the initial fear of conquest was based on anxiety caused by Mongol invaders in Europe the 1300’s. In the U.S. yellow peril was linked to an influx of Asian labor during the California Gold Rush as well as the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor during the Second World War. As Asian American stereotypes evolved, the model minority stereotype replaced yellow peril as the predominant Asian American stereotype (R.G. Lee, 1999; Hoppenstand, 1992; Marchetti, 1993; Ono & Pham, 2009; Mok, 1998; Tajima, 1989). The model minority stereotype originated in the mid 1960’s when Asian American success stories first appeared in popular magazines and newspapers in the U.S. (Osajima, 2003). Asian Americans were considered to be successful models of quiet ethnic assimilation (Osajima, 2003; Suzuki, 2005). The model minority is characterized and stereotyped as hard working, polite, intelligent, quiet, and competent (Mok, 1998; Paek & Shah, 2003; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010).
Asian and Asian American female stereotypes are multi-layered and at times include some characteristics of yellow peril and model minority (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Cho, 1997; Marchetti, 1993; Mok, 1998; Prasso, 2006; Shah, 2003; Uchida, 1998). However, distinct Asian and Asian American female stereotypes developed in response to specific gender norms from multiple Asian cultures as well as mainstream U.S. culture (Mok, 1998; Ono & Pham, 2009; Shah, 2003). The complex intersection of cultures uniquely situates Asian and Asian American females in sexualized roles (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Cho, 1997; Marchetti, 1993; Prasso, 2006; Shimizu; 2007). For example, the Dragon Lady is a scheming seductress based on yellow peril (Marchetti, 1993; Mok, 1998; Ono & Pham, 2009; Prasso, 2006; Shah, 2003). Lotus Blossom and Geisha were obedient, submissive, and sexualized dolls (Cho, 1997; Mok, 1997; Ono & Pham, 2009; Shah, 2003). Suzie Wong is assimilated, self sacrificing, and a submissive sex toy for white men in the U.S. (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Cho, 1997; Uchida, 1998). Lotus Blossom, Geisha, and Suzie Wong stereotypes are hypersexualized and defined by Asian and Asian American women’s relationships to white men. For example, scholars (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Le, 2010) have noted that the Suzie Wong stereotype is enacted by Asian American women as a means to gain stability in U.S. society through a marriage or significant relationship with a white man.

The labeling of the Suzie Wong stereotype highlights the particular importance of the U.S. media in portraying and reinforcing stereotypes and images of Asian American females. The Suzie Wong stereotype is named after the 1960 movie, The World of Suzie Wong (Quine), which portrays a female Chinese prostitute who falls in love with a white U.S. male who “saves” her through marriage. The influence of media in the development of this Asian American female stereotype is particularly relevant and worth further consideration. Media creates and maintains
prevalent Asian and Asian American stereotypes that affect mainstream audience perceptions (R. G. Lee, 1999; K. Y. Lee & Joo, 2005; Suzuki, 1989; Zhang, 2010). Despite significant cultural differences, scholars (R.G. Lee, 1999; Hoppenstand, 1992; Marchetti, 1993; Mok, 1998; Ono & Pham, 2009; Tajima, 1989) have contended that the majority of Asian American media portrayals are not differentiated and scholarship regarding existing stereotypes has remained relatively stable since the 1960’s. Media portrayals and stereotypes evolve with changing social, cultural, economic, and political circumstances (Cho, 1997; Marchetti, 1993; Mok, 1998; Suzuki, 1989). For example, Asian and Asian American female’s stereotypes evolved with immigration, World War II, and alongside them the predominant model minority stereotype. While some recent scholarship regarding Asian American female stereotypes has continued to reinforce the Suzie Wong stereotype (Feng, 2002), other scholars (Ono & Pham, 2009; Shimizu, 2007) have noted that particular actresses tend to select roles that are not marked by characteristics of the Suzie Wong stereotype. Mediated portrayals which reify or reinforce stereotypes conform to common characteristics of Asian American stereotypes (Kawai, 2005; Nakayama; 1994). In other words, when mediated portrayals show audiences stereotyped characteristics, they may reinforce stereotypes. In contrast, portrayals that resist stereotypes contradict existing characteristics of Asian American stereotypes in an attempt to break down existing stereotypes (Kawai, 2005; Liu, 2000; Nakayama, 1994; Shimizu, 2007). Much of this research has been limited to film roles (Feng, 1995; 2002; Marchetti, 1993; Ono & Pham, 2009; Prasso, 2006; Shimizu, 2007), with only a few scholars focusing on television portrayals (Halualani & Vande Berge, 1998; Patton, 2001; Pegues; 2007; Porter, 1998; Shah 2006).

Scholars (Taylor & Stern, 1997; Yuan et al, 2005; Zhang; 2010) have argued that Asian American females are least represented in the media and most susceptible to media stereotyping.
As noted earlier when cultural groups are underrepresented in the media, the few existing portrayals that exist are especially relevant to understanding stereotypes in U.S. culture (Harwood & Anderson, 2002; Maestro & Greenberg, 2000; Mok, 1998, Taylor & Stern, 1997; Yuan et al., 2005; Zhang, 2010). Sandra Oh’s performance of Dr. Cristina Yang on the long-running primetime network drama, Grey’s Anatomy, has been the most dominant portrayal of an Asian American female on U.S. network television in the past ten years. While Oh’s character is considered a supporting role, she is listed second in a long list of supporting characters from a large ensemble cast. In 2006, Oh won the Golden Globe in the category of Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in a Series, Mini-Series or Motion Picture Made for Television and a Screen Actors Guild award for Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Drama Series (IMDB, n.d.c.). In addition, she is the only individual cast member who was nominated every year between 2005 and 2009 for an Emmy in the Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series category. As such, Oh’s performance of Yang is particularly relevant and worthy of consideration in the exploration of Asian American female stereotypes in U.S. media. Thus, the following research question is explored in this thesis:

RQ: To what extent does Sandra Oh’s portrayal of Dr. Cristina Yang in Grey’s Anatomy resist or reify U.S. media stereotypes of Asian American females?

In order to answer the research question, I provide an extensive literature review (Chapter 2), which explores the development of Asian and Asian American stereotypes in U.S. culture and the role of U.S. media in the development and reinforcement of stereotypes. In Chapter 3, I highlight the perspective employed to approach the research question, textual analysis, and detailed description of Grey’s Anatomy and Oh’s character. I conducted an analysis of selected episodes and identified key scenes where Oh’s character reified and/or resisted existing Asian and Asian American stereotypes (Chapter 4). Lastly, in Chapter 5, I discuss the results of my
study by reviewing the dialectical perspective, and how mediated portrayals partially resist characteristics of existing stereotypes. I also conclude with implications, limitations, and directions for future research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Stereotypes and media portrayals evolve alongside society based on changing social, economic, cultural, and political climates (Cho, 1997; Entman, 2006; Marchetti, 1993; Mok, 1998; Palumbo-Liu, 1999; Shimizu, 2007; Suzuki, 1989). The first mediated Asian stereotype, yellow peril, was based on a threat of Asian invasion of Western nations in the 1300’s (Chung, 1976; Hoppenstand, 1992; R. G. Lee, 1999; Marchetti, 1993). Centuries later, as political, economic, and social realities shifted, the most prevalent Asian and Asian American stereotype evolved to the model minority (R. G. Lee, 1999; Ono & Pham, 2009; Osajima, 2003; Suzuki, 2002; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010). Asian and Asian American females functioned both within and separately from the yellow peril and model minority stereotypes (Marchetti, 1993; Ono & Pham, 2009). Asian and Asian American hypersexualized female stereotypes evolved from the Dragon Lady (deviant, sexualized yellow peril) to Lotus Blossom and Geisha (submissive sexual playthings), to the Suzie Wong (obedient model minority).

Asian American females are particularly vulnerable to media stereotype because they are underrepresented, thus examining limited portrayals is important (Brooks & Hébert, 2006; Holtzman, 2000; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Mok, 1998; Patton, 2001; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Yuan et al., 2005; Zhang; 2010). Also, popular and visible characters, in long running and highly rated television series, are influential for reinforcing and/or changing stereotypes (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). Sandra Oh is in her seventh continuous season portraying Dr. Cristina Yang on Grey’s Anatomy. Oh is second in billing to the show’s title character. The show launched in 2005, and won over 18.5 million viewers during the premiere season (ABC, 2005). Oh is the most visible Asian American female in U.S. media and her portrayal of Yang is important to
examine with regard to stereotypes. To this end, I review literature regarding Asian and Asian American stereotypes (yellow peril and the model minority), specific female Asian American stereotypes (Dragon Lady, Lotus Blossom, Geisha, and Suzie Wong), and mediated stereotypes of Asian and Asian Americans (including the relevance of television) to explore if and how Oh’s performances in *Grey’s Anatomy* influence stereotypes of Asian American females.

**Asian and Asian American Stereotypes**

Prior to the formation of specific stereotypes, Said (1999) posited that the concept of Orientalism is how Western cultures define and depict Asian and Asian American individuals and societies. In other words, Orientalism is based on Western perception of Asians and Asian Americans (Said, 1999). Said (1999) also argued that Orientalism allowed Western constructions of Asians and Asian Americans based on physical and perceived distance. Thus, Asians and Asian Americans are portrayed as separate. Next, Said (1985) noted that Orientalism is not stable but rather based on changing political, economic, and cultural conditions. For example, Ono and Pham (2009) noted that Orientalism is based on “a European invention of what white Europeans believed about Asians, a European externalization, hence a fictionalized view of the world” (p. 43). Scholars (Chung, 1976; Hoppenstand, 1992; R. G. Lee, 1999; Marchetti, 1993) have argued that the yellow peril stereotype is rooted in the 1300’s when Western nations feared invasion by Genghis Khan and the Mongols. As social, economic, and political circumstances changed, scholars (R. G. Lee, 1999; Ono & Pham, 2009; Osajima, 2003; Suzuki, 2002; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010) have contended that the model minority stereotype became the most prevalent in U. S. society. Thus in the following section, I review the Asian and Asian American stereotypes of yellow peril and model minority.
Yellow Peril

The first notable Asian stereotype, yellow peril, was based on the perceived threat of Asians upon the western world (Abreu et al., 2003; Chung, 1976; Hoppenstand, 1992; MacDougall, 1999; Marchetti, 1993; Mok, 1998; Ono & Pham, 2009; Prasso, 2006; Shah, 2003). Asian and Asian American stereotypes are informed by a historical context that dates back to the 14th century when Asian hordes fighting under Genghis Khan threatened Western and Christian cultural annihilation (Chung, 1976; R. G. Lee, 1999; Hoppenstand, 1992; Marchetti, 1993). For example, R. G. Lee (1999) claimed that in the 1800’s, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany commissioned a painting that personified the nations of Europe as Christian female warriors who were targeted by the heathen Asians. Wilhelm sent reproductions of the paintings to European and North American heads of state to persuade world leaders to be prepared to defend against the Asian yellow peril (R. G. Lee, 1999).

Chinese immigrants brought the yellow peril stereotype the U.S. in the mid 1800’s, when they arrived to work the gold rush in northern California (Abreu et al., 2003; Hoppenstand, 1992; R. G. Lee, 1999). The Chinese became “an influx… of cheap, admirably efficient immigrant labor” (Hoppenstand, 1992, p. 282). Additionally, R. G. Lee (1999) noted that Western perceptions of Asians as “distant and exotic was displaced (but not completely replaced) by a construction of racial distance as present and threatening” (p. 28). As a result, white labor forces became resentful of the Chinese, and feared that the Asian workers would steal available jobs and eventually conquer the white man's world (Hoppenstand, 1992). Chinese workers maintained separate communities and as a result of little meaningful contact, they developed reputations as scheming, but being more productive than their white counterparts (Hoppenstand, 1992). Thus, white laborers became resentful of Chinese workers who were viewed as stealing available jobs.
After the successful attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese joined the Chinese as part of a monolithic Asian yellow peril (Hoppenstand, 1992; MacDougall, 1999). Yellow peril was incorporated into World War II propaganda and, as a result, the stereotype enabled a quick military response to the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor (Hoppenstand, 1992). Hoppenstand (1992) added that the byproduct of a yellow peril stereotype was the U.S. internment of Japanese-American men, women, and children during World War II.

Ono and Pham (2009) noted yellow peril is the longest standing Asian and Asian American stereotype in Western society. Ono and Pham (2009) further posited that the discourse surrounding yellow peril constructs Asians and Asian Americans as a silent invading threat to society in the U.S. For example, Marchetti (1993) added that “the yellow peril combines racists terror or alien creatures, sexual anxieties, and the belief that the West will be overpowered and enveloped by the irresistible, dark, occult forces of the East” (p. 2). Media scholars (R. G. Lee, 1999; Ono & Pham, 2009) contended that books, movies, and television shows surrounding the character of Dr. Fu Manchu portrayed Asians as the threat of yellow peril. As stereotypes evolved with societal changes and immigration patterns, the yellow peril Asian stereotype evolved to model minority, the current, pervasive, and dominant Asian American stereotype (Mok, 1998; Osajima, 2003; Paek & Shah, 2003; Suzuki, 2005; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010).

Model Minority

Stereotypes evolved with changes in social, political and economic circumstances (Cho, 1997; Entman, 2006; Marchetti, 1993; Mok, 1998; Palumbo-Liu, 1999; Shimizu, 2007; Suzuki, 1989). The Asian American stereotype of the model minority is based on quiet assimilation and
passivity (R. G. Lee, 1999; Ono & Pham, 2009; Osajima, 2003; Palumbo-Liu, 1994; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010). Osajima (2003) and Palumbo-Liu (1994) have noted that the first stories that praised Chinese and Japanese peoples appeared in U.S. popular press in 1960’s. Palumbo-Liu (1994) wrote that popular press articles regarding Asian Americans as the model minority “focused on higher educational achievement levels, high median family incomes, low crime rates, and the absence of juvenile delinquency and mental health problems” (p. 370). Later, in the 1980’s popular press writers published several articles that lauded Asian American success as based on characteristics of hard work, politeness, quietness, and intelligence (Mok, 1998; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010). Taylor and Stern (1997) explained that Asian Americans are stereotyped as mathematically skilled, intellectually gifted, over competent, excessively hard-working, and serious or emotionless. Further, Paek and Shah (2003) posited that Asian Americans are stereotyped as having superior work ethics and higher levels of economic and educational success. Scholars (Cohen, 1992; Delener & Neelankavil, 1990) have noted that the Asian Americans are constructed as the model minority and have a premium demographic profile that is marked by higher affluence and education.

The United States Census Bureau (USCB, 2003, 2004, 2009) reported that Asian Americans have the highest percentage, per capita, of earning bachelors (59.4%) and post-graduate (19.5%) degrees. Also, Nakayama (1998) quoted evidence in the popular press noting that Asians are the fastest growing race in corporate America, dominate in schools, and have the lowest arrest rates. The USCB (n.d.a.) also noted that Asian American males and females reported the highest per capita median income, in which Asian American females earned over 13% more than their white counterparts. Also, because Asian Americans are stereotyped as overly successful in the workplace, scholars (Mastro & Stern, 2003; Taylor & Stern, 1997; ) have
argued that Asian Americans are also portrayed as solely dedicated to their careers. For example, Taylor and Stern (1997) noted that Asian Americans are portrayed primarily as “all work and no play” (p. 57). Mastro and Stern (2003) added that existing portrayals “may serve to reinforce perceptions of Asian Americans as dedicated to work only” (p. 645). Thus Asian Americans, as model minorities, are portrayed as more dedicated to career successes instead of personal, romantic, and familial relationships.

Nakayama (1998) argued that Asian Americans are the superminority or model minority as a means to legitimize oppression of other racial minorities. For example, Asian successes were compared against “the failure of blacks in America. The message was clear: patient and quietly-determined hard work brings success; welfare dependence and sheer ‘laziness’ bring economic disaster” (Palumbo-Liu, 1994, pp. 310-311). In other words, Asian Americans, as the model minority, functioned to reinforce subordination of African Americans and Latinos. Also, Chinn (2002) noted that the model minority stereotype reinforced hegemonic ideologies of discrimination against African American and Latinos because Asians and Asian Americans have achieved greater success. Zhang (2010) added that the media promoted Asian Americans from an oppressed minority to becoming a model for other racially oppressed groups to emulate. In 1960’s popular press held Asians as a model of ethnic assimilation in contrast to growing demands of equality from African Americans (R. G. Lee, 1999). Additionally, R. G. Lee (1999) posited that Asian Americans are constructed as the model minority because of their political silence. For example, Japanese internees remained silent regarding 1940’s World War II interment experiences until the 1970’s, while other racial minorities loudly, vocally, and in some cases aggressively protested oppression or social injustices (R. G. Lee, 1999). Thus, that silence
further promoted the model minority myth of quiet self-reliance to overcome racism and achieve success (R. G. Lee, 1999).

A negative result of the model minority myth is that Asian American males and females are perceived as having superior work ethics, but are also seen as emotionally robotic, and socially incompetent nerds (K.-Y. Lee & Joo, 2005; Ono & Pham, 2009; Taylor & Lee, 1997; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010). K.-Y. Lee and Joo (2005) noted that Asian Americans are stereotyped as less socially skilled and socially awkward in social interactions. Also, Taylor et al., (2005) added that since Asian Americans are not portrayed in social settings, thus, they are stereotyped as unable to socialize and therefore socially incompetent and awkward (2005). As a result, Zhang (2010) found that the model minority is perceived as over competitive, overachieving, and academically successful but are socially awkward. For example, Zhang (2010) posited that “Asian Americans are more likely to be left out and excluded than other racial-ethnic groups in social interactions” (p. 34). Taylor and Lee (1997) contended that Asian American “may not be as likely to be viewed as socially adept or fun loving” (p. 244). Kitano and Daniels (2001) added that Asian Americans experienced the least amount of personal and economic discrimination but suffered more social discrimination as compared to African Americans and Latinos. Thus, Asian American males and females are challenged with competitive tensions from both majority and minority races in the United States.

As noted previously, the yellow peril stereotype was initiated by the threat of Asian conquest over Western civilizations in Europe and North America (Chung, 1976; Hoppenstand, 1992; R. G. Lee, 1999; Marchetti, 1993). The metaphor deployed by Kaiser Wilhelm was to protect Christian female warriors from rape by heathen, feral Asians (Marchetti, 1993). For example, Marchetti (1999) added that the threat of rape of white women by Asian and Asian
American men became a “threat posed to Western culture” (p. 3). As a means of dealing with that anxiety, Asian and Asian American men are stereotyped as inferior and asexual (Ono & Pham, p. 71). Nakayama (1994) concurred and found that Asian and Asian American men are emasculated as heterosexually impotent in mainstream films. For example, Nakayama (1994) concluded that Brandon Lee’s character in *Showdown in Little Tokyo* (1991) was portrayed as “emasculated, potentially gay, in his cheap, throwaway Asian body” (p. 175). Thus, in addition to the uniformity of Asian and Asian American stereotypes, Marchetti (1993) argued that sex and sexuality are integral factors of yellow peril and model minority discourse. In contrast, Asian and Asian American females are represented as hypersexualized, lascivious, and seductive (Marchetti, 1993; Shimizu, 2007).

### Asian and Asian American Female Stereotypes

Historically, Asian females functioned within and separately from the yellow peril and model minority stereotypes (Marchetti, 1993; Ono & Pham, 2009). Whereas Asian and Asian American males were emasculated, females were stereotyped as hypersexualized (Marchetti, 1998; Ono & Pham, 2009; Prasso, 2006; Shimizu, 2007). Shimizu (2007) defined hypersexuality as “the inscription of pathologic or non-normative sexuality as if it were a natural characteristic, one that is directly linked to a particular race and gendered ontology (p. 31). In other words, Asian American females are portrayed as hypersexualized because they are perceived to naturalize Western heterosexual exotic white male fantasies that are in contrast with standard white sexuality (Shimizu, 2007). Scholars (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Cho, 1997; Marchetti, 1993; Prasso, 2006; Ono & Pham, 2009; Shimizu; 2007) have identified four Asian and Asian American female stereotypes: Dragon Lady, Lotus Blossom, Geisha, and Suzie Wong. The
Dragon Lady evolved from the yellow peril stereotype where Asian females were perceived as scheming and sexually seductive (Abreu et al., 2003; Chung, 1976; Hoppenstand, 1992; MacDougall, 1999; Marchetti, 1993; Mok, 1998; Ono & Pham, 2009; Prasso, 2006; Shah, 2003). Next, the Lotus Blossom is sexually docile and compliant (Cho, 1997; Shah, 2003). Geishas were Lotus Blossoms with the singular desire, ability, and training to please men sexually (Feng, 1995; Hamamoto, 1994; Mok, 1998; Noda, 1989; Paik, 1971; Tajima, 1989). Lastly, the Suzie Wong stereotype was assimilated while retaining Geisha-like qualities of sexual submissiveness (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Cho, 1997; Uchida, 1998).

*The Cold, Vicious, Conniving, and Evil Dragon Lady*

The Dragon Lady stereotype is a female variation of the yellow peril stereotype (Ono & Pham, 2009; Prasso, 2006; Shah, 2003). The Dragon Lady is associated with ruthless, manipulative, diabolical, and icy female Asian power (Ono & Pham, 2009; Prasso, 2006). Ono and Pham (2009) posited that the Dragon Lady is an Asian female who uses her sexual allure and deceptiveness to achieve her selfish goals. Prasso (2006) noted that this stereotype is based on the Chinese Dowager Empress Tsu Hsi. Hsi ruled China from 1861 to 1880 and was elevated from the rank of Imperial concubine; she was in power during the failed Boxer Rebellion (Prasso, 2006). As a concubine and empress, Hsi lived in, ruled from, and rarely left the Forbidden City Chinese imperial palace (Prasso, 2006). Western press did not have access to Hsi, so their reports regarding the empress were based on one-sided information provided by leaders of the failed Boxer Rebellion (Prasso, 2006). As a result, Western press reports portraying Hsi as a sexually alluring, conniving, and evil murderess were based on biased
sources (Prasso, 2006). For example, fictionalized narratives, at the time, sexualized Hsi as a deviant who indulged in multiple partners and bestiality (Prasso, 2006).

Ono and Pham (2009) added that the Dragon Lady is a malicious dark force who uses deceit and sexuality to attain her selfish and malevolent goals. In more modern times, Prasso (2006) as well as Ono and Pham (2009) have contended that the Dragon Lady is exemplified by Lucy Liu in her performance of the ruthless Japanese Yakuza (organized crime) leader, O-Ren Ishii, in *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* (2003) because she is a viper who was not interested in sex, but uses her sexual ability to hold onto men to further her own ends. Ono and Pham (2009) added that Liu’s characters possessed “if not mystical, then unusual, inventive, and unique sexual abilities and potentially threatening sexual desires” (p. 70). As yellow peril was brought to the U.S. during the Californian gold rush, the female stereotypes further diverged from male stereotypes because Asian prostitutes were imported for white male patronage (Cho, 1997). Asian males were a competitive threat for jobs while Asian females became harmless and sexualized playthings (Cho, 1997).

*Sexually Submissive Yet Trained Lotus Blossoms and Geishas*

Contrasting the dominant Dragon Ladies are the seductive and submissive Lotus Blossom and Geisha stereotypes. Cho (1997) wrote that during the 1800’s Californian Gold Rush, Chinese women were imported as prostitutes to serve both white and Asian male clients. Similar to Chinese male workers, the Chinese women also lived in separate communities and had little non-professional contact with their white male clients. The Asian prostitutes were perceived to be more docile and compliant than domestic ones because the Asian women were imported as indentured and domesticated servants (Cho, 1997). In contrast to Shah (2003) claimed that
during this time, sexually submissive and compliant Asian females were stereotyped as delicate exotic flowers or Lotus Blossoms. In contrast to the Dragon Lady, Lotus Blossoms are sexually submissive, instead of sexually dangerous, to men (Ono & Pham, 2009). Mok (1997) added that Asian females, as Lotus Blossoms, became naturalized as exotic and sexual playthings who were designed for male sexual fulfillment. Sue and Kitano (1973) posited that Asian females, as Lotus Blossoms, were portrayed as attractive, servile, and dainty. Ono and Pham (2009) added that Lotus Blossoms were subservient and willingly sacrificed themselves to please men. In other words, the Lotus Blossom existed solely to please men. In popular culture, Puccini’s Cio-Cio San exemplified the Lotus Blossom stereotype in Madam Butterfly (Marchetti, 1993). So, in the 19th Century, Lotus Blossoms were normalized as a dominant media stereotype because other portrayals did not counteract the images circulated in Madam Butterfly (Holtzman. 2000). Thus, Asian females were perceived to naturally more subservient to male desires than their white female counterparts.

The Lotus Blossom stereotype evolved to Geisha after America's victory over Japan during the Second World War (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Kwan, 1998; Mok, 1998; Nakayama, 1994; Shah, 2003). Mok (1998) noted that the most prevalent stereotype Asian female stereotype during the 1950’s was the subservient Geisha. In addition to the naturally subservient Lotus Blossoms, Geishas were courtesans and sexualized dolls, specially trained to please men (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Kwan, 1998; Nakayama, 1994; Mok, 1998; Shah, 2003). Mok (1998) described the Geisha image as the specially trained Japanese females “whose only desire was to selflessly cater to the whims of men” (pp. 191-192). Mok (1998) added that the Geisha stereotype was further reinforced by American servicemen returning from overseas duty. Gossett and Byrne (2002) concurred and wrote that “American military men stationed
overseas brought back expectations of conquest as well as stereotypes about Asian females being cute, doll-like, and unassuming, with extraordinary sexual powers” (p. 702). As a result, Asian females became mediated and subsequently stereotyped as submissively exotic and erotic creatures with special training, and desire to please men (Feng, 1995; Hamamoto, 1994; Mok, 1998; Noda, 1989; Paik, 1971; Tajima, 1989).

**Suzie Wong**

After World War II, in the 1960’s, the Lotus Blossom and Geisha stereotypes evolved into the Suzie Wong stereotype where Asian American females were perceived as subservient, selfless and supportive, while being sexually skilled and compliant to white patriarchal values (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Cho, 1997; Uchida, 1998). In the Hollywood motion picture, The World of Suzie Wong (1960), the title character, Suzie Wong, is a smart and successful Chinese prostitute living in Hong Kong (Perceval & Quine, 1960). While traveling home on a ferry, Wong meets Robert Lomax, a white male American who moves to Hong Kong to seek inspiration and start a career as a painter. As the film progresses, Lomax falls in love with Wong after witnessing her self-sacrificial devotion and childlike innocence. Additionally, Wong is relentlessly supportive of Lomax in his new career as a painter. In the film, Wong also expresses her desire to move to America with Lomax. The film ends with Lomax breaking intercultural marriage customs by proposing to Wong and the two presumably move to the U.S. Wong’s sacrifice and devotion are rewarded when Lomax chooses Wong as a legitimate partner over a willing white woman (Feng, 2002). Wong willingly sacrifices her home, friends, relatives, identity, and culture to move to the U. S. and marry Lomax (Perceval & Quine, 1960). In other words, she privileged her romantic relationship with Lomax above all else.
The Suzie Wong stereotype differs from previous Asian female stereotypes because the Dragon Lady, Lotus Blossom, and Geisha are not integrated into American society. For example, the Dragon Lady lived and ruled in China. Next, Chinese prostitutes, as Lotus Blossoms, were imported during the Californian Gold Rush and lived in Chinese communities that were separate from white society. Geishas were Japanese courtesans and sexual playthings, and thus not suitable for marriage or integration into the U.S. (e.g., U.S. servicemen did not marry and bring Geishas home from Japan). In contrast, in *The World of Suzie Wong*, Lomax marries and brings Wong home as his spouse. Thus, the Suzie Wong stereotype is distinctive from the Dragon Lady, Lotus Blossom, and Geisha. Suzie Wong is Asian and American and thus is constructed as a legitimate romantic partner for a white man. Today, the Suzie Wong stereotype serves to pressure Asian American females to assimilate and accept the exotic hyper-sexualized image as well as normalization of their romantic relationships with white males (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010). As a result, Asian American females in relationships with white males are normalized and accepted, but also stereotyped as performing the Suzie Wong stereotype (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Cho, 1997). White men, who marry Asian American females, may also stereotyped as accepting the Suzie Wong stereotype.

To legitimize Suzie Wong stereotypes, where white men are idealized romantic partners for Asian American females, Asian and Asian American men are framed as undesirable because they are seen as emasculated or threatening (Mok, 1998; Nakayama, 1994; Ono & Pham, 2009). For example, Nakayama (1994) claimed that Brandon Lee’s Asian male character was portrayed as less virile than Dolph Lundgren’s white male one, in *Showtime in Little Tokyo* (1991). In contrast, white men are constructed as protectors of and legitimate mates to the naturally docile and submissive population of Asian American women (Ono & Pham, 2009). Mok (1998) argued
that some Asian Americans reported having difficulties engaging in romantic relationships with other Asian Americans due to the effects of the stereotypes. Mok (1998) also posited that Asian American women are assimilated and accepted into American society, and desire white men (instead of Asian American men) as romantic partners.

In addition, scholars (Balaji and Worawongs, 2010; Le, 2010; Nemoto, 2006) argued that Asian American women seek stability in the U.S. by entering into romantic relationships and marriages with white men. For example, Nemoto (2006) found that some Asian American women desired white men as a means to gain access to middle-class American status. As an example, Le (2010) reported that Chinese American women’s spouses tend to be of Chinese ancestry (44.6%) or white (40.4%), while Korean American women choose white husbands (60.8%) over Korean American ones (22.5%). Thus scholars (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Cho, 1997) have contended that some Asian American women enact the Suzie Wong stereotype by marrying white American men as a means to gain acceptance into the U.S. Additionally, some white men tend to often stereotype Asian American women as sexualized, alluring, exotic, assimilated, obedient, and legitimate romantic partners (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Cho, 1997; Feng, 1995; Hamamoto, 1994; Marchetti; 1993; Mok, 1998; Noda, 1989; Ono & Pham, 2009; Paik, 1971; Tajima, 1989; Uchida, 1998).

Cho (1997) found that Asian American females are targets of racialized sexual harassment resulting from subservient Suzie Wong hypersexualized stereotype because they are perceived as obedient, submissive, and hypersexualized. Cho added that racialized sexual harassment is based on a Suzie Wong stereotype where “the projection of a privately compliant and catering Asian femininity, predisposed to the assertion of white male desire….they will make good victims and not fight back” (p. 190). Lastly, Cho also noted that Asian and Asian
American females “are particularly valued in a sexist society because they provide the antidote to visions of liberated career women who challenge the objectification of women” (p. 192). Thus, Asian American females occupy “a subordinated position within a subordinated group” of the model minority (Cho, p. 184). Scholars (Cho, 1997; Marchetti, 1993) have argued that the Suzie Wong stereotype reifies white patriarchies in a sexually liberated U.S. culture, because an Asian American female’s worth is measured not in the workplace, but as fulfilling a white man’s sexual desires. As a result, the Asian American female’s stereotype “also assumes a ‘model minority’ function, for it deploys this idea of Asian American women to ‘white women,’ just as Asian Americans in general are frequently used in negative comparison with their ‘non-model’ counterparts, African Americans” (Cho, 1997, p. 192). In other words, Suzie Wong, as the current dominant and reinforced model minority Asian American female stereotype, is deployed to support masculine domination against U.S. women’s independence and feminist ideals (Cho, 1997; Marchetti, 1993). R. G. Lee (1999) added that Asian American females are assimilated into white patriarchies and become recognized as American females based on their love of and relationships with white males. Thus, Asian American females who enact the Suzie Wong stereotype reinforce white male patriarchy. As a result, stereotypes are relevant to both perceptions and behavior and thus, worthy of scholarly investigation. In the next section, I review how media is significant in the creation and reinforcement of Asian and Asian American stereotypes.

Mediated Stereotypes of Asian and Asian Americans

Asian and Asian American stereotypes, based in a history of Western Orientalism, were created and are perpetuated/reproduced in the media (Ono & Pham, 2009). Zhang (2010) argued
that most racial stereotypes “about Asian Americans are constructed, activated, and perpetuated by the media” (p. 20). Each of the Asian and Asian American female stereotypes are created and reinforced by the media (Ono & Pham, 2009; Prasso, 2006; Zhang, 2010). For example, Western press misrepresented the Empress Hsi to create the Dragon Lady stereotype (Prasso, 2006). The Dragon Lady, in turn, stereotype is reinforced in selected film and television roles portrayed by Lucy Liu (Ono & Pham, 2009; Prasso, 2006). Similarly, *Madam Butterfly* and the contemporary *Miss Saigon* exemplified the Lotus Blossom stereotype (Marchetti, 1993). Movies such as *Memoirs of a Geisha* re-circulated the Geisha stereotype. Lastly, addition, the Suzie Wong stereotype was reinforced by the major motion picture, *The World of Suzie Wong*, within the broader cultural context (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Cho, 1997).

As previously noted, Allport (1979) suggested that stereotypes exaggerated perceptions that are associated with a social group that shortcut thinking and perceptions. Ono and Pham (2009) argued that “representations of Asian Americans in the media also affect non-Asian and Asian Americans, they sometimes play a pedagogical role in (mis)educating people about Asians and Asian Americans” (p. 6). Also, media stereotypes regarding Asian Americans may be accepted as social reality because Asian Americans make up less than five percent of the population and are concentrated in few geographic locations such as New York, California, and Hawaii (K.-Y. Lee & Joo, 2005; USCB, n.d.b.; Zhang, 2010). So, many U.S. viewers do not have significant quality contact with Asian Americans and are heavily influenced by mediated stereotyped images (Holtzman, 2000; Zhang, 2010). Ono and Pham (2009) added that media images demonstrate “how people think about race….media representations help guide and regulate beliefs and actions of those within society” (p. 10). We live our color and as a result, stereotypes affect how members of the stereotyped social group are treated (Mitchell, 2005).
Despite Asian American cultural differences, scholars (Mok, 1998; Ono & Pham, 2009; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010) have argued that Asian Americans, in most instances, are not differentiated in media portrayals. For example, Mok posited that media portrayals of Asian Americans are uniform regardless of increasing numbers of Asian immigrants as well as their cultural diversity and varied countries of origin. Scholars (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Ono & Pham, 2009; Shah, 2003) have added that Asian marked roles in American media can be played by interchangeable and substitutable Asian American actors because the portrayals are remarkably similar. Kawai (2005) commented that existing racial stereotypes and media roles do not differentiate “Chinese from Japanese, or Koreans from Vietnamese” (p. 111). For example, Nakayama (1994) noted that placing Brandon Lee, a biracial Chinese-white American, as a Japanese character was indicative of how the differences between Asian ethnicities are overlooked by both Hollywood and mainstream U. S. society. In short, Asians Americans are portrayed as monolithic, with a singular set of stereotyped characteristics (R. G. Lee, 1999).

As noted previously, scholars (Cho, 1997; Marchetti, 1993; Mok, 1998; Palumbo-Liu, 1999; Shimizu, 2007; Suzuki, 1989) have contended that media portrayals and stereotypes evolve with changing social, cultural, economic, and political circumstances. Shimizu (2007) argued that media images are unstable representations and interpretations change with context and culture. For example, Entman (2006) noted that African American media stereotypes have evolved alongside societal changes. Despite changes in society, scholars have posited that Asian American female media stereotypes have been stable, reinforced and re-portrayed since the 1960’s because the portrayed images conform to existing stereotypes (Feng, 2002; Mok, 1998; Suzuki, 1989; Wu, 2002). However, since the 1960’s, social, cultural, and political circumstances have changed thus a continued study of media representations is essential to
understanding changing perceptions and beliefs regarding Asian Americans (Pegues, 2007; Shimizu, 2007).

Regardless of stable or changing representations and interpretations, scholars (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Mok, 1998; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Yuen, Chin, Deo, Lee & Milman, 2005; Zhang; 2010) have posited that Asian Americans are also proportionally underrepresented in American media. For example, Yuen et al. (2005) found that Asian American actors are featured less prominently than actors of majority and other minority races. Additionally, scholars (R. G. Lee, 1999; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010) have claimed that Asian Americans are portrayed as peripheral and invisible characters in mainstream U.S. media. Mastro and Greenberg (2000) noted that Asian Americans represented 1% of individual primetime television characters as compared to 4% of the U.S. population. Additionally, researchers (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Mok, 1998; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Yuen et al., 2005; Zhang, 2010) claimed that Asian American females are the least visible in American media, and thus overlooked in scholarly research regarding media. As Cho (1997) claimed, Asian American females “occupied a subordinated position within a subordinated group” (p. 184). For example, Taylor and Stern (1997) wrote Asian American females are “the least visible, least important, and least multidimensional” (p. 58). Taylor and Stern (1997) added that the media underrepresentation may indicate that U. S. society overlooks Asian American females in general.

Representation in U.S. media is not an automatic indicator of societal acceptance (Greenberg, Mastro, & Brand, 1994; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). For example, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) found that African Americans are overrepresented in primetime television. Despite overrepresentation, the social group is not portrayed positively, thus, the details of the mediated images are important to consider. When represented, African Americans are portrayed
negatively and are least respected (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). For example, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) noted that African Americans were portrayed as the most disheveled and judged as the laziest. In addition, Greenberg et al. (1994) noted that despite primetime television overrepresentation, the negative portrayals lead audiences to judge African Americans as the least professional. Thus, the quality of media representations is important to consider when examining mediated stereotypes.

As a result of the lack of representation, and the qualities of the representations that do exist, Asian American females are most vulnerable to media stereotyping and the few media representations are more likely to influence audience perceptions of Asian American females (Brooks & Hébert, 2006; Holtzman, 2000; Patton, 2001; Taylor & Stern, 1997). For example, Brooks and Hébert (2006) noted that the few media representations are “crucial because stereotypes of underrepresented people produce socialization in audiences that unconsciously take this misinformation as truth” (p. 302). Holtzman (2000) added that audiences are more influenced by mediated images of underrepresented minorities because the few portrayals are easily and unconsciously internalized. For example, Patton (2001) argued the limited and even singular portrayals of Asian American females are especially influential on mainstream audiences because the mediated images are not easily counteracted by many other mediated images of Asian American females. Thus, individual characters are especially important to examine when social groups are underrepresented in the media (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Patton, 2001).

Toward this end, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) argued for privileging specific popular television characters when examining underrepresented social groups because the popular characters are most visible and are most influential to stereotypes. In other words, individual
popular characters in a television series “may provide the strongest opportunity to create, reinforce and/or alter social perceptions” (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000, p. 701). Thus, I argue that Oh’s portrayal in Grey’s Anatomy is relevant in an examination of Asian American female mediated stereotypes because her character is one of the most visible Asian American females in primetime television. Oh is second billed in Grey’s Anatomy, a long running, primetime broadcast series with a viewing audience averaging of 18.5 million per episode during the 2004-2005 premiere season (ABC, 2005). Next, I review the relevance of television, as a form of media, in the creation and reinforcement of stereotypes.

Relevance of Television

According to A. C. Neilson (2009), audiences in the U.S. watch 153 hours of live television a month compared to approximately 3 hours each via the Internet or mobile phone. Gerbner (1988) added “television is a centralized system of story-telling…its drama, commercials, news, and other programs bring a relatively coherent system of images and messages into every home” (p. 177). In addition, Fiske (1994) contended that media “affect and produce the reality that they mediate” instead of simply representing reality (p. xv). As a result, Fiske (1994) concluded that “we live in a world of media events and media realities” (p. xv). In other words, the images we see on television do not portray a window on reality, but is a factor in constructing the social reality in which audiences live and interact.

Shanahan and Morgan (1999) wrote that cultivation is concerned with how systems of consistent meanings are created in the television medium. Gerbner (1998) argued that entertainment media is the primary and most common source of socialization so television viewing cultivates a symbolic through which structure to interpret everyday life. Audiences can
develop inaccurate perceptions based on television viewership (Gerbner, 1998). Thus over time, television cultivates viewers’ perceptions of reality (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). For example, Zhang (2010) found that cultivated media images influenced respondents’ perceptions of Asian and Asian Americans as competitive threats and social rejects. In addition, Taylor et al. (2005) noted that “repeated exposure to stereotyped media portrayals can lead society at large to accept the stereotype as being reflective of reality” (p. 171).

Taylor et al. (2005) posited that cultivated images of Asian and Asian Americans may reinforce stereotypes of being successful, hardworking, technologically savvy, as quiet, passive, and lacking socialization.

Brummett (2006) added that televisions are staples in American homes and therefore provide a more intimate experience than movie theaters. Brummett (2006) also claimed that the smaller screens better suited to portraying individuals, often in close-up of faces, thereby privileging individual performances. For example, on a television, individuals may become too small in a large panoramic shot (Brummett, 2006). In contrast, on movie screens close-up of faces will appear too large for audience comfort (Brummett, 2006). Thus, television audiences are influenced by individuals portrayed on smaller, home-based television screens. Also, audiences may perceive closer relationships with television stars resulting from repetitive exposures (Brummett, 2006). In addition, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) privileged individual popular characters when examining underrepresented ethnic minorities. Thus, focusing on individual portrayals, such as Oh’s seven years as a leading character in the highly rated, primetime television network series, *Grey’s Anatomy*, is significant to an examination of Asian American female stereotypes.

So, as a dominant medium, television helps U.S. audiences to make sense of larger social issues by focusing on individuals represented on television. Scholars (Gerbner, 1998; Gerbner &
Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 1994; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999) have argued that television entertainment media is the primary and most common source of socialization. Television viewing cultivates a symbolic structure to interpret everyday life and we can develop inaccurate perceptions based on what we watch on television. Thus, over time, television cultivates viewers’ perceptions of reality (Gerbner, 1998; Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 1994). In other words, Gerbner (1995) argued that television media has “the most pervasive, inescapable, policy-directed, common and stable cultural contributions to what large communities absorb over long periods of time” (p. 552). However, as stereotypes evolve with society, researchers (Gerbner, 1998; Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 1994) have posited that cultivation is not a unidirectional process. Instead, media portrayals are not stable but change as “social relations may, of course, lead to a change in the system of messages and consequently to the cultivation of new and different perspectives” (Gerbner, 1998, pp. 180-181). Gerbner (1998) noted that cultivation is not static, but part of a continuous, ongoing, and dynamic process where the media message and cultural context interact.

Television portrayals of Asian and Asian American females have also evolved. *All-American Girl* (1994-1995) was the first network and primetime comedy to feature an all Asian American cast and the plotlines were loosely based on life experiences of comedian, Margaret Cho (Ono & Pham, 2009; Shah, 2003). Casting conformed to monolithic and undifferentiated portrayals between various Asian ancestries because the onscreen Korean American family was portrayed by Korean, Japanese and Chinese American actors (Ono & Pham, 2009; Shah, 2003). Shah (2003) added that *All-American Girl* “producers treated all Asians interchangeably” (p. 5). Next, Shah (2003) noted that the producers created *All-American Girl* based on what they “thought would draw a large racially diverse audience: an assimilated, well-adjusted family,
experiencing the same problems and dealing with the same issues as any other American family” (p. 5). Halualani and Vande Berge (1998) found that some respondents viewed the show as representing a positive and non-stereotypical family similar to the *Cosby Show*. Additionally, some respondents noted that Cho’s portrayal of Margaret Kim countered the stereotype of the Lotus Blossom and broke barriers [racial media](Halualani & Vande Berge, 1998).

Despite positive intents, Shah (2003) noted problems with the show. In *All-American Girl*, Shah (2003) posited that the producers made few references to Korean food, language, and traditions. When traditional food was served in the show, the food items were Chinese instead of Korean (Shah, 2003; Southgate, 1994). Additionally, Halualani and Vande Berge (1998) posited that *All-American Girl* reaffirmed white patriarchal superiority combined with a non-threatening Asian inferiority. The show launched in 1995 and was cancelled after two seasons and 19 episodes (Ono & Pham, 2009; Shah, 2003). During the short television run, the show faced low ratings combined with weak reviews (Ono & Pham, 2009; Shah, 2003). Shah (2003) attributed the cancellation to a mainstream audience that rejected the show’s stereotype breaking premise. However, Halualani and Vande Berge (1998) found that Asian American audiences also rejected the show for conforming to model minority stereotypes of overcoming racial oppression.

*ER* (1994-2009) also launched in the same year as *All-American Girl*. Michael Crichton created the show and the primetime broadcast network drama revolved around emergency room doctors in a Chicago-based hospital (IMDB, n.d.a.). Ming-Na Wen was featured in the premiere season, left the show, and then returned for the 2000 through 2004 seasons for a total of 113 episodes over six seasons (IMDB, n.d.a.). In the show, Porter (1998) wrote that Wen’s portrayal or Dr. Deb (Jing-Mei) Chen confirmed yellow peril stereotypes. For example, in one key scene Chen becomes jealous of the lead character, Dr. John Carter (Noah Wiley), because he is granted
permission to perform a solo procedure. Chen bribes a nurse to leave the surgery space so that she could also perform a solo procedure. Afterwards, Chen is noted as stating that she was more interested in the competition and medical science, thus confirming her threat to patients. In other words, Ono and Pham (2009) argued that “patients will be in danger because, such doctors do not really care about the patient’s life” (p. 84). Wen started the show as Dr. Deb Chen, however, when she returned to the show in 2000 her character was renamed to Jing-Mei Chen to assert her Asian identity, reifying the alienness of Asian Americans (R. G. Lee, 1995; Ono & Pham. 2009).

Next, scholars (Brooks & Hébert, 2006; Ono & Pham, 2009; Prasso, 2006; Shimizu, 2007) have contended that Lucy Liu’s portrayal of Ling Woo in *Ally McBeal* (1997-2002), is consistent with the Dragon Lady stereotype. Brooks and Hébert (2006) noted that Liu’s character “is the epitome of the stereotypical Dragon Lady when she growls or enters the scene to music associated with the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*” (p. 302). She was cold, abrasive, and “the classic stereotype of Dragon Lady” (Prasso, 2006, p. 72). She also had mysterious sexual abilities that other females on the show did not possess (Brooks & Hébert, 2006; Ono & Pham, 2009). Scholars (Brooks & Hébert, 2006; Ono & Pham, 2009; Prasso, 2006; Shimizu, 2007) have contended that Woo also portrayed the negative aspects of the Dragon Lady dangerous stereotype. Woo treats men with disdain and uses sex as a tool to hold on to men despite her contempt of them, and her sexuality is dangerous (Ono & Pham, 2009). Shimizu (2007) described Liu's portrayal of Woo as cold, frigid, ferocious, and her sexuality is uncontrollable, causes havoc. In the first season, *Ally McBeal* ranked 59th in Nielsen ratings, earning an average of 11.4 million viewers per episode (*Entertainment Weekly*, 1998). Despite low show rankings, Patton (2000) posited that Woo was detrimental to Asian American females.
because she was the only dramatic Asian American character on mainstream television at that time.

After *Ally McBeal* ended in 2002, another Asian American female portrayal gained prominence. Pegues (2008) noted that Grace Park’s portrayal of Sharon Valerii in two different cyborg incarnations reified both the Dragon Lady (character named Boomer) and self sacrificial Suzie Wong (character named Athena) female stereotypes in *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009). In contrast to *Ally McBeal*, *Battlestar Galactica* was on Syfy, a cable/satellite channel and earned less than three million viewers per episode. In the series, the cyborgs commit genocide and attempt to annihilate the human race. As Boomer, she engages in forbidden sexual liaisons with a junior officer thereby reifying the deviant sexualized nature of Dragon Ladies. In addition, Boomer is unaware of her cyborg (traitor) nature. She is a sleeper agent and unknowingly plants explosives to sabotage the space ship; she also attempts to assassinate the fleet’s military leader and commanding officer. As a Dragon Lady, Boomer’s hidden and threatening nature is out of control. As Athena, she was originally sent to seduce a stranded human officer stranded in order to create a human-cyborg hybrid baby. Park, as Athena, functions as a prostitute, similar to Suzie Wong, and falls in love with her white male lover. Athena betrays her cyborg race her love for her male (white) human “demands her alliance to humans…a cultural/ethnic renunciation” (p. 193). As a result of her self-sacrificial allegiance to her white male mate, Athena is assimilated into human society. Athena also sacrifices herself in order to rescue their hybrid child. Thus, Park’s portrayal reifies both Dragon Lady and Suzie Wong stereotypes. However, scholars (Ono & Pham, 2009; Shimizu, 2007) have argued that noted that not all Asian American female television portrayals conform to existing racial stereotypes.

In most cases, scholars (Feng, 2002; Ono & Pham, 2009; Patton, 2001; Prasso, 2005)
have found that in the past, Asian American female portrayals in media conform to existing stereotypes. However, Shimizu (2007) noted that existing Asian and Asian American female stereotypes do not adequately address Oh’s film portrayals. For example, in Under the Tuscan Sun (2003), Shimizu (2007) noted that Oh’s character was not marked by race in that she did not use an Asian accent. Additionally, Oh’s character in Sideways (2004) defies the subservient Asian American female stereotype because in that, Oh’s character does not “die for the white man who relegates her love as worthless. Instead, she will beat him up until he bleeds” (Shimizu, 2007, p. 268). In other words, Oh’s characters’ identities were not defined by her romantic relationships with white males. As a result, some of Oh’s film character roles do not conform to existing Asian American female stereotypes (Shimizu, 2007).

Mitchell (2005) added that different media such as television and movies should be examined individually because media are “environments where images live” (p. 203). In other words, Oh’s television performances should be examined independently from her film roles. Also, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) contended that individual popular characters, of underrepresented social groups, in a television series are most influential to creating, maintaining, and reinforcing stereotypes. Oh is in her seventh year on the broadcast primetime television series, Grey’s Anatomy. The show is highly rated and Oh’s role as Yang has earned a Golden Globe as well as multiple Emmy nominations for her portrayal. Thus, an examination of Oh’s performances on Grey’s Anatomy is especially relevant in understanding the development of Asian American female stereotypes.

Rationale

Stereotypes are mental pictures and act as selective and screening devices to simplify
perceptions (Allport, 1979; Lippman, 2007). In addition, stereotypes are especially influential and accepted as social reality when individuals do not have significant contact with the stereotyped group (R. G. Lee, 1999; K.-Y. Lee & Joo, 2005; Suzuki, 1989; Zhang, 2010). Holtzman (2000) added that mediated stereotypes are especially influential on “viewers who have little or no contact with Asian Americans in their real life….and therefore [have] no tools to recognize and challenge the messages in film and television” (p. 224). Asian Americans comprise less than 5% of American population and they are concentrated in specific geographic regions in the United States. Thus, many audience members in the U.S. do not experience real-life interactions with Asian and Asian Americans and rely on media portrayals to construct beliefs as well as form perceptions regarding Asians and Asian Americans (Holtzman, 2000; R. G. Lee, 1999; K.-Y. Lee & Joo, 2005; Suzuki, 1989; Zhang, 2010). Scholars (S. Lee, 1996; Mok, 1998; Ono & Pham, 2009; Suzuki, 1989; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010) have argued that U.S. media produce, circulate, and reinforce Asian and Asian American stereotypes. For example, Ono and Pham (2009) suggested mediated these images, “can have a long-term psychosocial impact on both Asians and Asian Americans and non-Asians and non-Asian Americans. Therefore it is important to analyze the images about Asian Americans created and distributed by those outside of the community” (p. 88). Thus, scholarship regarding U. S. media stereotypes is especially relevant to perceptions and behaviors related to Asian and Asian Americans.

In addition to being underrepresented, Asian American mainstream media portrayals are undifferentiated and uniform (Taylor & Stern, 1997; Yuan et al, 2005; Zhang; 2010). So, examining the few media portrayals are significant to scholarship regarding Asian Americans (Brooks & Hébert, 2006; Holtzman, 2000; Patton, 2001; Taylor & Stern, 1997). Asian American
females are additionally disadvantaged due to their gender and are least represented in U.S. mainstream media (Taylor & Stern, 1997; Yuan et al, 2005; Zhang; 2010). As a result, mediated stereotypes of Asian American females are especially problematic in that so few representations exist and they are likely to be stereotyped. Additionally, Allport (1979) contended that entire groups are marked by stereotypes regarding individual members of that group. Next, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) encouraged scholars to privilege individual characters when studying ethnic minorities that are underrepresented in the media.

Scholars (Feng, 2002; Ono & Pham, 2009; Patton, 2001; Prasso, 2005) have found Asian American female media portrayals confirm existing stereotypes. One of the most visible Asian American females currently in the media is Oh. Scholars (Ono & Pham, 2009; Shimizu, 2007) have argued that existing media stereotypes of Asian American females do not adequately account for Oh’s film performances. However, Under the Tuscan Sun (2003), Oh’s most prevalent performance is in television portraying Yang, in Grey’s Anatomy, a primetime, network, long running, and highly rated broadcast television drama which has received limited scholarly examination (Ono & Pham, 2009). According to the American Broadcasting Company (ABC, 2005), during the premiere 2004-2005 season, Grey’s Anatomy was the ninth ranked primetime drama and earned an average of 18.4 million viewers each episode. Oh is also second billed to the show’s title character and is in all 146 episodes (IMDB, n.d.b.). In contrast, Ally McBeal earned less than 12 million viewers (per episode) during the premiere season and Battlestar Galactica earned less than 3 million viewers per episode throughout the show’s run (Entertainment Weekly, 1998; Franklin, 2008). All-American Girl was plagued by poor ratings during its 19 episode, two year run (Ono & Pham, 2009; Shah, 2003). Wen was not in ER for the majority of the show (IMDB, n. d. a.) Thus Oh’s portrayal on Grey’s Anatomy is more
prominent than Liu’s in *Ally McBeal*, Cho’s in *All-American Girl*, Wen’s in *ER*, and Park’s on *Battlestar Galactica*. Thus, Oh’s representation of Yang is the most visible, and potentially influential, portrayal of an Asian American female in the past ten years. As a result, I propose the following research question:

RQ: To what extent does Sandra Oh’s portrayal of Dr. Cristina Yang in *Grey’s Anatomy* resist or reify U.S. media stereotypes of Asian American females?
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Over the past decades, the intercultural studies discipline has matured and scholars have
gained interest in Asian American studies (Martin & Nakayama, 1999; Ono & Nakayama, 2004).
Martin and Nakayama (1999) identified four research paradigms for intercultural scholarship
based on the intersection of subjective and objective dimensions: functionalist, interpretive,
critical humanist, and critical structuralist. Within these paradigms, intercultural Asian American
scholars (Balaji & Worawongs 2010; Paek & Shah, 2003; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010)
have focused on comparing stereotypes and perceptions to mediated portrayals. In the next
section, I review Martin and Nakayama’s (1999) four paradigms.

Four Paradigms of Intercultural Studies

As intercultural studies have matured within the communication studies discipline,
Martin and Nakayama (1999) identified four research paradigms based on an intersection of two
dimensions, subjective and objective. The authors wrote, “objectivism assumes a separation of
subject (researcher) and object (knowledge), a belief in an external total world and human
behavior that can be known, described, and predicted, and the use of research methodology that
maintains the subject-object separation” (p. 2). In contrast, subjective scholarship views reality
as internal and “subjective with us, thus, human behavior is creative, voluntary, and discoverable
by ideographic methods” (p. 2). Based on these two dimensions, the authors identified four
paradigms for cultural and communication research: functionalist (predictive, social scientific),
interpretive (emergent patterns, qualitative), critical humanist (ideological domination) and,
critical structuralist (dominant social structure).
In the functionalist paradigm, scholars seek to extend interpersonal communication theories into the intercultural context (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989; Martin & Nakayama, 1999). From this perspective, the relationship between culture and communication is causal (Martin & Nakayama, 1999). For example, Zhang (2010) sought to extend cultivation theory by linking media content to the acquisition and recirculation of stereotypes. Using questionnaires based on prepared scenarios, Zhang (2010) found that respondents internalized stereotypes and perceived Asians and Asian Americans as most likely to succeed in academia, but least socially adaptive, and therefore most rejected as social peers and friends. In other words, the repetitive portrayals and images in U.S. media cultivated stereotypes and caused perceptions, leading to behavior toward Asians and Asian Americans (Zhang, 2010).

Next, in the interpretive paradigm, “researchers are concerned with understanding the world as it is, and describing the subjective, creative communication of individuals, usually using qualitative research methods” (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, p. 7). Paek and Shah (2003) analyzed magazine advertising “to investigate more deeply and critically then past research how Asian Americans and other minorities are portrayed” (p. 227). Paek and Shah (2003) situated their work in racial ideology and stereotyping, but used a qualitative textual analysis methodology for the study. Paek and Shah (2003) concluded that racial ideology and hierarchy regarding Asian Americans is reflected within magazine advertisements. In addition, the authors (Paek & Shah, 2003) noted that the advertising creative processes are also racialized, thus advertisements both create, as well as reflect, ideology.

The next two paradigms are critically based and contest the relationship between culture and communication. The first is a critical humanist perspective where researchers view culture as contested sites of struggle (Martin & Nakayama, 1999). In other words, critical humanists seek
to “articulate the ways in which humans can transcend and reconfigure the larger social frameworks that construct cultural identities in intercultural settings” (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, p. 8). One example of this work is how Nakayama and Krizek (1995) sought to “disrupt the power that resides in white’s discursive space” identifying how whiteness discourse operates to create identities of racial minorities (p. 292). Nakayama and Krizek (1995) argued that a centered whiteness “is constructed through the rhetoric of whiteness. There is no ‘true essence’ to ‘whiteness’; there are only historically contingent constructions of that social location” (p. 293). Nakayama and Krizek (1995) concluded that the construction of whiteness and white identities also affect the construction of identities of minorities.

Also in this tradition, Nakayama (1994) explored Asian masculinity by conducting a textual analysis of Showdown in Little Tokyo (1991). Nakayama (1994) concluded that Asian masculinity is defined in contrast to white heterosexual masculine identity, which serves as the ”source of representational power” (p. 176). Thus, Asian males are emasculated by white male patriarchy (Nakayama, 1994). Additionally, Nakayama (1994) called for scholars to seek points of dialogue and convergence amongst the diversity of critical scholars. Next, Balaji and Worawongs (2010) utilized textual analysis of television advertisement in order to understand the normative assumptions of romantic relationships between white males and Asian American females. Balaji and Worawongs (2010) concluded that Asian American female and white male intercultural relationships are viewed as the norm and ideal. As a result, Balaji and Worawongs (2010) concluded that Asian American females have a more difficult time resisting gender/cultural norms and stereotypes.

Lastly, Martin and Nakayama (1999) noted that the critical structuralist paradigm advocates change by concentrating on the “structural relations imposed by the dominant
structure” of culture (p. 10). In other words, critical structuralist scholars perceived that structures create and reproduce power relations. For example, Hasinoff (2008) conducted a discourse analysis of one season of *America’s Top Model* to investigate the television show’s neoliberal construction of race (structural) interpretation of race. Hasinoff (2008) found that by choosing an African American and urban winner, the show demonstrated that disadvantaged minorities can seemingly transcend structural racial oppression by upholding neoliberal ideology. Hasinoff (2008) noted that women of color on the show are doubly commodified because they uphold neoliberal ideals and have greater market appeal. For example, Hasinoff (2008) concluded that the “women of color are ideal neoliberal citizens in that their racialization is produced as flexible and easily manipulated so that they can sell another commodity along with their physical features” (p. 340). Also, Pegues (2007) analyzed the construction of an Asian American female character in *Battlestar Galactica* to discover a new articulation of the racialized female subject within white patriarchy. Pegues (2007) concluded that the show reified existing gendered tropes of domestication and sexuality. In the four paradigms (functionalist, interpretive, critical humanist, and critical structuralist), I seek to utilize the interpretative perspective to examine emergent patterns of Asian American female stereotypes influenced by popular U.S. culture by examining Oh’s performance on *Grey’s Anatomy*. Thus, I briefly review media analyses from the interpretive paradigm of cultural communication.

I am interested in understanding the emergent patterns that are in the reciprocal relationship between culture and communication as well as how intercultural communication research is relevant to the experiences of everyday life (Martin & Nakayama, 1999). The authors posited that the interpretive paradigm of research within intercultural studies is based on philosophies such as symbolic interactionism and phenomenology. As a means to understand the
world, interpretive scholars view culture as socially constructed and experienced. Instead of predictive function, interpretivists view culture and communication as “more reciprocal than causal, where culture may influence communication but it is also constructed and it acted through communication” (p. 6). Thus, cultivation theory is privileged in interpretive intercultural studies because the theory aligns with interpretivist goals of understanding. In addition, the scholars also noted that interpretivists recognize that research within intercultural communication “should be more relevant to everyday lives, that theorizing and research should be firmly based in experience” (p. 8).

Martin and Nakayama (1999) added that research can be conducted using an interparadigmatic borrowing approach because the position “recognized as potential complementary contributions from other paradigms” (p. 11). However, Martin and Nakayama (1999) posited that researchers who borrow from another paradigm are still firmly situated in the primary paradigm. I am interested in the construction of identities and transcendence of stereotypes; as such, I situate my study in the interpretivist perspective and borrow from the critical humanist paradigm. Martin and Nakayama (1999) argued that the critical humanist approach has theoretical commonality with the interpretive paradigm because “both assume that reality is socially constructed” (p. 8). In addition, both paradigms consider popular culture, such as television entertainment media, as appropriate and important texts of research. Next, I will review one of the methods, textual analysis, used by scholars (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Nakayama, 1994; Paek & Shah, 2003) when conducting analyses from both interpretative and critical humanist perspectives.
Textual Analysis

A. McKee (2003) argued that textual analysis as methodology “for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are and how they fit in to the world in which they live” (p. 1). In other words, textual analysis treats texts as clues of how individuals make sense of the world around them (A. McKee, 2003). As a result, this methodology is appropriate for an interpretive intercultural study. In fact, A. McKee (2003) defined textual analysis as “whenever we produce an interpretation of something’s meaning – a book, television programme, film, magazine” (p. 4). Paek and Shah (2003) concurred and added that textual analysis involves interpretation that is based on intricate, multi-faceted, and deep readings of the selected text.

Additionally, A. McKee (2003) posited that textual analysis is deployed to understand how “we make sense of reality that we live through our cultures” (p. 10). In other words, textual analysis seeks to understand how culture is experienced. Also, Harwood (2000) suggested that textual analysis is useful to discover how media portrays social groups in stereotypical and counter-stereotypical ways. Additionally, as cultures change, textual analysis is concerned with discovering changing sensemaking practices. Thus, textual analysis is appropriate for an examination of intercultural communication and changing stereotypes, situated in the interpretivist paradigm. Also, A. McKee (2003) posited that textual analysis is appropriate for cultural media studies because researchers seek to measure texts, such as ones generated in popular culture, against other systems of meaning such as constructed reality and stereotypes. Additionally, Ono and Pham (2009) noted that media is especially influential in how “people make sense of themselves and their relationships with others” (p. 3). Thus, textual analysis is an appropriate methodology for analyzing mediated portrayals.
However, A. McKee (2003) suggested that “there’s no single correct interpretation of any text.” (p. 63). Thus, academic studies using the textual analysis are interested in finding likely interpretations instead of discovering the singular correct one (A. McKee, 2003). Additionally, interpretations should not be arbitrary. To address these issues, A. McKee (2003) argued that reasonable interpretations are based on the context as well as comparative evidence. As a result, reviewing existing stereotypes is reasonable to interpreting new and emergent stereotypes. For example, a review of Asian and Asian American stereotypes as well as Asian American female stereotypes is helpful to understanding emergent stereotypes for this social group. Thus, a textual analysis of Oh’s character in *Grey’s Anatomy* is appropriate to understanding how mediaportrays Asian American females.

Paek and Shah (2003) used an in-depth textual analysis methodology to discover connotative and denotative aspects of magazine advertisements to understand how racial meanings are constructed. To ensure a deep reading, the authors focused aspects such as characters, settings, message framing, word choice, actor placement, narratives, as well as how models and products were connected. In addition, the scholars identified “various representational devices such as icons, indices, and symbols that shape the construction of racial meaning” (p. 229). In this study, the authors also mentioned ideological concerns, but situated their methodology in qualitative textual analysis. In other words, their study was situated in the interpretive paradigm while borrowing from the critical humanist perspective.

Next, I will briefly review how Balaji and Worawongs (2010) utilized textual analysis of television advertisements to examine implied and explicit romantic relationships between white men and Asian American women. The authors built off of previous research conducted by using textual analysis as a methodology. The researchers argued that media is pervasive and that
stereotypes are reinforced by media as a means to convey messages quickly. Thus, the scholars deployed a textual analysis using settings and characters, presentation of messages, as well as icons and symbols. In addition to interpreting the mediated portrayals, the researchers also found underlying ideologies of racial hierarchies within the television advertisements. Thus, the scholars approached this intercultural study from a critical humanist perspective. As a result, a close textual analysis is appropriate for an intercultural examination of media from both interpretivist and critical humanist perspectives. In addition, the methodology is also appropriate for studies situated in interpretive intercultural studies that borrow from the critical humanist paradigm. Thus, I use textual analysis as a method from an interpretivist perspective (borrowing from critical humanists) to examine if and how Oh’s performance in Grey’s Anatomy resists and/or reifies existing mediated stereotypes of Asian American females.

Description of Text: Grey’s Anatomy and Sandra Oh

Grey’s Anatomy was launched in 2005 on ABC. In the first season, the hour-long, primetime broadcast show ranked ninth and earned average viewership of 18.5 million per episode (ABC, 2005). During the 2008-2009 season, Grey’s Anatomy was ranked 12th, averaging 14.5 million viewers per episodes (ABC, 2009). In 2007 Grey’s Anatomy won the Golden Globe award for the Best Television Series – Drama (ABC, n.d.a.). The show is also respected by television industry peers because Grey’s Anatomy has been nominated by the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for Emmy Awards every year since 2005 (IMDB, n.d.c.). In addition, the show has been nominated for 103 awards as well as won 39 awards from advocacy and media organizations such as Director’s Guild of America, Screen Actors Guild, Writers Guild of America, Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), National
Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Image Awards, People’s Choice Awards, and Teen Choice Awards (IMDB, n.d.c.).

The medical drama centers on a group of surgeons working in a fictional Seattle Grace Hospital (C.B.S., n.d.). The title character, Dr. Meredith Grey (Ellen Pompeo), is the daughter of a world-renown surgeon Ellis Grey, so she faces a lot of expectations as a new resident surgeon. The show interweaves medical cases with doctor’s lives and relationships. On the show, Grey’s best friend is Dr. Cristina Yang, portrayed by Asian American actress Oh. For example, Grey refers to Yang as her sister (season 3, episode 10; Paiz & Mann, 2006). Also, Yang is the first and only doctor in the hospital to notice that Grey was missing after they respond to an off-site ferry crash (episode 3, episode 16; Rhimes & Corn, 2007). On the Internet Movie Database (IMDB, n.d.b.) Yang is listed second in cast credits after Grey, indicating her importance in the show. Yang is characterized as competitive, ambitious, intelligent but also bossy and tactless (ABC, n.d.b.). As previously noted, Oh has been nominated and won several awards for her portrayal of Yang in Grey’s Anatomy, including a 2006 Golden Globe for Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in a Series, Mini-Series or Motion Picture Made for Television, a 2006 Screen Actor’s Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Drama Series, and is the only individual cast member that was nominated every year between 2005 to 2009 for an Emmy in the Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series category (IMDB, n.d.b.).

Procedures

In order to investigate if and how Oh’s portrayal of Yang on Grey’s Anatomy reifies or resists U. S. media stereotypes of Asian American females, I conducted a close textual analysis
of selected episodes from the first three seasons. I selected seasons 1-3 because one of the major plotlines in these seasons revolves around initiation, intensification, and dissolution of Yang’s romantic relationship with Dr. Preston Burke (Isaiah Washington; IMDB, n.d.b.). In the show, Burke was African American and the Chief Cardiothoracic Surgeon at Seattle Grace Hospital. During the first three seasons, Burke met, falls in love with, proposed to, and almost marries Yang. Yang accidentally conceives, plans on aborting, and then miscarries Burke’s baby during the first and second seasons. In the third season, one of the plotlines in their relationship involved the aftermath of a shooting where Burke’s hand is injured and his ability to perform surgery is severely compromised. To compensate, Yang became Burke’s crutch and helped him during surgery to cover-up that his potentially career ending hand tremors. During the third season finale, Burke walks away from Yang at the altar. He tells Yang, “I'm up there waiting for you to come down the aisle [pause] if I loved you, not the woman that I'm trying to make you be, not the woman that I hope you'll become [pause] I would be letting you go” (season 3, episode 25; Phelan, Rater, & Corn, 2007). With those last lines, he packs his belongings from their shared apartment and does not return to the show after the third season. Thus, the complete relationship arc is included in seasons 1-3 and allows for examination of the Suzie Wong stereotype.

In addition to Yang, Burke, and Grey (title character), I include interactions and dialogue from recurring characters such as: Grey and Yang’s fellow interns Dr. Alex Karev (Justin Chambers), Dr. George O’Malley (T. R. Knight), and Dr. Izzie Stevens (Katherine Heigl); Attending General Surgeon (and nicknamed the Nazi), Dr. Miranda Bailey (Chandra Wilson); Chief of Neurosurgery (and Grey’s love interest) Dr. Derek Shepherd (Patrick Dempsey); and Chief of Surgery, Dr. Richard Webber (James Pickens Jr.). In the second season, three additional surgeons joined the show: Head of Neo-Natal Surgery, Addison Montgomery-Shepherd (Kate
Walsh; estranged wife of Derek Shepherd); Attending Plastic Surgeon, Mark Sloan (Eric Dane; and the reason for the Shepherds’ estrangement); and Attending Orthopedic Surgeon, Dr. Callie Torres (Chyler Leigh). Additionally, I include guest characters that appear for single or selected episodes during the first three seasons who are part of key scenes. For example, Dr. Ellis Grey (Kate Burton; Grey’s famous mother) appears in a few selected episodes during the first three seasons. During the first two seasons, Grey tries to hide that her mother is afflicted with Alzheimer’s. During the second season, that secret is revealed in when Grey’s mother is transported to the hospital. Grey’s mother dies in the third season. Also, Burke’s mother, Jane Burke (Diahann Carroll), appears in three episodes during the first three seasons. Yang’s mother, Helen Rubenstein (Tsai Chin Zhou), is in three episodes. Lastly, Dr. Colin Marlow (Roger Rees), one of Yang’s prior romantic partners and a surgeon ranked higher in world fame than Burke, also makes an appearance.

The selection of this sample is consistent with A. McKee’s (2003) suggestions that scholars should not examine every text in the series but, enough texts within the series to understand rules and how the series works. The first three seasons included 61 total episodes of Grey’s Anatomy. I interviewed a longtime fan that has encyclopedic knowledge of plotlines and consulted online episode guide (IMDB, n.d.b.). I narrowed my data set to 42 episodes that specifically portrayed scenes and dialogue that demonstrate resistance and/or reification of model minority and Suzie Wong stereotypes. The data set included all nine episodes from the first season, 15 episodes from season two, and 17 episodes from the third season. Within the episodes, I concentrated on Yang’s interactions in addition to dialogue and nonverbal reactions that reveal perceptions regarding Oh’s character on the show. During my textual analysis, I found approximately 217 key scenes (including character dialogue, actions, and interactions) that
revealed Yang’s resistance and/or reification of Asian American female stereotypes. For the purpose of this study, I define a scene as an interaction or set of interactions between on-screen characters that has a distinctive beginning and ending as indicated by conventional devices such as location of interaction and ongoing interaction between the same characters. Additionally, my analysis categories are informed by characteristics associated with the model minority and Suzie Wong stereotypes. Additionally, my categories were fluid during analysis to also allow for emergent themes that may indicate stereotype resistance. During analysis, I also recorded observations that addressed Asian American female stereotypes. In the next section, I review the results of my textual analysis of key scenes from episodes within first three seasons of Grey’s Anatomy.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Consistent with previous research, I conducted an in-depth analysis of the selected 42 episodes and identified 217 key scenes. Of those scenes, 147 reified the model minority stereotype, 51 resisted the model minority stereotype, 43 reified Suzie Wong stereotype, and 26 resisted the Suzie Wong stereotype. In some instances, character dialogue and actions indicated both resistance and reification of one or both of the noted stereotypes. Seven scenes reified and resisted the model minority stereotype, five reified and resisted Suzie Wong stereotype, and 22 resisted Suzie Wong, while reifying the model minority stereotype. Lastly, I also found 31 scenes that addressed other characteristics regarding Asian mediated stereotypes. The categories are non-exclusive to allow for a broader understanding of Oh’s portrayal and character interactions. As I describe the results of the analysis, I will indicate the season and episode the season in parentheses. For example, season one, episode one will be noted as (1, 1).

Model Minority

The model minority stereotype is marked as exceedingly competent in the workplace, socially incompetent, overly competitive, lacking emotions, overachieving in academia, and polite (R. G. Lee, 1999; Mok, 1998; Ono & Pham, 2009; Osajima, 2003; Palumbo-Liu, 1994; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010). In my textual analysis, I found 147 scenes and dialogue that depicted Dr. Cristina Yang as a member of the model minority. However, I also found 51 scenes in which Yang’s character does not conform to model minority characteristics. Lastly, in a few instances (7 scenes) Yang is portrayed as simultaneously resisting and conforming to the Asian American model minority stereotype.
Reifying the Model Minority Stereotype

In my analysis of 42 episodes of Grey’s Anatomy, I found key scenes where Yang demonstrates characteristics of the model minority. She is shown as more competent than her colleagues (n = 19), socially awkward and incompetent (n = 48), overly competitive (n = 21), lacking emotions (n = 15), exceptionally hard working (n = 14), and achieving in academia (n = 9). First of all, members of the model minority are characterized as exceedingly competent in comparison to their colleagues (K.-Y. Lee & Joo, 2005; Mok, 1998; Ono & Pham, 2009; Taylor & Lee, 1997; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010). Yang is portrayed as more competent than her fellow interns on the first day in the series premiere episode (Rhimes & Horton, 2005a). For example, Dr. Izzie Stephens does not know how to start a central line and has to wake up Dr. Miranda Bailey. Dr. George O’Malley cannot find blood vessels and hurts multiple patients during injections. Additionally, Dr. Meredith Grey is lost in the hospital, late answering an emergency page, and almost loses a patient because she is less competent. In the patient room, the patient has had multiple seizures and three nurses repeatedly ask Grey for instructions, “What do you want to do? Dr. Grey, you need to tell us what you want to do!” Grey responds by asking the nurses to page Dr. Derek Shepherd and Bailey. Shepherd takes over the situation and asks Grey to leave. On her way out, Bailey admonishes Grey, “You get a 911, you page me immediately, not in the five minutes it takes you to get to the emergency, immediately, you are on my team and if somebody dies it's my ass, you hear me, Grey?”

In that same episode, Yang is shown as easily completing her assignments and having extra time to report to her superiors (Rhimes & Horton, 2005a). She is not affected by the incompetence shown by her fellow interns. Throughout the series, attending surgeons regularly quiz interns during hospital rounds and Yang was usually the first to answer questions correctly.
Additionally, during the second season, and despite being hospitalized for her miscarriage, Yang was able to correctly and quickly answer Bailey’s question while in a hospital gown and attached to a line from an intravenous stand (2, 4; Stanzler & Clack, 2005). Bailey asks, “Dr. Izzie Stevens, “What are the primary causes of ventricular arrhythmias?” Stevens looks unsure and Yang answers, “valvular disease, mitral valve prolapse, stimulants, drugs, and metabolic abnormalities.” Yang’s superior competency was also shown in the third season when Dr. Preston Burke and Yang refuse to speak or work with each other as they dealt with the consequences of covering up Burke’s hand tremors. Burke offers the interns a spot on an upcoming surgery, “Anyone available to assist me on a truncus arteriosus surgery” (3, 13; Buchman & Grossman, 2007). Burke continues, “Good, then the first one of you to accurately describe the condition will get to scrub in.” Neither, Grey nor O’Malley had the correct answer and Yang tries to whisper the answer to her colleagues because she was not speaking to Burke. So, Burke left without taking an intern into surgery, “No one knows the answer. That's too bad, it'll probably be years before we see another one like this, oh well.” After Burke leaves, Yang tells O’Malley and Grey the answer, “It's a single arterial trunk coming from the ventricles. How could you not know that?”

While taking a seminar on laparoscopic general surgery with Webber, Yang is also shown as exceedingly competent (2, 22; Robe & Mann, 2006). After the class, Chief of Surgery, Dr. Richard Webber acknowledges Yang’s competence in comparison to her colleagues, “Hopefully your fellow interns will be as adept on the scope as you.” Lastly, Yang sometimes has to explain attending surgeon’s instructions to her follow interns. In the third episode of the first season, Stevens and Yang find a mortally wounded, unresponsive unidentified bike accident victim (Rhimes & Goldwyn, 2005). They consult with Shepherd. Stevens asks, “Dr. Shepherd,
he's not going to the OR?” Shepherd answers, “No. Do an EEG, and confirmatory tests. If he doesn't respond, six hours, declare him.” Shepherd leaves the room and Stevens asks Yang, “declare him [pause] declare him what?” Yang has to clarify, “brain dead.” Thus, Oh’s portrayal of Yang reified the Asian American model minority of greater competency as compared to her peers in the workplace.

Next, Asian Americans are portrayed as socially incompetent and awkward during interactions (K.-Y. Lee & Joo, 2005; Taylor et al., 2005; Taylor & Lee, 1997; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010). For example, Yang is portrayed as socially awkward and incompetent in the hospital. So, Yang is often criticized for her rude bedside manner. During the fourth episode of the first season, Liz Fallon, a former scrub nurse who worked for Grey’s mother at Seattle Grace, checks in and is (under suspicious circumstances) assigned to Yang (Parriott & Davidson, 2005). The first time Yang enters Fallon’s patient room, Yang slams the door open, turn on the lights to the brightest setting, and does not greet the patient. Fallon complains, “you always come in like that, bang, the light on?” As the episode progresses, Yang continues her behavior and Fallon quips, “You don't wake a patient like that. What do I have to do to get through to you?” Later in the season, Zoey Glass is pregnant, has breast cancer, and checks into the hospital. Yang does not agree with Glass’s decisions to keep her baby but leave potentially fatal breast cancer untreated (1, 8; Schmir & Anderson, 2005). When Yang rudely voices her opinion, Glass replies, “You have quite the bedside manner. You know that, right?” Additionally, Yang had problems apologizing after she oversteps her bounds and convinces Burke to question a fellow surgeon, Dr. Sydney Heron, in her operating room (2, 15; Clack & Paymer, 2006). In order for Yang to apologize, Burke had to lead her to Heron and almost force her to apologize. Yang, who usually very eloquent, stutters through the apology, “Sydney, I just wanted to [pause] um [pause] just
wanted to [pause] um [pause] to [pause] apologize for [pause] you know [pause] overstepping [pause] I’m sorry.” So, in her working environment, Yang was socially awkward because she cannot apologize.

Yang was also socially awkward outside her work as well. Despite their different statuses within the hospital hierarchy, and related friendships, Burke got along better with Yang’s friends when they arrive to Grey’s house to cook and share a Thanksgiving meal (2, 9; Rhimes & Dinner, 2005). During that episode, Burke easily takes over cooking duties, teaching and bonding with Stevens in the kitchen. In contrast, Yang is uneasy and complains constantly about needing liquor. While in the kitchen, Stevens and Burke discuss Yang’s social ineptness after Yang takes Burke’s car to buy liquor:

Stevens: Dr. Burke, how did you learn to cook like this?
Burke: My mother owns a restaurant in Alabama.
Stevens: Seriously?
Burke: Seriously.
Stevens: Does Cristina know that?
Burke: No. Actually, she doesn't.
Stevens: She doesn’t ask a lot of personal questions. She’s kind of hard to get to know.

Meanwhile, Yang takes Burke’s car and drives off to find liquor. She also detours to the hospital and takes care of incoming patients. Instead of spending time relaxing with her friends, Yang is socially awkward and is more comfortable at work.

Additionally, Burke is a better friend to Yang’s friends than Yang. For example, during the 19th episode of the second season, O’Malley suddenly leaves the home he shares with Grey and Stevens (S. McKee & Stanzler, 2006). As a result, he has nowhere to live and looks forlorn
while sitting on the steps outside of Seattle Grace Hospital with a packed suitcase. Burke walks by, understands O’Malley’s situation, and the scene ends with Burke staring pensively at O’Malley. In the next scene, Burke and Yang have a conversation in bed while O’Malley is getting ready to sleep on their living room couch:

Burke: He's your friend. He needed our help.
Yang: Are his problems surgical?
Burke: Mmm no.
Yang: Then technically he doesn't need our help.
Burke: You're a good person.
Yang: I am not.

In addition to Burke being a better friend, Yang was also socially awkward because O’Malley and Burke actually share a more cohesive bond. During the second season, O’Malley moves in with Burke and Yang (2, 19; S. McKee & Stanzler, 2006). In the next episode, Burke and O’Malley work in perfect sync to make breakfast (2, 20; Stanton, Werksman, & Robinson, 2006). For example, Burke throws ingredients from the refrigerator and O’Malley grabs them out of mid air. The two look like they have been part of the same routine for years and bond so well that they practically ignore Yang. At the end of that episode, Yang enters her shared home with Burke and notices that the men are playing musical instruments. Burke and O’Malley are so involved that neither of them notice Yang as she enters the apartment, walks into the bedroom, and closes the door behind her. After O’Malley moves out, he still has a better social connection with Burke as shown in this interaction between Burke, O’Malley, and Yang (2, 23; Klaviter & Melman, 2006):
Burke: Hey, O'Malley.

O’Malley: Big news. Eugene Foote is here. He's having problems with his pacemaker.

Burke: Eugene Foote is here…What…in this hospital?

O’Malley: Uh-huh.

Yang: Who's Eugene Foote?

O’Malley: Genius violinist, Burke's hero, Burke flew down to San Francisco last year, to put in his pacemaker. Burke has like 40 of his albums.

Burke: No, 42.

O’Malley: Actually, 43 because you just got the greatest hits. You know, the one with the DVD?

Burke: Oh! Right. You want in on Foote?

O’Malley: Yes. But, uh, I'm on neuro today with Dr. Shepherd.

Burke: Ok.

Yang: I want in..hello…I want in.

Burke: Hmm? Oh. Sure. Yeah, right.

Yang: Burke, I laid on top of you naked last night. So, why don't you wax nostalgic about that?

Thus, Burke and O’Malley demonstrate a closer social relationship despite Yang’s romantic relationship with Burke.

Lastly, Yang and Grey are best friends, but Grey also complains about Yang’s social incompetence. For example, after Grey finds out that Yang is pregnant with Burke’s baby, she confronts Yang about their friendship in the following scene (2, 1; S. McKee & Horton, 2005):
Yang: Look, Meredith, can we not go there? Can everyone just accept the fact that there are some things I like to keep to myself? I don't discuss everything to death.

Meredith: Well, why even confide in me at all. If you're so intent on not discussing it? Why even tell me?

Later that same episode, Yang demonstrates a second time her social awkwardness. As mentioned in the Chapter 3, Yang was planning on aborting her baby from Burke. However, she needs a designated emergency contact and chose Grey. In the following interaction, Yang confirms her friendship with Grey but still notes awkwardness with their closeness:

Cristina: The clinic has a policy. They wouldn't let me confirm my appointment unless I designated an emergency contact person. Someone to be there, just in case, and to help me home, you know, after. Anyway, I put your name down. That's why I told you I'm pregnant. You're my person.

Meredith: I am?

Yang: Yeah, you are…whatever.

Meredith: Whatever.

Yang then reveals that Burke broke up with her and Grey responds by putting her arm around Yang. Yang indicates her awkwardness:

Yang: You realize this constitutes hugging?

Meredith: Shut up, I'm your person.

In season 2, Yang and Burke reconcile and their relationship becomes public and intensifies into season 3, but her social awkwardness continues as Yang needs Burke to help her communicate with family. After an uneasy introduction, Yang notes her inability to simple have coffee with Burke’s mother (3, 2; Vernoff & Melman, 2006). She demands that Burke get out of
his hospital bed and run interference during coffee in the hospital cafeteria, “You [pause] will save me from this. You will save me from this or [pause] you will save me from this.” Additionally, when Burke’s mother (Jane) and Yang’s mother (Rubenstein, Yang’s mother remarried after her father passed away) converge in their apartment for wedding planning, Yang was portrayed as socially incompetent and needing Burke to calm her during this interaction (3, 22; Rhimes & Grossman, 2007):

Rubenstein: Cristina, stop lurking. Come and say good morning to your guest.


Jane: Early? Darling, by the look of the calendar we should have been here six months ago.

Rubenstein: She doesn't understand what goes into planning a wedding.

Burke approached Yang and handed her a cup of freshly brewed coffee and told her to, “Breathe, sip, then breathe” (3, 22).

Thus, Yang is portrayed as socially incompetent in work relationships, friendships, and family relationships. Next, I review scenes that portray over competitiveness.

Based on the model minority stereotype, Asian Americans are characterized as overly competitive (R. G. Lee, 1999; Mok, 1998; Taylor & Lee, 1997; Zhang, 2010). First, Burke and Yang acknowledge Yang’s competitiveness. For example, in a conversation with Burke, Yang identifies herself as competitive, “I'm competitive. I'm always right” (2, 5; Rhimes & Tinker, 2005). Next, in a later episode from the same season, Burke also acknowledges Yang’s competitiveness when he told her, “you, you are the most competitive, most guarded, most stubborn, most challenging person I have ever met” (2, 18; Vernoff & Schmir, 2006). Also, Yang
views herself as a competitor in the best medical discipline of surgery. For example, while in surgery with Bailey and Webber, Yang reveals her perceptions of the surgical field as the best, “Surgery is the most competitive field in medicine. We're all here to win” (3, 13; Buchman & Grossman, 2007). Also, Yang criticizes O’Malley when he laments that surgery might be too difficult after a patient dies while he assists Burke during surgery, “Maybe I should've gone into geriatrics. No one minds when you kill an old person” (1, 1; Rhimes & Horton, 2005a). Yang replies that surgery was the best because “Surgery is hot, it's the Marines, it's the macho, it's hostile, it's hardcore. Geriatrics is for freaks who live with their mothers and never have sex” Additionally, Yang denigrates other types of doctors when Grey considers dating Dandridge, “Wait, did you say vet? Like animals? Oh, you can't date a vet. He's not even a real doctor” (2, 23; Klaviter & Melman, 2006).

In the show, Yang is portrayed as the best intern. In a conversation with Bailey, Yang notes, “I am the best intern you've got and you are wasting me on puke and boils” (2, 7; S. McKee & Davidson, 2005). Also, Burke agrees that Yang was the best intern. After Grey’s mother was admitted into Seattle Grace, Burke asks Yang to conduct an echocardiogram: “her mother is going to need the best care we have to offer and you Dr. Yang are the best” (3, 14; Phelan, Rater, & Robinson, 2007). Lastly, in the first episode of the premiere season, O’Malley notes that Yang was the top of her class when she earned her medical doctorate from Stanford (Rhimes & Horton, 2005a). In addition to being competitive with fellow interns, Yang also competes against her Chief of Surgery, Webber, during laparoscopic general surgery seminar (2, 22; Robe & Mann, 2006). In the hands-on training portions, the unnamed Seminar Teacher compliments Yang’s performance “Very nice, Dr. Yang” while criticizing Webber’s “A little less tension there, Chief. Watch your grip. There you go.” After the Teacher walks away,
Webber seemingly defends himself by telling Yang, “I wasn't copying you.” Yang responds, “I wasn't copying you.” During a lunch break, Webber acknowledges Yang’s competitiveness noting, “Seems I'm a little rusty on my bead transfer and rope pass. Dr. Yang here, has been kicking my ass all day.” After Webber leaves, Yang gloats, “Okay, I really am kicking the Chief's ass.”

Next, Yang is generally competitive and wants to win in activities outside of the medical discipline as well. For example, Dr. Alex Karev, O’Malley, and Yang engage in an eating contest after a Japanese competitive eater checks into Seattle Grace with a persistent hiccup. Yang beat the men and immediately starts gloating, “You want to be me! You want to be me, but you can't be me! You want to be me” (2, 14; Phelan, Rater, & Davidson, 2006). In another scene, Yang and Burke lost a board game against O’Malley and Dr. Callie Torres during a couples night (2, 22; Robe & Mann, 2006). The next day, Yang complains to Grey and Stevens:

I am not a sore loser. You know, and so what if I am? See, the whole point of games is that there's a winner [pause] a first place. You want a second best surgeon operating on you? No, you want the very best. And second best is mediocre. And to settle for mediocrity is [pause] is frankly, you know, a sign of self-loathing and substandard work ethics.

Also, Asian Americans, as model minorities, are stereotyped as robotic and lacking emotions (K.–Y. Lee & Joo, 2005; Ono & Pham, 2009; Taylor & Lee, 1997; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010). In episode 15 of season 2, Yang persuades Burke to question Dr. Sydney Heron, a resident filling in for Bailey during surgery; Heron accuses Yang of being unkind and uncompromising (2, 15; Clack & Paymer, 2006). Yang complains to her colleagues:
She called me unkind [pause] unkind and lacking in compassion. In front of my boyfriend! I am not unkind [pause] and that is a problem, why? I mean if it's what she wants, it's what she wants and that is not unkind or lacking in compassion. I'm a very compassionate person! I'm more compassionate than you Alex.

Shepherd also comments on Yang’s lack of compassion and emotions in dealing with patients, “He is in shock. The man's lost his fingers and his only remaining habit in one day. We need to be compassionate” (2, 14; Phelan et al., 2006). Yang is unsure and asks, “Compassionate?” Shepherd replies, “Yes. It's an emotion. Have you ever heard of it?”

Yang’s fellow interns also comment on her lack of feeling. For example, after Yang is hospitalized for losing her baby, her colleagues comment the day after she had her surgery (2, 4; Stanzler & Clack, 2005):

O’Malley: I don't know, when I left, Cristina said she was ok.

Stevens: Nobody goes what she went through and is totally over it by now.

O’Malley: Cristina can.

Meredith: She's fine.

Stevens: Too fine [pause] she's cold.

O’Malley: No, she's hardcore, she's got ice in her veins and she does what she has to do to get through it.

Stevens: She lost a baby. She lost a fallopian tube, and she's acting like she doesn't even care. She's all like: "Hello, I'm totally fine person." Ok, she's my friend too but she's acting like she has no emotions or warmth, like she's missing a soul.

O’Malley: God, she's going to make a great surgeon.
Stevens: George!

O’Malley: It's true. You show no weakness, you make it to the top.

Grey: Some people just keep their feelings to themselves.

Lastly, O’Malley also commented on Yang’s robotic lack of emotion (3, 8; Stanton, Werksman, & Melman, 2006):

Because you are a robot. You are a freaking robot, in a white coat who never makes a mistake, and most days I appreciate that, most of the time, I really feel like I have something to learn from you. But right now I need you to try to be a human.

Thus, Yang is portrayed as lacking emotion or feelings by multiple male and female characters.

As the model minority, Asian Americans are also characterized as excessively hard working (Mok, 1998; Paek & Shah, 2003; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010). For example, in the second season, Yang is in an empty operating room, quizzing herself on the names of various surgical instruments. She is interrupted by Burke and tells him that in addition to extra self quizzing, she will also clean up after herself by performing duties usually reserved for nurses, “I'm going to sterilize everything when I'm done. The scrub nurses won't even know I was here” (2, 1; S. McKee & Horton, 2005). Additionally, Yang arrives to work earlier than her fellow interns in order to have access to better surgeries and gain experience. She tells Grey, “I know that I was here at 4:00 and you didn't get here till 4:30” (1, 4; Parriott & Davidson, 2005). As such, when other interns were sleeping or resting, Yang woke up earlier and practices more to become a better surgeon. Next, Yang is portrayed as hardworking despite her own illness (1, 7; Rhimes, Koenig, & Martin, 2005). She indicates that has the flu during the introductory scenes of the episode, but refuses to rest despite her illness. In an interaction with Burke, Yang refuses
to go home after Burke offers her a ride because she wants to be stronger than the flu, “This is
not going to make me go home.” Additionally, in that same episode, when Bailey offers a
surgery, Yang quickly volunteers, despite her condition:

   Bailey: Dr. Shepherd needs an intern in surgery. Which one of you is clear?
   Yang: I'm good, Dr. Bailey, where do you want me?
   Bailey: You need to lie down somewhere.
   Yang: I'm fine, I'm completely healthy.

Furthermore, in season 2 episode 4, after being hospitalized for her miscarriage, Yang
demonstrates the model minority characteristic of being hardworking when she tries to make
rounds in a wheelchair (Stanzler & Clack, 2005). She helps Stevens revive an unconscious
patient. Additionally, Yang returns to work immediately after discharge (2, 5; Rhimes & Tinker,
2005). Yang reports for work and tells Bailey, “I'm back, I just want to make that clear. I'm back
and I'm ready to work [pause] I'm good. I'm ready to scrub in. I'm 100% on top of my game.”
Bailey is surprised and replies, “You just got discharged.” Thus, Yang demonstrates being
exceptionally hardworking by quizzing herself as well as working when she is ill.

Lastly, members of the model minority are characterized as intellectually gifted and by
overachieving in higher education. In the premiere episode of the show, during a conversation,
O’Malley notes Yang’s academic overachievement, “So says the girl who finished top of her
class at Stanford” (Rhimes & Horton, 2005a). Additionally, in an effort to convince Bailey that
delivering lab results was beneath her educational level, Yang said, “Well, I have a B.A. from
Smith, a Ph. D from Berkeley, and an MD from Stanford and I'm delivering lab results” (1, 2;
Rhimes & Horton, 2005b). Also in the first season, Grey and Yang confront Dr. Raj Sen from
the psychology department about transferring an undesirable patient. Yang confronts Sen’s
competency regarding the patient diagnosis and assignment, “Man, didn’t you go to medical school?” Sen responds, “yes, and unlike the correspondence school you attended.” Yang cuts him off with a quick retort, “Oh, that would be Stanford, right” (1, 8; Schmir & Anderson, 2005). Lastly, Yang is shown as studying harder than colleagues in preparation for their Internship exam (3, 24; Heinberg & Misiano, 2007).

Yang: How do you treat pancreatic divisum? Izzie?

Stevens: Oh, Cristina. If you're not going to let us sleep, do you at least have to let me put coffee in my cup.

Yang: Okay, so go. No one's stopping you.

Stevens: I'm too tired to go.

Yang: Pancreatic divisum.

Karev: Dorsal duct sphincterotomy.

Yang: Not your turn, but correct. You do me.

Yang’s characteristics confirm to multiple aspects of the model minority stereotype including increased competency over her colleagues, social awkwardness and incompetency, competitiveness, lacking emotions, being exceptionally hard working, and over achieving academically. While Oh’s performance often confirms to existing model minority stereotypes, her portrayal also resists the Asian American model minority stereotype.

Resisting the Model Minority Stereotype

In 51 scenes, Oh’s portrayal of Yang does not conform to the model minority stereotype. In contrast to the characteristics of the model minority stereotype, discussed above, Yang is portrayed as physically and verbally aggressive (instead of quiet and passive; n = 18 scenes),
socially competent (instead of socially awkward; n = 10 scenes), and able to give and receive comfort (instead of being an emotional automaton; n = 23 scenes).

As noted previously, Asian Americans are expected to be models of quiet passivity (R. G. Lee, 1999; Ono & Pham, 2009; Osajima, 2003; Palumbo-Liu, 1994; Taylor et al., 2005; Zhang, 2010). Taylor et al. (2005) added that existing media portrayals cultivate and reinforce Asian American stereotypes of passivity. For example, Palumbo-Liu (1994) noted that Asian Americans, as model minorities, are praised for their ability to both work hard and work quietly in contrast to more aggressive and more vocal protesting oppressed social groups. However, Yang’s character is not quiet. Instead, in several instances she is aggressive with her colleagues. First, she is verbally aggressive regarding access to surgeries for advancement and needed experience. For example, after Yang found out that Grey’s mother was a world renown surgeon, she was verbally aggressive (1, 1; Rhimes & Horton, 2005a): “She's a living legend, she won the Harper Avery, twice [pause] I would kill to have Ellis Grey as a mother. I would kill to be Ellis Grey.” Next, Yang was verbally aggressive with O’Malley indicating that she would kill to have access to a rare brain surgery procedure (1, 7; Rhimes et al., 2005). O’Malley told Yang that he was preparing to assist in the surgery, “Yang. I'm scrubbing in on a hemispherectomy with Shepherd.” Yang replied, “Get out! I would kill for that.”

Next, Yang is both verbally and physically aggressive with her colleagues during interactions. First, Yang’s loses her patience with O’Malley’s insecurities resulting from a patient’s death. O’Malley earned a nickname of 007 or a license to kill when his patient died. In this interaction, Yang threatens to hit O’Malley (1, 1; Rhimes & Horton, 2005a):

O’Malley: 007. They're calling me 007, aren't they?
Grey: No one's calling you 007.
O’Malley: I was on the elevator and Murphy whispered 007.

Yang: Oh, how many times do we have go through this, George, five, ten? Give me a number or else I'm going to hit you.

Additionally, in the second episode of the first season, Yang and Karev engage in a contest to finish with patients in the shortest amount of time (Parriott & Horton, 2005). To win, they need to avoid hugs from patients as well as their visiting family and friends. In one scene, a patient’s family member aims to give Yang a hug. To avoid the hug and win their contest, Yang physically shoves Karev into the family member’s waiting arms. In a later episode, Yang threatens to stab Karev with a plastic fork during lunch (1, 6; Vernoff & Brazil, 2005). As Karev approaches the table Yang is sharing with Grey and Stevens, Yang warns Karev, “Don’t sit here.” Karev ignores Yang, sits and engages Grey and Stevens in conversation. Yang continues, “Why are you sitting here?” After, Karev refuses to leave, Yang asks, “You know what? If I stuck this fork into his thigh, will I get in trouble?” Yang also threatens Karev over delicious coffee cake (3, 3; Cahn & Arkin, 2006). As Karev reaches for the last slice, Yang grabs his arm and warns him, “Touch that piece, lose a hand.”

Female colleagues are also not immune to Yang’s aggressive behavior. In the fourth episode of the first season, Yang tells Stevens that she is extremely jealous of Steven’s attractiveness (Parriott & Davidson, 2005):

You are eight feet tall, your boobs are perfect, your hair is down to there. If I were you, I'd walk around naked all the time. I wouldn't have a job and I wouldn't have skills. I wouldn't even know how to read. I'd just be naked… You get that we hate you, right?
During a jog, Yang lashes out towards her best friend Grey, “you are stupid, oh God, you are stupid, evil, sadist and I want to kill you” (2, 3; Rhimes, Vernoff, & Davidson, 2005). Lastly, Yang is quick to offer to fight another doctor for a patient, “Yeah well, he is ours now, and if you want to fight me for it, I'll guarantee you, I will win” (2, 7; S. McKee & Davidson, 2005).

In addition to her intern colleagues, Yang is also both verbally and physically aggressive towards the nursing staff outside of the hospital (2, 15; Clack & Paymer, 2006). In a local bar, a nurse purposefully drops a drink in Yang’s lap and Yang reacts aggressively, “Are you kidding me? I will kill you, you know that….Oh, she, oh Bring it on! Okay! Let's bring it on!” The bar owner settle tensions and Grey has to pull Yang out of the bar. In these key scenes, Yang does not conform to the quiet model minority stereotype. Instead, she is loud and aggressive. Next, I will explore how Yang is also socially competent and accepted by her peers.

Zhang (2010) found that Asian Americans are rejected as social peers because of the lack of social competency. For example, Asian Americans, as model minorities, “may not be as likely to be viewed as socially adept or fun loving” (Taylor & Lee, 1997, p. 244). However, Yang demonstrated both social competence. First, Yang is able to have fun and engage others in joining her. The interns throw a party and neither O’Malley nor Grey are enjoying themselves (1, 5; Hamilton & Coles, 2005). However, Yang is dancing on a table and persuades them to join her. Yang calls out to them, “Baby! You made it! Woo Hoo!” Grey decides to stop cleaning, take a drink, and join Yang. Next, Yang convinces O’Malley to join them, “Hey, baby! George! George, come here.” The scene ends with O’Malley dancing on the table between Yang and Grey. All three are drinking out of the same bottle and enjoying themselves. In the second
season, after Yang moved in with Burke, Yang is dancing wildly, in her underwear as she is
brushing her teeth (2, 18; Vernoff & Schmir, 2006). Burke returns from his morning run and
stops to stare at Yang. Yang starts dancing towards Burke and he joins her. In these two
instances, Yang is able to have fun, enjoy herself, as well as persuade others to join her. Also,
fellow interns do not reject Yang as a peer. Instead, Yang enjoys lunch with her colleagues daily.
Additionally, in one episode, Yang demonstrates her sense of humor regarding a female patient
who has uncontrollable and spontaneous orgasms (2, 18; Vernoff & Schmir, 2006). Yang jokes,
“any chance they're contagious…you know, it's like when you see someone throw up, it makes
you wanna throw up too.” So, Yang is able to have fun and is socially accepted.

Also, Yang is not socially awkward because she is Grey’s best friend. In fact, on two
occasions, Stevens notes that she is excluded from Grey and Yang’s relationship (2, 3; Rhimes et
al., 2005). She tells Grey, “it's just…it's just that a lot of the time it feels like you and Cristina are
kind of over there and I’m over here.” In the third season, Stevens also comments to Yang, “hey,
so are you and Meredith having one of your ‘we're best friends, we're so cool’ secret time things”
(3, 9; Koenig & Robinson, 2006).

Next, Yang is not socially awkward because her peers care for her. During the third
episode of the second season, Yang miscarries Burke’s baby, faints in the operating room, and
undergoes an emergency operation (2,3; Rhimes et al., 2005). Bailey hovers over an unconscious
Yang as Dr. Addison Montgomery-Shepherd operates on Yang. As Yang stabilizes,
Montgomery-Shepherd operates tells Bailey, “She's lost a lot of blood but I've got it from here.
Dr. Bailey you must have a surgery or two of your own today.” Despite Bailey’s surgical
workload and Nazi reputation, she opts to stay with Yang and tells Montgomery-Shepherd, “I'm
fine right here.” A few minutes later, Grey tries to see Yang in the operating room. Bailey stops Grey at the door to protect Yang:

Bailey: Need something?

Grey: I'm coming in.

Bailey: No you're not.

Grey: I am, I am her friend.

Bailey: Exactly. She's lying on the operating table, naked and exposed. She's sedated but she is probably scared out of her mind. Now right, she's not a doctor and she is not your friend. She is a patient and she deserves to have all the privacy I can give her. You're not going in there.

Grey: You have to let me in there.

Bailey (humorously): You can try. I'd have to take you down. Hey, I might be short but you're pretty tiny. I could do it.

Grey: Right now, just in this moment, I hate you.

Bailey: I can take it.

As the episode progresses, we see that Bailey has been watching over Yang during her recovery. After a longer recovery period, we see that Yang’s colleagues, Grey, Karev, O’Malley, and Stevens, are all in her room and keeping Yang company. Grey’s voice over further indicates that Yang is not socially rejected, but rather a cared for friend, “there's an upside to free falling, it is the chance you give your friends to catch you.”

Lastly, Yang is able to give and receive comfort. During the beginning of the second season, Yang is hospitalized after her miscarriage (2, 4; Stanzler & Clack, 2005). After suffering a mental breakdown, Yang was willing and able to publically accept comfort from Burke. Yang
was also willing to give comfort. Later in the second season, Yang is part of the surgical team that loses a severely facially disfigured patient, Jake Burton (2, 18; Vernoff & Schmir, 2006). Jake suffers from facial tumors and wanted to have the tumors removed despite potential risks. After Jake dies, Karev said to Yang, “it’s a shame, he never had his face fixed.” Yang looked at Karev and the two approached Dr. Mark Sloan (Attending Plastic Surgeon) to operate on Jake posthumously. After helping Sloan with the cosmetic procedure, Yang and Karev escort Jake’s parents to see Jake. The Burtons’ were comforted and noted that Jake looked peaceful. The scene ends with Yang covering up Jake’s body before leaving the morgue, indicating social competency by being able to give comfort.

In addition to patients, Yang is also willing to help comfort and offer sympathy to her colleagues. In the third season, O’Malley’s father did not recover from heart surgery and dies in Seattle Grace (3, 12; Vernoff & Yaitanes, 2007b). O’Malley does not want to speak to his friends or family and walks outside of the hospital. Yang follows him out to offer comfort in the following interaction:

Yang: There's a club, the dead dad's club, and you can't be in it until you're in it. You can try and understand, you can sympathize, but until you feel that loss. My dad died when I was nine. George, I'm really sorry you had to join the club.

O’Malley: I [pause] I don't know how to exist in a world where my dad doesn't.

Yang: Yeah, that never really changes.

Yang also shows emotions when she cries about an injured Grey (3, 16; Rhimes & Corn, 2007). This, I suggest that Yang is not an emotionless robot. She is able to receive and offer comfort as well as demonstrate caring. Next, I will review how Yang concurrently confirmed and contradicted characteristics of the model minority.
Simultaneously Resisting and Reifying the Model Minority Stereotype

In seven scenes, Oh’s performances simultaneously resisted and reified characteristics of the model minority stereotype. She combines aggressiveness with model minority characteristics of working harder, social awkwardness, and overcompetitiveness. Second, Yang demonstrates a lack of emotion and then becomes a source of comfort for a colleague and their patient. She also blends social awkwardness with lack of emotions and then becomes attached to a patient and as the patient dies, Yang demonstrates sadness. Next, Yang also demonstrated that she can be more competent than her colleagues while showing emotions. Last, she is both socially awkward and socially competent.

For example, as noted previously, aggression is not associated with quiet model minority behavior (R. G. Lee, 1999; Ono & Pham, 2009; Osajima, 2003; Palumbo-Liu, 1994; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010). However, Yang demonstrates verbal and physical aggressiveness. Additionally, Yang combines aggressiveness with behaviors that are associated with the model minority stereotype. For example, in the premiere episode of the first season, Yang is practicing suturing on a banana while other interns relax before a meeting after a grueling first day (Rhimes & Horton, 2005a). Grey asks, “What are you doing?” Yang responds, “I'm suturing a banana, with the vain hope that it wakes up my brain.” O’Malley laughs and Yang aggressively responds, reminding O’Malley that he lost a patient on this first day, “what are you smiling at, 007?” Yang apologizes, indicating that she understands her verbally aggressive behavior, “I'm sorry, I get mean when I'm tired.” Thus, in one scene Yang demonstrates that she is working harder than her colleagues, combined with aggression.

In the third episode of the first season, Yang approves of Grey’s social awkwardness combined with aggression, “so what [pause] are you just going to repress everything into some
deep dark twisted place until one day you snap and kill them” (Rhimes & Goldwyn, 2005). After Grey agrees, Yang adds, “This is why we are friends.” Lastly, Yang combines a model minority characteristic of over competitiveness with aggressiveness when a past romantic interest, Dr. Colin Marlow, arrives at Seattle Grace right before Burke and Yang’s wedding (3, 18; Cahn & Frawley, 2007). Yang tells Burke that Marlow is, “smug, passive-aggressive whiny ex-boyfriend trying to show me I picked the wrong guy” (3, 20; S. McKee & Misiano, 2007). Yang responds by treating Marlow’s visit like a competitive chess match (by taking his Queen and Bishop) and adds a component of aggressiveness. Yang tells Grey that she needed to create a gambit to force Marlow into a defense position. Later Yang tells Grey that she is trying to scare Marlow away by taking his Bishop. Lastly, Yang demonstrated verbal aggressiveness with regard to her competition with Marlow, “I’ve got to crush him, I’ve got to annihilate him at his own game.” Thus, Yang combined aspects from the model minority stereotype with aggressiveness.

Yang also simultaneously reified and resisted the model minority stereotype with her patients. In the third episode of the first season, Yang and Stevens try to gain experience with donor surgeries when they find a mortally wounded patient, Kevin Davidson (1, 3; Rhimes & Goldwyn, 2005). In a later scene, Yang tries to persuade Mrs. Davidson’s wife to donate Kevin’s organs. At first, Yang demonstrates social awkwardness as she lacks sympathy and is tactless in asking for Davidson’s organs. As the show progresses, we see that Yang becomes a source of comfort and encouragement for Stevens as well as Davidson’s surviving family. At first, Yang is in a room speaking to Mrs. Davidson and her young daughter:

Yang: This form simply says that you consent to the donation of your husband's major organs - heart, lungs, liver and kidneys. Now I need to ask you a few questions. Are you willing to donate his corneas?
Mrs. Davidson: You want his eyes?

Yang: Um [pause] corneal transplants can give someone back their sight.

Mrs. Davidson: I suppose that is okay.

Yang: What about his skin?

Mrs. Davidson: What?!

Yang: It is used to help burn victims.

Mrs. Davidson: You want to cut off his skin? What about the funeral? You want me to have a funeral, and have people look at him, have his daughter look at her father and he doesn't have any skin? It's his skin!

Mrs. Davidson starts crying and Yang flees the room. Bailey is outside and they continue a separate interaction outside:

Bailey: What are you doing?

Yang: I'm not a people person.

Bailey: No kidding.

Yang: I [pause] I can't do it [pause] I can't talk to the families of patients…I'm sorry.

Bailey: What's his name?

Yang: Who?

Bailey: The patient. What's his name?

Yang: Kevin Davidson.

Bailey: Remember that. Not the gorked guy, not John Doe, Kevin Davidson. He's someone's husband, someone's son [pause] not a collection of body parts for you to harvest, a person. No one said this was easy.
After speaking to Bailey, Yang reenters the room to speak with Mrs. Davidson and her daughter. Later in the episode, Yang and Stevens are scrubbing in to harvest Davidson’s organs. Stevens wants to back out, but Yang encourages Stevens to continue:

Stevens: I'm not going to stay.
Yang: It's your job, you have to.
Stevens: You are better at this part than me, I don't want to watch him get taken apart, look at the vultures…waiting to pick him clean.
Yang: Every last one of them represents someone, somewhere, who's going to live because of Kevin.

With Yang’s encouragement, Stevens finishes scrubbing and enters the operating room. Inside, the surgeons remove and place organs in containers held by a line of long line of organ transporters in scrubs. After the last organ is removed, the room is emptied but Yang stays behind with Stevens standing by Davidson’s hollow corpse on the operating table. The two agree to sew Davidson back up for his family. The scene ends with Yang encouraging Stevens to speak to Davidson’s surviving family and Stevens addressed them, “Mrs. Davidson? He's ready if you'd like to see him.”

In another series of interactions with a patient, we see that Yang both conforms and contradicts the characteristics of the model minority stereotype. At first, Yang lacks emotions for the patient and shows social awkwardness. As the show progresses, Yang becomes attached and demonstrates connectedness. As mentioned earlier, Nurse Fallon is admitted to Seattle Grace (1, 4; Parriott & Davidson, 2005). Though the course of the episode, we find out that Fallon was previously a scrub nurse at Seattle Grace, will not have surgery, and that Webber plans to let her
die at the hospital she called home. Instead of sympathy, Yang disagrees and expresses her disapproval to Grey and Stevens:

Stevens: The woman's life was this hospital. It was her home. It's a sweet thing for them to do.

Yang: It's a waste of a bed, and it's a waste of my time.

Grey: Who are we talking about?

Yang: Liz Fallon. They brought her here to die.

Stevens: Wouldn't you want them to do the same thing for you?

Yang: No! You know what? I want the doctors to do everything they could….I'd want them to cut me open until the minute I die.

Later, Fallon is confirmed that she was at the hospital to die:

Fallon: They were never going to operate.

Yang: You could have told me.

Fallon: What fun would that have been? Think of it as a hazing ritual. Welcome.

Yang: Liz, don't talk. Don't talk. Liz, just…

The machines hooked up to Fallon start beeping, indicating that the nurse is near death. Instead of letting Fallon die, we see that Yang has formed an attachment and starts resuscitation efforts.

Burke: What the hell are you doing?

Yang: We lost pulse.

Burke: Let her go.

Yang: Where's that epi?

Burke: Let her go! She's DNR…let her go down.

Yang continues resuscitation and Burke has to physically pull her off of Fallon.
Burke: Do not resuscitate.

Yang: All right.

Burke: It is on her chart.

Yang: All right

Burke: Let her go down. Let her go down.

Burke allows Yang to call Fallon’s time of death. Later, as the show closes, Yang cries in Burke’s arms in the surgeon break room.

During Yang’s hospitalization, after her miscarriage, Oh’s portrayal reifies the Asian American model minority stereotype by demonstrating more competence than her peers while resisting the stereotype by not being quiet and serious and breaking down in front her mother and colleagues (2, 4; Stanzler & Clack, 2005). From her hospital bed, Yang diagnoses a patient with Munchausen’s disease. When Stevens confirms Yang’s diagnosis, Yang repeats “I was right” to her mother, Stevens, and to herself. Then, Yang starts sobbing uncontrollably repeating “I was right.” As the show progressed, Yang continues sobbing and repeating that she was right as O’Malley and Grey both try to help her calm down. Yang is sedated and finally finds comfort in Burke’s arms.

Lastly, Oh portrays Yang as both socially accepted and socially awkward. After Burke and Yang confess to covering up for Burke’s tremors, the interns are cold to Yang (3, 10; Paiz & Mann, 2006). Grey tries to intervene (because she cares for Yang) in the intern locker room:

Grey: I can't take this anymore.

Stevens: What?

Grey: Let her off the hook…let Christina off the freaking hook.

Yang: Meredith…
Grey: Izzie, you cut the LVAD wire. She stuck by you and did the echo. Alex, you cheated on Izzie with syph nurse, and she helped you study for your boards. And George when everyone was calling you 007…

O’Malley: She was calling me 007…

Grey: Just let her off the hook.

Karev and Stevens both apologize to Yang and they leave with O’Malley. Yang and Grey are alone. Despite Grey’s social acceptance, Yang is still socially awkward, “Why can't you mind your own business? What is your problem?” Grey responds, “You're my sister. You're my family. You're all I've got.” Instead of thanking Grey, Yang simply tells her that she is tired. Thus, Oh’s portrayal of Yang in Grey’s Anatomy confirms and contradicts key characteristics of the model minority Asian American stereotype. Next, I will review how Yang reifies and resists elements of the Suzie Wong Asian American female stereotype.

Suzie Wong Stereotype

Scholars have noted that the Suzie Wong Asian American female stereotype is characterized by sacrificial and selfless devotion, obedience and subservience, assimilation and loss of identity, gaining legitimacy based on a romantic relationship with a white male, hypersexuality, and over supportiveness (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Cho, 1997; Feng, 2002; Uchida, 1998). In the present study, I found 43 scenes where Yang demonstrated characteristics consistent with the Suzie Wong stereotype. I also found five scenes where Yang simultaneously resists and conforms to the Asian American female stereotype. In 21 scenes where she resists (and does not also reify) Suzie Wong characteristics, Yang also reifies elements of the model minority stereotype by privileging her career over her romantic relationship. Thus, I
review those scenes separately. To start, I will review scenes in which Yang was portrayals reify the Suzie Wong stereotype.

Reifying the Suzie Wong Stereotype

In my analysis of selected episodes from the first three seasons of *Grey’s Anatomy*, I found 43 scenes where Yang demonstrates characteristics consistent with the Suzie Wong stereotype. Oh portrays Yang as selflessly devoted, obedient/subservient, and overly supportive to Burke (n = 32), willing to shift or lose her identity (n = 2), gaining legitimacy from a romantic relationship (n = 6), and hypersexual (n = 3). First, one of characteristics of the Suzie Wong stereotype is a sacrificial and selfless devotion as well as obedience to her romantic male partner (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Cho, 1997). As indicated previously, Yang demonstrated the Suzie Wong stereotype characteristic of devotion to Burke (as her romantic partner) when he developed a potentially career ending and dangerous hand tremor after Shepherd cleared him for surgery (3, 4; Heinberg & Lerner, 2006).

She starts covering for Burke, despite the threat to her own career, during surgery, Yang notices that Burke’s hand is trembling (3,5; Clack, Phelan, Rater, & Melman, 2005). In order to help and protect her romantic partner, Yang becomes Burke’s crutch during surgery, “What if I held the vessel [pause] what if I hold the vessel [pause] come on [pause] Burke, if I hold the vessel” Burke completes the procedure with Yang’s help. Yang tells Burke that she is willing to cover for him, “No one has to know.” Burke nods in agreement.

A few episodes later, in the third season, Yang and Burke are successfully hiding his hand tremors until O’Malley notices them while fishing (3, 9; Koenig & Robinson, 2006). Yang is concerned and is ready to further support Burke:
Burke: Why are you acting like the sky is falling?

Yang: It is falling, it already fell, George knows.

Burke: I was in surgery for 14 hours yesterday and no tremors.

Yang: Yeah, with me by your side, and ready to jump in.

Burke: I haven't had a tremor in a week.

Yang: George knows. This isn't just any surgery; you are operating on his father today.

Burke: I am aware of that and I am fine.

Yang: He's going to do something, I know him. He's not just going to just stand by and say nothing.

Burke: There's nothing to say….I had a tremor and now I don't.

Yang: We need a strategy, we have to figure out our story and come up with a plan.

Burke: Cristina, you are too intense.

Yang: I am too intense? I have been working my ass off making sure nobody knows. Running your board, learning surgical procedures I shouldn't have to know until my fifth year covering you.

Burke: Covering me! I haven't been covering you?

Yang: Excuse me?

Despite Yang’s apprehension, she is obedient to Burke’s wishes

Burke: I'm just saying that we are a team.

Yang: Okay

Burke: A strong team, and I wouldn't be in the OR if I didn't know I could do it. You're just going to have to trust me on that. Don't let this O'Malley thing break you down

Yang: No, I'm not.
Later in the same episode, the situation is exacerbated when Webber offers Burke the Chief of Surgery position. Burke and Yang meet in a stairwell:

Yang: It'll be okay.

Burke: Cristina...

Yang: Whatever happens, he cannot punish you. Every surgery we have done has been textbook. We haven't lost a single patient, we are flawless.

Burke: Cristina, you were right the Chief does want Dr. Hahn to replace me as head of cardio. Richard's planning to retire, and he's recommending to the board that they name me, next chief of surgery.

While in surgery, later in that same episode, Yang’s overly selfless devotion becomes overbearing to Burke and he pushes back. Additionally, Yang is concerned with Burke’s ability in the procedure, but remains obedient to his wishes:

Burke: It entered the right ventricle and went right through the septum. I'm going to need to place a pericardial patch.

Yang: Shall I do a running whip stitch?

Burke: No, I've got it.

Yang: I can do a McGoon, I have been practicing.

Burke: Dr. Yang, move to the other side of the table.

Yang: Dr. Burke, I apologize, I didn't mean to…

Burke: Move to the other side of the table. Thank you.

As the episode ends, Yang is spattered in blood when Burke’s stitch ruptures; her concerns were legitimate. After the surgery is completed, Burke walks into Webber’s office to confess.
In the next episode, Yang and Burke are engaged in a war of silence where they refuse to speak with each other. However, despite this tension and prolonged argument, Yang is still selflessly devoted to Burke. As she and Grey are leaving for the day, she sees that Shepherd is headed back to work with Burke (3, 10; Paiz & Mann, 2006). Shepherd tells Grey, “I'm going to go back upstairs with Dr. Burke. He wants me to take a look at his shoulder, don't wait up for me.” Yang jumps into the elevator before the doors close. In the next episode, Yang and Burke are still not speaking to each other but Yang spends the night on the couch in Burke’s hospital room (3, 11; Vernoff & Yaitanes, 2007a). Two episodes later, Yang gives into Burke (3, 13; Buchman & Grossman, 2007). She does not care if she is right or wrong, but rather, she was giving in because she valued their relationship more:

I was right, I swear, I really believe what I did was right. I don't want you to forgive me. Frankly, I'd find it patronizing if you did, because while I know I was right, you think I'm wrong, which doesn't matter. Because...I'm in this...I'm in this for the long haul, and I'm in this to finish the race. So, if that means I don't win this one, then fine. I don't win. You win. I'm talking. See I'm talking first, you win.

Burke rewards Yang’s devotion by proposing marriage, “Marry me.”

Next, Feng (2002) noted that by enacting the Suzie Wong stereotype, Asian American women lose their identities by privileging their romantic partners’ needs and wants. Additionally, Asian American women, when conforming to the Suzie Wong stereotype, demonstrate subservience by subordinating their interests in favor of their romantic partners’ desires. Yang demonstrates that identity shift and subservience when a past romantic interest, Marlow, visits the hospital before Yang and Burke’s wedding (3, 18; Cahn & Frawley, 2007). Marlow tells
Burke that Yang was not interested in a marriage, “She used to say to me that she thought marriage was for the weak and undirected. I made a number of marriage proposals [pause] but she wouldn't have it.” Later, Burke confronts Yang about her acceptance of his proposal despite her past views regarding marriage:

Burke: Then, why did you say yes?
Yang: Because I wanted to make you happy.
Burke: Happy?
Cristina: You know, I'll do a lot of things to make you happy. Do I give a crap about a ceremony with a dress and a flautist? No, but, I'm happy to do it, if it'll make you happy.
Burke: Heartwarming [pause] thanks.

As such, Yang demonstrates that she is willing to submit to please Burke. Two episodes later, Marlow confronts Yang about her engagement to Burke, “We both know you're not the marrying kind” (3, 20; S. McKee & Misiano, 2007). Yang responded, “You don't know me anymore.” Later in same the episode, Marlow challenges Yang about her personality change after he eavesdrops on a conversation between Yang and Burke:

Yang: How long have you been standing there?
Marlow: Long enough. We've been playing our little game all day long. But, what I just saw, that was real. That question you asked him, the question about the sutures that was from my paper, the one you helped me write, you already knew the answer. The Cristina Yang I knew was concerned with excellence. She would have never played the part of helpless girl to build up a grown man’s ego. What has become of you?
Yang: I learned that sometimes you have to think about other people.
Marlow: You compromised yourself.

Yang: No.

Marlow: I'm going home, you're right, it's senseless, Coming here, chasing after a job that was beneath me just so I could be near a women who...a woman who apparently no longer exists. Best of luck with the wedding.

Thus, Yang is willing to shift her identity and demonstrates her subservience by subordinating her surgical expertise to Burke in order to please her romantic interest.

Burke is African American while Marlow is white, thus indicating a partial resistance to the Suzie Wong Asian American female stereotype. While scholars (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Le, 2010) have argued that Asian American women gain legitimacy through their romantic relationship with white men, Yang is partially confirming the stereotype because she gained access to more surgical experiences because of her romantic relationship with a powerful male figure. In the very first episode of the series, Burke is portrayed as a strong and powerful figure because he was the Chief Cardiothoracic Surgeon when Yang and her colleagues started their internships (1, 1; Rhimes & Horton, 2005a). Additionally, Burke was in charge of the operating room as well as selecting the first intern to receive access to surgery. So while Burke is African American, rather than white, within the context of the show he has a great deal of power and in a predominantly patriarchal system, he provides legitimacy for Yang.

Next, as described previously, scholars (Balaji & Worawongs, 2010; Cho, 1997; Uchida, 1998) have noted that one of the characteristics of the Suzie Wong stereotype is that Asian American females are hypersexualized sex toys. Yang demonstrates some elements of hypersexuality when O’Malley moves in with Burke and Yang. Burke enjoys and has bonded with O’Malley. The night before, the two men ignore Yang when she returned home. The
following night, the two men are playing chess and are enjoying themselves when Yang arrives home. Once again Yang is ignored. Thus, Yang walks naked from her shared room with Burke to their kitchen. O’Malley quickly covers his eyes and claims, “I didn't see anything! Dude! I did not see anything!” Burke reacts by kicking O’Malley out of the apartment as a means to protect his toy. In the third season, Burke is in Seattle Grace, recovering from further surgery to repair his hand (3, 2; Vernoff & Melman, 2006). Yang closes the door, strips off her scrubs, and crawls onto Burke’s hospital bed wearing skimpy red lingerie. Yang tells Burke, “Just because you can’t touch, doesn't mean you can't enjoy.” Later in the season, as Yang is studying for her intern exam, Burke rubs her feet, kisses Yang, and lures her away from her books with an offer of sex (3, 21; Wilding & Verica, 2007).

Despite scenes of Yang’s hypersexuality, Grey is portrayed as more sexualized in comparison to Yang. For example, in the premiere episode, the series opens with Grey waking up after a one-night stand with a man whose name she cannot remember (Rhimes & Horton, 2005a). Later, in the premiere episode, the unnamed man is revealed as Grey’s superior at Seattle Grace and Chief of Neurosurgery, Dr. Derek Shepherd. As the series progresses, Grey also has sex with O’Malley (2, 18; Vernoff & Schmir, 2006). During the second season, Grey has a random one night stand in her bed (2, 10; Stanton, Werksman, & Stanzler, 2005b). The interaction is similar to the premiere episode where she does not remember his name. Grey’s sexual exploits become so overwhelming that she practices celibacy and substitutes knitting for sex (2, 22; Robe & Mann, 2006). Grey explains why she is not drinking but knitting in a bar:

  No, celibate, I'm practicing celibacy, and drinking does not go well with celibacy, because it makes everything and everyone seem kind of porny. Then, my head
gets all cloudy and then the next thing you know, I'm naked, and my point is, I'm celibate, and knitting is good for surgical dexterity, so I'm making a sweater.

In the next episode, Grey is still trying to maintain celibacy (2, 23; Klaviter & Melman, 2006). But by the third season, Grey is fantasizing about a having group sex with Shepherd and veterinarian, Dr. Finn Dandridge (Chris O'Donnell; 3, 3; Cahn & Arkin, 2006). In contrast, Yang is monogamous with Burke during the entire first three seasons. Thus, in Grey’s Anatomy, the female white lead character is more hypersexualized than the Asian American female.

Oh’s portrayal of Yang reifies the Suzie Wong stereotype as selflessly devoted, subservient to and overly supportive of Burke, willing to shift or lose her identity; gaining legitimacy from a romantic relationship, and emphasizing hypersexuality (though to a lesser degree than her white counterpart). While Oh’s portrayal does reify the Suzie Wong stereotype, in other scenes she simultaneously reifies and resists the Suzie Wong stereotype.

**Simultaneously Reifying and Resisting the Suzie Wong Stereotype**

In five scenes, Oh’s character both contradicts and confirms characteristics of the Suzie Wong stereotype. She tries to gain legitimacy via her romantic relationship, but does not prioritize that relationship above her career. Furthermore, Yang is relentlessly supportive and caring for Burke, but does not enjoy being his caretaker. To start, in the first season, Burke and Yang’s relationship develops quickly into a romantic one. In the sixth episode of the first season, Yang simultaneously confirmed and contradicted characteristics of the Suzie Wong stereotype (Vernoff & Brazil, 2005). Yang uses her relationship to Burke to get access to surgery. She approaches Burke and tells him, “I really want in on this… I'm not talking. I'm just saying.” Burke grants her access, circumvents Bailey, and tells Yang to “find her mother, get a family
history, and I'll tell Bailey.” However, Yang does not want to further the relationship. Instead, she leaves the room after Burke tries to talk about their relationship. After the surgery, Burke tries to talk to Yang again, “Look, I'm just asking, what is this, what are we doing here? What is it?” Instead of engaging or trying to further the relationship, Yang deflects, “You need a definition? You really want to be that guy?” Thus, Yang does not privilege her romantic relationship over her career.

Yang continues to simultaneously reify and resist the Suzie Wong stereotype. Yang becomes Burke’s caretaker after his initial surgery from Shepherd (3, 3; Cahn & Arkin, 2006). She feels a duty to take care of Burke, but does not enjoy it thus reifying and resisting the Suzie Wong stereotype of relentless and self sacrificial support. In the third season, Burke is lying on their living room couch, in sloppy clothes, and throwing a ball up against the wall. Yang suggests that Burke should use the ball as therapy for his injured hand. Burke responds by throwing the ball against a coffee mug which then causes coffee to spill on the floor in Burke’s usually meticulous apartment. Yang offers to clean up the spilled coffee and Burke responds by telling her, “Whatever, leave it. It doesn't matter.” In the same episode, Yang is complaining to her friends:

Yang: I'm on my knees in a puddle of coffee, and he's lying on the couch playing with himself, you know, and not in a good way.
Grey: But he's recovering from surgery, and you've read the studies on recovery and depression in surgical patients.
Yang: Yeah well, he's not a patient, he's Preston Burke. He's just milking it. Now he's got me fetching his food and the paper and his slippers like I'm a dog.
Later in the episode, Yang is explaining after-care to a couple who are awaiting surgery. She becomes so immersed in lamenting her role as a caregiver that she almost did not notice that her patient was having a seizure and close to dropping his baby:

You know it is brutal being the caretaker. You'll be fetching the paper and then cleaning the carpet, and he wants ice in a cup, not a mug. It never stops. It's the caretakers that are the silent victims. You know, and when do you ever hear about them? Never! I never hear anything about them. Then, it's always, the patient this and the patient that.

Despite her complaining, Yang is still devoted to Burke. That night, Yang returned home with four whole chickens and cleaves them on the counter. She tells Burke, “You can take a leave of absence if you want to, but you're not going to sit on your ass all day. You're going to work hard and you’re going to get every bit of your strength and dexterity back.” She then offers the cleaved chickens to Burke to work on by telling him to put the chickens back together. So, in these key scenes, Oh’s portrayal of Yang both reifies the Suzie Wong stereotype because she is supportive and provides care, but resists the Suzie Wong stereotype through her complainants about having to be a caregiver and her directness with Burke about his own recovering and his role in it. The resistance of the Suzie Wong stereotype in Oh’s portrayal also intersects with the model minority Asian American stereotype in some scenes.

Reifying the Model Minority Stereotype While Resisting Suzie Wong

In 21 scenes, Oh’s portrayal of Yang resists the Suzie Wong stereotype while reifying the model minority stereotype. Yang conforms to the model minority stereotype by prioritizing her career over her romantic relationship. For example in the latter half of the third season, Burke
and Yang are engaged and plan their wedding (3, 21; Wilding & Verica, 2007). However, Yang is more interested in studying for her intern exam than her wedding.

   Alex: What's Kahn's syndrome?

   Grey: Wait, wait, I know this!

   Stevens: Tick tock!

   Grey: Um

   O’Malley: Cracking under the pressure

   Grey: No! Um [pause] hypocortolisd [pause] cortolism

   Yang: Primary hyperaldosteronism! Yes, get out of the seat…it’s my turn.

   Stevens: No, it's my turn.

   Yang: No, it's not.

As the interns are gathered at Yang and Burke’s house, Burke tries to get Yang to try cake samples.

   Yang: Oh honey I

   Burke: Try this one, white sponge with vanilla butter cream.

   Yang: Ok yeah. I'm trying to study for the most important test of my intern career. I don't have time for wedding cake.

   Burke: Just try it.

   Stevens: Go, go!

   O’Malley: What is the strongest layer of the small bowel?

   Yang: Fine, yummy, go!


Burke approaches Yang with a second piece of cake.
Burke: This is the lemon, might be a little tart.

Stevens: What is actinic keratosis?


Yang: In old people.

Karev: In anyone.

Burke: Is it too tart?

Yang: Baby, I don't care. I mean, is Alex right or am I?

Burke: You don't care? Well, I'll get another bride.

Yang: I love it. I love all cakes. Now break the tie.

Burke: Karev is right.

Later in the day, and in order to help facilitate studying as well as choosing a cake, Burke sets a conference room in the hospital with multiple mini-cake samples.

Yang: Um, what are you doing?

Burke: The bakery wants me to make a decision by tomorrow so if you can tell me your favorite by then that would be great.

Instead of appreciating Burke’s accommodation, Yang tells Grey, “Cakes and little place cards? Ok, he's turning into a girl.” On the day of the test, Burke approaches Yang, in the hospital, for help with the wedding (3, 24; Heinberg & Misiano, 2007):

Burke: Cristina.

Cristina: What is MEN Syndrome? Wait, don't answer that.

Burke: The minister needs to see a copy of your vows before the wedding.

Cristina: Multiple endocrine neoplasia. Yes.

Burke: Look, I know it's test day, and I'm not supposed to be talking about the
wedding on test day. But since tomorrow's our wedding day…

Cristina: You have five seconds…go.

Burke: Bill Adams can't make it, I have no best man.

Cristina: Oh, no, baby, I'm so sorry.

Burke: And I need your vows by...

Cristina: Okay, time's up.

Burke: Cristina.

Cristina: Test day.

Burke: What am I supposed to tell the minister?

Cristina: Test day.

Yang makes her priorities clear, when she tells her colleagues that her career is more important than her relationship, “I am not a bride. I am a surgeon” (3, 22; Rhimes & Grossman, 2007). Thus, Oh’s portrayal of Yang reinforces the model minority stereotype of overachiever, while resisting the Suzie Wong stereotype of the need to gain legitimacy through the romantic relationship.

Overall, Oh’s portrayal of Yang on Grey’s Anatomy served to both reify and/or resist characteristics associated with the model minority and Suzie Wong stereotypes. Also, when contradicting the Suzie Wong stereotype, Oh’s portrayal at times conformed to aspects of the model minority stereotype. During the analysis process it became clear that other Asian and Asian American stereotypes were at times addressed in Oh’s performance.

Dangerous and Deceitful Yellow Peril/Dragon Lady

In addition to the characteristics of the model minority and Suzie Wong stereotypes, I
also found that Oh’s portrayal demonstrates conformity as well as resistance to other Asian stereotypes. First, in 31 scenes, Yang demonstrates characteristics of the yellow peril and Dragon Lady stereotypes because she engages in dangerous and deceitful behavior. Scholars (Marchetti, 1993; Mok, 1998; Ono & Pham, 2009; Prasso, 2006; Shah, 2003) have posited that the Dragon Lady is based on yellow peril Asian stereotype where she is not aggressive or direct, but uses deception and manipulation to achieve selfish goals. For example, despite finally confessing to Webber, about Burke’s injury, Yang conformed to the yellow peril stereotype because she puts patients in danger (Ono & Pham, 2009). As Yang noted, she performs operations that were too advanced for her internship and medical experience when she was covering for Burke (Clack et al., 2006; Heinberg & Lerner, 2006; Koenig & Robinson, 2006). For example, during episodes where they conspired to cover-up his hand tremors, observers are shocked when Burke allows Yang to perform a removal of tracheostomy tube during surgery (3, 8; Stanton et al., 2006). O’Malley walked into the operating room and said, “He's letting her decanulate the heart by herself?” A scrub nurse replied, “Freaking unbelievable, huh?” Thus indicating that Yang is performing surgical procedures that are well above her experience level.

Next, Yang was manipulative and deceitful. She wants O’Malley to move out, but instead of approaching Burke directly, she uses her sexuality to gain Burke’s compliance (2, 22; Robe & Mann, 2006). Also, instead of directly addressing Marlow’s attempt to romantically reconnect with her, Yang is manipulative and deceitful (3, 20; S. McKee & Misiano, 2007). Burke questioned Yang about her different behavior during Marlow’s visit to Seattle Grace:

Burke: I was actually talking about you. What was that?

Yang: You're going to have to put up with me being nice and sweet for a little while.

Burke: That'll be a nice change of pace.
Yang: Shut up.

Yang: That's more like it.

So, instead of directly addressing Marlow with Burke, Yang is deceitful. Additionally, Yang deceives Burke about moving in with him (2, 14; Phelan et al., 2006). She moved in with Burke but did not tell him that she kept his apartment. During interactions with Grey, Yang reveals her deceit, “I'm avoiding Burke [pause] He thinks I moved in with him.” Later in the episode, the two friends further discuss Yang’s deceit:

Grey: The truth, did you move in with Burke or not?

Yang: I told him I moved in with him, but I'm keeping my old apartment. What? I sleep with Burke every night and my clothes are there. So, I still have my apartment, big deal.

Grey: You have to tell him.

Yang: Actually, I don't.

After Burke discovers that Yang has kept her apartment, Yang tries to rationalize, but Grey has to explain to Yang, “Are you sure he's just not acting like you lied about moving in” (2, 18; Vernoff & Schmir, 2006). Thus, Yang actively engages in deception.

Next, Yang also manipulates Torres, a superior, into giving Yang her famous intern test note cards. Instead of asking directly, Yang preys on Torres’ female identity and insecurities regarding (Izzie) Stevens and Torres’ husband, (George) O’Malley. As noted in the Dragon Lady stereotype, Torres is aware of Yang’s manipulative strategy but cannot resist Yang (3, 21; Wilding & Verica, 2007):

Yang: I know you have to give him the cards cause you're married to him [pause] I respect that…but, there is an argument to be made for female surgeons sticking together.

Torres: You're relentless.
Yang: Sisterhood and all that you know.

Torres: Mm-hm, scary [pause] inhuman relentless.

Yang: You are like a role model [pause] to me [pause] or something.

Torres: Ok, you know what stop. This is just getting sad. I will give the cards to George, I am sure he will share.

Yang: No he won't [pause] with me anyway. He'll just share them with Izzie. They're like an exclusive little unit [pause] whatever.

Torres: Yang. My uh [pause] my locker is on the right side, third one from the door. The cards are on the top shelf.

Yang: Really [pause] you're?

Torres: They're all yours.

Yang also achieves her goals by using manipulative strategies thus supporting the yellow peril and Dragon Lady stereotypes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I found key scenes where Oh’s portrayal of Yang in *Grey’s Anatomy* reified and/or resisted characteristics associated with the model minority and Suzie Wong stereotypes. In scenes where Oh’s character portrayed reification of the model minority stereotype, she is shown as more competent, socially awkward, overly competitive, lacking emotions, exceptionally hardworking, and an academic overachiever. However, in some cases, her portrayal resisted the model minority stereotype because Oh portrays Yang as aggressive, socially competent, accepted by her peers, and demonstrates emotions. Lastly, the character is portrayed as simultaneously resisted and reified characteristics of the model minority stereotype.
by combining characteristics of hard work, social awkwardness, over competitiveness, lack of emotion, and competency with non-model minority stereotype characteristics such as aggression, showing emotions, and social competency.

With regard to the Suzie Wong stereotype, Yang demonstrates conformity to the Asian American female stereotype. She is selflessly devoted, obedient/subservient and overly supportive to her romantic partner, willing to shift or lose her identity to please her romantic partner, gains legitimacy from the romantic relationship, and is hypersexualized. Additionally, Oh’s character is portrayed as simultaneously contradicting and supporting the Suzie Wong stereotype because she gains legitimacy via her romantic relationship, but does not intensify that relationship. Also, she is supportive and becomes Burke’s caretaker, but does not enjoy the role. She is hypersexualized at times, but less hypersexualized than her white female counterpart, Grey. Oh’s portrayal of Yang also simultaneously reifies the model minority stereotype while resisting the Suzie Wong stereotype because she prioritizes her career over her romantic relationship. Lastly, Oh’s portrayal conforms to the yellow peril and Dragon Lady stereotypes because she engages in dangerous and deceitful behavior.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Sandra Oh’s portrayal of Dr. Cristina Yang on Grey’s Anatomy provides insight into how Asian American females are being portrayed in U.S. media. My analysis suggests that the simultaneous reification and resistance of both model minority and Suzie Wong stereotypes in Oh’s portrayal indicates a more complex portrayal of Asian American females in U.S. media. Instead of simply portraying characteristics consistent with existing stereotype, she demonstrates resistance to and thus, I argue that the conflicting and unique representation of Oh’s character provides insight of the resistance to the model minority Asian American and Suzie Wong Asian American female stereotypes. Also, I suggest that Oh’s portrayal of the Asian American is verbally aggressive and less dependent, thus calling into question, the Suzie Wong stereotype. Additionally, while previous research (Feng, 2002; Mok, 1998; Suzuki, 1989; Wu, 2002) assumes that portrayals are stereotypical, based on my analysis, I suggest that this is not necessarily the case and that Oh’s portrayal is a step towards creating multiple Asian American meanings instead of simplistic stereotypically ones. Furthermore, I discuss implications such as, monolithic portrayals, and legitimatized oppression. I conclude with limitations and directions for future research. To start, I review how the dialectical approach is helpful to examine the coexisting and interpenetrative tensions of Asian American female stereotypes.

Dialectical Approach

Martin and Nakayama (1999) contended that “dialectic offers intercultural communication researchers a way to think about different ways of knowing in a more comprehensive manner, while retaining the significance of considering how we express
knowledge” (p. 13). Additionally, the authors noted that a dialectical approach allows multiple perspectives when examining intercultural communication. Furthermore, the authors also urged scholars to avoid approaches that are situated in a singular paradigm. Thus, situating an examination in the interpretivist approach, while borrowing from the critical humanist perspective, is appropriate for an intercultural study regarding Asian American female stereotypes. Next, the authors noted that a dialectical approach allows researchers to address intercultural studies in a dynamic, not static, manner. Therefore, the dialectical approach is appropriate when examining stereotypes of Asian American females because they evolve within shifting political, social, economic, and cultural circumstances (Cho, 1997; Marchetti, 1993; Mok, 1998; Suzuki, 1989). Martin and Nakayama (1999) posited that “the most challenging of the dialectical perspective is that it requires holding two contradictory ideas simultaneously” (p. 14). To do this, scholars should transcend dichotomies and mutually exclusive categorizations (Martin & Nakayama, 1999).

Relational dialectics were developed by interpersonal scholars (Baxter, 1990; 2000a, 2000b; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) to explain the tensions that arise in personal relationships. Baxter and her colleagues initially identified three primary tensions that exist in relationships: autonomy–connection, stability–change, and novelty-predictability. In addition to interpersonal relationships, dialectics have also been applied to group interactions (Kramer, 2004) and intercultural communication (Martin & Nakayama, 1999).

Martin and Nakayama (1999) proposed six dialectics to further the study of intercultural communication that are “neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive” (p. 15). The scholars (Martin & Nakayama, 1999) defined the six dialectics as: cultural-individualistic, personal/social-contextual, differences-similarities, static-dynamic, present-future/history-past,
and privilege-disadvantaged. First, the cultural-individualistic dialectic is concerned with a functionalist perspective where individuals in intercultural interaction are characterized by membership in both individual and intercultural groups. Next, the personal/social-contextual dialectic explores how people communicate differently in various contexts are influenced by both personal as well as contextual aspects. Third, the differences-similarities dialectic “reminds us that difference in similarity can coexist in intercultural communication interactions” (p. 16). The authors added that interpretive scholars emphasize similarities while critical researchers emphasize differences. Fourth, the static-dynamic dialectic is concerned with how culture evolves. The functionalist scholars emphasize stability of culture while interpretive and critical researchers’ privilege instability. Fifth, the present-future/history-past dialectic that focuses on how scholarship is performed on the past through the lens of the present. Lastly, the privilege-disadvantaged dialectic focuses on how individuals have political, social, or status position in societies. The authors noted that this dialectic is central to critical scholars. From the six noted above, I focus on differences-similarities and static-dynamic dialectics as they relate to stereotypes.

First, within the differences-similarities dialectic, Martin and Nakayama (1999) noted that scholars tend to emphasize group differences. However, in a dialectical approach to intercultural communication studies, the similarities and differences coexist. This approach allows scholars to not simply view existing stereotypes as simple dichotomies or mutually exclusive categories. Instead, this perspective allows us to study stereotypes as dialectics Kawai, 2005). A dialectical approach to stereotypes allows scholars a more nuanced perspective to examine the ways in which stereotypes are mutually informing, interpenetrative, and coexist. Thus, a dialectical approach allows to scholars to cast off stereotypes as simple binaries and
explore variations in the behaviors of social groups. Additionally, the authors noted that critical scholars emphasize differences and interpretive scholars emphasize similarities. As a result, the similarities-differences dialectic is especially appropriate to this study because I situate this examination in the interpretive paradigm while borrowing from the critical humanist approach. Thus, I seek both similarities to (reification) and differences (resistance) from existing stereotypes of Asian American females. Next, static-dynamic dialectic “highlights the ever-changing nature of culture and cultural practices” (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, p. 16). The authors noted that interpretive scholars tend to view culture as relatively stable, while critical researchers emphasize instability. Thus, a dialectical approach allows scholars to view culture as both static and dynamic simultaneously. As a result, I seek to understand how aspects of existing stereotypes remain static and are in tension with more dynamic characteristics.

Previous research (Kawai, 2005, Ono and Pham, 2009; Zhang, 2010) has explored Asian and Asian American stereotypes from a dialectical perspective. As Zhang (2010) noted, model minority and yellow peril are an inseparable dialectic and thus inform one another. Ono and Pham (2009) concurred and added that the two stereotypes are interrelated. Kawai (2005) suggested that traditionally “stereotypes are subject to a binary meaning system rather than to a meaning system with many possible meanings because stereotyping is more rigid than a simple meaning-making process and also tends to involve power inequality” (p. 118). Kawai (2005) urged research away from this binary system and argued that Asian and Asian American identities will benefit by approaching separate stereotypes as interrelated as a means to avoid internalization of simplistic meaning dichotomies. In other words, when stereotypes are approached from a dialectical framework they no longer function as a dichotomous binary. Instead they function as dialectics that mutually inform each other, are interpenetrative, and
allow for simultaneous and coexisting contradictions. Kawai (2005) suggested that scholars create additional characteristics and functions of the stereotypes from a dialogical perspective in order to resist simplistic stereotypes of Asians and Asian Americans. Thus, in the next section, I suggest that the results of my analysis may contribute to add meanings as a means to resist simplistic stereotypes.

Multiple Meanings – Characteristics and Functions

As noted previously, scholars (Ono & Pham. 2009; Patton, 2001; Pegues, 2007; Taylor & Stern, 1997) have found that mediated portrayals of Asians and Asian Americans conform to stereotypes. However, Kawai (2005) suggested that stereotypes and meanings of stereotypes are not fixed and change with political and economic circumstances. Kawai (2005) described meanings as characteristics associated with stereotypes. Kawai (2005) explains that meanings function on surface and deeper levels. At the surface, meanings associated with the model minority Asian American stereotype include characteristics such as academic overachievers. However, the meaning associated with the stereotype can also relate to how the stereotype functions. For example, this deeper or more complex level of meaning of the model minority stereotype has been used to oppress other racial minorities (R. G. Lee, 1999; Nakayama, 1998; Palumbo-Liu, 1994; Zhang, 2010). Based on my textual analysis of Sandra Oh’s portrayal of Dr. Cristina Yang in Grey’s Anatomy, I maintain that she partially resists the model minority Asian American and Suzie Wong Asian American female stereotypes (see Table 1). As a result, instead of finding solely conformity to stereotypes, I suggest that mediated portrayals may also resist simplistic stereotypes that influence Asian and Asian American identities.
Oh’s portrayal reifies characteristics of the model minority stereotype because she is portrayed as competent, overly competitive, hard working, an academic overachiever. She also demonstrates resistance to the model minority Asian American stereotype because she is portrayed as aggressive instead of quiet and passive. Lastly, her portrayal also demonstrates simultaneous conformity and resistance to characteristics of the model minority. For example, she lacks emotions and has the ability to express emotions. She also is portrayed as both socially awkward and socially competent. Additionally, Oh’s portrayal of Yang also simultaneous reifies and resists the Suzie Wong stereotype. First, she is portrayed as demonstrating both selfless devotion to her romantic partner while working for her own interest. Next, she is portrayed as obedient and subservient to her romantic partner but also prioritizing her career over the romantic relationship. Third, she is portrayed as gaining legitimacy based on the romantic relationship as well as gaining legitimacy based on herself. Lastly, she is portrayed as hypersexualized but not more or less than other women on the show. To start, I will review model minority stereotype characteristics that are reified and thus not in tension.

First, Asian Americans are portrayed as the model minority stereotype with perceived characteristics such as work competency, competitiveness, hard working, and overachieving academically (K. –Y. Lee & Joo, 2005; Taylor et al., 2005; Taylor & Lee, 1997; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010). In Grey’s Anatomy, Yang conforms to the model minority stereotype characteristic of being portrayed as extremely competent. In the third season, a patient faints because of the pain in his legs (3, 13; Buchman & Grossman, 2007). Yang, who is a third year intern at this time, is able to perform an emergency operation on a patient who is not anesthetized, alongside Attending Orthopedic Surgeon, Dr. Callie Torres. Yang’s quick action, with Torres, saves the patient’s life. Next, the model minority Asian American stereotype also
includes the characteristic of over competitiveness (Mok, 1998; R. G. Lee, 1999; Taylor & Lee, 1997; Zhang, 2010). For example, Yang is portrayed as competitive while taking a laparoscopic general surgery seminar with Chief of Surgery, Dr. Richard Webber (2, 22; Robe & Mann,

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2006). Yang is first to finish a in class workshop and loudly exclaims, “Done! I'm done! I totally finished first. I'm done!”

Next, Asian Americans, stereotyped as members of the model minority, are portrayed as hard working (Mok, 1998; Paek & Shah, 2003; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010). For example, Yang arrives to work earlier than her colleagues (1, 4; Parriott & Davidson, 2005). Yang tells Grey, “I was here at 4:00 and you didn't get here till 4:30.” Lastly, the model minority are marked by overachievement in academia (Mok; 1998; Taylor et al., 2005; Taylor & Lee, 1997; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Zhang, 2010). For example, when fellow intern Dr. Alex Karev questioned Yang’s credentials and she is quick to answer, “Well, I have a B.A. from Smith, a Ph. D from Berkeley, and an MD from Stanford” (1, 2; (Rhimes & Horton, 2005b). Thus, Yang reifies some characteristics of the model minority Asian American stereotype because she is portrayed as competent, competitive, hard working, and an academic overachiever. By maintaining existing stereotypes, Oh’s portrayal addresses the static and similar portions of the similarities-differences and static-dynamic dialectics. Next, I will review how Oh’s portrayal of Yang contradicts the model minority Asian American stereotype.

Scholars (R. G. Lee, 1999; Ono & Pham, 2009; Osajima, 2003; Palumbo-Liu, 1994; Taylor et al., 2005; Zhang, 2010) have posited that Asian Americans are stereotyped as quiet and passive instead of aggressive. However, Oh’s character is not passive and in several scenes, she is portrayed as physically and verbally aggressive in interactions with colleagues and hospital nursing staff. In Grey’s Anatomy, Oh portrays Yang as aggressive when speaking to her colleagues (1, 1; Rhimes & Horton, 2005a). For example, the interns compete for access to perform surgeries and Grey is selected during the premiere. Yang loses the opportunity and confronts Grey when Grey tries to apologize to Yang. Yang tells Grey, “You know what, you
did a cutthroat thing, deal with it. Don't come to me for absolution, you want to be a shark, be a shark.” Grey tries to protest, but Yang quickly cuts her off, “Oh yes you are. Only it makes you feel all bad in your warm gooey places. No, screw you!” By resisting the passive characteristic of the model minority Asian American stereotype, Oh’s portrayal addresses the differences aspect of the similarities-differences dialectic. Next, I will review how Oh’s portrayal also simultaneously reifies and resists the model minority Asian American stereotype.

From the perspective of a mutually informing and interpenetrative dialectic, Yang demonstrates simultaneously conformity and resistance to characteristics of the model minority: lacking emotions and having the ability to express emotions, as well as being socially awkward and socially competent (R. G. Lee, 1999; Ono & Pham, 2009; Osajima, 2003; Palumbo-Liu, 1994; Taylor et al., 2005; Zhang, 2010). To start, Yang experiences coexisting tensions between lacking emotions and having emotions. For example, during the first season, Yang and Stevens find a mortally wounded patient (1, 3; Rhimes & Goldwyn, 2005). At first, Yang wants to move on to another patient. She tells Stevens to stop hoping for the patient to live, “Look at his EEG. There's no higher brain function. He'll never talk, move or think again. There's no one in there. Think like a doctor, Izzie.” As the episode progresses, Yang helps Stevens and the patient’s family emotionally cope with the loss.

Also, Yang demonstrates social awkwardness combined with social acceptance (3, 10; Paiz & Mann, 2006). Yang is ostracized by her fellow interns after she and Burke reveal that they have conspired to cover-up Burke’s hand tremors during surgeries. While the interns are changing in their shared locker room, Grey publically defends Yang and demands that they forgive her. Their colleagues apologize to Yang for their ostracization. However, Despite Grey’s show of public support, Yang is unable to thank her. Additionally, Yang shares her lunches with
her colleagues and is not rejected as a peer because she is invited to parties and other gatherings. As a result, she is portrayed as both socially awkward and socially competent. Thus, her portrayal demonstrates the coexisting tension between static-dynamic and similarities-differences dialectics because some characteristics remain static and similar whereas others are dynamic and different. Additionally, I suggest that the dialectical perspective is helpful in that added meanings that may help to breakdown of stereotypes to potentially interrupt the internalization of existing Asian American stereotypes. Specifically, Kawai (2005) argued that using dialectical perspective to tensions within and around existing stereotypes will help make “it more difficult for people of the yellow race to accept the model minority stereotype” (p. 127). Next, I will review how Oh’s portrayal of Yang simultaneously conforms to and contradicts the Suzie Wong Asian American female stereotype.

In my analysis of Yang on *Grey’s Anatomy*, I found that Oh’s portrayal both reified and resisted characteristics of the Suzie Wong Asian American stereotype because she demonstrates selfless devotion romantic partner, yet working for self interest; obedience and subservience to the romantic partner while prioritizing own career; gaining legitimacy based on romantic relationship and gaining her own legitimacy; and being hypersexualized, but not more or less hypersexualized than other woman on the show. First, the tension between selfless devotion to her romantic interest and working for own interest is apparent. In the third season, Yang and Burke are planning their wedding after (3, 22; Rhimes & Grossman, 2007). Yang changes her personality and is willing to submit to Burke’s desires to be married as well as a formal church wedding. However, as the wedding is about to begin, Yang cannot make herself walk down the aisle (3, 25; Phelan, Rater, & Corn, 2007). Burke leaves Yang at the church. Yang returns to their shared apartment and her sense of self interest resurfaces after she realizes that Burke has
packed his belongings. Yang has Grey use scissors to cut off her wedding gown as Yang exclaims, “He's gone, I'm [pause] I'm free. Damn it. Damn it. Damn it. Damn it. Oh, god.” The third tension is based on gaining legitimacy based on the romantic relationship and gaining legitimacy based on herself. In the second season and early parts of the third season, Yang gains access to valuable surgery experience and legitimacy based on her romantic relationship with Burke.

However, during their war of silence in the middle of season 3, Burke is recovering from surgery to repair his hand (3, 10; Paiz & Mann, 2006). Burke and Yang refuse to speak to each other and Yang is working under other surgeons. Dr. Erica Hahn is an attending cardiothoracic surgeon who fills in for Burke at Seattle Grace. Hahn is impressed with Yang and tells Burke, “Dr. Yang here is proving to be an extremely capable asset.” Thus, Yang simultaneously gains legitimacy on her own and through Burke. The last tension is based on simultaneously being hypersexualized but not more or less hypersexualized. For example, during the second season, Burke leaves Yang a key to his immaculate apartment and asks her to move in with him (2, 10; Stanton et al., 2005b). Yang is afraid to move in and shows Burke her messy apartment. Clothing, emptied take-out containers, and papers are piled all over the furniture. Yang tells Burke:

I don't do laundry. I buy new underwear, and see under that table? Six months of magazines that I know I'll never read but I won't throw out. I don't wash dishes, vacuum or put the toilet paper on the holder. I hired a maid once. She ran away crying.

Burke looks contemplatively over the messy apartment. In a later scene, we see Burke and Yang obviously tired, passed out, and nude while semi-covered under a blanket; they had sex. As the
episode closes, Yang enters Burke’s apartment, using her key, and unannounced. Apparently, the sexual encounter convinced Yang to move their relationship forward. However, Yang is no more sexualized than the show’s title character, Grey. Grey’s sexuality becomes such a problem that Grey takes a vow of celibacy and Stevens has to help her maintain that vow:

I took a celibacy vow, so she's replacing sex with knitting, and so I'm knitting pieces of Meredith's sweater so I can switch them out with hers so she can really believe she's knitting because if anybody needs to be celibate, it's Meredith.

Thus, Oh’s performances simultaneously reify but also resist characteristics of the Suzie Wong Asian American female stereotype. Also, by both contradicting and conforming to aspects of the Suzie Wong Stereotype, Yang demonstrates the coexisting dialectics between the similarities-differences and static-dynamic tensions. Overall, Oh’s portrayal demonstrates that mediated portrayals do not solely conform to existing stereotypes but also, in some instances, contradict characteristics of perceived stereotype binaries to avoid internalization that can result from simplistic meaning dichotomies. Thus, Kawai (2005) suggested that internalization and acceptance of stereotypes by stereotyped social groups can be disrupted by resisting characteristics of and adding meanings to existing stereotypes. As a result, I suggest Oh’s mediated portrayal of Yang may function to interrupt internalization of simplistic stereotypes that influence the identities of Asian American females.

Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

In this section, I discuss the implications of my analysis. First, I review how Oh and the actress that portrayed her mother address how media tends to stereotype Asians and Asian Americans as monolithic and interchangeable despite differing cultural origins (Kawai, 2005;

**Monolithic Portrayals – Interchangeable Asians and Asian Americans**

Scholars (Kawai, 2005; Ono & Pham, 2009; Shah, 2003; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Yuan et al, 2005; Zhang, 2010) have noted that Asian and Asian Americans are not differentiated in U.S. media. Nakayama (1994) and Shah (2003) have concurred and noted that Hollywood producers treated Asians of different origins interchangeably. For example, in *Memoirs of a Geisha*, the lead characters of on screen Japanese Geishas were portrayed by Chinese actresses Li Gong, Michelle Yeoh, and Ziyi Zhang (IMDB, n.d.d.). The producers of *Grey’s Anatomy* defied Hollywood’s monolithic portrayals and interchangeability because Oh’s is a Korean American and she portrayed a Korean American on-screen character. For example, in the second episode of the first season, Stevens asks Yang to translate for an Asian patient (Rhimes & Horton, 2005b). Yang tells Stevens that she cannot translate, “because I grew up in Beverley Hills, the only Chinese I know is from a Mr. Chou's menu. Besides, I'm Korean.” However, in the second (2, 4; Stanzler & Clack, 2005) and third seasons (3, 24; Heinberg & Misiano, 2007), producers cast a Chinese actress, Tsai Chin Zhou, to play Yang’s Korean mother thus conforming to existing Hollywood norms of substitutable and interchangeable Asian and Asian American actors (IMDB, n.d.e.; Nakayama, 1994; Shah, 2003). As a result, the producers for *Grey’s Anatomy* contradicted interchangeable portrayals with Oh’s character but treated Asian and Asian American actors as substitutable when casting the actress who played the role of Yang’s mother.
Next, I will discuss how Oh’s portrayal with regard how the model minority function to legitimize racial oppression.

_Legitimized Oppression_

Both the model minority and Suzie Wong stereotypes serve to legitimize oppression (R. G. Lee, 1999; Ono and Pham, 2009; Palumbo-Liu, 1994). Scholars (Chinn, 2002; R. G. Lee, 1999; Nakayama, 1998; Palumbo-Liu, 1994; Zhang, 2010) have argued that the model minority stereotype functions to legitimize structural oppression. Additionally, the Suzie Wong stereotype functions to support a white male patriarchy against feminist ideals (Cho, 1997; R. G. Lee, 1999; Marchetti, 1993). In other words, both stereotypes serve to legitimize structural oppression of social groups. However, in _Grey’s Anatomy_, the model minority stereotype does not function to legitimize racism in this fictional context. Three of the four positions of power at Seattle Grace hospital are occupied by African Americans: Dr. Miranda Bailey, Attending General Surgeon; Burke; and Dr. Richard Webber, Chief of Surgery (1, 1; Rhimes & Horton, 2005a). However, Yang does gain access to surgeries via her romantic relationship with Burke, so he functions as a male authority figure (1, 6; Vernoff & Brazil, 2005). Yang does gain some legitimacy through her relationship with Burke, based on his position of power at work rather than based on his race and position in dominant U.S. culture. Furthermore, at times Yang attempts to reject the patriarchal power relationship as she resists being the dutiful bride by arguing she is a surgeon first. For example, in season 3, Stevens notices that Yang is not excited about her wedding (3, 22; Rhimes & Grossman, 2007). She tells Yang that her behavior is “not very bridey.” Yang replies, “I am not a bride. I am a surgeon.” As such, Oh’s character in _Grey’s Anatomy_ demonstrates the oppressive functions associated with the Suzie Wong stereotype at times. In
contrast, her race is not used to hold back other minority characters in the way that the model minority stereotype typically functions (Chinn, 2002; Palumbo-Liu, 1994; R. G. Lee, 1999; Nakayama, 1998). Additionally, Rodrick (2005) noted that, “While Grey’s Anatomy isn’t exactly reinventing the medical drama, it’s radical in another. It stars a helluva lot of blacks, Asians, and women. What makes the show unusual is that the characters’ angst is not anchored in race or ethnicity.” (p. 98). Show creator is quoted in that same article as adding, “There was no reverse conspiracy to hire a diverse cast. We’re all post-civil rights, post-feminist babies. It is not remarkable that a black man is the head of surgery” (Rodrick, 2005, p. 98). Thus, I suggest that the series creator and producers created a fictionalized environment where Oh’s portrayal of a model minority stereotyped character does not function to legitimize racial oppression. Next, I will address limitations of this study as well as conclusions and directions for future research.

**Limitations**

I acknowledge that the data set I analyzed does not include every episode of eight seasons of Grey’s Anatomy. Also, in addition to all nine episodes of the first season, I also choose specific episodes from the second and third seasons in which Oh’s portrayal of Yang addressed the Suzie Wong Asian American stereotype. However, the process is consistent with A. McKee’s suggestion regarding data set selection. Additionally, I specifically sought scenes that reified and/or resisted characteristics of the Suzie Wong Asian American female stereotype. Thus, I did not actively engage in analysis regarding yellow peril, Dragon Lady, Lotus Blossom, and Geisha Asian stereotypes. As a result, I acknowledge that my data set is not comprehensive and limited to portrayals of the model minority and Suzie Wong stereotypes. Furthermore, I acknowledge that my data set does not include every televised portrayal of Asian and Asian females in the
U.S. However, as I choose to analyze one of the most visible portrayals of Asian American females who is also a popular character in a long running television series, thus, I suggest that the results of my analysis is relevant to Asian and Asian American stereotypes (Mastro and Greenberg, 2000). Lastly, I will conclude as well as suggest directions for future research.

Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

Based on my analysis, I suggest that media portrayals may resist existing stereotypes. In order to further research, I urge scholars to a dialectic approach because it may accommodate various points of dialogue in diversity, allowing for multiple points of view without considering them as neither opposite nor incongruent with each other (Nakayama, 1994). As Nakayama (1994) noted the diverse field of intercultural scholars needs to find points of convergence as a means to advance the discipline. Kawai (2005) encouraged scholars to seek and create multiple dialectical meanings to avoid simple and dichotomous stereotypes. Additionally, Liu (2000) added that scholars should keep an open mind during research to avoid examinations “in which Orientalism is always and everywhere diagnosed” (p. 36). Patton (2001) added that scholars should analyze other television shows to determine emergent trends. Thus, I hope that my study is a step to address how media portrayals may resist stereotypes that influence Asian and Asian American identity. Lastly, in accordance with Liu (2000) and Kawai (2005), I suggest that scholars seek multiple and new characteristics and functions of existing stereotypes as a means to break down simple dichotomies.

Also, as noted previously, stereotypes evolve with dynamic social and economic changes (Cho, 1997; Marchetti, 1993; Mok, 1998; Suzuki, 1989). I am interested in how the perspective from hybridity will inform stereotype scholarship. First, Shugart (2007) wrote that hybridity is a dynamic, ambiguous, and unstable blending of multiple cultures. Additionally, Shugart noted
that existing scholarship regarding oppressed social groups is focused on media representations. Thus, I suggest that scholars consider incorporating hybridity into examinations regarding Asian and Asian American mediated stereotypes. Shugart added that hybridity addresses the blurring of racial color lines. As a result, I urge scholars to consider examining stereotypes from the perspective of hybridity when exploring mediated portrayals that may simultaneously resist and reify characteristics of Asian and Asian American stereotypes. Lastly, Shugart noted that hybridity is a challenge to whiteness. Thus, I suggest that scholars engage in research regarding racialized stereotypes as a means to break down those stereotypes because breaking down stereotypes will help avoid internalization of simple dichotomous stereotypes.
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