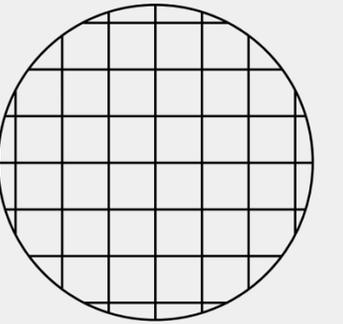**#StopAsianHate:**

Understanding the psychological implications of the dehumanization of Asian people in western media

Leslie Yick

Pepperdine University

leslie.yick@pepperdine.edu

Abstract

Asian representation in western media is limited at its least harmful and dehumanizing at its most. The effects of this representation in media have in part contributed to the rise in violence against Asian people in the United States. This violence has negative psychological implications for the Asian American community that already underreports mental health issues and underutilizes mental health services. This poster will review the literature on media's influence on dehumanization, explore the correlation media has on influencing violence, and seek to understand the subsequent psychological implications for Asian American communities and the potential for direct outreach.

Dehumanization

In a study that links dehumanization to shooting biases found that having participants read an article about Black men committing a string of robberies (i.e., associating Black men with danger), increased racial shooting biases.

Which begs the question of what biases and stereotypes are inflamed by media's narrative on Asian people.

Dehumanization can provide increased justification to cause a racial out-group harm.

"Stereotypes are most dangerous when they are abused as weapons of mass dehumanization targeted against specific groups of people. Moreover, stereotypes are most effective as weapons of mass dehumanization when they result in the aesthetic detention of a targeted group of people in the uncanny valley."
(Roh et al., 2015, p.78)

Mekawi, Y., Bresin, K., & Hunter, C. D. (2016). White fear, dehumanization, and low empathy: Lethal combinations for shooting biases. Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 22(3), 322-332. https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000067

Top films in 2019

1 Asian and Pacific Islander characters were depicted as *perpetual foreigners*, faced emasculation or hypersexualization depending on gender, and were stripped of romantic and family relationships or friendships.

2 *One-quarter* of Asian and Pacific Islander primary and secondary characters *died by the conclusion* of their movie.

3 The films reflect the worst impulses of an environment in which hate crimes, harassment, and violence face the Asian and Pacific Islander community daily.
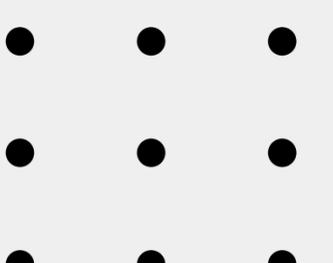
In a USC study examining Asian Pacific Islander representation across the 100 top-grossing films from 2007- 2019 researchers found that out of 1300 films the percentage that featured an Asian or Pacific Islander lead or co lead was only **3.4%**

Yuen, N. W., Smith, S. L., Pieper, K., Choueiti, M., Yao, K., & Dinh, D. (2021). (rep.). The Prevalence and Portrayal of Asian and Pacific Islanders across 1,300 Popular Films. Retrieved August 2022, from https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii_aapi-representation-across-films-2021-05-18.pdf.

Techno-Orientalism in film

Techno-Orientalism is defined as the phenomenon of imagining Asia and Asians in hypo or hyper-technological terms in cultural productions.

Blade Runner, and *The Matrix* are examples of techno-orientalism with their Asian-influenced visions of the dystopian future.

The **fear of racial and technological takeover** manifests in these types of films and sends the subtle message that Asia and Asians are dangerous and inhuman.

Roh, D. S., Huang, B., & Niu, G. A. (2015). Techno-orientalism: Imagining Asia in speculative fiction, history, and Media. Rutgers University Press.

COVID-19 Media Coverage

Global representations of masked "Chinese" faces created a **hypervisibility of masked Asian people**. The absence of other representations coupled with racist and xenophobic remarks about the virus' origins **positioned Asians and Asian Americans as the threat to public health.**

In the earliest press briefings in the United States, the 45th president ignored its medical name and instead called it the "Chinese Virus"; in doing so, he positioned Chinese, Chinese Americans, and Asian Americans as targets for discrimination. He continued to call COVID-19 the "Chinese virus" until the end of his presidency.

Huynh, V. W., Raval, V. V., & Freeman, M. K. (2022). Ethnic-racial discrimination towards Asian Americans amidst COVID-19, the so-called "China" virus and associations with mental health. Asian American Journal of Psychology. https://doi.org/10.1037/aap0000264

11,467 hate incidents

reported to Stop AAPI Hate's reporting center between March 19, 2020 and March 31, 2022

Hate crimes against Asian American people have been documented at double and triple their rate in 15 major U.S. cities.

Though causing significant fear and trauma, the majority of hate incidents reported to Stop AAPI Hate *would not be investigated or prosecuted as hate crimes.*

Education and active media campaigns that promote positive portrayals of Asian Americans are small steps toward combating the negative stereotypes that perpetuate violence.

Mental Health Implications

The collective trauma experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic includes the "secondary contagion" of hate crimes and anti-Asian rhetoric.

Perceived ethnic-racial discrimination among East and Southeast Asian American adults has been associated with a variety of mental health outcomes including anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.

Asian Americans with higher ethnic identity may be more aware of the implications of anti-Asian hate and thus more worried and anxious. In contrast, those with lower ethnic identity may not be aware of or understand the implications of anti-Asian hate for Asian Americans.

Identifying as an ethnic group other than Chinese was associated with higher anxiety and depression than identifying as Chinese because those clients may question why they are also targets of COVID-19 related ethnic-racial discrimination.

Walker, D., & Daniel Anders, A. (2021). "China virus" and "kung-flu": A critical race case study of asian American journalists' experiences during covid-19. Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies, 22(1), 76–88. https://doi.org/10.1177/15327086211055157

Mental Health Implications cont.

Asian Americans are most likely to seek help from friends, family members, or relatives.

Stigmatizing beliefs about depression can create reluctance for treatment. These beliefs include: depression is a sign of personal weakness; having a depressed family member brings shame to the whole family; if I have depression, my family would be disappointed; and antidepressant medicines are addictive.

Mental health professionals may consider exploring experiences of direct and indirect ethnic and racial discrimination during the pandemic with Asian American clients, its effects on their psychological well-being, and ways of coping with this additional stressor.

Jung, H., Cho, Y. J., Rhee, M.-K., & Jang, Y. (2019). Stigmatizing beliefs about depression in diverse ethnic groups of Asian Americans. Community Mental Health Journal, 56(1), 79–87. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-019-00481-x

Walker, D., & Daniel Anders, A. (2021). "China virus" and "kung-flu": A critical race case study of asian American journalists' experiences during covid-19. Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies, 22(1), 76–88. https://doi.org/10.1177/15327086211055157

Treatment

Clinicians should be informed about the roles of racial stereotypes, discrimination, microaggressions, and cultural/familial values in Asian American clients' anxiety and depression.

Knowledge needs to be communicated in a *non paternalistic manner*, via *open-ended questioning* and empathic, *nonjudgmental listening* from a stance of curiosity and humility.

The treatment process should include the exploration and processing of difficult racialized experiences.

Taoist cognitive therapy has shown statistically and clinically significant improvements in anxiety, worry, psychological inflexibility, and emotional avoidance for some Asian individuals with GAD.

Treatment cont.

A survey done with Asian American college students found that both **personal (i.e., self-compassion) and social (i.e., social connectedness) factors** work together to **buffer the impact of racial discrimination on depression.**

Self-compassion was positively associated with less depression, posttraumatic growth, and less physical symptoms among Asian populations.

Self-kindness may help Asian Americans give themselves the caring and tenderness they need, which might prevent them from feeling inadequate or depressed.

Mindfulness may help Asian Americans to have a more balanced way of understanding their present moment experience and minimize rumination on racial discrimination incidents.

Common humanity reminds individuals that others are feeling the same way they are, which may prevent them from feeling isolated.

Liu, S., Li, C.-I., Wang, C., Wei, M., & Ko, S. (2019). Self-compassion and social connectedness buffering racial discrimination on depression among Asian Americans. Mindfulness, 11(3), 672–682. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-019-01275-8

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