

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Communication Quarterly

ISSN: 0146-3373 (Print) 1746-4102 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rcqu20

Who matters in Asian American movies? A content analysis of subgroup and intergroup representations

Sovannie Len & Kyungin Kim

To cite this article: Sovannie Len & Kyungin Kim (20 Oct 2026): Who matters in Asian American movies? A content analysis of subgroup and intergroup representations, Communication Quarterly, DOI: 10.1080/01463373.2026.2751193

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2026.2751193

© 2026 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.

Published online: 20 Oct 2026.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 105

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rcqu20

COMMUNICATION QUARTERLY
https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2026.2751193

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

Who matters in Asian American movies? A content analysis of subgroup and intergroup representations

Sovannie Len and Kyungin Kim

ABSTRACT

Audiences may learn and integrate information about racial groups and intergroup dynamics from entertainment media; however, this depends on the portrayals that are available to inform real-life perceptions. With a purposive sample of 53 U.S. movies centering Asian American characters across a 30-year timespan, this content analysis examined Asian American subgroup representation and Asian American characters' intergroup interactions with other racial groups. Results showed that East Asians were significantly overrepresented across movies, characters, and actors, whereas nearly all other Asian subgroups were underrepresented. Additionally, Asian characters' interactions with White characters were substantially more frequent and exhibited greater sentiment diversity than their interactions with all other outgroup characters. Such findings demonstrate that, despite the potential benefits of learning from entertainment media, opportunities for mediated intergroup contact may be constrained by uneven patterns of available media representations.

KEYWORDS

Asian American; content analysis; intergroup; movies; representation

Mediated intergroup contact, which may broadly encompass indirect observations of outgroup characters (i.e., parasocial contact) or ingroup and outgroup characters together (i.e., vicarious contact), has been theorized to improve intergroup attitudes and behaviors among audiences (Harwood, 2021; Len, 2025; Park, 2012). Though direct intergroup contact (e.g., face-to-face interactions) is often considered the gold standard as a prejudice reduction tool (Van Assche et al., 2023), it has several limitations (e.g., increased intergroup anxiety, threat of physical harm, disproportionate burdens on marginalized groups) that can lead to avoidance of real-life intergroup interactions and negation of potential benefits (Harwood, 2021; Van Assche et al., 2023; White et al., 2021). In contrast, indirect forms of intergroup contact (e.g., mediated contact) can reduce intergroup anxiety and promote modeling and self-efficacy for future interactions (Harwood, 2021; Len, 2025; Park, 2012).

According to Social Cognitive Theory (SCT; Bandura, 2001), media serves as "models" for real-life experiences, allowing audiences to indirectly learn

CONTACT Sovannie Len sovannielen@ucsb.edu Department of Communication, University of California, 4005 Social Sciences & Media Studies, Santa Barbara, CA 93106, USA

© 2026 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

about their social world and generate guidelines for attitudes and behaviors in future contexts (i.e., transference effect; Boin et al., 2021). However, the effects of mediated intergroup contact likely depend on the attributes of the media portrayals, such as their frequency and sentiment, which can then shape the generalizations audiences draw about the social world (Boin et al., 2021; Kim & Harwood, 2020). This leads to inquiry about the extent to which different types of mediated intergroup contact, especially involving those belonging to underrepresented and stereotyped groups, exist within media content and are readily available for individuals' learning.

Asian American media representation presents a particularly useful case for examining mediated intergroup contact for two reasons. First, Asian Americans constitute one of the most diverse racial groups in the U.S (Lee et al., 2018). yet their various subgroups may not be adequately reflected in media representations, potentially skewing perceptions of who is seen as "Asian" (Lee & Ramakrishnan, 2020). Further, Asian Americans occupy a unique social position as a "middle-man" group between Whites and other racial minorities in the U.S., which may result in unique intergroup consequences when Asian Americans are involved (Bonilla-Silva, 2004; Kim, 1999; Zou & Cheryan, 2017).

Given the aforementioned factors – that (1) the effects of mediated intergroup contact depend on the frequency and characteristics of available media representations, and (2) Asian Americans occupy a unique social position in both U.S. racial relations and entertainment media – we conducted a content analysis using a purposive sample of U.S. movies featuring Asian American characters as leads to document (a) Asian American subgroup representation, (b) the frequency in which Asian American characters are portrayed interacting with members of different racial groups, and (c) the sentiment of these intergroup interactions. By documenting these representational patterns, this work shows how disparities in media portrayals may create unequal opportunities to benefit from mediated intergroup contact and transference effects.

Social cognitive theory as a framework for mediated intergroup contact

According to Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), individuals may learn attitudes and behaviors from observations, and information from these observations may be generalized to rules about one's social world (Bandura, 2001; Potter, 2019). Because entertainment media contain symbols and representations of how the world functions, entertainment media content may be used as a source for observational learning regarding different social groups and intergroup dynamics (Bandura, 2001; Len, 2025; Mazziotta et al., 2011).

More specifically, SCT explains that observational learning occurs through processes like *attention* (i.e., what audiences focus on), *retention* (i.e., what audiences remember and integrate into their schema), and *motivation* (i.e.,

what contributes to enactment of the attitude or behavior), which informs how the learned information is generalized for future interactions (Bandura, 2001; Len, 2025). These observations may be easier to integrate when reinforced by the environment (Bandura, 2001), such that the frequency of particular representations may influence the salience of the information that is internalized within audiences (Boin et al., 2021; Kim & Harwood, 2020). Sentiment may also interact with frequency to affect which type of information is integrated (Len, 2025; Saleem et al., 2025).

Connected to this learning process are *transference effects* (i.e., the extent to which information is generalized to other contexts) for which there are three levels (Boin et al., 2021). *Primary transfer effects* refer to the direct generalization of depicted outgroup members in media to their real-life counterparts; *secondary transfer effects* refer to the generalization of information to other similar outgroups (e.g., from one racial group to another); lastly, *tertiary transfer effects* refer to a greater cognitive flexibility, whereby generalizations extend to broader contexts (e.g., race to other forms of marginalized identities). The different levels of transference effects showcase that information is not simply integrated on a one-to-one level and may not be uniformly applied to all contexts (Boin et al., 2021; Kim & Harwood, 2020).

Altogether, media representations can provide information for what groups, attitudes, and behaviors audiences should pay attention to and retain, whilst also providing external motivations for whom, when, and why audiences should enact those attitudes and behaviors in real life (Len, 2025). Transference effects may be interpreted as the degree to which information about different social groups is not only generalized but also applied elsewhere (Boin et al., 2021). However, documentation of mediated forms of contact is relatively uncommon (Riles et al., 2018), and it is still necessary to account for what available portrayals can affect the observational learning process and alter what media and transference effects actually occur.

Examining mediated intergroup contact for Asian Americans

Perceptions of Asian Americans and subgroup differences

Asian Americans represent an informative case for mediated intergroup contact because they are uniquely situated within U.S. racial politics, and subsequently, entertainment media. Following the U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2020), Asian subgroups (i.e., regional divisions) are defined as East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Korean), South Asian (e.g., Indian, Bangladeshi), Southeast Asian (e.g., Filipino, Vietnamese), and other Asian (representing Central and West Asian countries like Bahrain and Kazakhstan). There are also mixed Asians with two or more Asian heritages and mixed individuals with Asian and non-Asian heritage.

East Asians are seen as the prototypical Asians of the U.S (Goh & McCue, 2021) and are seen as the "most Asian" by both Asians and non-Asians alike (J. Lee & Ramakrishnan, 2020). They comprise the majority share of Asians in the U.S. from the 1990s (48.99%) to the 2020s (37.62%; U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2020) and are also commonly seen as the *model minority*, a stereotype which presents (mainly East) Asians as successful, smart, and docile (K. Kim & Len, 2026; Poon et al., 2016).

South Asians are typically seen as "less Asian" than East and Southeast Asians (Lee & Ramakrishnan, 2020). There were few South Asian immigrants before 1947, but they have grown in prominence from the 1990s (13.31%) to the 2020s (24.83%; U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2020). They are often perceived as model minorities, but more specifically as *techies* or technologically advanced workers (Basu, 2017; Wolock, 2020).

Southeast Asians are perceived as "less Asian" than East Asians but "more Asian" than South Asians (J. Lee & Ramakrishnan, 2020). The first instances of Southeast Asian immigrants were in the early 1800s, but immense waves of Southeast Asian immigrants came after the 1950s as refugees (Basu, 2017). Southeast Asians have been fairly prominent since the 1990s (35.56%) to the 2020s (32.94%; U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2020), but have been seen as less desirable because they are unable to achieve the same level of success as other Asian subgroups (Basu, 2017; Lee et al., 2017; Yamashita, 2022).

Other considerations skew the perceptions of Asian subgroups. Central and West Asians were not distinguished from "other Asians" (which included several ethnicities across multiple regions) in early censuses and occupy a small 4.61% of the total Asian population in recent times (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2020). Another factor in their neglect may be their ambiguous categorization, as these groups may be considered Asian, Middle Eastern, or even White in some contexts (Lee & Ramakrishnan, 2020). Further complicating this picture is that mixed individuals, a category that was not distinguished from monoracial (i.e., singular heritage) Asians in earlier census data, currently occupy 20.32% of the total Asian population in 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2020). How mixed-race or "other" Asian individuals choose to identify may further alter these numbers.

Despite significant subgroup differences, Asian Americans are often perceived as a monolithic group (Flores & Huo, 2013; Lee et al., 2018; Mok, 1998) and as a "middle-man" racial group (Bonilla-Silva, 2004; Kim, 1999; Zou & Cheryan, 2017), viewed more favorably than other racial minorities for being "educated" and "docile" (Dixon, 2019; Tukachinsky et al., 2015) but not as favorable as White Americans because they are "awkward" and "foreign" (Besana et al., 2019; Mok, 1998). In many cases, disadvantages amongst Asian Americans of any subgroup are often erased due to the model minority

myth (Lee et al., 2018). These complexities may not only be mirrored but exacerbated by media content.

Asian American Media representations and mediated intergroup contact

There have been some improvements to Asian American representation in recent years. Where previous media depictions of Asian Americans were predominantly stereotypical and shallow (Mok, 1998), modern-day depictions have included more counterstereotypical and nuanced representations (Besana et al., 2019; Kim & Len, 2026). Further, Asian American media portrayals have grown proportionate to their population size (Ramón et al., 2025). For movies and theatrical releases, this trend is meaningful, as it shows stable growth where other racial groups face more inconsistent representation (Ramón et al., 2025).

Changes in representation also have meaningful impacts for mediated intergroup contact. Prior research has found that non-Asian audiences' mediated contact with Asian Americans can increase both positive feelings and stereotypical perceptions about Asian Americans in real life (Chao et al., 2013; Ramasubramanian, 2011b). In some cases, Asian Americans have been used to contrast "less favorable" racial minority groups, allowing researchers to examine gradations in participants' responses to different racial groups (e.g., Dalisay & Tan, 2009; Len & Kubitza, 2026; Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007), adding to their middle-man status. General trends show that exposure to mediated intergroup interactions improves intergroup attitudes and potential behaviors (Joyce & Harwood, 2014; Mazziotta et al., 2011), so it is possible that audiences' vicarious experiences with Asian Americans may reveal some nuances with regard to media effect consequences.

However, two deficits exist. First is that most works tend to examine Asian Americans monolithically or with references to a particular subgroup (e.g., Paek & Shah, 2003; Ramasubramanian, 2011b). If media representations are indeed skewed, then the diversity of Asian Americans is masked and limits the variety of learning references that can be used. Second, since Asian Americans are seen as the middle-man group for race dynamics in the U.S. (Bonilla-Silva, 2004; Kim, 1999; Zou & Cheryan, 2017), mediated intergroup interactions with Asian Americans may parallel these social distinctions; the ways media creators design mediated intergroup interactions may be biased, such that Asian Americans are consistently shown to interact with particular racial groups and in particular ways. Altogether, if there is greater prevalence of particular Asian American subgroups or intergroup interactions, then the effects of mediated intergroup contact and subsequent transference effects may not be uniform (Boin et al., 2021). To further

explore these potential issues, two factors are considered: frequency (i.e., the number of occurrences) and sentiment (i.e., the valence and context of portrayals).

Frequency

Frequency is one prominent factor that impacts the rate and the strength in which mediated intergroup references are integrated. Low-frequency representation may render groups as socially devalued or invisible in the minds of audiences (Leavitt et al., 2015; Mastro, 2015), whereas high-frequency representation may facilitate greater integration of information by providing audiences with more references to attend to, retain, and be motivated by (Len, 2025; Stamps & Sahlman, 2021). Though effect sizes for media portrayals are generally small, they may have greater impact due to their pervasiveness (Saleem et al., 2025), especially for more prominent forms of entertainment media like movies.

However, there has been little work describing the differences in depiction for Asian American subgroups, for which the previously mentioned media effects may be recontextualized. For example, Mok's (1998) seminal work on early Asian American media representations makes little distinction between the different types of Asian subgroups, as entertainment media creators at the time had yet to make that distinction themselves. As non-Asians are more likely to exclude non-East Asians in their categorization of "Asian" (Lee & Ramakrishnan, 2020) and most media creators are non-Asian (Ramón et al., 2025), media depictions – and consequently media research – of Asian Americans may be limited. Sample sizes of Asian American media depictions are often smaller than those of racial groups, so more nuanced analyses regarding Asian subgroups are not feasible (e.g., Tukachinsky et al., 2015). In other cases, the focus on particular stereotypes like the model minority may predominantly reference East Asians, even if the researchers may have intended the work to apply broadly to other subgroups (e.g., Paek & Shah, 2003; Ramasubramanian, 2011b).

Because observational learning and transference effects are more likely to occur for references that are perceived as frequent (Boin et al., 2021), it is possible that what is learned about Asian Americans in media content is only relative to particular subgroups (i.e., eliciting primary transfer effect) and not others (i.e., reducing chances of higher-level transference effects). One study found that exposure to media portrayals of Native Americans produced secondary transfer effects toward Black Americans, but not vice versa, likely because Native Americans are a less salient group to reference (Kim & Harwood, 2020). If representations of the different subgroups are skewed, then subsequent media and transference effects may also be skewed. To explore this, we ask:

RQ1: Among U.S. movies that center on Asian American characters, what are the proportions of representation for different Asian subgroups in terms of movies, characters, and actors? How do these proportions compare to U.S. demographics?

Warped perceptions of Asian Americans may also occur from implicit yellowface. Differing from *explicit yellowface*, where non-Asians play Asian characters (with exaggerated features and mannerisms), *implicit yellowface* occurs when an Asian actor of one ethnicity plays a character of another Asian ethnicity, reflecting the larger assumption that Asians are "interchangeable" (Ono & Pham, 2009). One example is when mixed-race male actors are chosen to play monoracial Asian male characters when that character is intended to be attractive (e.g., Henry Golding in Crazy Rich Asians [2018]), which unfortunately maintains the stereotype that monoracial Asian men are undesirable (Ono & Pham, 2009). The difference in who plays which characters can shape perceptions of which subgroup is allowed to be Asian on screen and influence the transference effects that may occur. If Asian characters are played by actors of different subgroups, it would reveal notable biases in Hollywood's casting practices and what audiences may be able to generalize. We thus intend to explore the subgroups of the characters and corresponding actors by asking:

RQ2: Among U.S. movies that center on Asian American characters, to what extent are these Asian American characters played by an actor of the same racial subgroup or a different one?

Sentiment

Sentiment may also impact how mediated information is integrated. In some cases, media portrayals of Asian American success may evoke positive yet stereotypical affect toward and monolithic overgeneralizations of Asian Americans (Chao et al., 2013; Ramasubramanian, 2011b). However, these same stereotypes may provoke feelings of realistic threat that results in negative affect toward the group (Maddux et al., 2008). Thus, media portrayals of Asian Americans have a wide range of consequences, particularly for intergroup dynamics.

Unfortunately, there is little work that documents the various kinds of intergroup interactions in media content, especially with different combinations of racial groups (Len, 2025; Riles et al., 2018). One work by Riles et al. (2018) examined interpersonal interactions in a random subset of entertainment broadcasting episodes; intergroup interactions made up 33% of all interpersonal interactions, with the majority of these involving at least one White character (97%), followed by those involving at least one Black character (24%). Given the current landscape of

media representation, mediated intergroup interactions may be similarly skewed (i.e., biased toward interactions with White characters), and the effects of observing mediated intergroup interactions may be limited to which combination of groups audiences had actually observed (i.e., primary transfer effects). Thus, documenting these different interactions is necessary to see what is generalized for observational learning, as mediated intergroup contact effects may not uniformly extend to all combinations of intergroup interactions.

There are several factors to consider. Generally, positive intergroup contact reduces prejudice and can facilitate positive attitudinal and behavioral changes via improving evaluations of outgroups (Banas et al., 2020; Harwood, 2017; Saleem et al., 2025). In contrast, negative or stereotypical media representations can reinforce biases about outgroups and exacerbate intergroup tensions (Ramasubramanian, 2011a; Saleem et al., 2025). Documentation of both sentiments is necessary to see which effects may prevail.

Romantic interactions may be an additional context of interest to distinguish. As individuals become older, they tend to place greater emphasis on the relationship with their friends and romantic partners than families (Collins et al., 2009); however, romantic relations, even beyond friendship, are perceived as more salient and involved, especially in regard to intimacy and affection (Collins et al., 2009). Intimate intergroup contact is perceived as a powerful influence in improving intergroup attitudes and behaviors (White et al., 2021), and may even inspire more immediate care for outgroups due to greater investments or identification with their partners (Orta, 2013). Thus, the prominence of romantic intimacy or dysfunctions in media content may be a specific form of intergroup contact that elicits effects above and beyond other types of relationships (e.g., strangers, friends, family). Indeed, prior research found that greater media exposure to interracial romantic relationships had a positive effect on the perception and attitudes of these relationships and outgroup members (Lienemann & Stopp, 2013).

Given the complexity of intergroup interactions in entertainment media, it is important to account for how frequency and sentiment may interact. Thus, we ask:

RQ3: Among U.S. movies that center on Asian American characters, what are the available intergroup interactions involving Asian American characters in terms of frequency and sentiment?

Methods

Sample

We focused on movies produced by American media companies that have at least one "Asian American" main character, defined in this study as characters of Asian descent who were born in the U.S. or were determined to live permanently in the U.S. (even if the movie takes place in a different country). We selected movies over other mediums because they are fully encapsulated narratives within a relatively short timespan (<3 hrs). Moreover, one purpose of this content analysis was to document Asian subgroup representation; thus, we selected movies where the narratives are likely to explicitly name or showcase the characters' subgroup. Furthermore, we excluded movies starring non-American Asians (e.g., movies that starred Asians visiting the U.S.) as we elected to focus on Asian socialization within the U.S., highlighting Asian Americans' burden of representation (Feng, 2020).

The selection of these movies was time-bound by two prominent Asian American films: *The Joy Luck Club* (1993) and *Joy Ride* (2023), which premiered on September 8th, 1993, and on July 7th, 2023, respectively. We selected these anchors because of the parallels between the two films: both are prominent Asian American productions featuring all-Asian, predominantly female leading casts. Our selection criteria were as follows: live-action (i.e., not animated) and original fiction movies (i.e., not a documentary or based on a real person's life) released to the general public (i.e., not a festival or limited release) that feature at least one Asian American main character. We excluded biographical movies to focus on analyzing creatively constructed, fictional intergroup interactions that better reflect the creators' underlying intentions and biases, as opposed to interactions predetermined by real-life people and events. We additionally excluded sequels as they typically featured the same characters and dynamics.

We compiled our sample using two movie lists from Rotten Tomatoes and IMDB, as they were accessible to audiences who may want a comprehensive list of "Asian American movies." This generated 147 movies in total, but 80 movies were removed based on our criteria (or were duplicates), and 14 movies were removed due to accessibility issues (i.e., not available at the time on streaming platforms or for purchase). Our final purposive sample contained 53 movies.

Manifest codes

Characters serve as our first unit of analysis, which is examined in the context of movies (e.g., subgroup prevalence in movies), characters (e.g., subgroup prevalence amongst the total numbers of characters), and actors (e.g., subgroup prevalence amongst the total numbers of actors). To examine the subgroup representation of these characters, coders documented the perceived

subgroup or ethnicity (then determined the corresponding subgroup) of those deemed significant to the narrative plot (i.e., the narrative of the story followed them or that they were a recurring character who did not disappear after their initial introduction).

We coded for the following subgroups: East Asians, South Asians, Southeast Asians, other Asians (Central and West Asians), mixed Asians (i.e., those who share multiple Asian heritages), mixed (i.e., those who share Asian and non-Asian heritage), and unknown (for characters who were likely of Asian descent but were not specified). Although real-life individuals may identify with multiple subgroups, we treated characters as mutually exclusive for our intended analyses.

We considered characters' subgroups as manifest codes because many of these movies often explicitly state the characters' ethnicities. However, some movies did have non-explicit cues. For example, Asian-appearing characters speaking Tagalog indicated that they are of Filipino descent. Likewise, cultural clothing such as a lehenga is a general indicator of South Asia. Any ambiguity was documented as unknown. Then, during team discussions, we discussed which characters were central to the plot, and of the confirmed central characters, we conducted a reliability test on their perceived subgroup.

After the characters were documented, the first author researched and coded for the corresponding actor's Asian subgroup. The ethnicity of the actors was typically listed on the movie's pages on IMDB or Rotten Tomatoes, but other sources, such as Wikipedia, were also utilized. However, not all actors' ethnicities were listed and subsequently were categorized as unknown. Most unknown instances were for child actors with a limited online presence ($n = 10$).

Latent codes

Our unit of analysis for the latent codes was an *interaction*, defined as an uninterrupted conversation or activity involving the same set of explicitly participating characters without interference from another character or a separate event. For example, characters talking to each other counted as an interaction, but characters passively sitting next to each other did not. Moreover, if two characters interacted and another character joined them, this counted as a separate interaction, as the group dynamics had shifted.

To increase precision and thoroughness, we systematically coded every single intergroup interaction involving at least one Asian American character from the beginning to the end of each movie, using four subcodes: presence of interaction, number of non-Asian characters, race of the non-Asian character-(s), and sentiment of interaction. We first documented the presence of interaction with a timestamp and a "yes" or a 1 when an intergroup interaction occurred, whereas all other timestamps were coded as "no" or 0.

Additionally, we distinguished the difference between dyadic interactions (with one non-Asian person) versus group interactions (with two or more non-Asian persons) for the number of non-Asian characters interacting with the Asian American character(s). Distinguishing interactions by the number of non-Asian characters was important, especially in instances where the Asian characters were interacting with members of one racial group (e.g., only White characters) versus multiple racial groups (e.g., White and Black characters).

Next, the race of the non-Asian character was determined by examining the characters' appearance and any explicit information about the character(s) as the following mutually exclusive categories: White, Black, Latina/o/x/e, Mixed Race, other (e.g., Native Americans and Pacific Islanders), Mixed-Group (two + non-Asians; group interactions only), or unknown.

Lastly, sentiment was coded using the following mutually exclusive seven options: (1) positive (non-romantic), (2) negative (non-romantic), (3) romantic intimacy, (4) romantic dysfunction, (5) neutral, (6) complex, and (7) other/unknown. Positive (non-romantic) interactions included mutually enjoyable interactions between the characters, such as emotional support or positive conversations. Negative (non-romantic) interactions included conflict, acts of discrimination, and emotional tension. Romantic intimacy refers to the interactions between those sharing romantic interests (e.g., flirtation or sexual content). Romantic dysfunction refers to interactions like relationship conflicts, breakups, and domestic violence. Neutral interactions were those that did not have any notable characteristics (e.g., customer service interactions). Complex interactions were those that shifted from one sentiment to another. These instances were typically lengthier but still counted as one interaction, as they had the same characters interacting without an interpretation of another person or event. Lastly, other/unknown was used if the sentiment could not be specified.

Coding procedure and reliability

Our team of coders consisted of four Asian-identifying women who have all lived in multicultural areas with a high probability of intergroup interactions, allowing for greater familiarity with the codes. The two authors are Cambodian-American and Korean, respectively, and the two undergraduate research assistants are a mixed Asian-American of Japanese and Chinese descent and a Vietnamese-American.

This content analysis was conducted in five stages: training, reliability test 1, independent coding 1, reliability test 2, and independent coding 2. During the training stage, coders learned to distinguish the anticipated codes over three meetings. Then, for reliability test 1, the four coders conducted the first test for reliability by reviewing a subset of the movies ($n = 12$). For independent

coding 1, coders watched each movie and coded for the manifest and latent codes, meeting weekly for 4 weeks to discuss codes of approximately three movies per meeting, refine codes as needed, and resolve discrepancies. After every week's discussions, coders independently returned to each movie and the corresponding codes to make corrections before resubmitting finalized codes for the reliability tests. After 12 movies were completed, all of the finalized codes were examined for reliability.

According to Krippendorff (2004), reliabilities above .80 are good, but tentative conclusions may be drawn from alphas of .667. For reliability test 1, Krippendorff's alpha was 1 for Asian subgroup, .80 for presence, .80 for # of non-Asians, .79 for race, and .77 for sentiment. Coders proceeded to independently code another subset ($n = 32$). After independent coding 1, reliability test 2 was conducted with another subset of the movies ($n = 3$) to ensure coders remained reliable. After viewing the three movies, coders met to discuss any issues or discrepancies, individually made corrections as needed, and then submitted the finalized codes for the second reliability test. For reliability test 2, Krippendorff's alpha was 1 for Asian subgroup, .82 for presence, .83 for # of non-Asians, .84 for race, and .81 for sentiment. The remaining movies were divided and coded independently for the final stage of the project.

Results

For RQ1, we examined the representation of the Asian subgroups within movies, characters, and actors. Of the 53 movies, 41 depicted only one Asian subgroup (singular representation), and 12 depicted multiple Asian subgroups (multiple representation). Of the 41 movies with singular representation, 27 depicted East Asians only, six depicted South Asians, five depicted Southeast

Table 1. Proportion of Asian subgroup vs census Average.

	Census Average (1990–2020)	Movies ($n = 53$)	Characters ($n = 186$)	Actors ($n = 186$)
East Asian	43.30%	39 (73.58%) + 30.28% ***	117 (62.90%) + 19.59% ***	100 (53.76%) + 10.45% ***
South Asian	19.07%	9 (16.98%) − 2.09% ns	30 (16.13%) − 2.94% ns	20 (10.75%) − 8.32% **
Southeast Asian	34.25%	8 (15.09%) − 19.16% **	24 (12.90%) − 21.35% ***	28 (15.05%) − 19.2% ***
Other Asians	<4.61%	0 − 4.61% ns	0 − 4.61% **	1 (0.05%) − 4.56% **
Mixed (relative to monoracial)	<20.32%	5 (9.43%) − 10.89% *	9 (4.83%) − 15.49% ***	18 (9.67%) − 10.65% ***

The movie column includes singular and multiple subgroup representation counts, and the character and actor columns are mutually exclusive. Unknown characters and actors were not included. Other Asians and Mixed were not recorded as distinct categories in 1990, so only 2020% are accounted for. Percentages in parentheses refer to the proportion of the subgroup out of the total category, whereas percentages at the bottom refer to the difference from the Census Average. Asterisks indicate significance levels where ns = not significant, * is $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$.

Asians, one depicted mixed-race Asians, and two depicted those of unknown Asian descent.

For characters and actors ($n = 186$, see Table 1), East Asians were the most common subgroup (characters = 117, 62.90%; actors = 100, 53.76%), followed by South Asian (characters = 30, 16.13%; actors = 20, 10.75%), Southeast Asians (characters = 24, 12.90%; actors = 28, 15.05%), mixed individuals (characters = 9, 4.83%; actors = 18, 9.67%), and lastly Other Asian (character = 0, 0.00%; actor = 1, 0.05%).

We conducted a difference-of-proportions analysis to examine if particular subgroups are over- or under-represented according to real-life proportions using the average of the U.S. Census demographic data from 1990 and 2020 (except for other Asians and mixed individuals whose unique data were only recorded in 2020). East Asians were overrepresented in all three categories (movies: df (1) = 19.79, $p < .001$; characters: df (1) = 29.10, $p < .001$; actors: df (1) = 8.29, $p < .01$). South Asians were proportionally represented for movies (df (1) = .15, $p = .70$) and characters (df (1) = 1.04, $p = .31$) but underrepresented as actors (df (1) = 8.34, $p < .01$). Southeast Asians were underrepresented in all three categories (movies: df(1) = 8.64, $p < .01$; characters: df(1) = 37.65, $p < .001$; actors: df (1) = 30.45, $p < .001$). Other Asians were proportionally represented in movies (df (1) = 2.56, $p = .11$) but underrepresented in characters (df (1) = 8.99, $p < .01$) and actors (df (1) = 8.80, $p < .01$). And finally, mixed individuals were underrepresented in all three categories (movies: df (1) = 3.88, $p < .05$; characters: df (1) = 27.56, $p < .001$; actors: df (1) = 13.03, $p < .001$).

For RQ2, we examined the extent to which Asian American characters are played by an actor of the same or a different subgroup. East Asian characters ($n = 117$) were predominantly played by East Asians ($n = 95$; 81.20%), followed by Unknown ($n = 12$; 10.26%), Mixed ($n = 7$; 5.98%), and lastly Southeast Asian ($n = 3$; 2.56%). South Asian characters ($n = 30$) were predominantly played by South Asians ($n = 20$; 66.67%), followed by Unknown ($n = 5$; 16.67%), Mixed ($n = 4$; 13.33%), and lastly Other Asian ($n = 1$; 3.33%). Southeast Asians ($n = 24$) were predominantly played by Southeast Asians ($n = 22$; 91.67%), followed by Mixed ($n = 1$; 4.17%), and mixed Asian ($n = 1$; 4.17%). Lastly, mixed individuals ($n = 9$) were predominantly played by mixed individuals ($n = 3$; 33.33%) and East Asian ($n = 3$; 33.33%), followed by Southeast Asians ($n = 2$; 22.22%) and Unknown ($n = 1$; 11.11%). Though the majority of characters were played by actors of the same Asian subgroup, there are several instances where actors played characters of other subgroups, providing empirical evidence of implicit yellowface.

For RQ3, we examined intergroup interactions where at least one Asian American character interacted with one non-Asian character (i.e., dyadic interactions) or multiple non-Asian characters (i.e., group interactions). Across 53 movies, most intergroup interactions (total $n = 2035$) were dyadic

interactions ($n = 1560$) compared to group interactions ($n = 464$). Discrepancies (e.g., intercoder disagreements; $n = 11$) were removed from analyses.

Results demonstrated the complexity of frequency and sentiment for mediated intergroup interactions. Though there seemed a higher percentage of positive and romantic intimacy interactions with Black ($n = 227$; positive: 86, 37.89%; romantic intimacy: 20; 8.81%) and Latina/o/x/e ($n = 117$; positive: 54, 46.15%; romantic intimacy: 14, 11.97%) characters, these sentiments were substantially more likely to occur with White characters ($n = 1099$; positive: 299, 27.20%; romantic intimacy: 128, 11.65%). Even if negative interactions with White characters (negative: 204, 18.56%) may seem more prominent compared to Black (negative: 21, 6.17%) and Latina/o/x/e (negative: 15, 12.17%) characters, mediated intergroup interactions with White characters of *any sentiment* are more likely to be integrated due to the abundance of references – interactions with Whites appeared approximately 2.5 times more

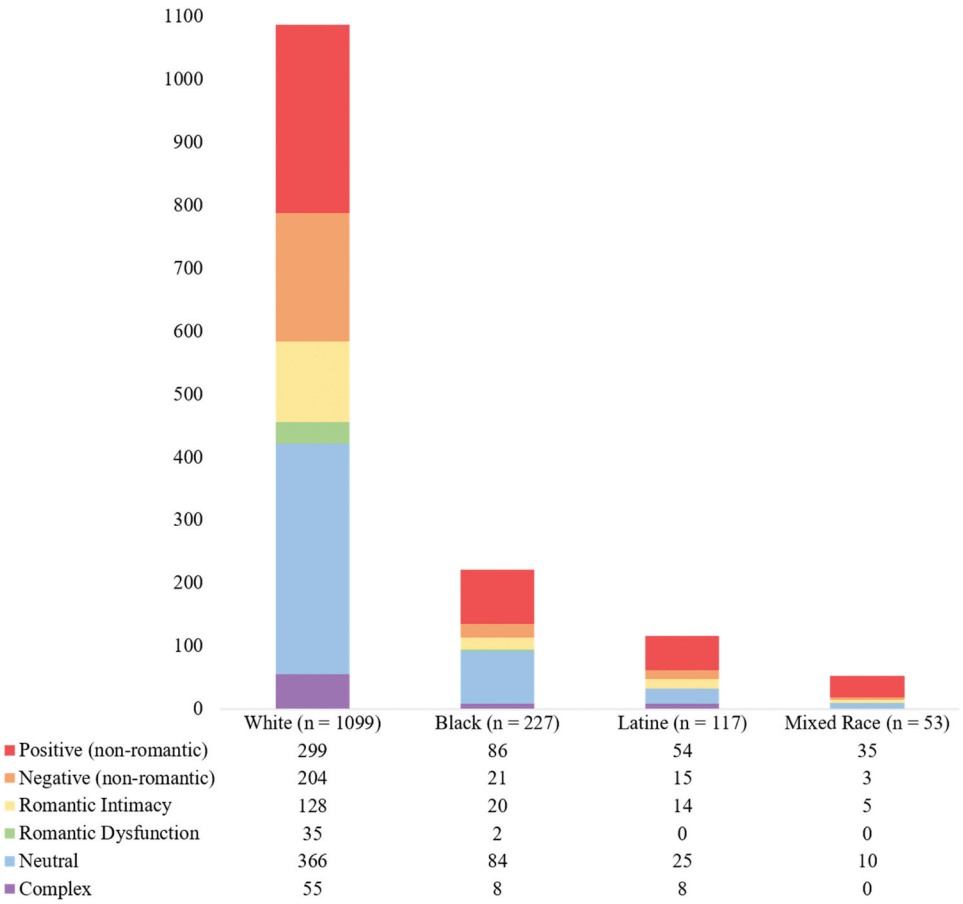


Figure 1. Dyadic interactions by racial group. Unknown racial group and sentiment codes were removed because of low counts.

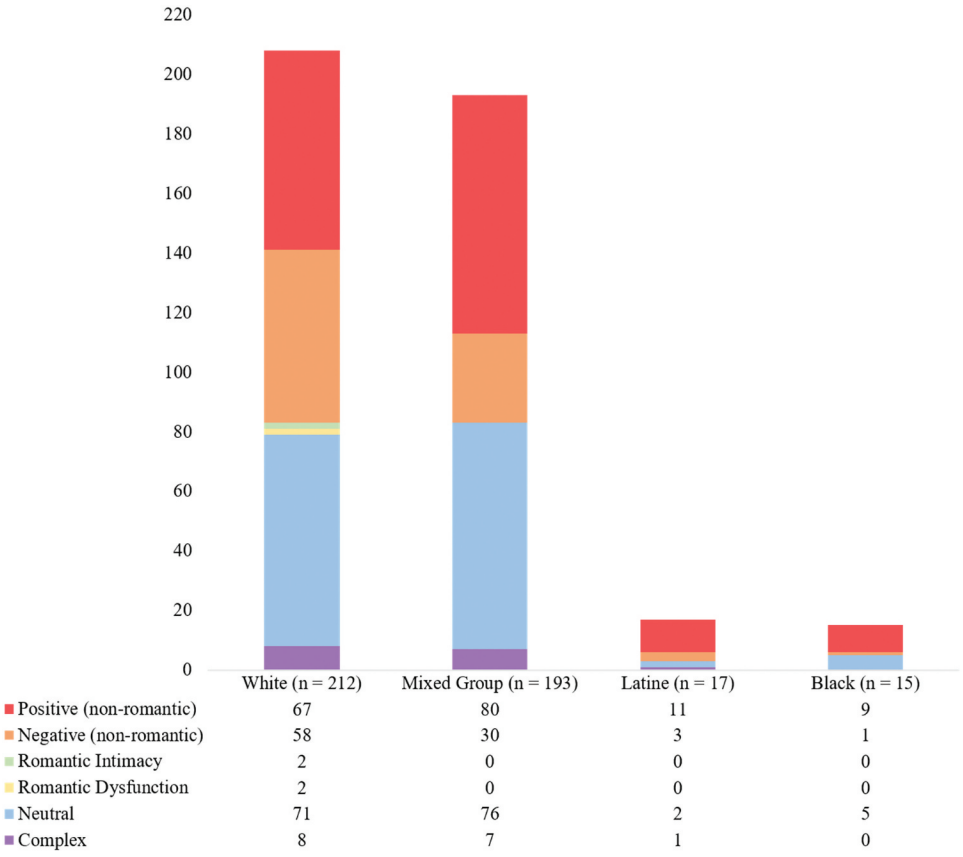


Figure 2. Group interactions by racial group. Mixed-race and unknown racial groups and unknown sentiment codes were removed because of low counts.

than all other racial groups combined. More specifically, interactions with a White character occurred 4.9 times more than those with a Black character, 9.5 times more than those with a Latina/o/x/e character, and 20 times more than those with a mixed-race character (without Asian heritage), as seen in Figure 1.

Similar results have been found for group interactions (see Figure 2). Group interactions with multiple White characters ($n = 212$) and mixed-group interactions (containing multiple races, but often at least one White character; $n = 193$) far surpassed the number of interactions with members of another racial group (Latina/o/x/e = 17; Black = 15). Though there was a high proportion of positive interactions with multiple Latina/o/x/e ($n = 11$; 64.70%) and Black characters ($n = 9$; 60.00%), these instances were so infrequent that they are unlikely to be referenced and integrated compared to the positive interactions with a White ($n = 67$; 31.60%) or a mixed group ($n = 80$; 4.15%) of characters. And though negative interactions with multiple White characters are

substantial ($n = 58$; 27.39%), they exist within a much broader scope of mediated interactions for audiences to reference.

Discussion

The purpose of this content analysis is to contextualize what types of mediated intergroup contact may occur in U.S. movies with Asian American leads and how this may inform observational learning and transference effects. Given the findings, it seems that these potential effects are likely to only benefit some Asian American subgroups and intergroup combinations.

East Asians' overrepresentation and other subgroups' underrepresentation

East Asians were the most represented subgroup in our sample and were overrepresented relative to movie, character, and actor proportions. The next largest group, South Asians, were proportionally represented in movies and characters but not actors. Generally, all other subgroups were significantly underrepresented in all categories, with Other Asians essentially absent from the sample.

One of the biggest discrepancies was the media representation of Southeast Asian Americans. They are the second largest subgroup in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2020) but were represented at less than half of their real-life proportions for all categories. One reason may be that they do not fit the model minority stereotype (Lee et al., 2017; Yamashita, 2022), and they are often regarded as having a lower status relative to other subgroups (Bonilla-Silva, 2004). Because media portrayals seek to be "safe" in their storytelling and maintain the status quo (Erigha, 2021), Southeast Asians may be neglected in media content for being too different from what is already presented of Asian Americans, thus rendered near invisible.

Similarly, mixed individuals with Asian heritage were underrepresented, relative to their 2020 Census proportions. Interestingly, while characters of mixed backgrounds were sparse, mixed-race actors were twice as prominent (9 characters versus 18 actors) and often played monoracial roles ($n = 12$; 75%). This may signal a discrepancy where mixed individuals will be prioritized to play Asian characters because they are "Asian" enough and more "acceptable" than monoracial Asians, but may not have opportunities for roles that deeply explore their identities (Jung, 2026). One reason may be that mixed individual castings allow for a White actor to be cast as a parent while also minimizing cultural aspects within the storyline–the cultural aspects possibly being difficult to address for a predominantly White industry (Jung, 2026). Mixed individuals, particularly those with White ancestry, thus occupy an ever-growing precarious position within the discussion of media representations,

as those who seek opportunities to be seen may also be used as racialized veneers to maintain a predominantly White Hollywood.

Altogether, the findings here have interesting implications relative to SCT and observational learning. Although representations of racial groups have generally increased over the years (Ramón et al., 2025), the diversity of depictions for Asian Americans remains limited. Rather than just prototypicality being the basis for which subgroup is presented in media content, it seems that those who fit the model minority stereotype (e.g., East and South Asians) dominate media depictions, reflecting their "high" status (Reid et al., 2004), even if it is not truly representative of these groups' lived experiences (Besana et al., 2019; Kim & Len, 2026; Mok, 1998). Lack of subgroup diversity thereby erases the nuances of one of the most racially diverse groups in the U.S. and contributes to monolithic overgeneralizations (Bandura, 2001; Flores & Huo, 2013; Lee & Ramakrishnan, 2020).

Indeed, the majority of movies about Asian Americans center on East Asians' experiences, so there are ample references (positive or negative) of this subgroup over others for audiences to observe and generalize. This may extend, or even be exacerbated, in media depictions that have Asian Americans as secondary characters with less explored narratives, especially if non-Asian creators have biases for who they consider to be "Asian" (Lee & Ramakrishnan, 2020). Subgroups may then be treated so distinctly that exposure to East Asians may only elicit primary transfer effects (i.e., generalizations to East Asians in real life) but not other transfer effects (i.e., generalizations to other subgroups). For non-East Asian American audiences, the lack of proportionate representation may result in lower identification or not seeing oneself as "Asian enough" (Lee & Ramakrishnan, 2020; Yamashita, 2022). For outgroup audiences, they may learn that only certain Asians truly count (Lee & Ramakrishnan, 2020).

Evidence for implicit yellowface and what it means for "Asian" representation

In analyzing the subgroups of the characters and the corresponding actors, we provide empirical evidence for implicit yellowface. Implicit yellowface may be more or less prominent in other types of media content (e.g., shows), but nevertheless exists.

Tied to observational learning and the availability of references, frequent patterns of implicit yellowface may contribute to the minimization of different subgroup experiences, the conflation of different subgroups, and the perpetuation of monolithic perceptions. Unfortunately, implicit yellowface may be the result of some underrepresented subgroups seeking any opportunity for media representation, which causes additional conflicts to arise when character and actor identities do not align. One example is mixed-race Asian (often with White backgrounds) playing monoracial Asian roles. Nishime (2017)

elaborates that mixed-race actors may be used by Hollywood creators to promote perceptions of racial equality without depth, such that mixed-race actors may have limited opportunities to play characters with their unique backgrounds, but then spark conflict for playing monoracial characters whose group may also lack adequate representation. Instances like these worsen when stories of mixed-race characters are played by monoracial White actors who are not lacking in representation, such as Emma Stone in Aloha (2015), further highlighting superficial preference in Hollywood. Of course, this is not limited to mixed-race actors, but it may be more prominent for them than other subgroups. In times when White characters and actors are overrepresented, and roles for anyone non-White are sparse (Ramón et al., 2025), the tensions derived from implicit yellowface provoke the feeling of a zero-sum game that pits Asian Americans against one another while masking the role that Hollywood executives play. Conversations about and solutions for implicit yellowface must go beyond actors but also consider how media creators decide what roles for Asian Americans (and other marginalized groups) should be created and who should play them (Ono & Pham, 2009). If unchallenged, media creators may continue to favor certain subgroups for characters and actors, thereby contributing to implicit yellowface and the erasure of some Asian American subgroups.

Mediated intergroup contact representation: reinforcing the status quo

Mediated intergroup contact between Asian and White interactions was more frequent and more diverse in sentiment than any other groups. The interplay between frequency and sentiment highlights the complexity of mediated intergroup contact: favorable interactions may have limited impact when infrequent. Thus, primary transfer effects may be more likely for interactions with White characters than with other racial groups due to the differences in representational references available to audiences (Boin et al., 2021; Kim & Harwood, 2020; Len, 2025).

Moreover, higher-level transfer effects from interactions with White characters are unlikely to transfer over to other racial groups because of perceived group dissimilarity (Boin et al., 2021; Zou & Cheryan, 2017). Current intergroup portrayals may reinforce perceptions of Asian Americans being closely aligned with Whites and distinct from other minorities. Previous studies have shown that media exposure to Asian Americans may result in comparative stereotyping that exacerbates status differences and negative affect between racial minorities (Chao et al., 2013; Dalisay & Tan, 2009; Ho et al., 2002; Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007). Mediated intergroup interactions that are favorable and frequent to one group over others may contribute to these comparative metrics, thus dividing groups more rather than improving intergroup relations.

Given the historical challenges to solidarity across these communities (Bonilla-Silva, 2004), more diverse and positive mediated intergroup contact references are necessary to promote stronger cross-group connections between racial minority groups (Len, 2025).

Theoretically, our findings support previous researchers' claims that whilst media models may be used to improve intergroup attitudes and interactions, the diversity of available media models remains relatively stagnant (Kim & Harwood, 2020). Though many researchers have theorized the benefits of mediated intergroup contact (Harwood, 2021; White et al., 2021), we demonstrate how insufficient the depictions are for previously theorized media effects to be actualized. Findings thus set boundary conditions for mediated intergroup contact and transference effects, suggesting that the benefits of media effects are only possible to the extent that available media depictions provide audiences with opportunities to form and generalize meaningful observations about outgroup members and intergroup interactions.

Limitations and future directions

One limitation is that our purposive sample was drawn from online lists. Though publicly available lists can reflect cultural visibility as they are often the first point of reference for those seeking "Asian American" movies, this could have led to some movies, particularly those featuring West or Central Asian characters, being excluded either due to the list creators' limited knowledge or biases. On a similar note, another content analysis may possibly find more subdued or exaggerated results if the inclusion criteria were not limited to Asian American-led movies. In future studies, a more comprehensive list may be generated through data scraping or establishing broader inclusion criteria. This may be combined with other codes and analyses to see how various factors (e.g., media writers and producers) may add to the general knowledge of media representations and mediated intergroup interactions.

There are several additional ways that future research can expand on this study. Future research can further distinguish the different types of intergroup contact. Though we distinguish between romantic and non-romantic relationships in this study, it may be meaningful to look at other relationships (e.g., strangers, friends) and examine their prevalence, especially if intimacy is a key factor in improving intergroup dynamics. Additionally, empirically testing how prevalence patterns may affect transference effects may reveal how and when mediated intergroup contact is successful. For example, future research may test if media depictions of East Asians apply to South Asians or Southeast Asians compared to the other directions. This may reveal to what degree transference effects occur with media representations.

Conclusion

As racial minorities gain a stronger media presence, many scholars have discussed the benefits for mediated intergroup contact. We do not argue against this but rather question its viability in the current state of entertainment media. Our research suggests entertainment media perpetuates a false notion that East Asians are the dominant Asians in the U.S., whilst erasing other Asian subgroups through their lack of proportionate representation. Moreover, the available mediated intergroup interactions, especially between Asian Americans and non-White racial groups, may be too limited for some transference effects to occur. If entertainment media is positioned as a tool to improve intergroup attitudes and behaviors, researchers must also continue to consider how prevalence and availability of representations may alter media effects.

Acknowledgments

We extend our deepest gratitude to our undergraduate research assistants, Elizabeth Truong and Nicole Kobayashi, who assisted with the data collection. We also like to thank Ronald E. Rice and the Media MOSAIC Lab for their support on this project.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Sovannie Len has earned her Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Barbara. She examines media representation and the impact of racial diversity on audiences.

Kyungin Kim is a doctoral candidate at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She examines how family communication practices and media messages influence the adjustment and well-being of individuals marginalized by issues of legality and carcerality.

ORCID

Sovannie Len http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8596-2801
Kyungin Kim http://orcid.org/0009-0005-3290-1430

References

Banas, J. A., Bessarabova, E., & Massey, Z. B. (2020). Meta-analysis on mediated contact and prejudice. *Human Communication Research*, *46*(2–3), 120–160. https://doi.org/10.1093/hcr/hqaa004

Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. *Media Psychology*, *3*(3), 265–299. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0303_03

Basu, S. (2017). Wage assimilation of immigrants: A comparison of 'new' and 'old' Asian source countries. *Migration Studies*, *5*(1), 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnw022

Besana, T., Katsiaficas, D., & Loyd, A. B. (2019). Asian American media representation: A film analysis and implications for identity development. *Research in Human Development*, *16*(3–4), 201–225. https://doi.org/10.1080/15427609.2020.1711680

Boin, J., Rupar, M., Graf, S., Neji, S., Spiegler, O., & Swart, H. (2021). The generalization of intergroup contact effects: Emerging research, policy relevance, and future directions. *The Journal of Social Issues*, *77*(1), 105–131. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12419

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2004). From bi-racial to tri-racial: Towards a new system of racial stratification in the USA. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *27*(6), 931–950. https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000268530

Chao, M. M., Chiu, C., Chan, W., Mendoza-Denton, R., & Kwok, C. (2013). The model minority as a shared reality and its implication for interracial perceptions. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, *4*(2), 84–92. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0028769

Chu, J. M. (Director). (2018). *Crazy rich asians [film]*. SK Global; Starlight Culture; Color Force; Ivanhoe Pictures; Electric Somewhere.

Collins, W. A., Welsh, D. P., & Furman, W. (2009). Adolescent romantic relationships. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *60*(1), 631–652. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163459

Crowe, C. (Director). (2015). Aloha. Film. Columbia Pictures; LStar Capital; RatPac Entertainment; Regency Enterprises; Scott Rudin Productions; Vinyl Films.

Dalisay, F., & Tan, A. (2009). Assimilation and contrast effects in the priming of Asian American and African American stereotypes through TV exposure. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *86*(1), 7–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900908600102

Dixon, T. L. (2019). Media stereotypes: Content, effects, and theory. In M. B. Oliver, A. A. Raney, & J. Bryant (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (4th ed., pp. 243–257). Routledge.

Erigha, M. (2021). Racial valuation: Cultural gatekeepers, race, risk, and institutional expectations of success and failure. *Social problems*, *68*(2), 393–408. https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spaa006

Feng, P. X. (2020). The burden of representation in Asian American television. In L. Lopez (Ed.), *Race and media* (pp. 79–91). New York University Press. https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479823222.003.0010

Flores, N. M., & Huo, Y. J. (2013). "We" are not all alike: Consequences of neglecting national origin identities among asians and latinos. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *4*(2), 143–150. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550612449025

Goh, J. X., & McCue, J. (2021). Perceived prototypicality of Asian subgroups in the United States and the United Kingdom. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *97*, 104201. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2021.104201

Harwood, J. (2017). Intergroup contact. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.429

Harwood, J. (2021). Modes of intergroup contact: If and how to interact with the outgroup. *The Journal of Social Issues*, *77*(1), 154–170. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12421

Ho, E. A., Sanbonmatsu, D. M., & Akimoto, S. A. (2002). The effects of comparative status on social stereotypes: How the perceived success of some persons affects the stereotypes of others. *Social Cognition*, *20*(1), 36–57. https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.20.1.36.20942

Joyce, N., & Harwood, J. (2014). Improving intergroup attitudes through televised vicarious intergroup contact: Social cognitive processing of ingroup and outgroup information. *Communication Research*, *41*(5), 627–643. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650212447944

Jung, A. E. (2026, September 8). The wasian generation. *New York Magazine*. https://www.vulture.com/article/the-wasian-generation.html

Kim, C., & Harwood, J. (2020). Parasocial contact's effects on relations between minority groups in a multiracial context. *International Journal of Communication*, *14*22. https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/13010

Kim, C. J. (1999). The racial triangulation of Asian Americans. *Politics and Society*, *27*(1), 105–138. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329299027001005

Kim, K., & Len, S. (2026). Career representation of Asian Americans in movies: A mixed methods approach to examining media vocational anticipatory socialization messages. *Communication and Race*, *3*(1), 38–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/28346955.2026.2637482

Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (2nd ed.). Sage Publication.

Leavitt, P. A., Covarrubias, R., Perez, Y. A., & Fryberg, S. A. (2015). "Frozen in time": The impact of native American media representations on identity and self-understanding. *The Journal of Social Issues*, *71*(1), 39–53. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12095

Lee, D. M., Duesbery, L., Han, P. P., Thupten, T., Her, C. S., & Pang, V. O. (2017). Academic needs and family factors in the education of Southeast Asian American students: Dismantling the model minority myth. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement*, *12*(2), 1–31. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48684422

Lee, J., & Ramakrishnan, K. (2020). Who counts as Asian. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *43*(10), 1733–1756. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2019.1671600

Lee, J., Ramakrishnan, K., & Wong, J. (2018). Accurately counting Asian Americans is a civil rights issue. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *677*(1), 191–202. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716218765432

Len, S. (2025). A social cognitive approach for using racially diverse entertainment media to improve children's intergroup socialization. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, *49*(4), 336–348. https://doi.org/10.1093/anncom/wlaf019

Len, S., & Kubitza, S. (2026). Almost villains? A mixed-method examination of white audiences' racial and moral categorization of media characters. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2026.2654865

Lienemann, B. A., & Stopp, H. T. (2013). The association between media exposure of interracial relationships and attitudes toward interracial relationships. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *43*(Suppl 2), E398–E415. https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12037

Lim, A. (Director). (2023). Joy ride. Film. Point Grey Pictures; Red Mysterious Hippo.

Maddux, W. W., Galinsky, A. D., Cuddy, A. J. C., & Polifroni, M. (2008). When being a model minority is good. . .and bad: Realistic threat explains negativity toward Asian Americans. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *34*(1), 74–89. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167207309195

Mastro, D. (2015). Why the media's role in issues of race and ethnicity should be in the spotlight. *The Journal of Social Issues*, *71*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12093

Mazziotta, A., Mummendey, A., & Wright, S. C. (2011). Vicarious intergroup contact effects: Applying social-cognitive theory to intergroup contact research. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, *14*(2), 255–274. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430210390533

Mok, T. A. (1998). Getting the message: Media images and stereotypes and their effect on Asian Americans. *Cultural Diversity and Mental Health*, *4*(3), 185–202. https://doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.4.3.185

Nishime, L. (2017). Mixed race matters: What Emma Stone and Bruno Mars can tell us about the future of Asian American media. *Cinema Journal*, *56*(3), 148–152. https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2017.0031

Ono, K. A., & Pham, V. N. (2009). *Asian Americans and the media*. Polity.

Orta, I. M. (2013). The impact of cross-group romantic relationships on intergroup prejudice. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, *41*(1), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2013.41.1.1

Paek, H. J., & Shah, H. (2003). Racial ideology, model minorities, and the"not-so-silent partner: " stereotyping of Asian Americans in US magazine advertising. *Howard Journal of Communications*, *14*(4), 225–243. https://doi.org/10.1080/716100430

Park, S.-Y. (2012). Mediated intergroup contact: Concept explication, synthesis, and application. *Mass Communication & Society*, *15*(1), 136–159. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2011.558804

Poon, O., Squire, D., Kodama, C., Byrd, A., Chan, J., Manzano, L., Furr, S., & Bishundat, D. (2016). A critical review of the model minority myth in selected literature on Asian Americans and Pacific islanders in higher education. *Review of Educational Research*, *86*(2), 469–502. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315612205

Potter, J. W. (2019). *Major theories of media effects: Analysis and evaluation*. Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

Ramasubramanian, S. (2011a). The impact of stereotypical versus counterstereotypical media exemplars on racial attitudes, causal attributions, and support for affirmative action. *Communication Research*, *38*(4), 497–516. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650210384854

Ramasubramanian, S. (2011b). Television exposure, model minority portrayals, and Asian-American stereotypes: An exploratory study. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, *26*(1), 1–17.

Ramasubramanian, S., & Oliver, M. B. (2007). Activating and suppressing hostile and benevolent racism: Evidence for comparative media stereotyping. *Media Psychology*, *9*(3), 623–646. https://doi.org/10.1080/15213260701283244

Ramón, A.-C., Tran, M., Abston, J., & Hunt, D. (2025). 2025 hollywood diversity report: Part 1 theatrical. Hollywood diversity report. UCLA.

Reid, S. A., Giles, H., & Abrams, J. R. (2004). A social identity model of media usage and effects. *Zeitschrift Für Medienpsychologie*, *16*(1), 17–25. https://doi.org/10.1026/1617-6383.16.1.17

Riles, J. M., Varava, K., Pilny, A., & Tewksbury, D. (2018). Representations of interpersonal interaction and race/ethnicity: An examination of prime-time network television programs. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *62*(2), 302–319. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2018.1451862

Saleem, M., Hawkins, I., Rains, S. A., Mastro, D., & Coles, S. (2025). Media depictions of minority groups: A meta-analytic review examining the effects of positive and negative portrayals on outgroup evaluations. *Media Psychology*, 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2025.2498374

Stamps, D. L., & Sahlman, J. (2021). Audiences' mediated contact with black characters in scripted television and support for racialized social issues. *Communication Studies*, *72*(5), 834–849. https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2021.1975140

Tukachinsky, R., Mastro, D., & Yarchi, M. (2015). Documenting portrayals of race/ethnicity on primetime television over a 20-year span and their association with national-level racial/ethnic attitudes. *The Journal of Social Issues*, *71*(1), 17–38. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12094

U.S. Census Bureau. (1990). *1990 census of population: General population characteristics-United States*. https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1990/cp-1/cp-1-1.pdf

U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). *2020: DEC detailed demographic and housing characteristics file A*. https://data.census.gov/table?t=-4000G

Van Assche, J., Swart, H., Schmid, K., Dhont, K., Al Ramiah, A., Christ, O., Kauff, M., Rothmann, S., Savelkoul, M., Tausch, N., Wölfer, R., Zahreddine, S., Saleem, M., & Hewstone, M. (2023). Intergroup contact is reliably associated with reduced prejudice, even in the face of group threat and discrimination. *The American Psychologist*, *78*(6), 761–774. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0001144

Wang, W. (Director). (1993). *The Joy Luck club [film]*. Hollywood Pictures; Oliver Stone Productions.

White, F. A., Borinca, I., Vezzali, L., Reynolds, K. J., Lyshol, J. K. B., Verrelli, S., & Falomir-Pichastor, J. M. (2021). Beyond direct contact: The theoretical and societal relevance of indirect contact for improving intergroup relations. *The Journal of Social Issues*, *77*(1), 132–153. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12400

Wolock, L. (2020). Diaspora and digital media. In L. K. Lopez (Ed.), *Race and media* (pp. 190–202). New York University Press. https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479823222.003.0019

Yamashita, L. (2022). "I just couldn't relate to that Asian American Narrative": How Southeast Asian Americans reconsider panethnicity. *Sociology of Race & Ethnicity*, *8*(2), 250–266. https://doi.org/10.1177/23326492221078953

Zou, L. X., & Cheryan, S. (2017). Two axes of subordination: A new model of racial position. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, *112*(5), 696–717. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspa0000080