University of San Diego

Digital USD

Dissertations

Theses and Dissertations

2019-05-19

Seeking Mirrors: Representation and Identity at Asian Pacific Islander Film Festivals

Yang Jiang
University of San Diego

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations>

Part of the [Asian American Studies Commons](#), [Communication Commons](#), [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), and the [Social Psychology Commons](#)

Digital USD Citation

Jiang, Yang, "Seeking Mirrors: Representation and Identity at Asian Pacific Islander Film Festivals" (2019). *Dissertations*. 151.
<https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations/151>

This Dissertation: Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Digital USD. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital USD. For more information, please contact digital@san Diego.edu.

SEEKING MIRRORS: REPRESENTATION AND IDENTITY AT ASIAN PACIFIC
ISLANDER FILM FESTIVALS

by

Yang Jiang

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduation May 2019

Dissertation Committee

Afsaneh Nahavandi, PhD, Chair
Hans Peter Schmitz, PhD, Member
Bradley J. Bond, PhD, Member
James Fabionar, PhD, Member
Brian Hu, PhD, Member

University of San Diego

© Copyright by Yang Jiang
All Rights Reserved 2019

University of San Diego
School of Leadership and Education Sciences

CANDIDATE'S NAME: Yang Jiang

TITLE OF DISSERTATION: SEEKING MIRRORS: REPRESENTATION AND
IDENTITY AT ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER FILM FESTIVALS

APPROVAL:

_____, Chair
Afsaneh Nahavandi, PhD

_____, Member
Hans Peter Schmitz, PhD

_____, Member
Bradley J. Bond, PhD

_____, Member
James Fabionar, PhD

_____, Member
Brian Hu, PhD

DATE: April 24, 2019

ABSTRACT

Media representation plays an important role in shaping how we perceive ourselves. For ethnic and racial minorities, studies have confirmed that exposure to stereotypical and negative representations can harm the development of ethnic and racial identity. Currently, however, there is little understanding of how representation can support the development of ethnic and racial identity. Essentially, what might visibility, rather than invisibility, in media representation look like, and what is the relationship between visibility and ethnic and racial identity?

This dissertation sought to address these questions by looking at the experience of Asian Pacific Islander (API) attendees at API film festivals. Compared to mainstream media, where less than 6% of characters are API, API film festivals focus exclusively on films featuring API characters, as well as international films from Asia. API film festivals, therefore, are rich sites for the study of visibility and its relationship with ethnic and racial identity.

Using an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach, this study interviewed 19 API individuals who had attended at least 1 API film festival and used their answers to create a 63-item survey about identity-related motivations for attending API film festivals. Interviews were thematically analyzed, while descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, and correlational analyses were conducted on the survey data (N=114).

Results indicate that exposure to diverse and complex media representation was related to enhanced self-identification for participants with their ethnic and racial identities. Also, participants agreed that they were motivated to attend API film festivals to develop their ethnic and racial identity, access non-mainstream content, support the

API community, and being with a mostly API audience.

The findings from the study have implications for media research on visibility and ethnic and racial identity, as well as for media creators and distributors who want to create more visibility for minorities. The study also provides evidence for the importance of cultural film festivals as resources for ethnic and racial identity.

Keywords: ethnic and racial identity, media representation, film festivals

DEDICATION

*All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not touched by the frost.
From the embers a fire shall be woken,
A light from the darkness shall spring;
Renewed shall be blade that is broken,
The crownless again shall be king.*

-J.R.R. Tolkien

For Mom and Dad, the original PhDs in this family, and the ones who sacrificed so much
so that I could have the privilege of following my heart.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Afsaneh Nahavandi, my advisor and dissertation chair, for her incredible support, patience, and guidance throughout my entire time within the PhD program and during this dissertation process. Through all of my unique journeys into possible topics of interest, she always found a way to see the value in my pursuit and balanced pushing me forward with giving me space to find my own way. Many times her practical and compassionate approach kept me from getting paralyzed in perfectionism and anxiety, and her fiery strength kept me authentic. I cannot thank her enough for her contribution to getting me through these last two years with my spirit and my voice intact. She taught me to own who I am, and to let the rest roll off my back.

Along with Afsaneh, I received so much support from my other committee members. Dr. Bradley Bond, thank you for taking a stranger under your wing; your prompt communication, willingness to answer any question, and detailed feedback were greatly appreciated. You are truly the consummate professional, and you've helped me through many aspects of this project. Dr. James Fabionar, thank you for letting me grab you on the very first day you arrived and never letting go. You always held space for my personal connection to this project and challenged me to think in new ways about what it means to be of Asian descent in the U.S. Dr. Hans Peter Schmitz, thank you for coming to the Department of Leadership Studies. Many times your honesty, sense of humor, and sharp insights brightened my day and kept me excited about my project. I am glad you were a part of this.

I'd also like to thank Dr. Brian Hu of my committee. Without your help, none of this would have been possible. It must have been fate that I happened to meet you that

day just as I was considering looking at the intersection of media representation and identity. I am eternally grateful that you saw something in me and took a chance to not only be a part of this committee, but to share your connections, resources, and time with me to make this study happen. In extension, I want to also thank everyone at PacArts who also supported me through this project, especially Sabrina Ruiz and Kent Lee. I am blessed that I met you all.

My colleagues at The Jacobs Institute for Innovation in Education, Vitaliy Popov and Yaoran Li, have also played meaningful roles during this time. Both of you have been incredible teachers that have cultivated an appreciation for the research process in me, as well as shown me the value of collaboration. But more importantly, what I will take with me forever is the kindness and understanding you have extended to me throughout these last four years, and the unwavering belief that you hold in my potential and capabilities. You will never know how much working with you has shaped who I am today and impacted my life.

I'd also like to thank the librarians at Copley Library. I requested so many books each week you all know me by name and face now. You even know that sometimes, people put my books on hold under my first name instead of my last name. I am sure that 75% of your work pulling books was generated by me, so I thank you for never banning me and always treating my constant requests with a smile of amusement. I truly have no idea what I will do when I cannot request 10 obscure books from around the world at the click of button through you all.

Lastly, I'd like to thank my friends, family, and partner. Desiree Aspiras, I am so lucky we met and grew into best friends over these last few years. You are truly one of

my soul mates in this life, and I know that our journey as friends has only just begun. Our conversations kept me sane throughout this process and reminded me that my dreams are bigger than a single project. Dr. Warren Whitaker, I'll never forget how much you kept things in perspective, inspired me with your hustle, and blasted through any self-doubt with your complete belief in me.

Dad, or Dr. Guoqiang Jiang, thank you for all your work to support our family. I know that the love that you have for each and every one of us is so deep, there is literally nothing you would not do for us. You have always found a way to support my journey, while also pushing me to be self-reliant. Every day, you teach me the possibility of sustained endeavors. Mom, or Dr. Lizhen Yan, you are my spiritual friend and the person I think of when I need to remind myself to have faith. With your joy and determination, you show me that we are only as old as we feel, life gives endless second chances, and it is never too late to become the person we dream of being. And to my little brother Shan Jiang, thank you for being a genuine angel in my life. Our conversations always lifted my spirits, and your passion and character inspires me to keep going.

Lastly, I want to extend my sincerest appreciation to my fiancé, Johnny Nguyen. We met in year 1 of this whole program, and here we are at the end and you're still by my side. I haven't been easy to deal with during this process (who am I kidding—I never have been and never will be), but you've been steadfast, forgiving, and encouraging throughout it all. Thank you for loving me and being a source of integrity, strength, and stability, and always making me laugh. In you, I will always have faith.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	x
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
Outline of the Dissertation	6
CHAPTER TWO: DO I BELONG?: AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIA REPRESENTATION AND SELF-CATEGORIZATION FOR ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDERS	9
Abstract	9
Introduction	10
Self-Categorization Theory	11
Methodology	16
Findings	18
Discussion	27

Conclusion.....	30
References	33
CHAPTER THREE: SEEKING MIRRORS: ETHNIC AND RACIAL IDENTITY- RELATED MOTIVATIONS FOR ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER ATTENDEES AT CULTURAL FILM FESTIVALS	42
Abstract.....	42
Introduction.....	43
Identity Exploration and Formation at Festivals.....	44
Motivations for Festival Attendance.....	47
Methodology	50
Results.....	55
Discussion	57
Conclusion	63
References.....	64
CHAPTER FOUR: REPRESENTATIONAL LEADERSHIP: LESSONS FROM ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER FILM FESTIVALS.....	76
CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION.....	89

So What?	90
Now What?	92
Limitations	96
Final Thoughts	97
REFERENCES	99

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Survey Participants' Demographic Characteristics	69
Table 2. Factor Analysis of Motivations for Attending AAPI Film Festivals.....	70
Table 3. Correlation Matrix Between Motivation Factors.....	72
Table 4. ANOVA Comparison of Identity-Related Motivation Factors Across Ethnicity and Generation	72
Table 5. Correlations Between Identity-Related Motivation Factors, Age, Income, Number of Ethnic Studies Courses Taken, and ERI Score.....	73
Table 6. Correlations Between Strength of Identification with Various Ethnic and Racial Identity Labels and Identity-Related Motivation Factors	74
Table 7. Correlations Between Motivation Factors and Festival Engagement and Film Preference	75
Table 8. Correlations Between Strength of Identification with Various Ethnic and Racial Identity Labels and Festival Engagement and Film Preference.....	75

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Normative and Comparative Fit	40
Figure 2. Self-Categorization Concepts in Ethnic Media Research (Johnson, 2010).....	41

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Until the lion learns how to write, every story will glorify the hunter. --African proverb

The question of “Who am I?” is central to human experience and establishing a cultural, ethnic and racial identity is an essential human developmental factor. For ethnic and racial minorities who are likely subject to discrimination and negative images of their group, developing a positive and strong relationship with one’s ethnic and racial group is especially important. A significant number of studies have shown that individuals who feel pride and a sense of connection and belonging with their ethnic and racial groups tend to have higher self-esteem and resilience in the face of discrimination and bias (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014).

According to social identity theory (SIT), the nature and strength of our identification with a particular group is based on the mental images and schema, or *prototypes* that we hold about what people in that group are like (Hogg & Reid, 2016). The more we are exposed to positive prototypes of people in a particular group, the more likely we are to feel pride in being a part of that group, and the more similarities exist between ourselves and group prototypes, the more likely we are to feel a sense of belonging. The types of prototypes minorities are exposed to, therefore, play a critical role in the development of their ethnic and racial identity.

In the past, our knowledge about different groups of people came mainly from the people in our immediate environment: the people we saw at school and at work, or the opinions passed down to us from our parents and friends (Dong, 2013). The media are now major sources of information about the world, especially because they can often be the only source of knowledge about people and situations that we do not have personal direct contact with (Bandura, 2001; Moran, 2013) and the visual nature of media can be quite persuasive (Aust & Zillmann, 1996;

Brosius & Bathelt, 1994; Zillmann, Gibson, Sundar, & Perkins, 1996; Zillmann, Perkins & Sundar, 1992). A well-established body of research has found that, in particular, our perceptions of minorities can be influenced and informed by media representations.

Unfortunately, there is currently a much stronger understanding of *invisibility*, or simplified, negative, incorrect or non-existent representations of a group (Fryberg & Townsend, 2008), in media representation and its negative impact upon minorities than visibility within media representation. When visibility is discussed, it tends to be in reference to the frequency of minority representation within mainstream content (e.g. McKinley, Mastro, & Warber, 2014). However, we must look at both quantity *and* quality of representation; otherwise, visibility can be satisfied with representations of minorities that are superficial, using them only as “scenery in white stories (Dargis, 2016, para. 6).” As Schiappa (2008) states, “Critics need to point to positive examples. If one cannot point to a more progressive direction, then one will literally go nowhere...We...need to be proactive about the direction in which film and television should go (p. 165).” Therefore, research that moves beyond the criticism of invisibility within media representation and seeks to understand visibility is needed.

However, the current focus of media studies on mainstream media content, such as television or commercial films, is not conducive to the study of visibility. These types of media have already been acknowledged as sites of invisibility for minorities (Smith, Choueti, & Pieper, 2017) because they have higher barriers of entry, focus on commercial viability, and need to appeal to popular tastes (Fryberg & Townsend, 2008; Wong, 2011). Research on visibility in media representation and its relationship with ethnic and racial identity development, therefore, can be distorted and limited if it conducted using mainstream content (e.g. Abrams, 2010).

On the other hand, film festivals offer a very rich site for the study of visibility. They provide an alternative, sometimes directly contradictory, platform to Hollywood, one that is not limited to the conventional, commercially viable, and easily digestible forms of representation that dominate mainstream media and tend to lead to the erasure and simplification of minority characters (Bennett & Woodward, 2014; Wong, 2011). Theme-specific film festivals, in particular, are often specifically focused on providing the space for the exploration of and discourse around particular identities, topics, and issues that are not usually found in mainstream media, or at least, are not usually treated with much complexity and care (Wong, 2011).

Currently, however, empirical research on film festivals is limited. What studies do exist tend to look at their tourism and economic value (Getz, 2010), leaving research on film festivals disconnected from research on media representation and identity.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is to address these gaps in knowledge by exploring the relationship between attendance at cultural film festivals and ethnic and racial identity. Specifically, this study investigated the relationship between attending Asian Pacific Islander (API) film festivals and API attendees' ethnic and racial identity.

There are two main reasons why I chose to look at API film festivals. First, the field of media studies has tended to focus on representation of Black and Latinx characters and their impact on Black and Latinx viewers, while API representations and their impact on API viewers remains very understudied (Mastro, Figueroa-Caballero, & Sink, 2017). This is problematic given that there is a long history of representational struggles for the API community. API characters tend to be given a very narrow range of roles; either as robotic doctors or oversexualized and passive females (Mastro et al., 2017; Ono & Pham, 2009). They have also

faced a continuous practice of *whitewashing*, where characters of color are played by White actors (Sim, 2017). For instance, Emma Stone was recently cast as “Allison Ng”, a mixed-race API character in Cameron Crowe’s (2015) *Aloha*, and Scarlett Johansson was cast in *Ghost in the Shell* (Sanders, 2017) as a character that was originally written to be Japanese. Lastly, the API community can often face *racialization*, where all groups within a particular racial category are assumed to be the same, such as all API people are assumed to have the same culture as Chinese people, and the distinction between groups is, therefore, lost, ignored, or simplified (Espiritu, 1992; Kibria, 2002). Studying media representation and its relationship with identity for the API population, therefore, is necessary.

Second, API film festivals have a long history in creating visibility for the API population. They began as a way to deal with the lack of media representation for APIs and provide a platform for API filmmakers and their films (Okada, 2015; Ono & Pham, 2008). To this day, they have continued to be important spaces for connecting audiences with a wide range of API films that might, otherwise, not be accessible (Ono & Pham, 2008). Furthermore, they do the work of expanding and complicating the boundaries of ethnic and racial identity for the API community. By including films from ethnic groups beyond East Asians (i.e. Chinese, Korean, and Japanese), for instance, the festivals highlight groups that are traditionally less visible within the API community, such as Pacific Islanders and Southeast Asians (Espiritu, 1992). This invisibility is also why I use the term “Asian Pacific Islander/Asian American Pacific Islander” throughout this dissertation, rather than the term “Asian American”, which can erase the distinction and complexities of difference between Pacific Islanders and other members of the API community (Espiritu, 1992).

These festivals also include a transnational aspect to ethnic and racial identity by including international films from Asia in addition to U.S. films. For members of an ethnic diaspora, the media can provide connections to their homeland, real for those who are first-generation immigrants, and imagined for those who are not (Robins & Aksoy, 2006). Use of transnational media can boost a sense of connection to one's ethnic identity and even build a new community locally (Oh, 2012, 2013). In general, transnational media can be seen as providing further symbolic resources (Oh, 2011) for the construction of API identity that is continually shifting and in the process of becoming (Ono & Pham, 2009).

Overview of Methodology

The study used an *exploratory sequential mixed methods* approach, where one form of data was collected first, and the findings from the first round of data collection were used to inform the second round of data collection (Creswell, 2014). Phase I consisted of conducting 19 interviews with API individuals who had attended at least one API film festival to explore their experiences and motivations for attending API film festivals. The interviews were analyzed using a mix of inductive and deductive approaches (Patton, 2002), and the findings were used to create items on a survey measuring identity-related motivations for attending API film festival. This survey was used to collect data in Phase II.

The findings from this study can contribute to both practice and research in a number of ways. First, the study can point to examples or features of media representation that can guide future research around visibility, and provide direction for media creators and distributors who are concerned with diversity within media representation. Second, this study has the potential to bring film festivals into the realm of media studies. By using data collected at a film festival to generate findings with important implications for media studies, this study provides an example

of the value of looking at film festivals as a media space, especially as a resource for the identity development of marginalized groups. Lastly, the API population has been significantly under-researched in media and ethnic and racial identity research compared to Black and Latinx populations (Behm-Morawitz & Ortiz, 2013; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). This study, therefore, also contributes further knowledge to our empirical understanding of ethnic and racial identity development and media representation for the API community.

Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation follows a three-article format. Chapter 2, 3, and 4 will each consist of an article that is designed to stand-alone and be submitted for academic and non-academic publications. The first article, presented in Chapter 2, focuses specifically on how exposure to certain kinds of media representation at API film festivals can influence the self-identification process of API attendees. The second article, presented in Chapter 3, provides an overview of the relationship between API film festivals and ethnic and racial identity by exploring the different kinds of identity-related motivations that exist for API individuals to attend API film festivals. Lastly, the third article presented in Chapter 4 is aimed at the culture section of a general magazine. The purpose of this article is to use findings from the study to help the general public understand the importance of film festivals in the movement towards more visibility and diversity within media representation.

In the first article (Chapter 2), I focus in on how exposure to media representation at film festivals can influence the degree and nature of self-identification with one's ethnic and racial group for API attendees. Utilizing self-categorization theory (SCT) and its theoretical integration with media representation as outlined by Johnson (2010), I examine how exposure to the films at API film festivals influence the process of self-categorization for API attendees. This article

consists of the interview data from Phase I. The findings from this study indicate that self-categorization can be enhanced through attendance at API film festivals, and in particular, that the diversity and complexity of representation at the festivals played important roles. The study suggests, therefore, that certain types of media representation can serve as interventions for developing ethnic and racial identity.

In the second article (Chapter 3), I explore identity-related motivations for attending API film festivals as a way to understand film festivals as resources for identity exploration, formation, and affirmation. This study builds upon research on motivations for festival attendance by looking specifically at film festivals and motivations related to ethnic and racial identity. The article consists of data collected from the survey in Phase II, which was informed by interviews in Phase I. Through a factor analysis and correlational analyses, the study aims to identify the different types of identity-related motivations that exist for API attendees at API film festivals. The findings identify 4 types of identity-related motivations that are distinct from a general motivation to be entertained and watch films, as well as relationships between motivation, audience characteristics, and festival engagement. The findings also result in a tool that can be used for future studies to assess identity-related motivations for attending film festivals.

In the third article (Chapter 4), I introduce the term *representational leadership*, or the act of creating and sharing media content that disrupts and heals harmful patterns of representation, and use data from Phase I and II to illustrate what API film festivals teach us about representational leadership. This article is meant for the culture section of a current events and culture magazine. With this article, I aim to bring awareness to how leadership can intersect with

representation and direct the attention of the general public towards the importance of cultural film festivals as spaces of representational leadership.

Chapter 5 presents my conclusion. I review and discuss the findings of this study and their implications for future research and practice. The limitations of the study will also be discussed. Since the articles in Chapter 2-4 will be formatted for submission, any references and appendices are found at the end of their respective article.

CHAPTER TWO

Abstract

Prior research suggests that exposure to certain kinds of media representation can support minorities' ethnic and racial identity. What are the mechanisms through which representation interacts with identity and what are the qualities of representation that have the potential to influence identity? Using self-categorization theory (SCT), this exploratory study sought to address these questions by examining how exposure to films at Asian Pacific Islander (API) film festivals influences API individuals' ethnic and racial identity. Interviews were conducted with 19 API individuals who had attended at least 1 API film festival. Thematic analysis revealed that participants experienced greater similarity with their ethnic and racial group, as well as their ethnic and racial identity becoming more salient. The diversity of API characters and cultural specificity of details in the films were noted as important qualities of representation. Directions for future research and implications for media scholars and practitioners are discussed.

DO I BELONG?: AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIA REPRESENTATION AND SELF-CATEGORIZATION FOR ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDERS

Introduction

For ethnic and racial minorities in the United States, the development of ethnic and racial identity has been linked to a number of positive psychological outcomes, such as self-esteem and resilience in the face of discrimination (for a review, see Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). Among the many factors that can influence an individual's ethnic and racial identity development is the media. Traditionally, much research has focused on the negative impact of mainstream media upon minorities (for a review, see Behm-Morawitz & Ortiz, 2013). However, there are also many studies that focus on the ways in which media, such as ethnic media, can support the development, affirmation, and maintenance of ethnic and racial identity (e.g., Abrams & Giles, 2009, Jeffres, 2000; Ramasubramanian, Doshi, & Saleem, 2017; Sullivan & Platenburg, 2017). As media continues to grow in its influence and reach, research that can inform and guide the practice of content development is crucial.

Thus, this study is an attempt to further the understanding of the mechanisms through which media can support, rather than harm, ethnic and racial identity development. The present study builds upon the framework proposed by Johnson (2010). Using *self-categorization theory* (SCT), she posits that access and exposure to content with information about norms and diverse representations of a particular group can enhance identification with one's ethnic or racial group. Given that the process of choosing to self-identify with one's ethnic or racial identity is a fundamental aspect of minorities' ethnic or racial identity development (Song, 2003), it is worthwhile to explore how media representation can support this process. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore the validity of Johnson's (2010) framework by exploring how

exposure to films at an API film festival influences the self-categorization process of API attendees. The following research questions guide this study:

- 1) To what extent are festival attendees being exposed to information about group norms and/or diverse prototypes?
- 2) How does exposure to information about norms and/or diverse prototypes influence participants' process of self-categorization?

Self-Categorization Theory

Social identity theory (SIT) is concerned with understanding why, how, and the degree to which people “identify themselves in terms of group membership (Howard, 2000, p. 368).”

Social identity is defined as the part of an individual's self-concept that is derived from this group membership, including any emotional and personal significance to that membership (Tajfel, 1978). SIT's main argument is that people derive a significant part of their self-esteem from their social identity, and, therefore, are motivated to achieve a positive perception of and sense of belonging with their social groups (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Much of the research on ethnic and racial identity, for instance, has been based on SIT (Phinney & Ong, 2007) and confirmed the importance of social identity for ethnic and racial minorities: the development of a positive relationship and a sense of belonging with one's ethnic and racial group is related to a number of outcomes, such as self-esteem and resilience in the face of discrimination (for a review, see Rivas-Drake et al., 2014).

Self-categorization theory (SCT), which developed out of SIT, explains the cognitive process of how an individual comes to identify him or herself as part of a group. *Self-categorization* occurs when an individual identifies him or herself as belonging within a particular social category/group, and is a product of accessibility and fit (Turner et al, 1987;

Blanz, 1999). *Accessibility*, or salience, refers to how available a particular social category is for an individual to use in his or her self-description (Johnson, 2010). Context and frequency of use can affect accessibility (Bruner, 1957, p.133): studies have found, for instance, that being an ethnic minority in a predominantly White school can increase awareness of oneself as a member of an ethnic group, and that individuals who are generally more aware of the role that race and ethnicity play in their lives will apply those categories more often (Umaña-Taylor, 2004; Yip, 2014).

Fit, as illustrated in Figure 1, is about perceived similarity and overlap between an individual and group prototypes and norms. *Prototypes* are cognitive schemas, or “images” that serve as examples of how group members behave, think, and feel; *norms* are beliefs about how groups members typically behave, think, and feel (Johnson, 2010; Hogg & Reid, 2006). There are two types of fit: *normative fit* refers to the degree of overlap between the individual’s characteristics and that of group norms and prototypes, while *comparative fit* refers to the degree to which fit with one’s group is perceived to be greater than fit with another group (Turner et al., 1987). An individual who is Black and White, for instance, will tend to self-categorize as Black if they possess stereotypically Black physical features, *and* if they have more stereotypically Black features than White ones (Good, Chavez, & Sanchez, 2010).

[Figure 1]

Asian Pacific Islanders and Self-Categorization

Though individuals may be societally classified in a particular group, that does not automatically translate into a sense of personal identification with that group (Chang & Kwan, 2009; Kinket & Verkuyten, 1997; Phinney, 1990; Song, 2003). The formation of ethnic and racial identity, therefore, is an ongoing process of negotiation between external and societal

expectations about how members of a particular ethnic or racial group should be, and an individual's personal choices and perceptions about what it means to be “an ethnic being” (Chang & Kwan, 2009; Song, 2003). For individuals of Asian descent in the United States, struggles with a long history of oversimplification and erasure of differences through stereotyping and racialization have made the process of self-identification complex. Take, for instance, the well-known “model minority” stereotype (MMS), which casts API individuals as high-achieving minorities who achieve success through their hard work and dedication (Lee, 1998). Thompson and Kiang (2010) found that 99.4% of their sample of API youths had experienced some encounter with the MMS. Individuals who do not fit the MMS can feel as if they are not “Asian” or “Filipino enough”, resulting in disidentification from their AAPI identity and non-participation in their API communities (Caplan, Whitmore & Choy, 1989; Lee, 2006; Lee & Zhou, 2014; Zhou & Bankstom, 1998). Lee and Zhou (2014), for instance, found that adult children of Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants who did not perceive themselves as successful enough or chose to take non-traditional career paths said that they were “American at heart” or not “Vietnamese enough” (p. 50). These dynamics can be further exacerbated by essentialist perspectives and ethnic purity discourses within the API community, where adherence to some “original” culture defines ethnic authenticity (Appiah & Gutmann, 1996; Lowe, 1996; Song, 2003).

API individuals also face racialization, or the assumption that all ethnic groups or individuals within a racial group are the same (Kibria, 2002). Often, one particular ethnic group's cultures are applicable for all Asian ethnic groups (e.g. all Asian use chopsticks, eat eggrolls, or speak Japanese), or one ethnic group is taken to be synonymous with or equivalent to all other Asian ethnic groups (e.g. assuming all Asians are Chinese, or that Koreans are the same

as Chinese). As a result, APIs can disidentify with their “Asian American” identity, opting for their ethnic identity instead. Kibria (2002), for instance, found that Chinese and Korean American youth would choose to be seen as “Chinese” or “Korean” to distance themselves from being seen as “just another Asian”. Rodriguez-Operana, Mistry, & Chen (2017) found that Filipino-American youth tended to disidentify with the “Asian American” label because they felt as if their experiences were different from that of other API ethnic groups. Therefore, even though terms like “Asian American” were created to help bring together multiple Asian ethnic groups for greater political and social power (i.e. panethnicity; Espiritu, 1992), struggles with racialization can lead to movement away from panethnic identities.

While this discussion is by no means comprehensive, it does begin to illustrate how perceptions of the API community can affect self-identification for APIs at the ethnic and racial level. This disidentification can have significant consequences for the API community and individual: individuals who feel excluded or not good enough can suffer low self-esteem and depression; ethnic and panethnic efforts can be weakened by disidentification; and stereotypes are exacerbated and confirmed when only those who fit them remain visible as examples of AAPI individuals. Supporting the self-identification process of all API individuals at the ethnic and/or racial level, therefore, contributes to a stronger and more diverse API community.

Integrating SCT into Media Research

Johnson (2010) put forth a theoretical integration of concepts from SCT with media research (Fig. 2). Specifically, she argued that the concepts of *accessibility*, *norms*, *prototypes*, and *fit* can help to explain the process by which usage of ethnic media, defined as “the broadcast, print, and digital communication channels that serve a particular cultural or racial group (p. 108)”, can lead to desired outcomes for ethnic media users, such as increased self-esteem. By

providing media content that features the stories, perspectives, and issues related to a particular ethnic group, ethnic media producers and distribution structures create the context for awareness about one's ethnic identity to occur more frequently and easily-- thus, increasing the *accessibility* and salience of ethnic categories. Furthermore, she argues that ethnic media should communicate information about group norms, as well as provide more diverse prototypes of ethnic groups than mainstream media. Exposure to this diversity can minimize the effects of stereotypes and other negative representations on group members. Lastly, exposure to norms and diverse prototypes should enhance the fit of ethnic, and possibly pan-ethnic, categories. Therefore, ethnic media can increase self-categorization by increasing both accessibility and fit.

Currently, there has been little investigation of media and its relationship with self-categorization. There are a series of studies by Oh (2011, 2012, 2013) that investigated transnational media usage with Korean Americans and found that they used their proficiency with transnational media as a way to identify themselves as “authentically” and “sufficiently Korean” and as a boundary marker between “Twinkies”, or more “Americanized Koreans”, and those who are “really Korean”. In a study of second-generation Indian American adolescents, Durham (2004) found that her participants would use Bollywood media as a way to stay identified with their Indian culture; one participant, for instance, said that “the movies...make us feel more like part of an Indian community (p. 153).” However, in both studies, if and how the media content itself actually influences perceptions of the boundaries of membership, and therefore, self-categorization is not explored.

This study, therefore, builds upon these studies and Johnson's (2010) framework by looking specifically at whether and how films at an API film festival can influence APIs' perceptions of the boundaries that define ethnic and racial group membership, and, therefore,

their self-identification with their ethnic and racial groups. Though film does not fall within her definition of ethnic media, the films shown at cultural film festivals are similar to ethnic media in that they focus on the experiences, conflicts, and lives of a particular cultural group, especially compared to mainstream media (Okada, 2015). Often, these films are unsupported by the mainstream media, and therefore, are often inaccessible outside of these festivals. (Lopez, 2016; Okada, 2015; Ono & Pham, 2008). Attendees at such festivals, therefore, have a high chance of being exposed to a range of media content that could influence their self-categorization processes. It is for this reason that API attendees at an ethnic film festival were chosen as the population for this study.

[Figure 2]

Methodology

This study relied on a qualitative case study approach (Patton, 2002; Saldana, 2011) by conducting interviews with Asian American Pacific Islander (API) attendees at the San Diego Asian Film Festival (SDAFF). Taking a *phenomenological approach*, the study aimed to develop a deeper understanding of the lived experience that API attendees have of self-categorization at an ethnic film festival from their own perspectives and in their own words. This perspective is appropriate given that self-categorization is an internal individual process that is affected by subjective perspectives of oneself and API ethnic and racial groups. Therefore, while most self-categorization research takes an experimental approach, this study differs in that it aims to “flesh out the concepts (Johnson & Sink, 2015, p. 11)” by providing a richer description of the self-categorization process.

Participants

Nineteen API individuals who had attended SDAFF were interviewed. The ethnic backgrounds of the participants were as follows: 12 were Filipino, 3 were Vietnamese, 1 was Chinese, 1 was Korean, 1 was Taiwanese, and 1 was of mixed ethnic descent. In terms of age, 8 participants were in the 18-34 years old range, 10 in the 35-60 years old range, and 1 in the over 61 years old range.

Procedures

Interview participants were recruited through *convenience* and *snowball sampling* (Patton, 2002). SDAFF holds a small festival in the spring each year, called their “Spring Showcase”. During the 2018 Spring Showcase, I made verbal announcements to the audience at various different movie screenings about my study. I also reached out to personal contacts that I was aware of who had attended SDAFF in the past. Further participant were recruited when interview participants were asked to refer other individuals who might be interested in participating in the study.

Interviews were conducted in three locations, depending on the participant’s preference: in the participant’s home, on a local university campus, and at my own home. In addition, some interviews were conducted on the phone and over Skype. The interviews ranged from one to two hours, utilized a semi-structured format (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009; Patton, 2002), and were recorded on my laptop and phone for transcription purposes.

Interview Protocol

Participants were asked about their experiences at API film festivals. Some of the questions that participants were asked are:

- Please briefly describe your history and experiences with attending SDAFF.
- Why do you attend API film festivals, like SDAFF?

- How, if at all, has attending SDAFF influenced the way you think and feel about the API community, your ethnic group, and/or yourself?
- What do you see as the value of API film festivals, like SDAFF?

Analysis

Interviews were transcribed and uploaded into Dedoose, an online coding program, for analysis (for a more detailed description of this software, see Leiber & Weisner, 2003). A thematic analysis was conducted on the data using a mix of *deductive* and *inductive approaches* (Patton, 2002; Saldana, 2011), where the concepts of SCT (norms, prototypes, accessibility, fit) were used as starting points for coding and then further codes and themes were allowed to emerge from the data. To conduct this analysis, I first read all of the interviews to gain an overall, cohesive understanding of the data. Second, a coding scheme was created using the 4 categories from SCT as well as other codes that emerged from the reading. 5 interviews were coded using this coding scheme, and adjustments were made before finalizing the coding scheme. Next, all the interviews were coded according to the finalized coding scheme. The codes were applied to text chunks of varying length, as long as that portion represented a relevant discussion, and the same unit of text could apply to more than one code. Lastly, all the excerpts were reviewed, and themes were identified in response to each research question. Participant quotes that were descriptive were highlighted for use as representative quotes.

Findings

RQ1: To what extent are festival attendees being exposed to information about group norms and/or diverse prototypes?

The first research question explored whether API individuals who attended API film festivals saw films that contained information about how people within the API community

behave and diverse API characters. As Johnson (2010) argued, content like ethnic media should include information about group norms and diverse group prototypes, especially compared to mainstream media.

Information about norms. Nearly all of the participants described learning about some kind of norm, or how people in a particular group behave, for both their own ethnic group as well as others. Julie, for instance, talked about how she learned new information about Polynesian dance culture through the films, while Melissa and Cassie said they learned about different languages. Both Melissa and Julie said they go very specifically to the festival to learn about different countries and ethnic groups and their cultures. Lily, for instance, described her a film about Filipinos who were hired to be mourners at funerals:

I remember kind of being like, oh I didn't know this was a thing, I'm going to look it up later. I also asked my parents about it...and my mom was like, oh yeah, that's common in the Philippines...Sometimes [the movies] teach me something new...that I haven't read about in a textbook or any of my Asian Am classes.

For some, the films were able to help them not only learn about new information, but to recognize behaviors they had already participated in as group norms. Dee described this experience when she watched another Filipino film:

It was really little details, like the food they had at the table and I'm just like yes, you would be having rice with sausages...and...there's a part where the nanny was taking care of the kid and cleaning him up and putting powder on his t-shirt...I was like that's such a Filipino thing...you don't really think about it until you see it on screen and you're like oh yeah, that is something we do.

Her sister, Melissa, had the same experience and grappled with it, wondering “Why is it that seeing someone else do it all of a sudden brings up things you took for granted? Something about seeing it on the big screen and because you’re watching it on the outside.” Another participant, Nellie, described it as “magic”, in that “it’s...something you don’t know that you have” until the film “brings life to it.”

Participants also compared the norms shown to that of other cultural or ethnic organizations or media channels. Bianca, for instance, said that in college, she was part of a Filipino club where they did traditional dances. However, these norms seemed different from her daily life as a Filipino: “My family doesn’t go around doing [these dances] every single weekend...as great as those gestures are that’s not every day.” Dee, a Filipino woman, said she watched a film about Filipino housekeepers who participate in beauty pageants. While she had seen such pageants at cultural festivals, the film, which showed her “5 or 6 different stories versus [her] just seeing the pageant up there, [the participants] walking on stage”, helped her understand how the pageants built a “sense of community” and all the details behind them. Thus, she gained a deeper understanding of a norm she had seen before.

The content at the film festivals, therefore, were able to communicate information about group norms to participants. Seeing members of their ethnic and racial group onscreen helped participants recognize previously unidentified common cultural norms as well as learn about new information about norms. The films were compared to cultural festivals and events in their capacity to communicate about norms, especially with more relevance and detail.

Diverse prototypes. Almost all of the participants mentioned that the films at SDAFF featured a highly diverse range of API characters, especially compared to mainstream media representations; thus, API prototype diversity was perceived to be higher than that of the

mainstream media. Frank, for instance, said that the festival showed him that Asian or API films could go beyond “kung fu...or once-upon-a-time-in-China” that he sees in mainstream media, and Paula said that the festival “showed [her] a lot more diversity in the film industry that’s not being shown on the mainstream”. Paula, Melissa, and Julie all discussed how the films showed them how many different ethnic groups and countries existed in the Asian and API community. Lily also compared the film content to that in mainstream Filipino television channels (e.g. TFC, GMA): “More of the stuff I see on [those channels] is definitely more lighthearted. I do like that the film festivals tend to tackle heavier issues.”

For some participants, the diversity was important because of its complexity in perspective. Jackie, for instance, mentioned the film *Gook* (Chon, 2017), which showed the 1992 Los Angeles Riots from the perspective of two Korean American brothers. Jackie was a “little kid during that time” and she recalled seeing Korean Americans being represented only as “victimized...silent...pawns.” She appreciated that the film tried to “render Korean Americans more complex than how they’ve always been framed by the media.” To her, “dehumanization happens when you only see a person in one particular way...when we get to have a fuller range...it feels like I’m a human being, not just a stereotype.”

Sometimes, the prototypes challenged participants assumptions about APIs. Maven, for instance, described how she was used to thinking that Asians “shy away from conflict” and when she watched a documentary where APIs were discussing vulnerabilities and differences it went against her “deeply ingrained conditioning of don’t be at the center of attention or don’t complain.” Another participant, Talia, said that she saw a film about a “Pacific Islander...girl that kind of looked like a guy” who wanted to be on a boys’ dance team, rather than a girls’ one.

Talia said that she had never heard of APIs who were going through these kinds of experiences, and it “blew [her] mind.”

Many participants said that the diversity helped them see that APIs were not all the same. For instance, Lily, a Filipino woman, said that the films helped her understand heterogeneity within the API community:

It’s important to see different ways of being Filipino on screen just to remind the young folks coming up, like, your way of being Filipino is good and it’s valuable and it’s great...There are other Filipinos and their identities may not overlap with yours...but they’re no less Filipino than you...That’s something I need to be mindful of, that our lived experiences are not the same...Same thing for other folks of other ethnicities, who are Chinese, or Korean, or Japanese. Their experiences are very different from mine, but even among their own ethnicity, people have different experiences.

Other participants made similar comments: Sean, said that the films helped him recognize the “intersectionality” of APIs, and Maven said that the films helped her “recogniz[e] the variety of experiences that exist” for APIs and that “no one film can capture everything.”

The prototype diversity was often compared to that of the mainstream media. Maven, said, “We are constantly being fed generalizations about Asians” and, therefore, the diversity of films at SDAFF was necessary to break up the repetition of stereotypical representations. She asserted that the films are “not the same stories we are expecting” and that “whether we...want to be surprised or not, we need to be.” David echoed this perspective on the value of having more diverse representation in the festival as opposed to mainstream, saying that he encourages his friends and co-workers to come so that they could see be exposed to films that show that Asian people can produce and create...be creative”, unlike the mainstream representations which

reinforce that APIs are only “good at math and science”. Thus, the festival was appreciated as a place of diverse representations that counter the limited or stereotypical representations of APIs in mainstream media.

RQ2: How, if at all, does exposure to information about norms and/or diverse prototypes influence participants’ self-categorization?

The second research question addressed Johnson’s (2010) hypothesis that exposure to content, like ethnic media, should lead to enhanced accessibility, or salience and ease of retrieval, and fit, or overlap and similarity in personal and group characteristics, for an individual’s ethnic and racial identity.

Accessibility. By seeing content that focused on Asian and API stories and characters, participants began to recognize certain details of their life experiences and behaviors that were shared by others in their ethnic or racial group. As a result, several participants were activated to apply their ethnic or racial identities to their self-description in ways that they had not previously, meaning that these ethnic and racial categories became more salient and accessible.

For instance, David, a Vietnamese male who grew up in the US, often watched Chinese movies with his mother. He remembered “loving watching those” but when he left for college, he stopped doing it. For a long time, he thought about that time of this life as simply “a stage of [his] life where [he] watched these movies” and did not apply any ethnic or racial categorization to the behavior. However, when he came to the festival, the films he saw there reminded him of those that he watched growing up and because it was in the context of an API film festival, he became aware of himself as an API person:

Now that I had a chance to see [Asian films] again, I feel almost more of a depth, culturally and personally. There’s this layer now that I can tap into, where before it just

wasn't there...I just feel this deeper sense of, I don't know what it is, but there's more depth to my personality.

This quote shows how seeing the films caused David's identity as an API and Vietnamese individual to become salient, as evidenced by David's words of literally feeling as if some part of oneself that has always existed has now come into awareness enough for him to utilize as a part of his self-understanding.

Another participant, Maven, also described a visceral experience of her API identity become more salient as a result of her first exposure to a film at a different API film festival. The film, titled "The Grace Lee Project (Lee, 2005), was a "cultural documentary...all about the Asian American experience." Maven said that normally, she was used to seeing documentaries that are "narrated by this British voice and very serious or about animals" and she found it shocking to see that format applied to conversations and situations where "everyone looks like me." Similarly to David, she also had quite a personal and emotional experience in response:

I had been so used to watching films or hearing stories where none of the characters look like me or where it's not so similar to my experience that its like, oh, I can really enjoy this story from this outside view...So when it's like too close to myself, I'm like whoa, I'm not sure how to process this. Am I supposed to feel how the characters feel? What if I don't feel that way? Is that wrong of me?...I start trying to compare my own identity to the identity of the characters.

Compared to watching mainstream media content, where Maven does not think about herself as an API individual, watching this particular film where everyone was API activated her to be "more aware of [her] identity". The salience of her API identity led to a more "emotional response" compared to the usual "intellectual processing".

Participants, therefore, confirmed that being ethnic film festivals did indeed increase their access to media content that led to increased salience of their ethnic and racial identities. This increased salience was not just a cognitive process, but an emotional one, that participants described as an experience of beginning to recognize oneself as part of the API community due to seeing content that they related to on-screen.

Fit. A majority of the participants experienced a greater sense of fit with their ethnic or racial identities as a result of exposure to prototypes and norms through the films. As was mentioned earlier, some participants learned from the diversity of prototypes that there was not “one way to be” API. This understanding of heterogeneity within the API community led to the de-essentializing of API identity, which led participants who had previously felt as if their ethnic or racial identity did not match who they were to experience greater fit. Talia, a Filipino woman, for instance, often said that she received many messages from her immigrant father that she was not acting like a Filipino. She said, “I have a sister that meets what I find is the criteria for a very perfect version of a Filipino daughter...every single day I heard it from my parents, like, why can’t you be like your sister?...So I grew up with this mentality...[I’m] not supposed to be like this.” However, as a result of seeing different Filipino films, she said that the festival taught her that she can be whoever she wants to be and she’s “still going to be Filipino no matter what.” Thus, she now feels a greater sense of belonging as a result of enhanced fit with her ethnic identity.

For some, it was being exposed to prototypes that countered stereotypes of APIs. Another participant, Dee, immigrated to the U.S. from Australia when she was a child, and says that she always struggled with the “Asian American” label because she did not identify with the stereotypes attached to it. She said, “If you’re only told you can be a certain way...it can

be...suffocating.” However, seeing a variety of API characters through the films showed her the “complexities and differences people have”, which made her “realize that [she] can relate to that a little bit more.” The festival helped her to move beyond the stereotypes, which she did not identify with, and into a place where she feels more “proud to say yes, I’m Asian American.”

Cassie, an actress, expressed a similar increase in fit due to being exposed to API prototypes that, in particular, went against the model minority stereotype. She said that she used to have a hard time merging her API identity with that of being an actress because she felt like “being Asian and being an artist are mutually exclusive.” Seeing films with API characters helped her recognize that “we can be Asian and also artist and creative instead of just math, math, math.” Other participants, such as Sam and Dee, also echoed her sentiment, that seeing these APIs in the films made them feel as if being API could include creativity and a career in the arts.

Maven also experienced a greater sense of fit with her racialized identity as an API person. She often felt uncomfortable owning her identity as an API person because she felt pressured to be an “ambassador of Asian-ness” when others assumed that she should or could represent and know about all APIs. However, seeing the diversity of prototypes helped her to recognize that there was so much diversity within the API community that there was it was impossible and unreasonable to expect her to know all there is about APIs. It also helped her to recognize a sense of solidarity with other APIs, saying, “Because we are so lumped together by Caucasians, we’re always viewed as one generalized group of people...There’s power in that shared experience of being generalized.” The overlap between her experience of racialization with other APIs as well as the lifting of the expectation that to be API, one must know about all

API groups and people, led her to view her racialized identity as less of a burden and more empowering.

Some participants also said experienced greater fit as a result of expanding their ethnic or racial identities to include universal human experiences. This was a result of seeing films at the festival that were not just “cultural” films, where culture is the main focus of the API stories or characters. Instead, Maven and Cassie both said that they appreciated seeing films that showed API individuals dealing with “real problems that...can be shared by people of any color”, like being in love, experiencing friendships, travelling or having a child. It made them realize that their API identity was not “mutually exclusive” with their identities as a human, and that APIs were more than just a minority or member of a particular ethnic or racial group. As Cassie said, “We are all intersectionally human regardless of what color we are.”

Lastly, participants did experience a sense of comparative fit. Cassie, for instance, described a film she had seen about an API man who is hiding a secret relationship with someone from his family. She said that because it was an API family, there were “little things” she could pick out and relate to more than if it had been a White family. Having API characters and related details in the story made her recognize that there was “less in-between” her and these API characters compared to White characters. Maven also agreed, saying, “Part of seeing Asian films is its more relatable, more real...than if a White or Black person was going through a similar story...the impact would still be there but there’s something extra when you see, oh, it’s someone that looks like me.” Thus, participants described the films enhancing their sense of fit with APIs specifically in comparison to White people.

Discussion

This paper began with the purpose of investigating how media can support the development of ethnic and racial identity, specifically through the process of self-categorization. Overall, the findings from this study indicate that films at an API film festival can communicate significant information about group norms and provide a diverse range of prototypes, which, in turn, can influence and enhance the self-categorization of API attendees into their ethnic and racial groups. The participants reported becoming more cognizant of their membership within their ethnic and racial groups (*accessibility*) and having the boundaries of their ethnic and racial identity expanded to be more inclusive of their individual characteristics (*fit*). Thus, the study supports Johnson's (2010) argument that SCT concepts can be useful and relevant for media research, and her propositions for the ways in which media content can influence self-categorization processes.

A key takeaway from this study is that, as Johnson (2010) suggested, diversity of prototypes matters if media content is to enhance self-categorization. Though the interview questions did not ask directly about diversity in representation, nearly 90% of the participants brought up diversity on their own. Participants discussed how the narrow perceptions they held of what it means to API challenged their ability to self-categorize into their ethnic and racial identities. The diversity of prototypes within the films, however, expanded and complicated participants' perceptions of their ethnic and racial groups, leading participants to feel a greater sense of similarity between themselves and their ethnic and racial group. In particular, participants stated that there was more diversity of API characters within the films at the festival than in mainstream media. These findings underline the value of exposure to alternative, non-mainstream content, such as ethnic media (Abrams & Giles, 2009; Ramasubramanian et al., 2017; Sullivan & Platenburg, 2017). Therefore, exposure to media content that challenges and

expands these boundaries has the potential to be an effective intervention for supporting ethnic and racial identity development through enhancing self-categorization.

Accessibility was also influenced through the films. This may be because APIs who are motivated to attend or seek out an API film festival are likely to already be aware of their ethnic and racial categories, and thus, those categories are already accessible. Nevertheless, there were some interesting findings about the capacity for film to increase accessibility. First, there was a connection between the communication of norms and accessibility. Participants mentioned recognizing certain personal behaviors and experiences they had to be a norm for their ethnic or racial group when it appeared in the films, which made these categories now accessible and salient for those situations and practices.

Participants also said that there was a certain “magic” about film which made these small details recognizable. These findings support arguments that film is a particularly effective medium for increasing awareness and learning about culture (Edmonds, 2013; Jordan & Bonds, 2015; Pierce, 2018; Rorrer & Furr, 2009; Ross, Kumagai, Joiner & Lypson, 2011). This experience may be a result of certain media techniques; Green, Brock and Kaufman (2004), for instance, argue that stylistic techniques in visual media can “defamiliarize” our experiences, “lead[ing] readers to see some aspect of the human experience with fresh eyes” (p. 321). In film studies, scholars have discussed the concepts of *photogénie* and *defamiliarization* in film studies, which describe how an everyday occurrence or object that is taken for granted or unnoticed, when captured on film or video, is suddenly transformed and highlighted so that the spectator sees it anew (Epstein, 1978; Willeman, 1994). Future studies could investigate the nature of this experience further as well as how certain techniques and qualities of visual media lend themselves to this experience.

The study does have its limitations. The sample was largely Filipino so the results may not be generalizable to members of other ethnic groups. Furthermore, the data is self-reported. Participants are limited by what their own awareness and their own biases or assumptions. It is difficult to account for how much participants were influenced by events or experiences outside of the films and the accuracy of their own explanations for their experiences. Additionally, those who are more engaged with their ethnic and racial identities may be more likely to both attend the festival and volunteer for the interview. They may be more easily influenced by the film content. Thus, the influence of exposure to films on the self-categorization processes of an individual who is less engaged with or interested in their ethnic and racial identity may differ. Lastly, as a first-generation Chinese American who has attended SDAFF, I have in-depth knowledge about my own experience as an attendee and its influence on my identity development. Having an insider status allowed me to use relevant language and build trust with my participants. However, it is possible that my own experiences biased my interviewing and interpretation of data. To mitigate against these possible biases, I used analytic memos and continual data checking against SCT literature.

Conclusion

Overall, the study highlights the importance of researching how media content can support ethnic and racial identity development. Much has been said about the harm that mainstream media representation can do for the self-esteem and pride of minorities (for a review, see Behm-Morawitz & Ortiz, 2013), but there continues to be less focus on the positive aspect of media representation of ethnic and racial minorities. This is problematic because it limits the ability for research to have an impact on the real world of media representation. Without an understanding of what media creators and producers *should* make, there is no way to identify and

move towards the creation of such representations. As Hall (1996) argues, representations do not only affect our identities by informing us about “who we are”, but they are also vehicles that we can use as a channel to express our vision of “what we might become”, and therefore, actively play a role in shaping the greater world’s perception of who we are.

There are many ways to build upon the findings of this particular study in future research. Experimental studies on the effects of exposure to diverse representation on self-categorization and increased accessibility from exposure to content related to norms could clarify the strength and direction of these relationships. Furthermore, this study aligns with literature on how individuals can turn to media as a resource to affirm their social identities (Abrams, 2010; Abrams & Giles, 2007, 2009; Harwood, 1998). Studies could also compare media content to other forms of communication to determine film’s particular quality as a medium of information. Investigating motivations to seek out and use media to increase self-categorization, especially for those who feel excluded or rejected from their ethnic and racial identities, and self-esteem could be a fruitful path of research that contributes further to the use of media as an intervention to support ERI development. In general, it would be helpful to move beyond looking at correlational studies with general ethnic identity measures such as ethnic pride (e.g. Ramasubramanian et al., 2017) and to begin to investigate specific moderators through which such outcomes are achieved.

This study also suggests the value in investigating content beyond television and mainstream film, such as film festivals. Usually, media and communication studies tend to focus on television, mainstream movies, and the Internet, but the world of independent cinema remains unacknowledged. Results like the importance of diverse and complex representation might not have emerged as strongly without the study having taken place within the context of a film

festival, which is built for showcasing a variety of the most emergent content. Given that film festivals are known to be platforms for content that counters the hegemonic Hollywood perspective (Bennett & Woodward, 2014; Wong, 2011), which tends to perpetuate a White racial frame (Feagin, 2017; Ortega & Feagin, 2017), they are rich sites for research that wants to understand how representation can be supportive of the identities of marginalized groups. Research needs to begin to recognize, document, and study the efforts of such spaces.

In conclusion, this study provides evidence for the potential of media content with diverse prototypes and communication about group norms to enhance self-categorization for APIs. Given that disidentification can have significant consequences for the API community and individual, supporting the self-identification process of all API individuals at the ethnic and/or racial level, therefore, contributes to a stronger and more diverse API community. Future research, and practice, therefore, should aim to both investigate and create media representations that can support the development of ethnic and racial identity for minorities.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, J.R. (2010). Asian American television activity: Is it related to outgroup vitality? *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34, 541-550.
- Abrams, J.R., & Giles, H. (2007). Ethnic Identity Gratifications Selection and Avoidance by African Americans: A Group Vitality and Social Identity Gratifications Perspective. *Media Psychology*, 9, 115-134.
- Abrams, J.R., & Giles, H. (2009). Hispanic Television Activity: Is It Related to Vitality Perceptions? *Communication Research Reports*, 26(3), 247-252.
- Appiah, K.W., & Gutmann, A. (1996). *Color consciousness*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Behm-Morowitz, E., & Ortiz, M. (2013). Race, Ethnicity, and the Media. In K. Dill (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Media Psychology* (pp. 252-266). USA: Oxford University Press.
- Bennett, A., & Woodward, I. (2016). Festival spaces, identity, experience and belonging. In A. Bennett, J. Taylor, & I. Woodward (Eds.), *The festivalization of culture* (pp. 25-40). Routledge.
- Blanz, M. (1999). Accessibility and fit as determinants of the salience of social categorizations. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 29, 43-74.
- Bruner, J.S. (1957). On perceptual readiness. *Psychological Review*, 64, 123-152.
- Caplan, N., Whitmore, J., & Choy, M. (1989). *The boat people and achievement in America: A study of economic and educational success*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Chang, T. & Kwan, K. K. (2009). Asian American Racial and Ethnic Identity. In N. Tewari & A. Alvarez (Eds.), *Asian American Psychology: Current Perspectives* (pp. 113-133). New York: Psychology Press.

- Chon, J. (Director). (2017). *Gook* [Motion picture]. USA: Samuel Goldwyn Films.
- Durham, M. G. (2004). Constructing the “new ethnicities”: Media, sexuality, and diaspora identity in the lives of South Asian immigrant girls. *Critical studies in media communication*, 21(2), 140-161.
- Edmonds, M. L. (2013). The Use of Film in Teaching Concepts of Qualitative Inquiry to Graduate Nursing Students. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 52(3), 179-180.
- Epstein, J. (1978). For a New Avant-Garde. In P. A. Sitney (Ed.), *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism* (pp. 26-30). New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Espiritu, Y. L. (1992). *Asian American panethnicity: bridging institutions and identities*. USA: Temple University Press.
- Feagin, J. R. (2013). *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fryberg, S. A., & Townsend, S. M. (2008). The psychology of invisibility. In G. Adams, M. Biernat, N.R. Branscombe, C.S. Crandall & L.S. Wrightsman (Eds.), *Commemorating Brown: The social psychology of racism and discrimination* (pp. 173–193). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Good, J. J., Chavez, G. F., & Sanchez, D. T. (2010). Sources of Self-Categorization as Minority for Mixed-Race Individuals: Implications for Affirmative Action Entitlement. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 16(4), 453-460.
- Green, M. C., Brock, T. C., & Kaufman, G. F. (2004). Understanding media enjoyment: The role of transportation into narrative worlds. *Communication Theory*, 14(4), 311-327.
- Hall, S. (1996). Who needs identity?. *Questions of cultural identity*, 16(2), 1-17.

- Harwood, J. (1999). Age identification, social identity gratifications, and television viewing. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 43, 123–136.
- Hogg, M. A., & Reid, S. A. (2006). Social categorization and human communication: The social identity perspective and group norms. *Communication Theory*, 16, 7–30.
- Howard, J. A. (2000). Social psychology of identities. *Annual review of sociology*, 26(1), 367–393.
- Jeffres, L. W. (2000). Ethnicity and ethnic media use: A panel study. *Communication Research*, 27, 496–535.
- Johnson, M. A. (2000). How ethnic are U.S. ethnic media: The case of Latina magazines. *Mass Communication & Society*, 3, 229–243.
- Johnson, M. A., & Sink, W. (2015). Ethnic Museum Websites, Cultural Projection, and Self-Categorization Concepts. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 26(2), 206–225.
- Jordan, D., & Bonds, T. (2015). The HeLa documentary film: An engaging writing and culturally relevant assignment on cell division and ethics for nonscience majors. *Journal of microbiology & biology education*, 16(1), 77–78.
- Kibria, N. (2002). *Becoming Asian American: Second-generation Chinese and Korean American Identities*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Kiang, L., Huynh, V., Cheah, C.S.L., & Wang, Y. (2017). Moving Beyond the Model Minority. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 8(1), 1–6.
- Kinket, B., & Verkuyten, M. (1997). Levels of ethnic self-identification and social context. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 338–354.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Sage.

- Lee, G. (Director). (2005). *The Grace Lee Project* [Motion picture]. USA: Women Make Movies.
- Lee, S. J. (1998). *Unraveling the "model minority" stereotype: Listening to Asian American youth*. Teachers College Press.
- Lee, S. J. (2006). Additional complexities: Social class, ethnicity, generation, and gender in Asian American student experiences. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 9(1), 17-28.
- Lee, J., & Zhou, M. (2014). The success frame and achievement paradox: The costs and consequences for Asian Americans. *Race and Social Problems*, 6(1), 38-55.
- Lopez, L. K. (2016). *Asian American Media Activism: Fighting for Cultural Citizenship*. USA: New York University Press.
- Lowe, L. (1996). *Immigrant Acts*. USA: Duke University Press.
- Oh, D. C. (2011). Viewing identity: Second-generation Korean American ethnic identification and the reception of Korean transnational films. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 4(2), 184-204.
- Oh, D. C. (2012). Mediating the boundaries: Second-generation Korean American adolescents' use of transnational Korean media as markers of social boundaries. *International Communication Gazette*, 74(3), 258-276.
- Oh, D. (2013). Biased Optimism, Media, and Asian American Identity. In D. Lasorsa, and A. Rodriguez (Eds.), *Identity and Communication: New Agendas in Communication* (pp. 22-42). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Okada, J. (2015). *Making Asian American Film and Video: History, Institutions, Movements*. Rutgers University Press.
- Ono, K. A., & Pham, V. N. (2009). *Asian Americans and the Media*. USA: Polity Press.

- Ortega, F. J., & Feagin, J. R. (2017). Framing: The Undying White Racial Frame. In C. Campbell (Ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Media and Race* (pp. 19-30). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Oyserman, D., & Sakamoto, I. (1997). Being Asian American: Identity, cultural constructs, and stereotype perception. *The Journal of applied behavioral science*, 33(4), 435-453.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. USA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: review of research. *Psychological bulletin*, 108(3), 1-56.
- Phinney, J. S., & Ong, A. D. (2007). Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions. *Journal of counseling Psychology*, 54(3), 271-281.
- Pierce, M. (2018) Visual Storytelling in Native American High-Density Schools. *Art Education*, 71(5), 34-41.
- Ramasubramanian, S., Doshi, M. J., & Saleem, M. (2017). Mainstream versus Ethnic Media: How They Shape Ethnic Pride and Self-Esteem Among Ethnic Minority Audiences. *International Journal of Communication*, 11, 1879-1899.
- Rivas-Drake, D., Seaton, E.K., Markstrom, C., Quintana, S., Syed, M., Lee, R.M., ...Yip, T. (2014). Ethnic and racial identity in adolescence: Implications for psychosocial, academic, and health outcomes. *Child Development*, 85, 40-57.
- Rodriguez-Operana, V. C., Mistry, R. S., & Chen, Y. J. (2017). Disentangling the myth: Social relationships and Filipino American adolescents' experiences of the model minority stereotype. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 8(1), 56.

- Rorrer, A. S., & Furr, S. (2009). Using film as a multicultural awareness tool in teacher education. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 11(3), 162-168.
- Ross, P. T., Kumagai, A. K., Joiner, T. A., & Lypson, M. L. (2011). Using film in multicultural and social justice faculty development: Scenes from Crash. *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*, 31(3), 188-195.
- Saldana, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research*. OUP USA.
- Smith, S. L., Choueiti, M., & Pieper, K. (2017). *Inequality in 900 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT, and Disability from 2007-2016*. Retrieved from http://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/Dr_Stacy_L_Smith-Inequality_in_900_Popular_Films.pdf.
- Song, M. (2003). *Choosing ethnic identity*. Polity Press.
- Sullivan, J.M., & Platenburg, G.N. (2017). From Black-ish to Blackness: An Analysis of Black Information Sources' Influence on Black Identity Development. *Journal of Black Studies*, 48(3), 215-234.
- Tajfel, H. (1978). *Differentiation between social groups: studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*. London: Academic Press.
- Thompson, T. L., & Kiang, L. (2010). The model minority stereotype: Adolescent experiences and links with adjustment. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 1, 119–128.
- Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Basil Blackwell.
- Umaña-Taylor, A. J. (2004). Ethnic identity and self-esteem: Examining the role of social context. *Journal of Adolescence*, 27, 139–146.

- Willemsen, P. (1994). *Looks and frictions: Essays in cultural studies and film theory*. British Film Institute.
- Wong, C. H. Y. (2011). *Film festivals: Culture, people, and power on the global screen*. Rutgers University Press.
- Yip, T. (2014). Ethnic identity in everyday life: The influence of identity development status. *Child Development*, 85(1), 205–219.
- Zhou, M., & Bankston, C. (1998). *Growing up American: How Vietnamese children adapt to life in the United States*. Russell Sage Foundation.

TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1. Normative and Comparative Fit.

Figure 2. Self-Categorization Concepts in Ethnic Media Research (Johnson, 2010).

CHAPTER THREE

Abstract

Despite the fact that scholars have stated the importance of festivals as sites for identity exploration, engagement, and formation, studies on identity-related motivations for festival attendance are lacking. The purpose of this study was to identify ethnic and racial identity-related motivations for Asian Pacific Islander (API) individuals for attending API film festivals. The study also explored relationships between identity-related motivations and audience characteristics, film festival engagement, and film preference. Using an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach, interviews were conducted with 19 API individuals who had attended at least 1 API film festival and thematically analyzed. The findings from the thematic analysis were used to generate items on a survey; an exploratory factor analysis and correlational analyses were conducted on the survey data (N=114). Results revealed 4 types of identity-related motivations that were distinct from general entertainment motivations: identity development, supporting the API community, accessing non-mainstream content, and being in a mostly API audience. In addition, individuals who identified strongly with hybrid ethnic and racial identity terms were significantly more likely to be motivated by identity to attend API film festivals. The main contribution of this study is to provide evidence of the need to study festival motivations beyond tourism by exploring identity-related motivations. Furthermore, this study highlights the potential of film festivals to serve as resources for identity.

SEEKING MIRRORS: ETHNIC AND RACIAL IDENTITY-RELATED MOTIVATIONS FOR ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER ATTENDEES AT CULTURAL FILM FESTIVALS

Introduction

Festivals are some of the fastest growing attractions in the global leisure industry (Li & Petrick, 2006), and there has been a corresponding increase in research on festivals. In particular, both scholars and practitioners alike have been interested in understanding why people attend festivals. Currently, studies into the motivation behind festival attendance have drawn heavily upon the field of tourism studies (Getz, 2010; Li & Petrick, 2006; Maeng, Jang, & Li, 2016). Given that festivals can provide a diverse range of experiences and are often intricately linked with the local community, scholars have argued that there is a need to expand our theory and knowledge of motivations behind festival attendance beyond those related to tourism, travel, and leisure (Getz, 2010; Maeng et al., 2016).

In particular, research into motivations related to psychological and sociocultural needs, which can be relevant for both tourists and locals, has been called for (Getz, 2010; Maeng et al., 2016). Since festivals have often been described as sites that provide access to experiences and content related to a particular culture, topic, or group, they are crucial spaces that connect people to a rich array of resources for identity affirmation and construction (Bennett & Woodward, 2014; Getz, 2010; Gamson, 1996). Thus, social and cultural identity needs have traditionally been discussed as reasons for both holding and attending festivals (Getz, 2010). Empirical studies on motivations for festival attendance have generally ignored these dimensions, however.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to address this gap by investigating motivations related to ethnic and racial identity for Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) attendees at an AAPI film festival. Thus, this study will explore the following questions:

- 1) What ethnic and racial identity-related motivations exist for AAPI attendees at an AAPI film festival?
- 2) What is the relationship between ethnic and racial identity characteristics and identity-related motivations?
- 3) What is the relationship between identity-related motivations and film festival engagement?

The paper describes the link between festival and identity, followed by a review of the literature on motivations for festival attendance. Next, methodology and findings are outlined, followed by a discussion of the findings. Lastly, the implications of the study for future research and practice will be presented.

Identity Exploration and Formation at Festivals

The question of “Who am I?” is central to the human experience, and the desire to answer this question in order to feel a sense of certainty about who we are and our place in the world is a fundamental human need (Hogg & Terry, 2000). According to social identity theory, for instance, we derive a significant portion of our self-esteem and self-concept from our knowledge of our membership in different groups, and so we are motivated to achieve a sense of pride and belonging to those groups (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). *Festivals*, which are temporary events that bring people together to engage in experiences, events, and activities related to a specific interest, lifestyle, or topic (Bennett & Woodward, 2014; Getz, 2010), have the potential to connect people with the content, community, and space that meets these identity needs.

Essentially “themed, public celebrations” (Getz, 2005, p. 21), festivals provide groups with a chance to gain a sense of pride and importance for their groups. Bramadat (2001), for

instance, described ethno-cultural festivals as spectacles that aim to capture the attention of the public and focus it on a community, and Del Barrio, Devesa, and Herrero (2012) call cultural festivals a “major expression of cultural heritage” (p. 237). In studying festivals held for small rural communities, Jaeger and Mykletun (2013) and De Bres and Davis (2001) found that they created a sense of pride, self-esteem, and cohesion for these communities that otherwise felt insignificant by attracting visitors and publicly celebrating the community’s culture and people. Kim (2005) argued that film festivals can remedy the pain of cultural injustice through invisibility for marginalized groups by providing public recognition that acknowledges, values, and affirms those groups. Festivals, therefore, can serve as important places for individuals to affirm their group identities and “articulate outward” (Jaeger & Mykletun, 2013, p. 224).

Festivals also provide information about who is included in, or the boundaries of, a group, thus influencing an individual’s sense of belonging and identity. Through the content and experiences that are chosen to be part of a festival, therefore, festivals are essentially engaging in *identity framing*, or the choosing of what aspects of a group’s identity should be highlighted and made visible (Gamson, 1996). With their wide range of programming and events, festivals are able to represent many facets of a group, including the marginalized and controversial ones. Esman (1982) examined how Cajun festivals in Louisiana represented the internal conflicts and differences in conceptualizations of identity for Cajuns, yet at the same time increased a sense of solidarity by providing a “ritualized celebration of unity, of the common heritage shared by all members (p. 199)”. Festivals, therefore, are particularly adept at representing and addressing the identity needs of complex and heterogeneous groups.

Through participation and attendance at festivals, people also have the chance to learn about and express their ethnic or racial identity. Bankston III and Henry (2000) also looked at the

Cajun festivals and found that they served as a vehicle for ethnic expression, especially for the reproduction of an idealized primordial and historic Cajun history through modern means.

Similarly, Brettell and Nibbs (2009) documented how second-generation South Asians participated in a college Diwali festival as way to express and develop their hybrid South Asian and American identities. Owusu-Frempong (2005) argued that African and African-American festivals are important vehicles for the construction and continuation of African identity because their reproduction of rituals and cultural knowledge provides an entertaining and engaging way for youth to connect with and learn about African culture.

Film festivals, in particular, have played an important role in elevating the identity of marginalized groups. Since they are not held to mainstream standards, film festivals can show a wider range of films than Hollywood, thus making them important challengers to the lack of diversity within and hegemony of Hollywood (Bennett & Woodward, 2014). As Wong (2016) states, the films at these festivals “reveal many works that tackle difficult issues...film festivals do not create social issues, but in selection, screening, and reception, they galvanize debates (p. 87).” For instance, LGBT film festivals facilitated the discussion and recognition of LGBT issues before the general public was able to (Kim, 1996). Thus, they were “crucial sites for changing the way people see what lesbian and gay identity...is” (Gamson, 1996, p. 256). In addition, film is a low-risk, immersive, and immediate way to explore identity through visual media that transports you directly into a different experience (Bennett & Woodward, 2014).

For the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, there is a long history of representational struggles. AAPI characters tend to be portrayed as either robotic doctors or oversexualized and passive females (Mastro et al., 2017; Ono & Pham, 2009), or have faced the continual practice of *whitewashing*, where characters of color are played by White actors (Sim,

2017). For instance, Emma Stone was recently cast as “Allison Ng”, a mixed-race API character in Cameron Crowe’s (2015) *Aloha*, and Scarlett Johansson was cast in *Ghost in the Shell* (Sanders, 2017) as a character that was originally written to be Japanese. Lastly, the AAPI community can often face *racialization*, where all groups within a particular racial category are assumed to be the same, such as all API people are assumed to have the same culture as Chinese people, and the distinction between groups is, therefore, lost, ignored, or simplified (Espiritu, 1992; Kibria, 2002).

AAPI film festivals have often served as platforms to counter these types of limiting representations, and offer content and resources for the construction and affirmation of AAPI identity. Beginning with the Asian American International Film Festival (AAIFF), which was held in New York in 1978, AAPI film festivals were the first places to showcase films by AAPI filmmakers (Okada, 2015). The festivals highlighted issues relevant to the AAPI community, offered counter-stereotypical images, and told stories that were ignored in dominant society. They also provided the space for filmmakers to experiment with different and new ways of representing AAPI characters and narratives. Thus, the films shown at these festivals both represented and developed the discourse around AAPI identity. To this day, AAPI film festivals continue to be crucial platforms for AAPI films that might otherwise be unavailable to audiences (Lopez, 2016; Okada, 2015; Ono & Pham, 2008). Furthermore, many of the festivals show internal Asian films, adding a diasporic and transnational element to AAPI identity. As Ono and Pham (2009) state, AAPI film festivals and the content they showcase “illustrate the complexity of the Asian American experience,...help create new places for production and distribution, and...change the ideological field by introducing new symbols and metaphors (p. 121).”

Motivations for Festival Attendance

Motivations are “internal factor[s] that arouse, direct, and integrate a person’s behavior” (Iso-Ahola, 1980, as cited in Crompton & McKay, 1997, p. 425). Understanding motivations for festival attendance has been a key issue within festival studies because knowledge in this area is critical to designing better festivals (Crompton & McKay, 1997). Maeng et al. (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of 46 studies on motivations for festival attendance and identified 5 major categories of motivations across the literature: 1) *socialization*, which is related to the desire to enjoy festivals with friends or family and to create new relationships; 2) *excitement*, or the desire to experience something stimulating, curious, and unique; 3) *escape*, defined as the desire to break away from routines and the mundane; 4) *learning*, or the desire to gain new knowledge and develop skills; and 5) *shopping*, such as purchasing wine, food, and souvenirs.

Scholars have noticed that festival motivation studies have been exclusively conducted from a tourism perspective, which examines festivals as tourist attractions that can be used to generate economic development and branding for a particular place (Getz, 2010; Li & Petrick, 2006; Maeng et al., 2016.). For instance, many studies use Iso-Ahola’s (1980) *seeking and escaping theory*, which sees tourism as motivated by the desire to escape routine and seek out psychological rewards (Getz, 2010; Li & Petrick, 2006). Both Kim, Borges, and Chon (2006) and Bàez and Devesa’s (2014) studies on motivations for attending film festivals relied upon traditional tourism motivations.

However, this continued reliance on tourism perspectives limits the field of festival studies for two major reasons. First, festivals are intricately tied to the local community and its members (Maeng et al., 2016). They can often be generated by and created to address local community needs, or focus on the culture of that community (Getz, 1997; 2007). Indeed, studies have often found that festivals are important for strengthening the identity and bonds of a local

community (De Bres & Davis, 2001; Derrett, 2003; Elias-Vavotsis, 2006). Thus, looking only at tourism-related motivations is a skewed and limited perspective that can lead to ineffective decision-making and festival designs as well as inaccurate knowledge about the behavior and needs of festival attendees (Maeng et al., 2016).

Second, the classical discourse about festivals has examined the roles and meanings that festivals have within society and culture. Scholars have argued, therefore, that there are important social and psychological reasons for why people attend festivals and that these are distinct from tourism motivations (Getz, 2010; Maeng et al., 2016). Research on motivations, therefore, should seek to bridge the gap between theory and research by acknowledging and investigating these dimensions of festival motivation (Getz, 2010; Maeng et al., 2016). In particular, Getz (2010) calls for research on motivations related to “cultural needs or social identification” (p. 9) by investigating specific cultures or groups.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to address the need for research on motivations for festival attendance beyond tourism, especially with cultural and social identity needs, by generating and exploring ethnic and racial identity-related motivations for AAPI attendees at an AAPI film festival. In response to Getz’s (2010) call for integrating qualitative methods, this study takes a mixed-methods approach by first discovering possible ethnic and racial-identity related motivations through interviews and then using quantitative methods to determine their distinct dimensions as well as relationships with festival engagement and attendee characteristics. Furthermore, motivations for attending film and other arts festivals (e.g. music, dance, visual arts) have been under-researched compared to other types of festivals (Bàez & Devesa, 2014). As Kim and colleagues (2006) concluded, attendees’ motivations are greatly influenced by the type of festival; therefore, further investigation into motivations for different

types of festivals is needed. This study, therefore, contributes to the building of knowledge and theory specific to festivals by expanding our understanding of why people attend festivals and the important role/function they play in society.

Methodology

This study utilizes an *exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach*, where qualitative data is collected first, and the findings from the qualitative data are used to inform the quantitative data collection in the second phase of research (Creswell, 2014). Interview data was collected first, and then used to inform the development of a survey for quantitative data collection.

Participants. Attendees at 9 North American AAPI film festivals were surveyed (N=176). Since this study was focused on ethnic and racial identity-related motivations for attendance, only responses from AAPI individuals (as defined in Phase I) were included. Consequently, responses from individuals who identified as non-AAPI were dropped, though 2 participants who identified as bi/multiracial with an AAPI background were included. Answers from incomplete surveys were also dropped. As a result, a total of 62 answers were dropped, leaving a final total of 114 AAPI participants whose ages ranged from 20 to 71 years old, with the mean age being 42 (SD=11.98). 32% were men (n=36), 67% were women (n=76) and 2% either identified as non-binary or preferred not to answer (n=2). A majority of the participants were born in the U.S. (n=71; 62%).

[Table 1]

Procedure. Survey participants were recruited through *convenience* and *snowball sampling* (Patton, 2002). Various AAPI film festivals were asked if they would be willing to share the survey online using a link through their mailing list or on social media. Four festivals

agreed to share the survey, and the author also reached out to personal contacts who had attended AAPI festivals, and asked them to complete the survey and to share it with others. SDAFF was the only festival that agreed to send the survey through their mailing list, while the other festivals shared it on social media; as a result, the majority of participants had attended SDAFF.

Survey participants were informed that the survey would help provide feedback for festival improvement, and that all participation was voluntary and answers would be kept confidential and anonymous. Prior to participating in the survey, all participants were required to provide consent. Participants were also alerted to the chance to win a \$100 Amazon gift card or an all-access pass to SDAFF's spring festival as an incentive for participation. At the end of the survey, they were directed to a link where they could enter into the raffle for this prize.

Instrument. Nineteen AAPI individuals who had attended at least 1 AAPI film festival were interviewed. Then, an inductive approach was used to identify quotes, codes, and themes from the interviews that were used to create a survey that measured possible identity-related motivations. The survey was comprised of 4 sections: a) demographics; b) film festival attendance and engagement; c) ethnic and racial identity development; and d) motivations for attending. There were 63 questions in total and the survey took about 10-15 minutes to complete.

Demographics. Participants were asked about age, income, gender, geographic location, race, ethnicity, and generational status. Generational status was measured by asking first, if the participant was born in the U.S.; if participants were not born in the U.S., they were asked if they moved to the U.S. at age 12 or younger, or after age 12.

Film festival engagement and film type preference. Participants were asked how many times they have gone to an AAPI film festival ($M=7.2$; $SD=.67$) and how many films on average they watch each time they go to one ($M=4.4$; $SD=4.72$). Participants were also asked to list

which AAPI film festivals they've attended, and place their film type preference on a range from 0 (*prefer to watch films about people from their specific ethnic group*) to 100 (*prefer to watch films about people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds*). A higher score, therefore, indicated a preference for watching films about people from a range of ethnic groups whereas a lower score indicated a stronger preference for films specifically about people from one's own ethnic group.

Ethnic and racial identity. Phinney and Ong's (2007) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R) was used to measure the level of ethnic and racial identity development ($M=4.18$; $SD=.67$). The MEIM-R is the short form of one of the most widely used measures of ethnic identity development and has shown strong reliability and validity (Phinney & Ong, 2007; Yoon, 2011). The 6-item scale contains a 3-item subscale measuring ethnic identity exploration (e.g. "I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.") and a 3-item subscale measuring level of commitment to one's ethnic identity (e.g. "I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group."). Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). All responses were averaged to generate participants' ethnic and racial identity (ERI) score, where higher scores represented greater ethnic and racial identity development. Cronbach's alpha for the Exploration subscale was .86, .87 for the Commitment subscale, and .90 for the overall scale, which is consistent with previous research (Phinney & Ong, 2007; Yoon, 2011).

Participants were also asked about how many AAPI ethnic studies courses they had taken before. They could choose a number from the range of 0 to 15, or more than 15. Since learning about one's ethnic and racial group is part of ethnic and racial identity development (Phinney &

Ong, 2007), taking ethnic studies courses may further indicate ethnic and racial identity development.

Lastly, participants were also asked about their identification with various different Asian and AAPI-related labels. They were given 6 choices of ways to identify: ethnicity only (e.g. “Japanese”), hybridized ethnic American identities (e.g. “Japanese American”), “Asian”, “Asian American” (AA), “Asian American Pacific Islander” (AAPI), and “American”. Participants were asked to rate the strength of their identification with each of these 5 labels on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly do not identify with*) to 5 (*strongly identify with*).

This question was chosen as a possible indicator of each individual’s ethnic and racial identity structure due to the complex history of ethnic and racial terms within the AAPI community. In general, while ethnic and racial minorities may be classified into a particular group by society or government structures, that does not automatically translate into a sense of personal identification with that group (Chang & Kwan, 2009; Kinket & Verkuyten, 1997; Phinney, 1990; Song, 2003). Especially for minorities who look physically different from what the dominant group is assumed to look like, categories, such as “Asian”, can be externally imposed labels that the individuals themselves may or may not actually personally identify with. Studies have found that AAPI individuals who do not identify with stereotypes of Asians being highly successful or only good at math and science can disidentify with their ethnic or racial identity, choosing instead to call themselves “American at heart” (Lee & Zhou, 2014, p. 50). Also, many have argued that the term “Asian American” is primarily related to East Asians (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean), and renders invisible and erases other ethnic groups, such as the Filipino population. Filipino youth, therefore, can sometimes identify stronger with the

“Filipino”, “Filipino American” or “Pacific Islander” than “Asian American” (Rodriguez-Operana, Mistry, & Chen, 2017). Thus, identity and choice of ethnic or racial terms are related.

Motivations for attending. This section consisted of 38 items measuring different kinds of motivations. The questions all began with the stem “I go to Asian American (AA) or Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) film festivals because...”. The first section consisted of 5 questions about general entertainment-related motivations (“I like watching movies in general.” “I like film festivals in general.”). Then, 32 items that were created using the themes from the interviews asked about various ethnic and racial identity-related motivations (“I want to see films that reveal different aspects of AAPI culture.” “I want to know that other AAPI people have had similar experiences as me.” “I want to feel like AAPI culture matters.” “I want to be connected to the AAPI community.” “I want to know what’s possible for AAPI people.”). Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach’s alpha for the 38 items was .77.

Analysis. Demographic and identity characteristics of the participants were analyzed using descriptive statistics. In order to achieve the goal of this study, which was to identify dimensions of identity-related motivations, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the 38 motivation items in the survey using a principal components analysis with varimax rotation. All factors with eigenvalues less than 1.00, two items or less, and items that had loadings onto more than one factor (defined as having a loading of .4 or greater on two or more factors). The factors were also evaluated and adjusted based on face validity. New variables were created out of the final 5 factors and used in a series of correlational analyses and analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests to examine the relationship between motivation factors and festival attendance and engagement.

Results

RQ1: What ethnic and racial identity-related motivations exist for AAPI attendees at an AAPI film festival?

The EFA resulted in 4 identity-related factors, which together explained 65.7% of the variance (Table 2): motivation for *identity development* (factor 1; $M=5.9$; $SD=1.00$), to *support the AAPI community* (factor 2; $M=6.2$; $SD=.81$), for *access to non-mainstream content* (factor 3; $M=6.3$; $SD=.77$), and for *AAPI audiences* (factor 4; $M=5.0$; $SD=1.20$). The general *entertainment/escape* items also resulted in a separate factor (factor 5; $M=6.3$; $SD=.82$). Identity development was the largest motivation factor, composed of 17 items and explaining 44.5% of the variance, and entertainment/escape was second, comprised of the 5 items and explaining 9.2% of the variance. Internal consistency reliability estimates were high, with Cronbach's alpha for each factor ranging from .97 to .73. The composite reliability of all the identity-related motivations was .97.

To examine relationships between the factors, zero-order Pearson's correlations were conducted. The data presented in Table 3 indicates that there were significant positive relationships between all of the identity-related motivations. The motivation for identity development was strongly related with all of the other motivations, especially access to non-mainstream content ($r=.77$, $p<.01$). The weakest relationships between the identity-related motivations were between audience composition with support ($r=.44$, $p<.01$) and access ($r=.45$, $p<.01$). There were no significant relationship between the entertainment motivation and any of the identity-related motivations.

[Table 2]

[Table 3]

RQ2: What is the relationship between ethnic and racial identity characteristics and identity-related motivations?

The results from an ANOVA comparing motivation factors by ethnic (East, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander, South Asian & other), generational, and gender subgroups are presented in Table 4. No significant differences were found across any of the groups. The results from a correlational analysis of the relationship between the 4 identity-related motivation factors and age, income, number of ethnic studies courses taken and ERI scores are shown in Table 4. Table 5 shows that ERI score was significantly correlated with affirmation ($r = .28, p < .01$), support ($r = .21, p < .05$) and audience composition ($r = .21, p < .05$). Overall score on the identity-related motivations was also related to ERI score ($r = .27, p < .01$). Age, income, and number of ethnic studies courses were not related to any of the motivation factors.

Lastly, the results from a correlational analysis of the relationship between the strength of identification with various ethnic and racial identity labels and identity-related motivation factors are presented in Table 6. Strong identification with racial/panethnic labels (“Asian American”, “Asian American Pacific Islander”) was correlated positively with all of the identity-related motivation factors as well as the overall score, and identification with hybridized labels had significant relationships with all of the factors, except for audience composition, as well as the overall score. Identification with ethnicity only labels showed a significant negative relationship with access ($r = -.21, p < .05$) and overall score ($r = -.20, p < .05$). “American” had a significant relationship with access only ($r = .22, p < .05$), and “Asian” showed no correlation with any of the factors. Across the factors, access showed significant correlation with the most labels (all except “Asian”). Audience composition had the least number of significant relationships with labels; it

was most strongly correlated with the racialized ($r = .21, p < .05$) and panethnic ($r = .26, p < .01$) identities.

[Table 4]

[Table 5]

[Table 6]

RQ3: What is the relationship between identity-related motivations and film festival engagement?

Table 7 shows the results of a correlational analysis of the relationship between motivation factors and festival engagement. No significant correlations were found between the motivation factors, including entertainment/escape, and times attending an AAPI film festival, average number of films watched per festival, or film type preference. Interestingly, strength of identification with particular ethnic and racial identity labels revealed a few significant correlations (Table 8). Identification with “Asian American Pacific Islander” was positively correlated with times attending an AAPI film festival ($r = .24, p < .01$). Identification with an ethnicity only label was negatively correlated with film type preference ($r = -.19, p < .05$), meaning that those who identified strongly with this label tended to prefer to watch films about people from their specific ethnic group as opposed to those about people from a range of ethnic groups. Participants who identified more strongly with the “American” label, on the other hand, tended to prefer to watch films about people from a range of ethnic groups ($r = .19, p < .05$).

[Table 7]

[Table 8]

Discussion

The aim of this study was to extend knowledge of motivations for festival attendance beyond those related to tourism and leisure by identifying ethnic and racial identity-related motivations. The findings revealed 4 distinct types of ethnic and racial identity-related motivations: the need for identity development, to support the AAPI community, access to non-mainstream content, and an AAPI audience. Claims that cultural and social needs are relevant to festivals studies (Getz, 2010), therefore, were supported and the fact that general entertainment/escape needs were not significantly correlated to any identity-related motivations supported Maeng et al.'s (2016) argument that identity-related motivations are distinct from other kinds of motivation. In addition, the scale generated from this study has high reliability and has the potential to be adapted for use in future studies on identity-related motivations for festival attendance.

Ethnic and Racial Identity-Related Motivations

The results of the study suggest that the largest factor motivating attendance was the need for identity development, which accounted for 44.5% of the variance in the EFA. This factor was comprised of items that were originally conceptualized as different components of identity-related motivation, such as the desire to learn about one's group, gain a sense of belonging and pride, and greater understanding of oneself as an ethnic or racial group member. This factor was interpreted as a general motivation for identity development because measures of ethnic and racial identity development often include dimensions like pride, belonging, and time spent learning about one's group (e.g. Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2015; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley & Chavous, 1998). Instead, the findings suggest that there may be an underlying motivation that drives individuals to take actions or gain experiences related to their ethnic and racial group. Social identity theory, which formed the basis of much of ethnic

and racial identity development research, claims that humans are fundamentally motivated to develop their social identities in order to increase their sense of confidence and clarity about who they are and their place in the world (Turner et al., 1987). Integrating social identity theory and research around ethnic and racial identity development, therefore, could be helpful for further research.

The access to non-mainstream content factor included items specifically addressing the desire to see diverse and complex representations of AAPIs. It is implied, then, that AAPI attendees may be motivated to attend the festivals because they are seeking out content that represents AAPIs in a more complex and varied nature, rather than the limited and stereotypical representations in mainstream media. Thus, this study adds to Báez and Devesa's (2014) finding that the most important part of festivals is the quality of the program by specifying that in the context of a festival that represents a group that is marginalized in the mainstream, one determinant of program quality is the diversity and complexity of representation within the films. The findings, therefore, also confirm the argument that film festivals are crucial spaces, platforms, and curators of alternative content that counters Hollywood hegemony (Bennett & Woodward, 2014), especially for AAPI communities (Lopez, 2016; Okada, 2015; Ono & Pham, 2008).

Lastly, participants were motivated by the desire to be in a mostly AAPI audience. This finding may connect with Banjo's (2013) study, which found that Black individuals were more comfortable watching Black films in an all-Black audience, as compared to feeling concerned when watching them with a majority White audience. As Banjo (2013) stated, the Black audience members had "little trust in white individuals to share in their enjoyment of black cultural media." Since *public regard*, or an individual's perception of how positively others

perceive their group, is a component of ethnic and racial identity that is positively correlated with well-being (Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009), the need to find safe and trustworthy spaces for viewing films can be important to the self-esteem and comfort of minorities while they watch films. Further investigation into this dynamic, however, is needed to confirm the reasons for attending the festival to be with an AAPI audience.

Relationships between motivation, audience characteristics, and festival engagement

The positive correlation between higher ERI scores and identity-related motivations echo studies that show the value of social identity uses and gratifications (SIG) theory. SIG claims that people use media to meet their social identity needs, such as affirmation; studies have found that Black, Latinx, and AAPI individuals who score higher on ethnic and racial identity assessments are significantly more likely to be motivated by ethnic and racial identity needs when selecting or avoiding media content (Abrams, 2009; 2010; Abrams & Giles, 2007). As Abrams (2010) suggests, it is possible that individuals who have a stronger sense of ethnic and racial identity may be more critical of media representations of their group as well as “vigilant in examining media messages (p. 548).” Perhaps, they may also be more desiring of and actively seeking out resources, such as media, that can bolster their ethnic and racial identities.

Another aspect of ethnic and racial identity that had significant correlations with motivation and festival engagement was the strength of identification with various ethnic and racial identity labels. Interestingly, the direction of the correlations varied: identification with hybrid, “Asian American”, “Asian American Pacific Islander” and “American” labels were positively correlated with identity-related motivations, while identification with ethnicity only labels showed negative relationships with access and overall score. The findings can have two interpretations: first, those who identify with their ethnicity only somehow are in less need of

bolstering their ethnic and racial identity and, therefore, as less motivated to attend the festival for those reasons. For instance, second-generation or later AAPIs tend to be more integrated into American society, and because they did not grow up in their country of ethnic origin, may face more complexity in terms of their relationship with their ethnicity as well as racism (Kibria, 2002; Song, 2003). As a result, they may be more likely to need affirmation and support for their ethnic and racial identity. Second, the survey may not have captured identity-related motivations that were relevant for those who identified with ethnicity only; this is possible since the interviewees in Phase I did not tend to only self-identify with their ethnicity.

Also, identification with “American” was positively correlated with a preference for a diverse range of films and ethnicity-only was correlated with a preference for ethnicity-specific films. A strong degree of identification with “American” may come with a perspective of all Asian ethnic groups being part of a larger group as a result of the racialization that Asians face in the U.S. and the pan-ethnic identities that have arisen as a way to gain more power (Espiritu, 1992; Kibria, 2002). For instance, ethnic distinctions amongst third- and fourth-generation Chinese and Japanese Americans may become less important than to earlier generations and replaced with a sense of a “general Asian American culture and forms of panethnic association (Song, 2003, p. 112).” Immigrants, though, may identify solely with their ethnic group and have “no use for a category of ‘Asian culture’” which acts as if all of these groups are the same. These findings emphasize the ability for people to actually choose how they want to approach their social identities, and the importance of not assuming that identification is an automatic or uniform phenomenon for all group members.

These findings also point to the need to look beyond typical demographic characteristics, such as income and age, to understand the various groups that exist at a festival. Kim et al.

(2006), for instance, found that significant motivational differences existed for attendees at an environmental film festival based on different levels of pro-environmental values. Generally, segmentation and profiling studies, however, have not taken into account identity and values-related characteristics (e.g. Báez & Devesa, 2014; Lee, Lee, & Wicks, 2004). Future studies, therefore, should consider more subtle and complex ways of grouping attendees, such as identity characteristics.

The lack of significant correlation between identity-related motivations and festival engagement suggests that the outcome measures used in this study were not able to capture the nature of high quality engagement for those motivated by identity needs. Perhaps, those who are motivated by identity needs are not going to consume more films or attend the festival more often. In other words, quality and film content may matter more than quantity. Individuals who want to meet certain identity needs will seek out films with content that meets those needs, rather than watching many films, which may be a more common behavior for people with a general interest in film. Therefore, measures such as satisfaction, perception of programming quality, or likelihood of returning/loyalty may be better outcome measures.

There are several limitations to this study. First, the participants came mostly from one film festival and two ethnicities, and the sample size could be expanded. The generalizability of the findings, therefore, must be taken into consideration and future research with a larger sample size would be beneficial. The data is self-reported, and further refinement and validation of the survey instrument are necessary. The survey was also generated from interviews with attendees at one specific film festival, which means that the survey may not reflect identity-related motivations that would have emerged from interviews with attendees at a different festival.

Future research could expand the interviews beyond one festival to ensure that the broadest range of motivations are captured.

Conclusion

As Crompton & McKay (1997) argued, studying visitor motivation for festivals is critical because it allows for festivals to create programming that better meets their visitors' needs and develop suitable marketing strategies, thus increasing the likelihood of attendance, satisfaction and repeat visitation. This study contributed to a better understanding of visitor motivations by identifying ethnic and racial identity-related motivations, provided the basis for a tool that can be used on future identity-related motivations research, and argued that identity characteristics are important factors to consider in future segmentation and profiling research. This study provides evidence for the existence and significance of identity-related motivations for festival attendance and highlights the importance of not assuming that tourism and leisure motivations cover all the reasons for festival attendance. Future studies can continue to build on this study by understanding, documenting, and exploring the important role that festivals have in the development of social identity and meeting our identity-related needs.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, J.R. (2010). Asian American television activity: Is it related to outgroup vitality? *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34, 541-550.
- Abrams, J.R., & Giles, H. (2007). Ethnic Identity Gratifications Selection and Avoidance by African Americans: A Group Vitality and Social Identity Gratifications Perspective. *Media Psychology*, 9, 115-134.
- Abrams, J.R., & Giles, H. (2009). Hispanic Television Activity: Is It Related to Vitality Perceptions? *Communication Research Reports*, 26(3), 247-252.
- Báez, A., & Devesa, M. (2014). Segmenting and profiling attendees of a film festival. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 5(2), 96-115.
- Banjo, O. O. (2013). For us only? Examining the effect of viewing context on black audiences' perceived influence of black entertainment. *Race and Social Problems*, 5(4), 309-322.
- Bankston III, C. L., & Henry, J. (2000). Spectacles of ethnicity: Festivals and the commodification of ethnic culture among Louisiana Cajuns. *Sociological Spectrum*, 20(4), 377-407.
- Bennett, A., & Woodward, I. (2016). Festival spaces, identity, experience and belonging. In A. Bennett, J. Taylor, & I. Woodward (Eds.), *The festivalization of culture* (pp. 25-40). Routledge.
- Bramadat, P. (2001). Shows, selves and solidarity: ethnic identity and cultural spectacles in Canada. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 33(3), 78-98.
- Brettell, C. B., & Nibbs, F. (2009). Lived hybridity: Second-generation identity construction through college festival. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 16(6), 678-699.

- Chang, T. & Kwan, K. K. (2009). Asian American Racial and Ethnic Identity. In N. Tewari & A. Alvarez (Eds.), *Asian American Psychology: Current Perspectives* (pp. 113-133). New York: Psychology Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approach*. USA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Crompton, J. L., & McKay, S. L. (1997). Motives of visitors attending festival events. *Annals of tourism research*, 24(2), 425-439.
- Crowe, C. (Producer & Director). (2001). *Aloha* [Motion picture]. USA: Columbia Pictures.
- De Bres, K., & Davis, J. (2001). Celebrating group and place identity: A case study of a new regional festival. *Tourism Geographies*, 3(3), 326-337.
- Del Barrio, M. J., Devesa, M., & Herrero, L. C. (2012). Evaluating intangible cultural heritage: The case of cultural festivals. *City, Culture and Society*, 3(4), 235-244.
- Derrett, R. (2003). Making sense of how festivals demonstrate a community's sense of place. *Event Management*, 8, 49-58.
- Douglass, S., & Umaña-Taylor, A. J. (2015). Development of ethnic-racial identity among Latino adolescents and the role of family. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 41, 90-98.
- Elias-Vavotsis, S. (2006). Festivals and events—(Re)interpreting cultural identity. *Tourism Review*, 61(2), 24-29.
- Esman, M. R. (1982). Festivals, change, and unity: The celebration of ethnic identity among Louisiana Cajuns. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 199-210.
- Espiritu, Y. L. (1992). *Asian American panethnicity: bridging institutions and identities*. USA: Temple University Press.

- Gamson, J. (1996). The organizational shaping of collective identity: The case of lesbian and gay film festivals in New York. *Sociological Forum*, 11(2), 231-261
- Getz, D. (1997). *Event management and event tourism*. New York: Cognizant Communication Corporation.
- Getz, D. (2007). *Event studies*. Burlington: Elsevier Ltd.
- Getz, D. (2010). The nature and scope of festival studies. *International Journal of Event Management Research*, 5(1), 1-47.
- Hogg, M. A., & Terry, D. I. (2000). Social identity and self-categorization processes in organizational contexts. *Academy of management review*, 25(1), 121-140.
- Iso-Ahola, S. E. (1980). *The social psychology of leisure and recreation*. William C. Brown.
- Jaeger, K., & Mykletun, R. J. (2013). Festivals, identities, and belonging. *Event Management*, 17(3), 213-226.
- Kibria, N. (2002). *Becoming Asian American: Second-generation Chinese and Korean American Identities*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Kim, S. (2005). 'Cine-Mania' or Cinephilia: Film Festivals and the Identity Question. In C. Shin & J. Stringer (Eds.), *New Korean Cinema* (pp. 79-92). Edinburgh University Press.
- Kim, H., Borges, M. C., & Chon, J. (2006). Impacts of environmental values on tourism motivation: The case of FICA, Brazil. *Tourism management*, 27(5), 957-967.
- Kinket, B., & Verkuyten, M. (1997). Levels of ethnic self-identification and social context. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 338-354.
- Lee, C. K., Lee, Y. K., & Wicks, B. E. (2004). Segmentation of festival motivation by nationality and satisfaction. *Tourism management*, 25(1), 61-70.

- Lee, J., & Zhou, M. (2014). The success frame and achievement paradox: The costs and consequences for Asian Americans. *Race and Social Problems*, 6(1), 38-55.
- Li, X., & Petrick, J. F. (2005). A review of festival and event motivation studies. *Event Management*, 9(4), 239-245.
- Lopez, L. K. (2016). *Asian American Media Activism: Fighting for Cultural Citizenship*. USA: New York University Press.
- Maeng, H. Y., Jang, H. Y., & Li, J. M. (2016). A critical review of the motivational factors for festival attendance based on meta-analysis. *Tourism management perspectives*, 17, 16-25.
- Okada, J. (2015). *Making Asian American film and video: histories, institutions, movement*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Ono, K. A., & Pham, V. N. (2009). *Asian Americans and the Media*. USA: Polity Press.
- Owusu-Frempong, Y. (2005). Afrocentricity, the Aday festival of the Akan, African American festivals, and intergenerational communication. *Journal of Black Studies*, 35(6), 730-750.
- Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: review of research. *Psychological bulletin*, 108(3), 1-56.
- Phinney, J. S., & Ong, A. D. (2007). Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions. *Journal of counseling Psychology*, 54(3), 271-281.
- Rivas-Drake, D., Hughes, D., & Way, N. (2009). A preliminary analysis of associations among ethnic-racial socialization, ethnic discrimination, and ethnic identity among urban sixth graders. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 19(3), 558-584.
- Rodriguez-Operana, V. C., Mistry, R. S., & Chen, Y. J. (2017). Disentangling the myth: Social relationships and Filipino American adolescents' experiences of the model minority stereotype. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 8(1), 56.

- Sanders, R. (Director). (2017). *Ghost in the Shell* [Motion picture]. USA: Paramount Pictures.
- Sellers, R. M., Smith, M. A., Shelton, J. N., Rowley, S. A., & Chavous, T. M. (1998). Multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity. *Personality and social psychology review*, 2(1), 18-39.
- Sim, G. (2014). *The Subject of Film and Race: Retheorizing Politics, Ideology, and Cinema*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Song, M. (2003). *Choosing ethnic identity*. Polity Press.
- Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Basil Blackwell.
- Wong, C. H. Y. (2011). *Film festivals: Culture, people, and power on the global screen*. Rutgers University Press.
- Yoon, E. (2011). Measuring ethnic identity in the Ethnic Identity Scale and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 17(2), 144-155.

TABLES

Table 1.

Survey Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Attribute	N*	% of participants
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Filipino	38	33
Chinese	30	26
Japanese	16	14
Korean	12	11
Vietnamese	13	11
<i>Festivals attended</i>		
San Diego Asian Film Festival	100	88
Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival	19	17
CAAMFest	17	15
Asian American International Film Festival	8	7
Boston Asian American Film Festival	4	4
DisOrient Asian American Film Festival of Oregon	3	3
Austin Asian American Film Festival	2	2
Seattle Asian Film Festival	2	2
Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival	1	1

**Some attendees have gone to multiple AAPI festivals.*

Table 2

Factor Analysis of Motivations for Attending AAPI Film Festivals

Factor label	Loading	Eigenvalue	% variance	α
<i>Identity development</i>		16.9	44.5	.97
I want to see experiences/stories that I relate to on screen.	.68			
I want to know that other Asian/AA/AAPI people have had similar experiences as me.	.82			
I want to feel like I am not alone in my experiences.	.82			
I want to understand my own experiences as an Asian/AA/AAPI person.	.83			
I want to have a chance to self-reflect on my life.	.74			
I want to learn more about myself.	.77			
I want to see that there is no one way to "be" Asian/AA/AAPI.	.71			
I want to learn about Asian/AA/AAPI culture, people, and history.	.69			
I want to learn about important issues in the Asian/AA/AAPI community.	.75			
I want to feel proud to be Asian/AA/AAPI.	.79			
I want to feel like Asian/AA/AAPI people are an important part of society.	.73			
I want to be connected to the AAsian/AA/AAPI community.	.71			
I want to see what Asian/AA/AAPI people are achieving.	.74			
I want to know what's possible for Asian/AA/AAPI people.	.73			
I want to be inspired by Asian/AA/AAPI people.	.74			
I want to feel like Asian/AA/AAPI people are capable of achieving many different things.	.57			
<i>Support</i>		1.9	5.1	.83
I want to support the Asian/AA/AAPI community.	.75			
I want to participate in events related to Asian/AA/AAPI culture.	.69			
I want to learn how to support the Asian/AA/AAPI community.	.56			
<i>Access to non-mainstream content</i>		1.5	4.1	.87
I want to see films that I can't watch in mainstream theaters.	.55			
I want to see films that I wouldn't know about on my own.	.80			
I want to see diverse stories about Asian/AA/AAPI people.	.58			
I want to see films that reveal different aspects of Asian/AA/AAPI culture.	.41			
I want to see films that accurately represent the diversity within the	.48			

Asian/AA/AAPI community.				
I want to be exposed to new aspects of Asian/AA/AAPI culture.	.43			
<i>AAPI audience</i>		1.1	.28	.73
I want to watch films with other Asian/AA/AAPI people in the audience.	.42			
I feel safe watching films in a mostly Asian/AA/AAPI audience.	.80			
I like being in a mostly Asian/AA/AAPI audience.	.65			
<i>General entertainment/escape</i>		3.5	9.2	.77
I like watching movies in general.	.84			
I want to be entertained.	.90			
I want to escape reality.	.43			
I find them enjoyable.	.82			
I like film festivals in general.	.61			

Table 3

Correlation Matrix Between Motivation Factors

Factors	1	2	3	4	5
1. Development		.66**	.77**	.66**	.17
2. Support			.62**	.44**	.01
3. Access				.45**	.15
4. Audience					.09
5. Entertainment					

* p< .05.

** p< .01.

Table 4

ANOVA Comparison of Identity-Related Motivation Factors Across Ethnicity and Generation

	Identity-related motivation factors			
	Development	Support	Access	Safety
<i>Ethnicity</i>				
East Asian	M = 5.88	M = 6.25	M = 6.24	M = 5.03
Southeast Asian	5.97	6.39	6.389	5.08
Pacific Islander	5.84	6.17	6.37	5.02
South Asian & other	5.45	6.20	6.47	4.27
F-ratio	.34	.24	.34	.65
Prob >	.80	.87	.79	.59
<i>Generation</i>				
Second	M=5.75	M=6.11	M=6.19	M=4.86
First	5.92	M=6.31	M=6.4	M=5.08
F-ratio	.84	1.7	1.7	.9
Prob >	.36	.20	.20	.35

*Significant difference at the level of .05.

Table 5

Correlations Between Identity-Related Motivation Factors, Age, Income, Number of Ethnic Studies Courses Taken, and ERI Score

Factor	Age	Income	Number of ethnic studies courses	ERI score
Development	.07	.06	-.04	.28**
Support	-.16	-.01	.12	.21*
Access	.03	-.05	.04	.13
Audience	-.01	-.04	-.08	.21*
Overall score	.03	.02	-.02	.27**

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 6

Correlations Between Strength of Identification with Various Ethnic and Racial Identity Labels and Identity-Related Motivation Factors

	Ethnicity only (e.g., "Filipino")	Hybrid (e.g. "Filipino American")	"Asian"	"Asian American"	"Asian American Pacific Islander"	"American"
Development	-.18	.25**	.06	.30**	.33**	.07
Support	-.16	.33**	.08	.43**	.27**	.18
Access	-.21*	.30**	-.06	.34**	.31**	.22*
Audience	-.11	.18	-.07	.21*	.26**	-.05
Overall score	-.20*	.28**	.02	.34**	.34**	.1

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 7

Correlations Between Motivation Factors and Festival Engagement and Film Preference

	Times attending AAPI film festivals	Average number of films watched per festival	Film type preference
Development	.04	.08	.05
Support	-.04	-.03	.14
Access	.00	.12	.15
Audience	.13	.07	.02
Overall score	.04	.08	.08

* $p < .05$.** $p < .01$.

Table 8

Correlations Between Strength of Identification with Various Ethnic and Racial Identity Labels and Festival Engagement and Film Preference

	Times attending an AAPI film festival	Average number of films watched per festival	Film type preference
Ethnicity only	-.16	-.01	-.19*
Hybrid	-.07	.12	.08
“Asian”	-.08	-.02	-.15
“Asian American”	.04	.11	.15
“Asian American Pacific Islander”	.24**	.05	.13
“American”	.13	.13	.19*

* $p < .05$.** $p < .01$

CHAPTER FOUR

REPRESENTATIONAL LEADERSHIP: LESSONS FROM ASIAN PACIFIC
ISLANDER FILM FESTIVALS

Images from #StarringJohnCho

In April of 2016, the meme #StarringJohnCho, which consisted of photoshopping the Korean American actor's face onto that of the leading man in posters of big budget Hollywood films like *The Avengers*, *Jurassic World*, and *The Hunger Games*, began. Soon, it was followed by #StarringConstanceWu. These memes, and others like it, that replace White people with those of color are attempts to advocate for more visibility within media representation for minorities, who are often rendered invisible or subject to whitewashing practices.

But is this kind of visibility enough? The same question is asked in Jay Z's music video, *Moonlight*, which centers around the concept of a remake of NBC's *Friends* where all the characters are played by Black actors. The music video shows an episode of this

remake being filmed, and during a break, one of the actors, Jerrod Carmichael, runs into comedian Hannibal Buress on set. When Buress derides the project, calling it “garbage”, Carmichael replies, “When they asked me to do it, I was like alright, this is something subversive, something that would change the culture.” It is clear from his tone that he is not so sure about just exactly how subversive the show actually ended up being. In fact, when filming resumes, he is unable to continue and walks off set.

The cast in the all-Black remake of Friends in Jay Z's Moonlight

The point *Moonlight* is trying to make is that simply putting more people of color on screen is not enough. When we are only considering quantity, not quality, we are vulnerable to ending up with [plastic representation](#), or superficial visual diversity where people of color are simply inserted into an originally White narrative or as “[scenery in white stories](#)”. This leaves people of color still trapped as reflections in a mirror of Whiteness, their value still measured through a White racial frame. Or, as [University of](#)

[Virginia professor Sylvia Shin Huey Chong](#) bluntly puts it, “In a racist world, perhaps the only imaginable self-love is the one measured through the mirror of the dominant group.”

In 1995, critical theorist Nancy Fraser wrote about this kind of representation as a form of [injustice](#). Rather than being rooted in a material inequality like socioeconomic injustice, cultural injustice occurs as a result of patterns of “representation, interpretation, and communication.” This could look like being rendered invisible through not being represented or discussed at all, or, like in *Moonlight*, it can occur through “cultural domination”, where groups are subjected to another culture’s way of representation and communication. In her article, Fraser explained that the way to address cultural injustice is through shifting and changing patterns of representation so that they “upwardly revalu[e] disrespected identities and the cultural products of maligned groups.”

Ultimately, the goal is to transform our systems of representation to the point where we, as people, are changed in how we see and feel about ourselves.

Addressing the issue of visibility within media representation, therefore, requires a certain kind of leadership—what I call *representational leadership*, or the act of creating and sharing media content that disrupts and heals harmful patterns of representation.

What might this kind of content look like, and how might it influence the way we think about ourselves? Last year, in an effort to begin to address these questions, I chose to look at the relationship between attending Asian Pacific Islander (API) film festivals and ethnic and racial identity for my dissertation. Over 2 months, I conducted interviews with 19 different API individuals who had been to API film festivals. I asked them about their experience at the festivals, and how the films they saw influenced the way they felt

about themselves as both an API person and a member of their particular ethnicity (e.g. Filipino, Vietnamese, Chinese). Then, using the interview data, I created a survey asking people why they attended API film festivals; I distributed it online, where it reached 114 API individuals.

For most people, the words “film festival” bring up the spectacles of Cannes and Sundance. But in reality, there are thousands of local [niche](#) film festivals that occur across the globe that focus on stories and films related to a particular topic or identity, such as LGBTQ or human rights film festivals. These festivals act as an alternative, sometimes directly contradictory, platform to Hollywood. Cultural film festivals, in particular, are focused exclusively on films related to the experiences of a particular ethnic or racial group. Unlike mainstream Hollywood, where [less than 30% of characters are people of color](#) and [all-minority casts are rare](#), these festivals show multiple films with minority characters annually. They also do not need to adhere to dominant forms of representation and storytelling, leaving room for the new and different. The purpose and culture of film festivals, therefore, are more aligned with and supportive of attempts at representational leadership than that of mainstream Hollywood, which essentially forces minority films to play a high-stakes game of Red Rover.

API film festivals, in particular, have a rich history of intentionally intervening with unequal and racist systems of representation. Beginning with the Asian American International Film Festival (AAIFF) in New York in 1978, API film festivals were created to provide a space for and access to API history and experiences, as well as resist and challenge the invisibility and marginalization of the API community within mainstream media. The films shown at these festivals highlights issues within the API

community, tells stories that are often ignored within the larger society, and support experimentation with aesthetic and narrative styles. To this day, API film festivals continue to be crucial platforms for API filmmakers and their films, making content that might never reach the public otherwise more accessible. In fact, 90% of my survey participants agreed that the ability to see films they couldn't watch in a mainstream theater was a key motivation for attending API film festivals. In addition, these festivals also show international films from Asia, creating a more complex dialogue around ethnicity and race as it reaches beyond national boundaries of identity.

<p>SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS</p> <p>The feature presentations of this year's San Diego Asian Film Festival include two delectable films about families bound by food, a selection of imaginative virtual reality from Taiwan, classic films that will have you singing in your seats, and a rousing documentary about the kids who will save the world.</p>	<p>ASIAN AMERICAN PANORAMA</p> <p>The best of Asian American cinema in all of its colors – from documentaries about the famous and infamous, to feature-length tales of woe and humor.</p>	<p>ASIA POP!</p> <p>Films to make you laugh, cry, and cheer, featuring high-flying teachers, time-traveling lovers, and a zombie-film director who will stop at nothing to achieve greatness.</p>
<p>MASTERS</p> <p>Fresh from Cannes, Venice, and other prestigious international film festivals, these are premiere works by the world's best directors</p>	<p>DISCOVERIES</p> <p>From Asia's most innovative and thought-provoking filmmakers come new stories and new ways of telling them.</p>	<p>SHORT FILM PROGRAMS</p> <p>Discover the thrills of the short form in this year's program, which includes international award winners, surprising documentaries, narrative thrills, slow burns, and lush pleasures, from an exciting new generation of filmmakers.</p>

Film categories at the 2018 San Diego Asian Film Festival

API film festivals, therefore, are critical players in the transformation of how we representation the Asian and API community, and rich sites for the study of how

representational leadership might look and its potential impact upon the way minorities think and feel about themselves.

* * *

“Honestly, I think at first, it’s a little uncomfortable because I was just so used to watching films or hearing stories where none of the characters look like me, or where it’s not so similar to my experience. When it’s too close to myself, I’m like whoa, am I supposed to feel how the characters feel? What if I don’t feel that way? Is that wrong of me?” Maven¹, a 27-year old Taiwanese woman, shifts in her seat as she tries to find the words to describe her response to seeing *The Grace Lee Project*, the first film she ever watched at an Asian Pacific Islander (API) film festival. She’s one of the individuals I interviewed and surveyed for my dissertation on API film festivals, and she wasn’t the only one who struggled to verbalize the impact the films at these festivals had on them.

I, myself, had been stunned by the first film I saw at my local San Diego Asian Film Festival (SDAFF), Kim Dae-Hwan’s *The First Lap*. I remember watching this simple yet sharply detailed film about a hesitant couple meeting each other’s parents for the first time and thinking: *this* is what we’re allowed to make movies about, and *this* is how we’re allowed to make it? Without any over-the-top production or plotlines, but gently and precisely, with subtle moments of tension and forgiveness so intricate to my own life yet so rarely acknowledged in the films I’ve seen that I did not even realize they existed, much less mattered enough to make it into a film, until I saw them play out on screen that day.

¹ All names have been changed to remain anonymous.

I wasn't the only one. In my interviews, other people had their own moments of surprising recognition at SDAFF. Dee, a Filipino woman who moved from Australia to the U.S. as a child, talked about watching a scene in Thop Nazareno's *Kiko Boksingero* where the main character is getting a powdered tea towel put into the back of his shirt. "You could hear everybody just giggle," she recalled, "because they were like, yes, we all had to put powder everywhere because it was a weird Filipino thing to do...You don't really think about it until you see it on screen, and then you're like, oh yeah, that is something we do."

Another participant, David, a Vietnamese man, said that going to the festival reminded him of the Vietnamese-dubbed Chinese films he used to watch with his mother growing up. Until the festival, he didn't think much of that time: "I thought of it as just a stage of my life where I watched these movies." But, now, watching films that were similar and in the context of an API film festival, he experienced a sense of nostalgia accompanied by a recognition of himself as a part of a cultural community: "I feel almost more of a depth, culturally and personally. There's a layer now I can tap into, where before, it just wasn't there...more depth to my personality."

At other times, the films showed me Asians in a way that was completely different from what I was used to seeing in the media. I'll never forget watching *Bad Genius* and *MDMA* at SDAFF in 2017, two bold and entertaining films inspired by true events that centered on API women running slick hustles. One told the story of a high-achieving Thai student who runs a massive college entrance exam cheating ring; the other, a Chinese American college student who became one of the major West coast MDMA suppliers in the 80s. Thus, it was at a film festival, not the mainstream media,

that I first found, and will continue to find long after Hollywood has forgotten about us, representations of Asians as fearless, intriguing, and glamorous.

In fact, 85% of my survey participants agreed that they attend API film festivals in order to see films that reveal different aspects of the API community. CAAMFest, one of the original API film festivals, for instance, showed a [collection of shorts](#) on the global LGBTQ API community in 2018, from a Hawaiian teen exploring her sexuality whilst navigating her mother's religious values to a transgender Pakistani woman. The 2018 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, another founding API film festival, featured films like *Out of State*, a documentary about a private prison in Arizona where native Hawaiian prisoners have begun to discover their indigenous traditions, and *Find Your Voice*, a New Zealand film about a Maori rapper and featuring *Whale Rider*'s Keisha Castle Hughes.

Lily, a Filipino woman, began going to API film festivals in college as a protest against Whitewashing practices in Hollywood: "I remember getting all angry about it and telling people who'd listen, you know, we shouldn't...support stories like that. We need to go to film festivals more and support stories being told by our own people." Through the film festival, she was exposed to a variety of unexpected stories, such as one about the Filipino practice of hiring professional mourners at a funeral. Seeing so many films that offered a perspective and experience different from her own led her an important understanding about identity: "They're good reminders that even what it means for me to be Filipino is just one perspective...That's something I need to be mindful of, that our lived experiences are not the same...There's not a right way to be Filipino or Asian...Remember that there are other Filipinos and their [experiences] may not overlap with yours but they're not less Filipino than you."

The ability to show a wide range of stories, then, is a critical advantage that film festivals have over Hollywood because it allows for the closest representation of a population's true complexity and diversity. Like the seemingly solid images on our television screen are really made up of thousands of tiny, constantly changing particles, so is the nature of a particular ethnic or racial group. Rather than having some essential, inherent quality that defines what it means to be Asian, Black, or Latinx, these groups are a living, breathing mosaic of millions of individuals, each with their own experiences, personalities, and beliefs. As a result, it is virtually impossible for the [simplistic](#) and [racialized](#) films that Hollywood puts out one at a time to represent or meet the needs of an entire race or culture. Film festivals, however, are able to offer enough stories to counter what Vietnamese American author Viet Thanh Nguyen calls "[narrative scarcity](#)", and in a way that challenges us to be both empathetic and critical.

The potential impact of narrative plentitude is profound. For some, it means healing from a sense of rejection. Talia, an artist, described how growing up in Mira Mesa, a heavily Filipino area, and her immigrant parents taught her a very limited perspective about what it meant to be Filipino, one that made her feel like a misfit. "How come all these other Filipino people...turned out the way their parents perceive them? I see some of them on Instagram now...and I feel like this was my perception of what I think is typically Filipino at the age of 38. But I've never really fit that mold." With her father, especially, she recalled that they would "have these fights" where he would say "They don't do this in the Philippines" and she would say, "I don't know what Filipino means." However, through seeing the many different experiences that Filipino people have through the films at SDAFF, she's gained an understanding that there is no one way

to be Filipino: “I can be however I want to be and I’m still going to be Filipino no matter what.”

For others, the festival shifted them away from trying to value status in dominant and White stories, and instead, towards valuing their own stories. Cassie, a Filipino Guamanian undergraduate student training to be an actress. Before SDAFF, her experience with API-specific roles had been limited to highly Orientalized ones, such as a play where she was a prostitute in Kowloon. Her strategy, then, was to try to get roles that were “traditionally played by a White woman...or [a] non-Asian.” Attending SDAFF, though, changed her mind. For the first time, she saw films that showed API individuals dealing with “real problems that aren’t exclusive to anybody, that can be shared by people of any color” and doing “normal things”, like traveling, having a baby, or being in love: “These people are telling stories that do not exempt their culture or ethnic heritage but also do not focus on it. It’s not the core of the story, but it makes the story more rich and profound.” Now that she knows it’s possible, she’s made getting high quality API roles, rather than White ones, her ultimate goal.

* * *

At the end of *Moonlight*, Carmichael, unable to keep acting, walks off the set. He is led by fellow actress, Issa Rae, down a back hallway and to a door, through which he steps into a mysterious moonlit forest. Here, the video ends, leaving us wondering what this strange new world he’s stepped into is, and where he will go to next. What is clear, though, is the message that we must find the courage to not settle for simply being inserted into current patterns of representation and instead, commit ourselves to stepping into the uncertain future of representation.

Carmichael after he leaves the set in Jay Z's Moonlight

So what clues can we garner about what we might want our future systems of representation to look like from studying API film festivals? First, we must work to counter plastic representation with films that include [culturally and contextually specific details](#). When marginalized groups see specific details of their experiences on screen, they feel a sense of recognition and gain a deeper understanding of and appreciation for their own identity and experiences as a member of their particular group. They also experience being seen as human, having universal and shared experiences simply with their own flavor as a result of their particular culture or background.

Second, narrative plenitude is essential. [One story cannot and should not represent an entire group](#). To do so is to racialize, stereotype, essentialize, and objectify that group. To do so is to dehumanize them, for it is an inherent quality of being human that we are each unique in our own ways. When we offer people narrative plenitude, they have the chance to heal the cracks in their relationship with their own ethnicity and race that were caused by racist and unequal patterns of representation. They are given the

chance to gain a sense of belonging to and pride for the ethnic and racial groups that they come from.

Perhaps, most importantly, though, the findings from my study underlined the importance of having spaces, like cultural film festivals, that support representational leadership. As [Margaret Cho](#) said. “You don’t understand invisibility until you realize you’re not invisible anymore.” By showing a diverse range of work from artists and creators that are pushing and exploring the boundaries of filmmaking, film festivals expose us to a higher standard of what’s possible for representation, and, consequently, how much further mainstream representation has to go.

They are also the place where we have the greatest chance of experiencing films that give us a deep sense of recognition, validation, and affirmation-- freed from the limits of commercial viability and mainstream digestibility that erase and simplify us, the films at a festival can, instead, focus on rendering us in authentic and accurate ways that do justice to our lives. In other words, film festivals provide us with a mirror of our own construction, and teach us how to love our reflection in it.

In a time where every person has an unprecedented ability to create and share their own content, and media channels are becoming increasingly open to diversity, it would be a shame for us to use our power to simply repeat old narratives and stories. Instead, we must find ways to use these platforms to speak into existence a new world-- a world that *we* want, where we are truly seen and acknowledged in all of our humanity, complexity, and worth. As [bell hooks](#) asks, “Do we position ourselves on the side of colonizing mentality? Or do we...see[k] to create space where there is unlimited access to the pleasure and power of knowing, where transformation is possible?”

Now, more than ever, then, we need artists that will have the courage to leave behind our past and struggle towards the future through the articulation and discovery of new forms of representation, and the spaces that will allow for their work to reach the greater public. Now, more than ever, we need representational leadership.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This dissertation explored the question of how API film festivals can support the ethnic and racial identity of API attendees. Each article took a different angle on answering this question and connecting it to larger implications. The studies also collectively contributed to our understanding of what characteristics and qualities of media representation can support the formation of ethnic and racial identity.

The first article aims to understand how exposure to films at an API film festival can enhance a specific aspect of ethnic and racial identity. Using self-categorization theory, the article examines if and how watching films at an API film festival influences attendees' self-identification with their ethnic and racial identities. The study finds that diversity and contextual specificity of the representations within the films contribute to attendees' experiencing greater fit and accessibility of their ethnic and racial identities.

The second article looks at the relationship between film festivals and ethnic and racial identity through the lens of motivations for attending. The study identifies 4 different motivations for attending API film festivals that are related to identity. These motivations are to access films that cannot be found in mainstream spaces, develop their ethnic and racial identities through exposure to the films at the festival, support the API community, and watch films in the safety of a mostly API audience.

Finally, the third article is written to bring the findings from the research into the context of the greater media landscape and create broader awareness of representational leadership and cultural film festivals. The article argues that film festivals present a wider and more innovative range of media representation than mainstream media and are

valuable spaces for experimentation with and movement towards greater visibility of minorities within media representation.

So What?

The original motivation for this dissertation was to understand what we could learn about visibility within media representation through studying film festivals. So, how do the findings of the dissertation connect back to the bigger picture around visibility, and why does this even matter?

Nancy Fraser (1995) conceptualized two types of contemporary oppression: socioeconomic injustice and cultural injustice. The second type of injustice occurs mainly through the domination of one particular culture and the consequent non-recognition or disrespect of others. She quotes Charles Taylor (1992), who said, “Nonrecognition or misrecognition...can be a form of oppression imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, reduced mode of being...Due recognition...is a vital human need (p. 25).” Essentially, without proper recognition, people can suffer from a lack of self-understanding, love, and respect.

For the API community, such cultural injustice has long been a part of its history of representation in the U.S. Americans of Asian descent have had low levels of representation in the media, they are limited to a narrow range of stereotypical roles, rarely have developed personalities and backstories, and struggle to be cast as the main character (Lopez, 2017). As Lopez (2017) states, the impact of this invisibility can have significant impacts on the API community, where they can influence the way individuals form their sense of identity and belonging with their ethnic and racial groups, but also their nation as well.

The remedy for nonrecognition, then, is recognition through beginning to transform “societal patterns of representation (p. 73) so that they value and call attention to marginalized groups and their cultural products. Media, therefore, are more than just a forms of entertainment-- they can be a channel for healing. However, it is hard to use it to its full potential if we are only focused on criticizing media as a tool for oppression and marginalization. Instead, we need to be reminded that, like any tool, it is not inherently bad-- what matters is how it is used. Thus, this dissertation is important because it directs our attention towards examples of media representation and spaces that increase visibility for minorities. In that way, the findings from this dissertation can motivate us to focus on learning how to harness the power of media to create new forms of visibility that can counter the distortion and harmful effects of invisibility.

What are these forms, though? As I have discussed, it's not enough to just talk about quantity of representation-- we must also talk about quality. Otherwise, we end up with what Warner (2017) calls “plastic representation”, where minorities are placed on screen in superficial or normatively White ways. Instead, we need “culturally specific contextual” roles-- roles that are written about and for minorities and their actual experiences. We cannot just rely on critics, however, to evaluate what kinds of representations are progressive or not. As Schiappa (2008) argues, the only way to really know if certain kinds of representations are progressive or not is to see if they actually change or inform audience members’ perceptions and understanding of a particular category of people.

This dissertation address both of these points. Through using audiences as my sole source of data, this findings point to the value of going beyond critical writing and to

talk with the actual consumers of media. Also, my interviewees mentioned that the cultural specificity of the films helped them identify with their ethnic and racial identity, and represented diversity within the API community. This dissertation further highlights the importance of having a wide range of experiences represented even within a particular ethnic or racial group; such representation contributes to breaking out of the racist perspective that all people within a particular group are the same, and the essentialist view that there is some inherent quality that defines belonging to a particular culture. Therefore, the findings contribute important evidence to the greater search for non-plastic representation and the question about what meaningful visibility looks like.

This dissertation also does the critical work of opening the field of media studies beyond mainstream spaces, and the field of festival studies beyond tourism. We already know that mainstream films, for instance, under-represent minorities (Smith et al., 2017), yet we continue to default to such platforms for research on media representation. In doing so, we continue to give even more power to dominant groups and by ignoring the spaces where marginalized groups are actually most visible, we deny their power. Thus, the findings acknowledge film festivals as important sites for studying visibility within media representation. In fact, this dissertation argues that film festivals actually are sites of representational leadership, or the act of creating and shared media content that disrupts and heals harmful patterns of representation.

Now What?

The next steps are to build upon the aforementioned contributions of this dissertation. There are several implications of how future research studies can build upon the findings from this study. There are also important takeaways for people who in the

media industry, film festivals specifically, and other organizations who are interested in building ethnic and racial identity.

Research

Several paths can be taken from this dissertation project in both media studies and festival studies. First, further research should be done on visibility, not just invisibility, in media representation. More research should be done on understanding what kind of representation has a positive relationship with the identity of marginalized groups; experimental studies comparing exposure to different types of representation and their impact on identity, in particular, are important. For example, there is a need for experimental studies that test whether exposure to diverse media representations actually enhances self-categorization, and if enhanced, whether self-categorization then connects with a greater sense of pride and self-esteem. In terms of methodology, studies could consider Schiappa's (2008) argument that representations are progressive in so much as they do "categorical work"-- that is, they change how an audience member perceives or thinks about a particular group of people. As this study illustrates, conducting audience research is fruitful in opening up a more complex understanding of visibility and new possible avenues for measuring impact. Also, in conducting studies on visibility, especially ones that are aimed towards gaining a better understanding of visibility, scholars should consider using non-mainstream content, such as independent films.

There are some frameworks that can be integrated into these studies. This study demonstrates the potential of integrating social identity theory (SIT) as well as work on ethnic and racial identity. As Johnson (2010) argues, social identity theory (SIT) can provide useful concepts for the study of media and its impact on minority groups. SIT can

also provide an explanation of why people are motivated to take action based on their group identities. Research on ethnic and racial identity illuminates many psychological aspects of identity that could be explored for their interaction with media. Integrating such research would be particularly important for studies that want to move away from assuming that all people within a particular group are the same, and focus on intragroup differences and dynamics.

Further research on the API community, in particular, is necessary given that the findings indicate further complexity within the population that cannot be understood at the aggregate level. For instance, future studies could examine why API individuals who identified with certain ethnic and racial terms were more motivated by identity reasons to attend API film festivals. There could also be a look into self-categorization processes for specific ethnic groups, taking into account historical patterns and contexts of representation that may illuminate deeper insights into the relationship between the content and quality of representation and the formation of ethnic and racial identity than was able to be reached in this current study. For instance, what kinds of representations might influence the self-categorization of Filipino individuals into a pan-ethnic versus national ethnic identity, and how might the history of colonization, erasure within the API community, and racialization be related to these dynamics?

For festival studies, more research could be done on identity and festivals. The scale that was built in Chapter 2 could be used for further research at different film festivals, and an experimental study on the relationship between attendance and ethnic and racial identity development could be done. Also, using the scale with different outcomes is another possibility; the lack of significant relationship between participant's

identity-related motivations and times attending or average films watched at the festival suggest that a different measure of festival engagement is needed. A cluster analysis could be conducted using the scale and identification with different API labels in order to study festival audiences more in-depth. Lastly, this study was primarily focused on the film aspect of film festivals; much more research could be conducted on the other aspects of festivals, such as Q&A sessions, discussions, and events that could contribute to the relationship between festival attendance and identity formation.

Practice

This dissertation has important implications for the practice of representational leadership. First, media creators and distributors can use the findings from this project to inform their development of diverse media content. Participants in this study described the value of seeing diverse and counter-stereotypical representations that illustrate the complexity and humanity of their ethnic and racial group. The study further illustrates that there is a demand for content that mainstream theaters are not playing. Taken together, the entertainment industry should consider these findings in crafting representations of API and other marginalized groups, as well as the possible demand that may exist for such content.

Second, the findings from this study can be used to inform film festival leadership. Film festivals can use this information to hone their marketing and program development, using the motivations and influences described in the survey and interviews as a framework for thinking about the impact they can have. Festivals can also use the findings from this study to argue to the general public as well as possible donors and grant-making institutions for the value of film festivals. Film festivals can also use the

questions developed in the survey for their audience surveys. Lastly, community leadership could use the findings from this study to even begin building and creating awareness of the value that film festivals have for bringing visibility to a particular group.

Third, the findings from this study have the potential to be applied more broadly with organizations and programs that are looking to build ethnic and racial identity. The dissertation provides evidence that film can be used a tool for ethnic and racial identity development. Community organizations and educational institutions, such as high schools looking to build an ethnic studies course, should take heed of film as an important medium for transferring information about a particular community's history and experiences. Building curriculum or finding others ways to utilize film within efforts to build identity, therefore, would be an important practical application of this dissertation.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, my participants tended to be largely Chinese and Filipino, which is not representative of the API population at large. Furthermore, the sample size for the interviews and survey were limited. The study also relies on self-reported data, making the data limited to what participants can cognitively understand, a factor that may be affected by their biases and assumptions. Outside influences, for instance, on ethnic and identity development could have affected participants' experiences and were unable to be accounted for and separated. There could have also been issues with self-selection bias, where participants who felt positively influenced by the festival may have been more likely to volunteer for this study. Lastly, I also must acknowledge my positionality as an API person who was personally influenced

by attending an API film festival. It is always possible that my own perception of my experience was projected upon my interpretation of interview answers.

Final Thoughts

In a keynote at the 2018 Getting Real conference, Chi-Hui Yang stated:

The world's most challenging issues are complex, intersectional, and not tidy, and require imaginative forms to articulate them...What are these forms that can hold the complexity of reality, where there is no beginning, middle or end, where there are no images available, where magnitude exceeds representation, where images can perpetuate violence, where history operates in non-linear ways, when the image economies of certain people are so distorted that we need to create new ones? (para. 14)

While he was talking specifically about documentaries, his words are relevant to a general struggle for recognition through all visual and aesthetic forms. Indeed, as I end this dissertation, I realize that this was the question I began with, and the question I am still left with-- only now, I am even more convinced of its importance. Criticizing media representation is important, but only in service of understanding what we want to see instead. More than anything, I am convinced that we need to be answering and attempting to answer the question of what the future of representation might look like.

I leave this dissertation grateful for the people who sat and struggled with me to name something they didn't have words for. In their struggle, I recognized my own, and I knew that we were connected in our understanding that something important was happening. In particular, I leave even more grateful for API film festivals. Without them, I might have taken much longer to understand the vast potential of visibility through

media representation, and, consequently, my north star of hope that kept me motivated and focused during this journey might not have shined so brightly.

As Warner (2017) states, “Meaningful, resonant diversity is a... difficult, underdeveloped approach that requires all stakeholders to think harder about what on-screen difference looks and feels like” (para. 23). The artists and creators featured at API film festivals are just some of the people who are working to figure out this complex challenge. With this dissertation, my purpose was to understand why their work matters, and to highlight the spaces that support them. As I end this project, I know that I am neither alone in nor done with my desire to support efforts at representational leadership. I will continue to walk alongside all of those who are shaping the future of their communities through the power of media, and I look forward to the places that our journey will take us.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, J.R. (2010). Asian American television activity: Is it related to outgroup vitality? *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34, 541-550.
- Aust, C. F., & Zillmann, D. (1996). Effects of victim exemplification in television news on viewer perception of social issues. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73, 787-803.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication. *Media Psychology*, 3(3), 265-299.
- Behm-Morowitz, E., & Ortiz, M. (2013). Race, Ethnicity, and the Media. In K. Dill (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Media Psychology* (pp. 252-266). USA: Oxford University Press.
- Bennett, A., & Woodward, I. (2016). Festival spaces, identity, experience and belonging. In A. Bennett, J. Taylor, & I. Woodward (Eds.), *The festivalization of culture* (pp. 25-40). Routledge.
- Brosius, H., & Bathelt, A. (1994). The Utility of Exemplars in Persuasive Communications. *Communications Research*, 21(1), 48-78.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approach*. USA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Dargis, M. (2016). Sundance Fights Tide With Film Like ‘The Birth of a Nation’ [Webpage]. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/30/movies/sundance-fights-tide-with-films-like-the-birth-of-a-nation.html>
- Dong, Q. (2013). *Mass Media Socialization Research*. USA: Cognella, Inc.

- Espiritu, Y. L. (1992). *Asian American panethnicity: bridging institutions and identities*. USA: Temple University Press.
- Fraser, N. (1995). From redistribution to recognition? Dilemmas of justice in a 'post-socialist' age. *New left review*, 212, 68-93.
- Fryberg, S. A., & Townsend, S. M. (2008). The psychology of invisibility. In G. Adams, M. Biernat, N.R. Branscombe, C.S. Crandall & L.S. Wrightsman (Eds.), *Commemorating Brown: The social psychology of racism and discrimination* (pp. 173–193). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Getz, D. (2010). The nature and scope of festival studies. *International Journal of Event Management Research*, 5(1), 1-47.
- Hogg, M.A., & Reid, S.A. (2006). Social categorization and human communication: The social identity perspective and group norms. *Communication Theory*, 16, 7–30.
- Jeffres, L. W. (2000). Ethnicity and ethnic media use: A panel study. *Communication Research*, 27, 496–535.
- Johnson, M. A. (2010). Incorporating self-categorization concepts into ethnic media research. *Communication theory*, 20(1), 106-125.
- Kibria, N. (2002). *Becoming Asian American: Second-generation Chinese and Korean American Identities*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Lopez, L. K. (2016). *Asian American Media Activism: Fighting for Cultural Citizenship*. USA: New York University Press.
- Mastro, D., Figueroa-Caballero, A., & Sink, A. (2017). Primetime Television: Portrayals and Effects. In C. Campbell (Ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Media and Race* (pp. 77-68). New York, NY: Routledge.

- McKinley, C.J., Mastro, D., & Warber, K.M. (2014). Social Identity Theory as a Framework for Understanding the Effects of Exposure to Positive Media Images of Self and Other on Intergroup Outcomes. *International Journal of Communications*, 8, 1049-1068.
- Moran, M.B. (2013). Media Influences on Adolescent Social Identity. In D. Lasorsa, and A. Rodriguez (Eds)., *Identity and Communication: New Agendas in Communication* (pp. 6-22). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Oh, D. C. (2011). Viewing identity: Second-generation Korean American ethnic identification and the reception of Korean transnational films. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 4(2), 184-204.
- Oh, D. (2012). Mediating the boundaries: Second-generation Korean American adolescents' use of transnational Korean media as markers of social boundaries. *International Communication Gazette*, 74(3), 258-276.
- Oh, D. (2013). Biased Optimism, Media, and Asian American Identity. In D. Lasorsa, and A. Rodriguez (Eds)., *Identity and Communication: New Agendas in Communication* (pp. 22-42 New York, NY: Routledge.
- Okada, J. (2015). *Making Asian American film and video: histories, institutions, movement*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Ono, K. A., & Pham, V. N. (2009). *Asian Americans and the Media*. USA: Polity Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. USA: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Ramasubramanian, S., Doshi, M.J., & Saleem, M. (2017). Mainstream versus Ethnic Media: How They Shape Ethnic Pride and Self-Esteem Among Ethnic Minority Audiences. *International Journal of Communication*, 11, 1879-1899.
- Rivas-Drake, D., Seaton, E. K., Markstrom, C., Quintana, S., Syed, M., Lee, R. M., ... & Ethnic and Racial Identity in the 21st Century Study Group. (2014). Ethnic and racial identity in adolescence: Implications for psychosocial, academic, and health outcomes. *Child Development*, 85(1), 40-57.
- Robins, K., & Aksoy, A. (2006). Thinking experiences: Transnational media and migrants' minds. *Media and cultural theory*, 86-99.
- Sanders, R. (Director). (2017). *Ghost in the Shell* [Motion picture]. USA: Paramount Pictures.
- Schiappa, E. (2008). *Beyond Representational Correctness: Rethinking Criticism of Popular Media*. USA: State University of New York Press.
- Smith, S. L., Choueiti, M., & Pieper, K. (2017). *Inequality in 900 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT, and Disability from 2007-2016*. Retrieved from http://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/Dr_Stacy_L_Smith-Inequality_in_900_Popular_Films.pdf.
- Taylor, C. (1992). *Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition'*. Princeton.
- Warner, K. J. (2017). In the Time of Plastic Representation. *Film Quarterly*, 71(2). Retrieved from <https://filmquarterly.org/2017/12/04/in-the-time-of-plastic-representation/>

Wong, C. H. Y. (2011). *Film festivals: Culture, people, and power on the global screen*. Rutgers University Press.

Yang, C. (2018). Documentary Power: A New Manifesto [Webpage]. Retrieved from <https://www.documentary.org/feature/documentary-power-new-manifesto>

Zillmann, D., Gibson, R., Sundar, S. S., & Perkins, J. W. (1996). Effects of exemplification in news reports on the perception of social issues. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73, 427–444.

Zillmann, D., Perkins, J. W., & Sundar, S. S. (1992). Impression-formation effects of printed news varying in descriptive precision and exemplification. *Medienpsychologie*, 4, 168–185.

Date: 5-10-2019

IRB #: IRB-2018-368

Title: Media Representation and Asian American Identity

Creation Date: 3-15-2018

End Date:

Status: **Closed**

Principal Investigator: Yang Jiang

Review Board: USD IRB

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved
Submission Type	Modification	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved
Submission Type	Modification	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved
Submission Type	Closure	Review Type	Unassigned	Decision	

Key Study Contacts

Member	Yang Jiang	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	yjiang@san Diego.edu
Member	Afsaneh Nahavandi	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	anahavandi@san Diego.edu