On the Edge: The New Orientalism in American Advertising

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On the Edge: The New Orientalism in American Advertising

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Introduction

In November 2012, global marketing research company AC Nielsen released a report titled “State of the Asian-American Consumer: Growing Market, Growing Impact,” on the “tremendous buying power” of Asian Americans, which included the recommendation that the time was ripe to target this “untapped domestic growth opportunity.” Asian Americans have long been seen as a “model minority” demographic, especially in advertising, where their presence in professional industries and average income have fueled stereotypes of being technologically savvy, hard-working, and thrifty (Taylor & Stern, 1997). However, more recent reports like this one triggered a flurry of news articles about the many ways that advertisers and companies might try to target them as affluent, more extravagant spenders in their campaigns and strategies. The articles cited figures from the report and even U.S. Census data stating that Asian Americans were the “fastest growing minority group in the U.S.,” were nearing $1 trillion in buying power, increased “523% since 1990,” and had an average family income that was much higher than the national average (“Why Asian American spending power catches advertisers,” 2012; “Asian Americans are the most prolific spenders,” 2013).

The attention to Asian-American consumers also focused on the growing number of Asian Americans as compared to other racial groups—Nielsen cited a 51% increase in the population since 2000 (“Asian American Consumer Base,” 2012). Along with being “well-educated” (“50% of Asian Americans 25 and older have a Bachelor’s degree”), this made the segment appealing to market research groups and advertisers. A year later, Nielsen continued the research into Asian-American consumers, releasing a report declaring the segment “Significant, Sophisticated, and Savvy” and insights into their
purchasing habits, including a large number fitting a “Swayable Shopaholics” consumer profile much more than white shoppers, as opposed to “Penny-Pinchers” or “Conscientious Consumers” (“Asian-American Consumer Report,” 2013). In the wake of these reports being published, outlets such as The Huffington Post observed a surge in the number of ads targeted at Asian Americans quite explicitly—around Chinese New Year this year, for example, dozens of companies, ranging from Godiva and McDonald’s to Allstate Insurance and Citibank, released advertisements in Chinese and featuring Chinese families preparing for celebrations of the Year of the Horse (“Chinese New Year: Flood of Top Brands,” 2014).

Reports like Nielsen’s “Significant, Sophisticated, and Savvy” account of Asian Americans, whose purpose is to help companies strategize and make focused business decisions, contain generalizations despite compiling detailed statistics among dozens of pages. The misleading statements in the report are certainly not limited to the market research industry; the same conclusions can be found in even the U.S. Census report or data from economic research centers from which it drew information. Reports like these, including one from the Pew Research Center, prompted more comprehensive reports on the Asian-American community, including the Asian Pacific American Legal Center’s “Community of Contrasts” (2011), which documents the social and economic diversity of Asian Americans. Forbes Magazine’s Rosa Trieu also wrote “The Problem with the Asian American Consumer Report” in response to Nielsen’s publication (2014). She points out the high percentage of Vietnamese, Hmong, Cambodian, and Laotian families living in poverty and the expensive cost of living in areas with high concentrations of Asian Americans—issues that were not included in the consumer report and others like it.
Nevertheless, mainstream media also observed trends consistent with these reports emerging from advertisements in which Asian-American actors made appearances. *The Washington Post* reported that many television advertisements featured tech-savvy Asian Americans, in one instance “coming to the rescue” to repair computers in a Staples commercial, in another as an IT consultant for IBM, and in a few others as electronic gadget salespeople and experts (Farhi, 2011). In a commercial for CVS pharmacy, a pharmacist of Asian descent provides medical advice and options to a “baffled Caucasian lady.” Another article observed that, despite recognized as “the fastest-growing multicultural segment,” Asian Americans were not being reached out to by marketers. The article goes on to describe the segment as “the Cinderella,” whose members were also feeling disenchanted with their professional lives and underrepresented in senior leadership positions (“83% of Asian Americans [feel] loyal to their company but only 49% [feel] they belong”). Indeed, this association of Asian Americans with technical and scientific industries, as well as with being perpetually “other” had been observed since the 1990s in literature on representations in advertising, as well.

The most frequently studied media representations still come from film and television—advertising continues to receive less attention in scholarly literature, in addition to lacking the publicity and celebrity surrounding the film industry. However, advertising is also a valuable medium in which to examine cultural representations; the images it delivers are just as planned and deliberate, and are increasingly produced and shot like films are. Sut Jhally’s documentary *Advertising and the End of the World* observed in 1998 that more money was already being spent on advertisements per second
of the final product than on movies, and that yearly advertising spending in the U.S. had reached $175 billion. Advertising, though, is unique in that films themselves are the end product being consumed, whereas advertisements contain a persuasive factor, and often a call to action that does not exist in film. Indeed, Kenneth Gilbraith argues in *The Affluent Society* (1958) that advertisements help to construct the artificial American demand for goods and services via “The Dependence Effect,” whereby production satisfies wants, but also creates those wants in a society. In addition to advertising’s main purpose of selling merchandise, William Leiss, Stephen Kline, and Sut Jhally (1986) write that it also serves as an integral part of today’s culture by being a vehicle of communication in society.

While church sermons, for example, once held a prominent position in spreading messages, they argue, advertising now serves as that “privileged form of discourse,” as people have become categorized by their lifestyles, consumption patterns, and taste in products (p. 3).

Grant McCracken (1986) also argues that advertising promotes the movement of cultural meaning from the world to consumer goods and then to individuals; their images can bring together the constructed world and the consumer together with a product, relaying messages about what gender, class, or other demographic a person should be in order to consume the product, and in what context. Thus, while advertising has evolved to encompass many different forms, including simple images on billboards, storylines in television commercials, or a combination of images and copy, they all use metaphor to bring products and people “into a meaningful relationship” (p. 258). This relationship is illustrated by fictional representations that both resonate with viewers’ experiences but also “reformulate them in a unique way” to construct an appealing or ideal world.
Representations of people and cultures in advertisements, then, often reinforce stereotypes or tired portrayals in using them to create a recognizable but striking image. Scholars including Erving Goffman have observed tropes such as the infantilization of women in advertising (Advertising and the end of the world, 1998). This trend draws on the treatment of women in real life in addition to illustrating a fantastical situation in which a man’s feeling of power is triggered, creating a positive association with the product featured. Sut Jhally observed the increasing volume of advertisements with sexual themes in order to “cut through” the other media and provoke viewers.

Advertising reflects people’s desires and worldviews, and as such, a valuable assessment of depictions of minority groups like Asian Americans should consider the nature of their inclusion in advertisements, as well. Viewers also have an awareness of whether they are adequately represented in media, even in a form as idiosyncratic as advertising; social psychology studies have also found that characters’ race and ethnicity are among the most important indicators of perceived similarity to viewers, and stereotypes associated with Asian Americans, including the “model minority” expectation, have been found to contribute to anxiety in Asian-American students as well as to cause feelings of threat to non-Asian peers (Mastro and Stern 2003, Taylor, Landreth, and Bang 2005).

Given the industry-wide attempt to target Asian Americans, this thesis explores how Asianness is portrayed in contemporary advertising to the American public. This includes the types of products or services they are most often associated with, what kinds of imagery or patterns emerge from the advertisements, and to what capacity the representation might diverge from representations observed in film and other popular
media over the years. I argue that although people of Asian descent have proportional representation, print advertising still positions them as marginal and exotic: on the edge. Their presence in advertising is used to signal multiculturalism and the edgy, affluent, and modern, but is done so in a way that upholds the model minority stereotype.

Orientalism, Old and New

Although my analysis of print advertising draws on classic writings about Orientalist media depictions, it also shows that Orientalism continues to evolve, as it has in the past few decades. The term “Orientalism,” coined by theorist Edward Said, generally refers to the East as constructed by the West—after all, the “Orient” is a fantasy space with no real definition, an example of what Said described as “imaginative geography” (as cited in Bernstein, 1997, p. 2). However, Orientalism originally was a response to Western fears of Islamic cultures and others that it colonized, and evolved as a tool to assuage and control those fears (Bernstein, 1997). Early Orientalist portrayals were found in travel and academic writing, but often manifested in the media as film narratives of a Western hero’s adventures, triumphs, and romances in exotic, underdeveloped locations in the Orient: *Arabian Nights*, *Lawrence in Arabia*, and *Ali Baba* are popular examples from the early 1900s.

In more recent years, tales of discovery have persisted, but people of the East, rather than locations, have become more salient symbols of exoticism or evil. This can be seen in stories of Americans fighting dictators and terrorists and other modern adaptations of the “yellow peril” theme (Bernstein, 1997). It has also adapted to include ways of portraying individuals—Asian women, for example, have been depicted as self-sacrificing caretakers who are submissive to Western men. Orientalism’s construction of
the East, however, has increasingly become a construction of the East within the West; enduring stereotypes of Asian Americans as intelligent peers and co-workers illustrate this. My current sample also shows that other common associations with Asianness in advertising, such as being alternative or edgy, affluent, and technologically savvy are related to a history of Orientalist depictions and are representative of a new Orientalism in which people of Asian descent are given space but still marginalized. In the upcoming chapter, I review literature on Orientalist film tropes and explain how newer representations have adapted and continued them.
Cinema and Media Studies Literature

Most work on media representation of Asians focuses on those in film, an industry whose history is more celebrated and well-known. Much of the literature focuses on Hollywood’s history of Orientalism, yellowface, and anti-miscegenation laws, just a few facets of the history of Asian presence in American film. Such history is helpful for giving a historical context for Asian representation in American popular culture, but also because film critique and reading of imagery, character construction, and mise-en-scene can be used to look at the layout, portrayal, positioning of both people and objects in an advertisement.

In American film, Asian men have long been featured in roles that are emasculating; they are not usually portrayed as sexually desirable or even romantically believable with women of any race, and this is also reflected in general sentiment and lack of Asian men as romantic leads, for one—in Andrzej Bartkowiak’s 2000 movie Romeo Must Die, for example, the ending was revised because of audience responses, not producers’ preference. The film’s stars, Jet Li and Aaliyah, were originally scripted to kiss each other in the end, typical of most romantic movies; however, after a focus group expressed discontent with the scene, the final product had the two lead actors hugging instead (Slanted Screen, 2006).

Asian women, by contrast, have often been hypersexualized in films, positioned as ideal romantic and sexual partners. They are also placed in contention with white women in the plot by being sexually desirable and exciting, as well as nurturing and submissive to men. Film plots such as those of The World of Suzie Wong and Sayonara have used the “new” feminist white woman, portrayed as too independent to be sexually
viable for a chivalrous and powerful male lead, as a norm against which the exotic Asian woman is then contrasted. At the same time, depictions like these have been seen as progressive and inclusive despite fetishizing Asian women, as they existed in the face of a history of anti-miscegenation laws, including the Hays Code, which forbade on-screen portrayals of miscegenation from 1930-1968 (Courtney, 2005). Keith Aoki (2011) observes that Asian women are objectified as “dragon ladies” or “chaste lotus blossoms” in onscreen interracial relationships in films like *Snow Falling on Cedars*, but this has also been noted of countless other films, from *The World of Suzie Wong* to the more recent *Memoirs of a Geisha*. In the last two years, many have also observed that interracial relationships are often the pairing of a white man and Asian woman in not just film, but advertising, too (Farhi, 2012). Independent Asian American filmmaking has also addressed this and attempted to subvert these norms by pairing Asian women with other people of color—*Sally’s Beauty Spot* (1990), for example, found its protagonist coming to terms with her body and appearance after leaving her white boyfriend and dating a Black man.

The model minority stereotype has also been examined in the context of academic settings and political discourse, but is arguably intertwined with the concept of yellow peril (Kawai, 2005). Theorist Homi Bhabha (1996) discusses the contradictory way in which fetishism embraces both the archaic and the modern, both exotic and predictable or knowable—yellow peril, for example, can be seen as an archaic version of the model minority stereotype, which similarly posits Asians as a threat to successful white America but is superficially positive as it posits that Asians are diligent and wealthy due to their own efforts at assimilation. A related media trope depicts Asian characters as rivaling
white characters but being more successful and working with evil or corrupt motives— in Philip Kaufman’s 1993 film, *Rising Sun*, for example, the mobsters are Asian men who out-clever the white protagonist, but do so to terrorize others (Kawai, 2005). These Asian men are also meant to be threatening to American audiences, as they take advantage of women in the plot, characterizing Asian masculinity as undesirable and predatory.

Part of the model minority dialectic is this racial triangulation whereby Asian men are positioned as more intelligent and capable than Black Americans, but not as desirable or virtuous as white Americans. However, staging a plot with a villainous Asian character also allows others to develop their characters and relationships. Brian Locke’s *Racial Stigma on the Hollywood Screen from World War II to the Present* (2009) examines the genre of “Orientalist buddy films,” in which a supporting Asian character is used to facilitate bonding between Black and white main characters in the storyline. The triangulation creates a storyline that, as the two characters reconcile and tension between them is reduced, represents race relations in the U.S. as hopeful and constructive. Black and white characters are brought closer together through uniting forces to defeat a common enemy, who is Asian—Locke cites *Bataan* and *China Gate* as examples—often with the Asian character used as a scapegoat for the tensions and conflicts that the other two characters face. This then often plays into themes of yellow peril and other stereotypes; *The Family Man* finds Nicolas Cage and Don Cheadle’s characters meeting during an argument with an immigrant Asian cashier, while Cold War-era films like *Bataan* depict a Communist threat to the main characters in the form of Asian antagonists. Additionally, Asian characters in this genre of film embody a fundamental Orientalist type of character; a one-dimensional “Eastern” who “acts as a foil for the
multidimensional ‘Western’” (p. 8). Though it has appeared in the form of a Communist threat, it can manifest, as in the more recent film *Crash*, characters who simply do not evolve and thus redeem themselves in the eyes of the audience, and instead transfer “the stigma of American racism from white to yellow” (p. 5).

The construction of Asian spaces and culture in American film, on the other hand, has been typified by outdated imagery. Often, this consists of bustling and crowded scenes where the foreign and exotic are emphasized with hyperactivity and even hyper-coloration. Exemplifying this is the trend dubbed “food pornography,” or the characterization of Asian foods as exotic and descriptive of ethnic difference (Mannur, 2006, p. 3). This can take the form of scenery that features grotesque and obtrusive meats and foods hanging in the film shot of an Asian setting, as seen in *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960) when the main character, Robert Lomax, arrives in a poor district of Hong Kong. The scenery both disgusts and amuses the audience, while also illustrating that the setting is distinctly Asian. Because American films about Asia or Asians also often star white actors, Asian spaces have also been paired with a white star who stands out from the crowd. Like actor William Holden in *Suzie Wong*, who stumbles confusedly across a crowded Hong Kong street, Bill Murray in a scene in *Lost in Translation* (2003) is pictured in an elevator full of Japanese businessmen, standing much taller than everyone else. He is shot from above, furthering a sense of alienation that he finds in the foreign city of Tokyo. Later, he finds solace in the one other American in his hotel—a beautiful white woman with whom he then explores the city. Once again, this demonstrates Bhabha’s idea of stereotypes as both phobias and fetishes; the excitement in depictions of
Orientalist spaces reflects the presence of both fear and desire in the white characters (Holmlund, 1993).

Additionally, gendering of Asian spaces also occurs in media; the “East” is often romanticized and described as culturally feminine, especially in early western cinema. Cecil DeMille’s 1934 adaptation of Cleopatra is one example; the very characterization of Cleopatra to begin with, as sexually manipulative, embodies both fear and desire (Shohat, 1991). The film also constructs the Orient as “exclusively the scene of carnal delights”—the background features opulent architecture, many busy scenes of feasts, and plenty of ornate décor (p. 49). There also seems to be an infatuation with what is “original”—Cleopatra does this with hieroglyphs, which are meant to represent authenticity of depiction of the ancient, foreign culture. Shohat speculates that this reflects perhaps, ironically, nostalgia for a “pure” civilization before colonization and contamination by the Occident. Filmic representations then compensate in their attempts at reviving the “lost” cultures. However, this attempt at “revival,” in its inaccuracy, of course then also “suppresses the voice of the present.” (p. 45).

Deserts are also a common setting for action movies, as they represent the primitive and deprived. The trope of Americans rescuing tradition from oblivion in the desert extends into more contemporary blockbuster films: Indiana Jones (Raiders of the Lost Ark) (1981), The Mummy (1999), and Intolerance (1916) all feature white male heroes who recover “authentic” lost worlds of the past. The setting of the desert as an Orient space also allows the strong white male hero to assert his masculinity; the desert, in its underdevelopment and hot climate often accompanies plots of adventure and passion. The female supporting characters, whom the hero bonds with, represent the
exotic and provide even more excitement as she often requires rescue and a “Western unveiling for comprehension” (Shohat, 1991, p. 57). Similar to Cleopatra, older movies like Kismet and Harum Scarum construct alluring, forbidden, often voyeuristic environments for the white hero—in Kismet, for example, Marlon Brando secretly observes women in a harem—creating what Shohat describes as a “masculinist utopia of sexual omnipotence” for the star to exert his power and be catered to by the supporting female characters (p. 70). This is further emphasized in storylines that begin in the city but transition to the desert or village. The urban setting is unexciting as it is already tame and Westernized, but as the action builds up, it moves to the desert, where tales of rape and subsequent rescue by the Western characters play out.

Scholarly literature has given less attention to the use of Asian spaces or objects in advertisements. I begin to fill this gap with my analysis of the cultural messages that are embedded within the images of print advertisements. I expect the mise-en-scene observed in films set in Asian spaces to carry over to the realm of advertising, where a single image is often required to construct an entire fantasy of consumption—in travel or vacation images, for example, the types of props and landscapes used will perhaps invoke stereotypical symbols of Asian culture, text may describe the locations as mysterious and exotic, and themes may revolve around how American travelers will find adventure and authentic experiences of cultures of the past at the destination.
Advertising Literature Review

Perhaps because of the limited material available for analysis contained in each advertisement, compared to television, film and video, advertising has gone relatively unexamined in terms of its representations of people of color and other marginalized identities. Americans have much more daily exposure to advertisements than to film and television, which is perceived as more ideological and manipulative. One 2012 study found through self-report measures that more than 50% of people say they distrust advertising (Hestroni, 2012). However, the bulk of advertising—targeted to consumers and created by companies—nevertheless successfully sells goods and services. And because its images depict situations that are not realistic, but an idealized version of the world, Michael Schudson (1989) describes it as portraying not how we actually behave, but how we think we should behave. Advertising, then, with its images and wealth of cultural representations, has been described as the “not-so-silent partner” of mass media, just as capable of influence as other forms of media that are consumable products in themselves (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1995).

Advertising as a medium to send a message with a call to action also means a degree of interaction between viewer and product; the “viewer is also actor, the audience is participant” (Schudson, 1989). Just like filmic representations, images in advertising invoke hegemonic representations, and when they do, they have an othering effect; the in-group stereotypes the poorly represented out-group (in low representation at all, or in harmful depictions). The relatively recent partitioning of audiences and consumers by companies looking to appeal to certain demographics may give more representation in numbers (this is what gave rise to sitcoms starring all-Black or all-Asian casts in the
television industry in 1990s), but the question remains of what the quality and limitations of those representations are.

Past studies examining Asian American representations in advertising contain quantitative results, listing percentages of advertisements featuring certain companies, industries, or actors (Taylor & Stern, 1997; Paek & Shah, 2003). Often, they code for the models’ race, age, and gender, as well as the advertisements’ product or the magazine they are featured in. Results vary widely, perhaps due to the low representation of Asians to begin with; for example, one study of magazine advertisements found 86% to feature white models and only 2% to have Asian models, while another in 2003 found 10.3% to feature Asians (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000; Paek & Shah, 2003). Studies of primetime (8pm-11pm) television commercials find even more variation, with Monk-Turner, Heiserman, Johnson, Cotton, and Jackson (2003) finding only 2.3% to feature Asian models, while Taylor and Stern found in 1997 that 8.4% of them featured Asians.

Extant literature on thematic readings of different representations in advertising have focused on gender and race, but have often not taken into account the unique ways in which they interact for Asians especially. Ideal hegemonic depictions of masculinity, for example, are represented by sexual or financial achievement and an unemotional, dominating nature, while femininity is associated with beauty, domesticity or domestic products, empathy, and compliance (Vigorito & Curry, 1998). However, Asian men, while featured mostly in work or business settings, are also not usually portrayed as being sexually desirable or dominating (a theme that is also carried over from popular depictions in film). Less has been explored regarding Asian women in particular, but Asian models in general have also been found to have little representation in domestic or
family settings. Considering the sexualization and exoticization of Asian women in film and television, I would expect female Asian models to be featured more in beauty and fashion advertising, and less in professional or social settings.

Over the last couple of decades, the development of Asian markets in conjunction with reports of growing Asian American wealth and buying power have sparked companies to target Asian American consumers in addition to leading academic studies to explore how marketers are doing so. As of 2003, Asian Americans had a buying power of $125 billion, which many have noted may contribute to fueling the stereotype of Asian Americans as a “model minority” (Paek & Shah, 2003). As a result, in 1997, Asian Americans were actually found to be overrepresented in television advertising relative to their population. Nevertheless, academics’ readings of advertising imagery have found them to be full of recycled stereotypes and tropes, with Octavio Emilio Nuiry describing them to have long been “filtered through Anglo eyes” (as cited in Paek & Shah, 2003).

The model minority stereotype, for example, was created during Cold War. It depicted Asians well-educated, skilled with technology, and wealthy, but has been used over the years to fuel “yellow peril,” and has been found to permeate more recent Asian representations, as well. One study found Asians to be featured in 35% of business advertisements, for example, 18.5% of computer ads, and 16.7% of Internet ads. Wu (208) found Asian models to be most concentrated in tech, fashion, telecommunication service, and banking ads. Curiously, Asian American models in advertising have also been more likely to achieve gender parity (54.3% male, vs. 45.7% female) (Paek & Shah, 2003). For African American and Latino/Latina models, the percentage of models was
more heavily skewed toward males (54.3% male vs. 32.6% female and 62.1% male vs. 37.9% female, respectively).

In addition, Black and white models tend to appear most in TV ads as compared to Hispanic or Asian models. When Hispanic models are featured, they tend to be young, are shown speaking with accents, and are sexualized. Asian models tend to be featured in tech ads, and are young and portrayed as passive and hardworking (Mastro & Stern, 2003). One study from 1997 found that Asian models are overrepresented in business settings especially, but are usually shown in supporting roles. They are also rarely in home, family, and social settings (Taylor & Stern, 1997). This finding echoed results from a few years earlier, as well (Taylor & Lee, 1994). More recently, in 2005, a study found that tech and business magazines on the whole were more likely to feature Asian Americans than general interest and women’s publications were (Lee & Joo, 2005). Another study of women’s magazines specifically found that white models were portrayed more as being “sexy” and were used more in clothing ads, while Asian models were portrayed as being younger and more “cute,” and used in beauty (Frith & Mueller, 2004). Kim and Chung (2005, p. 87) also observed the use of women of Asian descent in ads with themes of “forbidden pleasure” (especially those for cigarettes or liquor), arguing that the ads to a degree also sell the fantasy of Asian women along with the product.

Studies on audience’s attitudes to representations in advertising also reveal the importance of inclusiveness in its casting, similar to effects of film and television representations. Historically, advertisers had avoided featuring models of color in fear that it would deter white consumers, despite it having little impact (Kim & Chung, 2005).
Minority viewers of ads also rate them as being more favorable and persuasive when they do feature people who are the same race or ethnicity (Appiah, 2001). Studies have not asked participants to assess the actual content of the advertisements, although news reports and interviews have suggested there is positive response from Asian American consumers, who are simply hopeful that more representation will mean fewer stereotypes in the media (“Why Asian-American Spending Power,” 2012). This thesis attempts to assess whether these expectations will be borne out by empirical study.
Methods

Qualitative methods will be used in this study to give in-depth evaluation of Asian imagery in contemporary advertising. However, brief quantitative analysis will also be presented to provide an understanding of the prevalence of Asian representations in advertising and the degree of consistency with previous research.

Sample

Because this study seeks to investigate current representations of Asians and Asian culture in American advertising, their relation to the history of popular media representations over the years, and their significance today, the advertisements are taken from a variety of popular American magazines over the past three years. These magazines were chosen due to their high volume of paid readership; all of the titles used make at least $25 million per year in circulation revenue. The following titles represent the top magazines of each major magazine category that are included in the sample in order to consider the material read by a wide range of audiences and marketers:

- Financial/Business: *Forbes, Fortune*
- Food/Home: *Better Homes and Gardens, Good Housekeeping, Food Network*
- News/General Interest: *Time, Reader’s Digest, The Economist, The New Yorker*
- Pop Culture: *Rolling Stone, Vanity Fair*
- Women’s Interest: *Cosmopolitan, Glamour, Vogue*
- Men’s Interest: *Men’s Health, GQ*

Certain highly circulated titles have been left out due to thematic content of the magazines being repetitive; for example, *Good Housekeeping* will not be used because of its thematic similarity to *Better Homes and Gardens*, which has greater circulation.
revenue. Other categories were also not considered due to their titles being too low in circulation, including tech magazines such as *Wired*, or teen magazines such as *Teen Vogue*. In total, 180 issues of the selected titles were considered. By selecting all advertisements in those issues that included either Asian models or objects, a total of 310 advertisements were sampled for examination.

**Textual Reading of Advertisements**

Common themes of the type of advertisements that appear, such as their company/industry, magazine category, or audience will be noted and discussed in relation to past literature and historical media representations of Asian culture. However, special attention will be given to reading the imagery and text of advertisements to explore the connotations and latent messages encoded in the representations of Asians and Asian culture. This will be done through examining the copy in the advertisement, model positioning and appearance (including attire), relation between the product/selling points and the Asian portrayals present, and how they may echo or deviate from associations established in film and television. Attention will also be given to differences between men and women actors, and between luxury and mass consumer magazines or products.

**Coding Scheme**

In order to keep track of the hundreds of advertisements I gather, as well as have a basic understanding of any trends or patterns among them, I will use a coding scheme and the software program *HyperResearch* to take notes, code for specific parts of the images, gather basic statistics of the frequency with which certain elements appear in the images, and organize them. *HyperResearch* has been chosen because of its compatibility with
.jpeg image files, Mac operating systems, and because of the simplicity and accessibility of its format.

In each image, I coded for people, objects, the type of company producing the advertisement, and the publication it appeared in, although I do not document each image in this paper. In analyzing the hundreds of advertisements, I noted the people’s gender, ethnic background if possible, setting, position within the photo (i.e., central or peripheral, in a group or alone), facial expression, attire, and interaction with other people or objects. For objects, I noted their cultural origin and the type of object (e.g., food, décor, location of landmark). Collectively, these features of people and objects were analyzed as visual cues to the cultural meanings embedded in the images. I also coded for the type of market the company being advertised is in, whether it can be considered luxury or mass, and which magazine issue the advertisement appeared in.
Quantitative Findings Overview

Using the Frequency Report Builder tool in the *HyperResearch* software after coding for elements in the advertisements, statistics of interest were compiled from the sample. Because of the largely qualitative and thematic quality of this thesis, detailed records of, for example, exactly how many repeat images there were or how many total advertisements I came across during the research were not kept. Additionally, while my methods coded for both people and objects, the literature reviewed only considered people. However, average number of advertisements in the magazine titles were found to determine a general picture of the sample’s representation for comparison with past studies’ findings: About 4% to 5% of the sample was found to have Asian people or items, which is proportional to the 4.8% of the American population that Asian Americans comprise but differs from levels of representation found in more careful quantitative studies of representation (CDC.gov). These studies have reported numbers ranging from 4% to more than 10% (Taylor & Lee, 1994; Paek & Shah, 2003; Taylor, Landreth, & Bang, 2005; Kim & Chung, 2005).

Advertisements collected in my research contain more images from different markets and industries because they are from a wider range of magazine titles. As such, the gender ratio I have found also differs from that found in previous research, which already varied quite a bit. Paek and Shah’s study in 2003, for example, as stated in the literature review, reported Asian male and female models to have quite even amounts of representation. This contrasts with results Taylor and Stern’s earlier 1997 study, which found there to be twice as many Asian men as women in television advertising, and again with this study’s sample, which found there to be three times as many instances of
women models in the advertisements as men (166 and 54, respectively). While none of these samples contain comprehensive counts of all advertisements, my sample does give a larger sampling of women’s interest and fashion magazines. This also shifts the attention away from more frequently examined magazine categories, which tend to feature and cater to men, including science and business. As such, while a reflection of previously reported trends can be seen—business and technology advertisements were found here to also feature Asian models more heavily—some unexpected or newer types of images emerge with the introduction of different titles. In addition, I also code for objects of Asian cultural origin, which introduces questions of how they are used either alone or in conjunction with people, whether they serve similar purposes in terms of supporting the selling of the product, and whether their function is as liminal (or not) as that of the people in the advertisements. Asian “objects,” including characters, attire, architecture, and designs or themes, were found in 99 instances, 26 of which were images of Asian settings or landmarks. There were 24 instances of specifically naming a country or location in the advertising copy, as well as 18 props or items of décor of Asian origin.

Unsurprisingly, the ethnic backgrounds of the Asian/American people featured in the advertisements were overwhelmingly of East Asian descent. Of the advertisements with people in them, East Asian models appeared 161 times, while there were only 27 appearances of models who were not East Asian and 26 of ambiguous ethnicity and/or of mixed race. Asian/American models also appeared as a central or main character in the print advertisements in 119 instances and in peripheral or merely supporting positions in only 35 instances.
The setting and companions of any Asian models has also been studied in the past, and my analysis mainly echoes those results, with some exceptions. While many including Taylor, Landreth and Bang found people of Asian descent to be shown most often in business and work settings (34.3% of the time) and least often in home or social settings (6.4% and 5.7%, respectively), I found that work and leisure settings had more similar numbers, at 13% (41) and 16% (52) of the advertisements (2003). However, the interpersonal relationships depicted were still mostly work-related, with only six instances of couples being depicted and only eight families. Friendships were shown in 17 advertisements. 23% (73) of the advertisements featured an Asian/American model alone.

In terms of the prevalence of different markets, partly due to the inclusion of fashion and women’s interest titles, the biggest category in this sample with Asian representation was fashion (86 advertisements)—which has received little attention in past research—followed closely by financial and business (32), technology (30), and beauty (27). A majority (114) of consumer product advertisements were also for luxury items and brands, while 85 were mass. The magazine title with the most Asian representation was Vogue, with 52 instances, followed by Fortune with 32, then Forbes with 25, and then Glamour with 24 and 23 for Vanity Fair, echoing the trend of business and fashion being most popular, pointing to an emphasis on wealthier audiences and markets. By contrast, certain titles featured little to no Asian representation throughout a year’s worth of issues: Reader’s Digest had none, while Scientific American and Entertainment Weekly both yielded only one.
In the next chapters, I explore thematic elements of these advertisements, visual trends, and implications of the quantitative findings in this section. I will discuss how objects, including buildings, decorations, and symbols are used to invoke nostalgia and lust for exotic adventure typical of old Orientalism, but how Asian people are used to signify alterity and futurism. I first discuss Asian women in beauty advertisements, in which they are associated with youth and scientific developments in skincare. I then explore the use of Asians to convey nontraditional gender expression and the typecasting of Asians as tech-savvy businesspeople. Ultimately, the images show that Asianness is portrayed to the American public as a nonthreatening but interesting and fashion-forward, model minority.
Asian Objects

Objects of Asian origin, including buildings, architecture, artwork, or symbols, are used in the backdrop of many advertisements as unusual or exotic accessories, often to signal adventure. In this way, their use is similar to the use of the East as a setting in many classic Orientalist films, typifying an “old Orientalism” in which a nostalgia for lost or traditional cultures is invoked. Although some of the more popular recognizable objects being used were modern, such as views of downtown Shanghai, most were ones whose origins date back hundreds, or even thousands of years.

Asian patterns, accessories, and furnishings are used most in advertising for fashion—an industry that often deploys them in its products to begin with. “Asian influence” has been trendy in recent years as designers create collections drawing from Asian fashions, usually traditional Chinese or Japanese. Garments like the qipao or kimono continually make appearances in runway designs—just this past summer, modernized, “reconstructed kimonos” were seen in Prada and Haider Ackermann collections (“Milan Fashion Week,” 2012). In 2011, Ralph Lauren designed a qipao with black mesh and a dragon embroidered across the entire back, while Louis Vuitton also designed dresses with qipao elements and models walked the runway carrying foldable Chinese fans. This year, Kate Spade is debuting a collection inspired by its creative director’s trips to Shanghai and Tokyo. The collection consists of simple casual-wear (coats, blouses, skirts), including a sweater with the Shanghai Oriental Pearl Tower stitched on it, and some apparently Asian-inspired accessories: a clutch shaped like a golden fan and tassel, a purse shaped that is a bejeweled American Chinese food “oyster pail” takeout box (Moore, 2014). These accessories and articles of clothing that are
“Asian-inspired” usually find their creative interest in the juxtaposition of old (Asian) and new (Western), and in the eclecticism that the objects add. This can be seen when the attire is transitioned into print advertisements quite directly, but also when items of Asian origin are incorporated into the background of advertisements.

Revlon’s 2012 Shanghai collection set its advertisements in a dark room with red accents and Chinese furniture. The cosmetics collection itself consisted of lipstick and nail polish in gold and different rich shades of red, as well as a cherry blossom stencil. The advertisement plays up this red palette; the model (white American actress Emma Stone) has red hair and is wearing red lipstick, the wall behind her is red velvet, there is a red lacquer divider, a monochromatic painting of cherry blossoms hangs on the wall, and red orchids are displayed next to her. She sits in a Chinese carved dark wood chair, wearing a glittery satin gown. Virtually all of the accessories in the room seem to be attempts to signal “traditional Chinese” around the model, a modern, white American woman. “Shanghai” as a title specifically does not appear to play any role except to signal a color palette associated with China, and perhaps modern luxury; designer Gucci Westman stated she was inspired by “romantic films of China, where women adorn ultra-feminine wardrobes of vibrant high-collared cheongsam dresses with saturated colors” (Moore, 2014). Thus, Shanghai signals not modern China, but the old and traditional—cheongsams (or qipao) were made popular in film by upper class women in China in the 1930s. The objects in the advertisement, again, prompt associations with old Shanghai, the room dividers and furniture being old-fashioned accessories of upper class Chinese homes. They introduce an element of the traditional and the historical to balance and add interest to the chic modern woman.
An advertisement spread appearing in *Vogue* for luxury retailer Saks Fifth Avenue also uses Asian objects in the backdrop to create a quirky backdrop for its products. In the photographs, a white woman wears floral-patterned spring dresses. In one image, she stands in front of a collection of Chinese porcelain and figurines and a dark chest of drawers with gold accents; in another, she is in a garden filled with large blue and white porcelain vases. In another photograph, the model wears a simple A-line dress and lounges on a couch with embroidered pillows, a couple of which have Chinese calligraphy and dragons on them. In a third set of photos, the model wears black and gold eveningwear and stands in a room with gold-colored walls, frames, and sculptures. In the background are orchids in blue and white wares, in addition to what looks like a model of a red and gold traditional Thai temple. The objects in this spread are not artfully arranged; across the series of photographs, the collections of decorations are many and random. The Asian objects have nothing to do with the attire, but they introduce variety, color, and an exotic element to the imagery; the clothing by itself is sleek and plain in design, so the busy backgrounds add most of the visual interest. As with the accessories in the Revlon advertisement, the objects bring into the space ancient arts (blue and white wares, calligraphy, jewel-toned dragon imagery, traditional Thai architecture) and are used to contribute an ornate and traditional aesthetic to the styling.

Asian objects are also used to add quirk or diversity to advertisements with themes of unconventionality; often, it also functions as an element of exoticism. In an advertisement for Juicy Couture, a group of young models wearing an assortment of accessories—a young man wears a flower headband, while another dons bunny ears. They sit on a lawn completely strewn with random items, including several live rabbits, a
cello, and a golden statue of the Buddha. The scene resembles a yard sale, meant to evoke a youthful eccentricity and carelessness. The only copy reads “Juicy Fields Forever.” A seeming allusion to the song “Strawberry Fields Forever” and psychedelic culture, the advertisement uses these random objects to create an offbeat, surreal atmosphere. The Buddha statue serves as another random item in the mix, but presumably was chosen because of the foreignness it introduced, perhaps a product of Buddhist teachings becoming popularized and trendy among young people.

Another advertisement for Borgata Hotel, Casino and Spas shows a similarly eclectic mix of people in a surreal scene. A group of eight adults are on a stage, grouped into separate vignettes—a mermaid and man lounge in a bathtub, a woman and a man dressed as a wolf dine at a large table, women ride horses and sit atop a large clock face, and a woman wearing a kimono-inspired dress carries an Asian oil-paper umbrella and plays with a butterfly. The scene represents life at the Borgata, a “show that never ends.” The use of dress and parasol are meant to help create a sense of fantasy and exotic interest via costume and performance, mystique, even sex appeal, as the costume is quite skin-baring. In a similar advertisement for Bombay Sapphire gin, the bottle emits a cloud of blue smoke in which a variety of objects—a dragon, Buddha, elephant, and tower—are clustered. The brand’s slogan, “Infused with Imagination,” encourages the illusion the viewer should indulge when thinking about the product; the branding evokes not just objects associated with Bombay but with the “Orient” in general in a fantasy space. The objects work as part of the visual interest by fitting in with the theme of the surreal, the mysterious, and the strange or Other.
Among the cases in this sample that featured Asian objects and not people, many were also for development or business companies and used to represent global growth. There are three examples in this sample from chemical company DuPont alone—the company often uses examples of the development it has facilitated in different areas of China. In one case, the photograph is of downtown Shanghai, with the message: “China’s progress rests on the shoulders of science.” It then explains the partnering DuPont has done with the Chinese government and NGOs to solve the accompanying challenges of “China’s rapid growth.” In another advertisement, the same text is used, but the photograph is of a building’s interior, where dozens of red Chinese lanterns create the backdrop for the ad, meant to show a juxtaposition of traditional Chinese décor and the sleek, modern building it is in (See Appendix, Fig. 1). The object is thus used to symbolize not only China, but also urbanization and growth.

Shell Oil Company uses settings in Japan and China in two different advertisements to accompany examples of where Shell has brought “cleaner energy.” In China, the “fast-growing economy needs cleaner energy” and in Japan, the energy is “not just for tonight’s bowl of warming noodles, but for years to come.” These Asian countries apparently best exemplify the growth and investment in the future. Another ad for computer hardware developer Freescale also uses a photo of Shanghai’s skyscrapers, warning that “without intelligence, it doesn’t matter how well connected you are,” in reference to the high traffic congestion and consumption in the city. A MasterCard advertisement references “picking up dinner in Beijing” for a client because the card has “2x the global acceptance of American Express” as a relatable situation nowadays for people doing business overseas. The trend continues; an HSBC ad reads: “A mall in the
Philippines can change the way you look at your financial future” because of the wealthier middle class and introduction of Western brands, and another ad uses a Chinese Terracotta warrior wearing Brazilian rubber flip flops to symbolize the projection that “in the future, new trade corridors will be the norm, not the novelty.” Thus, in the realm of business, Asian settings are generally used to accompany a message about being conscious of expanding and globalizing commerce. By showing an image of a buzzing Shanghai scene and messages about “growth,” the brand calls to mind not just present-day Asia, but its history, as well, referencing both past and future at once.

Asian locations as symbols of internationalism also appear in advertising for consumer goods, usually with an added element of adventure and excitement. Swatch’s line of waterproof watches is displayed with the Shanghai skyline and Pudong River in the background, and another menswear advertisement features a man standing in front of a building with traditional Chinese architecture and a hip-and-gable roof. In another women’s denim ad, a woman poses in Tiananmen Square, and the slogan is “Well-traveled denim co.” Camel cigarettes use photos of what looks like a Thai Lanna Yi Peng lantern festival to encourage readers to “Discover the unexpected,” while Sherwin Williams shows a Chinese dragon, pagoda, and lanterns and asks its audience, “Where will color take you?” (See Appendix, Fig. 2) Cadillac shows photographs of drivers testing its cars on the “barbaric stretch” of road in China’s Taihang Mountains and gives background on how villagers created the road “to connect with the outside world.” In more creative settings, as opposed to in business advertising, older and more recognizable objects and places that have become symbols of Asia are used instead to evoke wanderlust and the thrill of discovering lost cultures. The longing and nostalgia for
escape and adventure in an older, somehow more interesting or more “culturally rich” Asia becomes apparent.
Asian Women and Beauty Advertising

In contrast to the use of objects of Asian origin, the presence of Asian people in advertisements is meant to signal modern trends and the cutting edge, even in beauty products. In the personal care category, Asian women are used to sell both women’s and men’s products, especially high-end skin and hair products marketed as “foreign” and “scientific.” The models are also associated with edgy styling within the women’s market; however, they are used in men’s personal care in submissive, sexualized roles—overall, Asian women are positioned as exotic, often styled in a way reminiscent of either of the filmic “dragon lady” or “lotus blossom” stereotypes.

Compared to previous literature, the proportion of women to men in the advertisements was much higher, and much of this female presence occurs within two traditionally feminine categories: fashion and cosmetics. While Paek (2005) found that Asian men and women had pretty even representation in the images, I found three times as many women (166 instances) as men (54 instances), mostly in magazines like Vogue and Cosmopolitan. The intended appeal of the advertisements in these two markets, which typically rely on the attractiveness or beauty of the people in the advertisement, however, featured little use of sexual appeal or sexualization of the models because many of the products are also catered to female customers. Instead, Asian women, and indeed, female models in general, were used as standards of beauty for certain features; they use or wear products catered to other women and in a setting or in a way that would be appealing for other women.

Especially in the beauty market, Asian women’s appeal in the advertisements translates to being used as exemplars for successful skincare products, especially ones
that are used specifically for anti-aging properties or for a “youthful” appearance. Asian models are rarely used for other makeup products like eyeshadows, eyeliners, or lip colors. Often, the female Asian model is used in a group with other models to demonstrate the product’s suitability for women along an entire range of ethnicities or skin tones. American skincare and makeup manufacturer Estée Lauder, for example, hired Chinese model Liu Wen, who was also the first Asian Victoria’s Secret Angel, in 2010 to be its first spokesmodel of Asian descent—both “in an effort the reach the Asian audience” and because “the beauty world is in love with Asian girls” (Coulson, 2013). She joined Puerto Rican model Joan Smalls and French model Constance Jablonski as spokespeople, and the skincare advertisements they appear in typically feature all three models. The ones in my sample were all for skin products and featured Wen in peripheral positions in the images; while Asian models are included to sell specific products, they are often marginal and reduced to certain fetishized physical features.

One advertisement, which appeared in Cosmopolitan’s July 2012 issue, features Jablonski in the center of the group of three, and the copy describes the product, an “Even Skintone Illuminator” which corrects hyperpigmentation and dark spots. Bold lettering declares that the product is “Proven gentle and effective for all ethnicities.” Presumably, the range of skin tones captured by the three models, as Smalls is dark-skinned and Jablonski has light skin. However, Jablonski is actually presented in the middle of the spectrum. Though white and blonde, she is made up to have a tanned skin tone, with heavy contouring, while Wen, by contrast, is at the lighter end of the spectrum and with much less bronzing and contouring, as if to highlight her “bright” and supple skin (See Appendix, Fig. 3). She begins to disappear into the side of the frame as the block text
partially covers her face. In another advertisement for foundation, Jablonski is central again, taking up an entire page for a product line contains “shades for every skin tone.” Yet, Liu Wen does not provide another skin tone on the spectrum, as she is even lighter than the white model; her other ethnic facial features alone presumably diversify the women that the product caters to, in addition to embodying the “bright” and youthful complexion necessary for skincare products.

The presence of Asian models in the beauty market is also used to signal the special research and technology that goes into skincare products for younger-looking skin. Past research, as well as this overall sample, finds that, consistent with stereotypes, Asian models feature heavily in tech ads—however, the theme of scientific or hi-tech appeal could also be seen in the beauty realm, using Asian models. A new electric facial cleansing brush by Clarisonic, which retails at over $100, features an Asian woman (“Shuya”) with no makeup on, holding the product. The copy says that the product will “transform your skin” to look clearer and “younger looking,” and the mention of the model’s name and lack of retouching indicates that she is a real consumer. The ad even includes before and after photographs of fluorescent makeup residue from a clinical study, providing scientific evidence. Lancome’s Advanced Genefique Youth Activating Concentrate serum similarly features an Asian woman’s face while promising that the product will “reactivate 10 key signs of youth,” citing numbers and percentages on the 10 different measures of youth (See Appendix, Fig. 4). The numbers and statistics often justify or provide legitimacy for expensive products such as this one, but appear pretty rarely; most mass or more affordable cosmetics rely solely on the model or graphics in the image. The Asian women in these instances serve as models and examples of youth as
represented by clear, smooth skin, but also are associated with and supplement by the more persuasive and substantial scientific “proof” and research in the advertising campaign, in addition to the attractiveness of the product.

This theme of using technology in “transformation” in the beauty industry continues in several other advertisements, including those of beauty store chain Sephora. Their tagline, “Transforming Beauty,” is printed beneath the image of two women, one Asian and one white. Another series of Sephora ads, introducing their new “Skincare IQ” line, promises to get rid of dark spots through providing customers with “skincare’s newest overachievers,” products that can correct many different kinds of skin imperfections and “go for extra credit” (See Appendix, Fig. 5). Another ad promises “100% shade match” and pictures faces of women of different ethnicities and their specific shades of foundation in digits (e.g. “3YO5”). Yet another introduces Sephora’s “genius new in-store technology,” which will find suitable, customized products and skincare advice for customers. Each of these advertisements features an Asian woman to illustrate the range of skin tones that could be served (“100% shade match”), and, in every single instance, accompanied by a description of new technology or science available to consumers.

Notably, the beauty advertisements that Asian models appear in are almost all for high-end brands and stores and not products available in mass retailers or drugstores. The “clinical studies,” statistics, and branding, which emphasize the personal fit and success that customers can find in the brand’s products, also all signal not just technology and the innovation of beauty products, but luxury. These advertisements also appear in *Vogue* and other high-fashion magazines, which overall feature public figures and extravagant
fashion and lifestyle trends. This trend continues into another sector of personal care that often features Asian women as a standard for beauty: hair care products.

The hair products in my sample skew high-end and use themes of futurism when they feature Asian women. One product from BedHead by Tigi, again cites statistics and cites the use of scientific innovation in the products in addition to the just the photographs that are used alone for many mass or drugstore products. The text reads, in neon lights in all capital letters, “Supercharged straight with 98% humidity resistance,” as the model, in profile and looking away from the camera, wears a shiny black leather jacket that reflects colors from different neon lights around her (See Appendix, Fig. 6). While many hair care advertisements, especially those for more affordable brands, focus on the model’s hair and natural features, this one doesn’t—her hair is short, and visual interest derives from the bright color scheme, lighting, and her attire, which all evoke a sense of originality and boldness rather than conformity to the usual romantic, feminine image of long, beautiful hair. Another advertisement for Vidal Sassoon also pictures an East Asian woman with short hair and bangs, with copy that says “Now sleek meets chic” and “Salon genius, affordable for all.” Once again, the themes of innovation and novelty, along with “genius” are associated with the model, who is used to represent a modern, rather than traditional, standard of beauty.

Further, the models in the above advertisements that revolve around taglines about modernization and originality in beauty often share the same hairstyle, one evocative of older filmic representations of Asian Americans, regardless whether it is a hair-related advertisement. The models in both the Tigi and Vidal Sassoon hair advertisements, as well as the ones in the Sephora IQ ads, are styled with straight,
shoulder-length bobs and blunt bangs cut straight across the face, as opposed to longer, wavier hair. Their hair is angled and sharp, creating a hard, edgy appearance and hairstyle reminiscent of that worn by the first Asian American film star, Anna May Wong. In the 1930s, Wong portrayed some of the original stereotypical “dragon lady” and “lotus blossom” roles on screen wearing this hairstyle. In the famous film *Shanghai Express* (1932), Wong acted as co-star Marlene Dietrich’s foil in character and appearance; her dark hair with bangs visually contrasted with Dietrich’s loose, blonde waves. With very few spoken lines, Wong came to embody an exotic mysteriousness and cunning. Today, the image then becomes associated with the same mystery and secrecy and the “cutting edge” of style and unconventional beauty. Further, this aesthetic seems not to apply to other women who are mixed-race, who tend to be featured in ads for more affordable and widely accessible brands that embody a classic, all-American look, such as Garnier Fructis and Dove.

In addition to Asian people, materials of Asian origin also become central to the advertising message if in the product. High-end haircare brand Aveda, for example, created an advertisement for its new line with “naturally derived invati solutions” for thinning hair. The main page of the advertisement focuses on a model, appearing to be South Asian, while a smaller column on the opposite page explains the properties and origins of invati, which means “‘invigorate’ in Sanskrit,” and application of “Ayurveda—the 5000 year-old healing tradition from India.” It also states that the formulators of the product “consulted with Ayurvedic doctors to select potent herbs,” including turmeric and ginseng. The attractiveness of the product comes from not only believing in its efficacy, but also the ad’s theme: the harnessing of an ancient, exotic tradition that is
unavailable in the United States. Western science refines these techniques and raw materials and transforms it into an upscale luxury item. Here, where the copy revolves around an old custom previously untapped, the central message reflects an older trope of exoticization whereby the “backwards” customs of Asia are lusted after and salvaged. Adrienne McLean notes its presence in many films of the 50s and earlier, including those made during the period of “Egyptomania,” depicted the Orient as “feminine and fertile,” symbolized by “the sensual woman” (McLean, 1995, p. 133). Similarly, the woman in the Aveda advertisement is made the focus and a symbol of the fruitful materials cultivated and used in the hair product—her “thick, full hair,” thus described in the copy, the gilded background, architecture, and her ethnic features all construct a feminine embodiment of the product.

Another high-end product, from skincare line SK-II, also emphasizes the natural materials and special method used in making the product, a “Facial Treatment Essence.” While the brand’s spokesperson, white actress Cate Blanchett, is the focal point, a large block of text explains that the “Miracle Water” used in the product was “discovered in a sake brewery in Japan,” where workers had “remarkably youthful-looking hands,” which in turn “sparked scientific research” and led to the invention of the Essence. Again, the natural and sought-after “youthfulness” of Asian people is “discovered,” and a naturally occurring material is taken and cultivated to become useful, “new” product to American consumers. Similarly, cosmetics brand Origins’ “GinZing energy-boosting moisturizer” promises “instant hydration and radiance” and places ginseng in the center of its imagery and branding—a special ingredient that makes the product valuable. Incidentally, these products also combine high-end exclusivity with evidence of scientific research and
development; the messaging suggests that part of the justification for the exorbitant price lies in the precise and technical process through which a foreign ingredient is carefully developed into a more useful, luxurious item.

While Asian women are central to many advertisements for skincare and haircare, they are rarely used for selling other types of cosmetics such as eye or lip products. The physical feature on Asian women that are most-often racialized and seen as different, the eyes, are rarely emphasized or even associated with makeup in beauty advertising. In the hair and skincare images with Asian women in them, their faces also often were obscured by hair, or the models were barefaced and not wearing any heavy or strong colors on their eyes, lips, etc. By contrast, a large number of cosmetics advertising featuring non-Asian women focuses on the eyes and eyelashes. Only two advertisements in my sample featured Asian women at all in advertisements involving makeup besides face products, and they both featured women without mono-eyelids—that is, with the eye shape that most makeup is meant to cater to and that composes almost all of the imagery seen in American beauty advertising and products. Model Liu Wen, for example, who has a mono-lid, can be found in many of Estée Lauder’s advertising for skincare and creams, but not in commercials for mascara, eyeliner, or eyeshadow. The only advertisement in my sample that features an Asian woman as the central model is one for L’Oreal Paris’s Smoldering Eyeliner. It features Algerian-French actress Leila Bekhti, but positions her as South Asian within the image, as it claims that the product itself is “Kajal-inspired,” referencing the term used for the eye cosmetic in Hindi. In another advertisement for Lancome’s ArtLiner 24H eyeliner, different makeup techniques and looks using the product are demonstrated on four models: two white women, one Black woman, and one
Asian woman. Their looks are called “Classic Chic,” “Eye Candy,” “Flirt with Color,” and “Delicate Doll Eyes,” respectively. Out of the four, the Asian model’s look is the brightest and most daring—this tutorial uses a bright teal color and is described as a way to “accentuate…eyes with color” and “guarantee[s] that when you blink, [people] won’t miss it,” while the others use a darker blue, purple, and black (See Appendix, Fig. 7). Yet, the name (“doll eyes”) suggests that the wearer is demure and delicate, and the last step of the tutorial tells viewers to “wink away.” The look places an Asian woman, often seen as having “delicate” features and quiet or passive sex appeal, at the intersection of traditional, coy beauty and a daring “boldness” rather than strictly “modern” or “classic” like the other models.

Unlike beauty advertising aimed at women, which uses an aspirational frame for Asian women, female Asian models are clearly sexualized and objectified when appearing in personal care advertising aimed at men. Although no Asian male models in advertising for men’s personal care grooming products, three ads for men’s personal care feature women in the image. The first, for Gillette razors, features actress Hannah Simone and asks readers to go online in order to “read her mind” and find out how she “likes her man’s body styled.” The second, for American Crew hair products, features a white man surrounded by three women, one of whom is Asian and has the tagline in block text overlain across her body: “Drive Her Wild.” Like the other women in the image, she is not looking at the viewer, but at the man. She leans into his shoulder, and her hand rests on his thigh. The use of sexual attraction in both of these advertisements rests on both female models, but gives them different amounts of agency and control. In the Gillette ad, the man is expected to adjust his grooming habits in a way that will please the
woman; the ad copy encourages readers to use their product “for whatever body style she likes,” which remains a secret that they must find out by expending more effort and going to the website. Simone nevertheless reclines on a bathtub in a demure, submissive manner. But, for the Crew ad, the man, who is the main character, has already groomed himself to be attractive, and women fall under his spell as a result. The Asian model rests, limp by his side and looking toward him affectionately. A similar relationship among models is found in an advertisement for male grooming brand Axe; a white woman Asian woman cozy up to a man in an astronaut suit in a hot tub. The slogan reads “Leave a man, Come back a hero;” the women are, again, are suddenly dominated by the man, who is suddenly masculinized and empowered by the product. Any patterns of use of female models in advertising catered to men cannot be further explored because of the small amount of data. The few images here suggest there is an effect of intended audience on the representations; it is telling that only Asian women appeared in advertising for products for men, and that the images show them as sexualized and submissive. None of the advertising found that caters to women uses desire for sexual attraction in men as a factor. This is true for many advertisements in fashion as well, but it also echoes a trend of (Asian) women as especially sexually appealing and docile, as commonly seen in film.
Asian Models and Fashion Advertising

In fashion advertising, Asianness is used both to add multiculturalism and diversity to advertising, and to convey the edgy and unconventional. In fashion, where the fresh and unusual are appealing, Asianness is used to express alternative masculinities and femininities in clothing design while also lacking sexuality or romance. The inclusion of Asian models is used to contribute to futuristic “fantasy spaces” in the fashion industry, whose images produce taste groups and aesthetics rather than written messaging to attract the high-end, forward-looking consumer (McRobbie, 1998). Thus, unlike the use of Asian objects, which evoke a sense of history and tradition, Asian bodies are used to point toward the cutting edge and the future.

Asian Inclusion as Multiculturalism

Asian models are often used to illustrate the diversity or universality of certain mass or accessible brands, especially in those with modern, all-American branding like Tommy Hilfiger and The Gap. The ads tend to feature many different outfits and products in one advertisement, and do so by having a bigger group of models, usually all young but are ethnically different. Mainstream outfitter, The Gap, features Asian men in multiple advertisements for their denim and casual clothing. They feature a group of both men and women of different racial backgrounds, and the Asian men in these ads are not central to the image, but instead are used as part of a lively, multicultural environment. Each male model wears a different brightly colored pair of pants, each adding more visual “flavor” to a theme of vibrancy and diversity. In another Gap advertisement, a collaboration with Egyptian-British designers Liam and Sammy Fayed (who model in the advertisement), a young Asian male model smiles and stands on the seat of a moving
bicycle, wearing a varsity jacket, jeans, and sneakers. Beside him, a block of text describes the line as fusing tradition with “a youthful rock ‘n roll attitude to create sharp, modern menswear.” The Asian fashion model and racial diversity accompany the theme of modern youthfulness, daring, and stylishness. In another series of Gap advertisements, an Asian woman models part of its denim collection. Chinese model Shu Pei, wears a pair of jeans and the tagline next to her projects a youthful and carefree branding message: “Wing It.” Japanese model Tao Okamoto appears in another similar ad alongside five other women. In all of these campaigns, the models’ names and the names of the different styles are printed on the ad, illustrating the wide range of styles and customers that the brand tries to embrace. Both the men’s and women’s advertisements feature Asian people as part of a mixed group to illustrate diversity and a high-end, modern style.

All-American designer and brand Tommy Hilfiger’s recent advertisements also appeal to the young consumer; the models in his advertisements are set in a large group on university campuses, in front of the “Hollywood” sign, on a boat, and other traditionally American settings, and picture groups of dozens of young people modeling the clothing (See Appendix, Fig. 8). The models are overwhelmingly white, with a just a few models of color and only one who is Asian. In all of the images, the Asian woman is featured very peripherally. Her presence, while not central, is enough to signal diversity of consumers for the brand. American designer Ralph Lauren also uses diverse groups of models alongside themes of youthfulness and modernity in his everyday collections, despite mostly featuring only white women for his luxury designs. In one ad, a group of young models of different ethnic backgrounds, genders, and hairstyles walks down a city
street, led by a young celebrity deejay. Branding that seeks to convey contemporary fashions for young consumers casts Asian models in advertising to round out a diverse yet mainstream and stylish group; however, this changes in the realm of luxury fashion advertising.

**Asianness and Alternative Masculinities and Femininities**

**Asian men and fashion advertising.**

Men’s interest magazines, which target a younger and upper-class audience, increasingly emphasize stylish and quality clothing as a large part of both their content and featured advertisements. While the articles and content are largely mainstream in the products they feature and the trends they cover, high fashion, with its female-pioneered history and emphasis on the new and whimsical, often embodies an alternative masculinity. This alternative masculinity is less obsessed with physical fitness, strength, or sexual dominance than the kind portrayed in other product categories. While Schroeder and Zwick (2004, p. 45) focus on the kind of masculinity represented in many mass markets—one that is “tenuous” and “momentary” as it seems to have to be constantly signaled by the presence of attractive women, the kind of men’s fashion and models seen in *Vogue* and *GQ* are different. Bright colors are often embraced, and hypermasculinity by way of muscular physiques or subjugation of women are less common, and the settings that Asian male models appear in are quite varied, from the gender and number of people they appear with to the kinds of apparel they wear. Perhaps the combination of the fashion industry not being a traditionally male-dominated one and the innovation and freedom afforded by such a luxury market combine to allow for such representations.
Despite appearing in very few fashion advertisements to begin with, Asian men modeled a variety of kinds of apparel, from wedding tuxedos to jeans. An advertisement for Boss by Hugo Boss, for example, which appeared in *Esquire*, features an East Asian man in front, wearing a suit with different colored blazer and pants, plaid shirt, and tie and carrying a black leather suitcase (See Appendix, Fig. 9). A white man in the background is similarly well-dressed but in head-to-toe grey. He looks at the Asian man in the foreground, who seems unaware of his presence. The main model, with his multiple visible accessories (suitcase, belt, bright tie, pocket square) and more fashionable, colorful choices in fashion, appears the envy of other men and a model for young, affluent professionals. He is clean and sophisticated, but presents viewers with a trendy look that stands out. Yet, a sense of hostility or competition is not present here; both men are clearly stylish and presented as attractive.

Within the small sample gathered of Asian male models in fashion, a couple of instances of romantic attraction, albeit subtle and not sexually charged, are also unexpectedly present. One campaign from Vera Wang features a spread over several pages, featuring an all-Asian set of models consisting of a few different women and a man. While some of the attire being modeled is casual, a few of the images revolve around her famed “Vera Wang Bride” and formal collections and feature the man as the love interest. The focus is still on the woman, who wears elaborate gowns, holds flowers, and is in the foreground of each shot, and in both cases, the man stands in the back and looks at her, unsmiling. His attire is quite plain and is obscured by the woman in both cases, and he is ostensibly only there to signal that the two are a couple. However, the man and woman never lock eyes and are not touching each other—the woman does not
even appear to acknowledge his existence. The imagery in the advertisement, from the lush greenery in the background to the white and blush-colored attire and gold beading on the dresses, to even the elegant hairstyles on the women all signal the softness and romanticism typical of a bridal theme, yet the man does not connect with the bride, and no contact or romance between the two is present. Thus, the only fashion advertising campaign in this sample that features an Asian man in a romantic setting or relationship does not find him acting or performing on it—it is only implied from attire and setting. While the mere presence of an all-Asian couple and cast in the advertisement is rare enough, its content continues to withhold any overt signs of sexual attraction or romantic appeal.

One other advertisement for upscale department store chain Lord and Taylor also features an Asian man with a woman, but romance is again avoided. The copy reads: “The brands, the prices, and what about the service!” A woman in a brand name trench coat is waited on by three men who adjust her coat, fix her makeup, hold a phone up to her ear, and take her measurements. The two white men seem absorbed in their tasks, while the Asian man, in contrast to the bridal advertisement, looks at her longingly, seeming distracted. The woman is oblivious, again looking toward the viewer and not the men. In this image, the Asian man appears to express romantic attraction but is limited by his “service” role, indicated by the text. Additionally, the image finds a woman in charge and being catered to by a group of men, reversing the stereotypical image of woman as caretaker and giver, yet the two white men perform their tasks seriously and professionally, while the Asian model slouches beside the woman, absentminded. Thus, again, any sexuality is hinted at for the Asian man, rather than made explicit as it often is
in advertising, and a role of submissiveness is implicit for him as gender roles are reversed.

A final example illustrates the complicated gender roles and ambivalent sexuality given to the Asian male model. An Asian man and a white woman star in the advertisement for Moncler winter jackets, and despite being shown alone with the woman, the male model appears on the opposite page from her, the two models mirroring each other rather than interacting. The two do not overlap or touch in any way and both look at the viewer rather than at each other, perhaps to keep consistent with the icy, arctic setting depicted in the background, and the man holds a puppy in his arms. The man’s photograph blends traditional masculinity—his strong, commanding gaze, attire, and build—with a soft white color scheme and the delicate animal in his arms. Further, his coat appears to be almost identical to the one the woman wears. This could also be an indicator of the fact that in fashion, an alternative masculinity prevails—one in which innovation of design and imagery means less of a boundary between what is “for men” and what is “for women.”

This more relaxed standard for gendered clothing also tends to feature more Asian men; the Asian men in this sample represent an alternative masculinity in high fashion not just in the couples’ scenarios mentioned previously, but also larger group dynamics. This can be seen in a series of advertisements for Italian fashion house Etro appearing in men’s magazines including *GQ* and *Esquire*, as well as fashion magazines like *Vogue*. In the advertisement, the Asian male model again embodies an unconventional masculinity—one that not all men are expected to relate to or even aspire to, but that appeals to the original or forward-thinking consumer. In this Etro advertisement, which
appeared mostly in men’s magazines, three men appear together, without women. In this image, they wear a mix of deep colors and formal menswear. However, while the two other men wear three-piece suits, the Asian male model wears a long coat made of a patchwork pattern—decidedly less traditional than the other men’s looks, The attire alone makes him stand out from the group, but he also stands upright, wears a slight smile rather than a glower, and has his hands in his coat pockets, rather than leaning against a wall like the other two. He stands out visually but also holds a softer, more reserved pose than the other men.

In another series of advertisements for high-end suit design house Brioni’s, an Asian model appears in multiple images, which are all in black and white and feature nature scenes as the backdrop. The model stands on a mountain peak, wearing a suede jacket in one photo and a large coat with fur trim around the collar in another. The tailored menswear and monochromatic photo evoke a classic and a rugged masculine aesthetic, respectively, yet the fur trim and patterns are unconventional and the tagline reads: “To be one of a kind.” Certainly, high-end fashion houses (and, indeed, many mass market brands, too) seek to create unique styles, but Asianness appears to coincide often with the trend of individuality and being unusual in expressing one’s masculinity. In the contexts of many magazine advertisements—featuring men and women or just men—the Asian male consistently contributes to an alternative masculinity in which styles converge with feminine designs, and his physical appearance and posing also deviate from those of others around him.

Such presence of Asian male masculinity in these advertisements begs the question of where on a spectrum of male representation these depictions fall; in an
industry like haute couture fashion where innovation of design often translates to nontraditional gender expression and styling, “feminine” physical qualities or clothing do not necessarily equate to emasculation as it typically might in film or television. Even in film, with regards to Bruce Lee’s sexless yet masculine characters on-screen, Celine Parreñas Shimizu (2012, p. 44) argues in *Straightjacket Sexualities* that his lean, petite frame “expand[ed] our recognition of sexuality,” that his masculinity and sexuality were of a kind that remained “unaccounted for within limited definitions of patriarchy”.

However, it seems that in the case of fashion advertising, Asian male models’ presence has not carved out a new niche for masculinity to exist, but rather plays into an existing one. Their presence in this market, albeit small, fits into an aesthetic of the refined, sophisticated, and detail-oriented wealthy man. This also explains the absence of Asian men from more traditional men’s fashions, whether it be rugged or work clothing, or athletic attire; Asian masculinity continues to be seen as one reserved for the progressive, fresh, or unusual rather than the established and conventional standards of attractiveness or even romantic attraction and relationships. This stronger presence in representing an alternative masculinity, combined with an absence of images of traditional masculinity, implies that Asian men are not being seen as redefining masculinity, but simply only appropriate in selling products to a particular market in a marginal spot on the spectrum of masculine representation.

**Asian women and fashion advertising.**

On the whole, Asian women have much more representation in fashion advertising than Asian men do—about six times more in this sample. This is unsurprising considering the proportion of women to men in fashion, but also the nature of fashion
advertising, which relies much more on attractiveness of the people using the product than other industries do. Asian women have a much more robust history of being seen as sexually attractive and fulfilling accepted standards of beauty (including in film and other media) than Asian men do. However, Asian women tend to have much more presence in high fashion advertising, as well, and even when featured in more classically American advertisements and designs, are frequently depicted in alternatively feminine styles paralleling Asian men’s representations. There is a much larger sample of Asian women in fashion to draw from here, though, and more pronounced trends can be found—Asian femininity often exists alongside themes of futurism and individuality, and is often used in modeling trends of menswear for women.

Japanese model Tao Okamoto also appeared in another offbeat advertising campaign for American retailer Target, with which Chinese-American designer Phillip Lim designed an affordable clothing line. (Indeed, a large portion of Asian female representation in the advertisements in this sample came from just a couple famous models who appear in multiple campaigns.) The line, which features Okamoto in a variety of outfits at different times of day and in different outdoor urban settings, illustrates a “day in the life” of a modern woman who can easily transition between work and leisure, skirts and pantsuits, effortlessly. Her nighttime “9:45 p.m.” outfit is, uniquely, a button-down and pantsuit—something usually worn to work in an office. Another Target advertisement also features an Asian woman in the center, among a group of three other women. She is the only one who looks at the camera, does not appear to be engaged in conversation, and is not smiling. All of the women wear black and white—the copy on the advertisement reads “Everyone feels bright in B&W.” The ad positions the
monochromatic fashions as a fresh, new trend that is “bright” and attention-catching. The other women wear patterned blouses and dresses and are laughing; however, the Asian woman sits in apparent silence and wears a men’s-style varsity jacket, button-down, and large watch. Unlike the others, she also wears her hair tightly pulled back instead of down. Her hairstyle and attire follow masculine fashion trends, in contrast to the other women, who wear more obviously feminine clothing and styling.

Asian women do appear in some advertising for mass or more affordable clothing (e.g., Target or Gap), but their presence in high fashion is much larger, and the way they are used to express edgy fashion trends or even edgy brands of femininity is more obvious. There are advertisements for more romantic or traditionally feminine gowns being modeled by Asian women, but they are rare. Supermodel Liu Wen, for example, models for a few classically feminine luxury brands, such as Tiffany & Co., Coach, and Oscar de la Renta, while Vera Wang’s everyday clothing advertisements also feature a few Asian women. However, many advertisements featuring Asian women revolve around trends of menswear-inspired clothing for women, or a roughened, tomboy brand of femininity that complements the kind of Asian masculinities found in fashion. Levi’s, for example, which is known for being all-American and for its history (having patented blue jeans in 1873), features Asian women when illustrating themes of boldness and risk-taking in women. One ad reads, “Cut with grace/Go forth,” the page split into fourths. Each image is a fragmentation of the female model’s body—she is literally “cut” to show details of her Levi’s outfit (See Appendix, Fig. 10). She wears black jeans with a button-down shirt, tailored coat, suspenders, and boots. Her hair is short and slicked back, and she looks, unsmiling, straight into the camera. The outfit, though made for women and
sold as being “graceful” and “cut” for a woman, draws heavily on men’s styles and accessories, including the suspenders and boots. Along with her serious facial expression, these encourage viewers to “go forth” and step out of their comfort zones, presenting this nontraditional women’s outfit as an appealing, new, and individualistic one.

Another Levi’s advertisement is similarly segmented into four parts. One of the images (the only one with color) is of a disco ball with an American flag pattern painted onto it, and one shows the backside of a man wearing worn-in denim from head to toe, his jacket emblazoned with the United States’ great seal. The central model is in the third image, and the last shows the Levi’s logo and slogan: “Equipped for the modern frontier/Go forth.” The man in worn work denim illustrates the past, while the woman and disco ball represent the present and future, when denim represents not a history of physical labor or tradition of American work ethic, but youthful energy, leisure, and fashion. The young Asian woman is “equipped” with a denim jacket that is adapted not for physical work but for the “modern frontier,” in which style emerges as a cultural indicator. Thus, the model is used to signal contemporary culture and evolution in the brand, rather than embody the elements of the brand that are traditional or timeless.

Calvin Klein also centers an advertisement on an Asian female model and uses motifs of youth and leisure in its campaign. The new products that the advertisement tries to sell—“jeans, underwear, and fragrance” for the most part do not appear in the advertisement. The woman in the center is in the front of a large room filled with at least a dozen other models, all of them dancing in jeans and little to no other clothing. The fragrance and underwear are nowhere to be seen—the focus is clearly on the young people in the advertisement, who are attractive, free-spirited, and fresh-faced. Again, the
color scheme is black and white and the image quality is grainy, evocative of years past and perhaps the brand’s history, but the text, typical of LED displays and the green blur overlaying the image create a high-tech, futuristic aesthetic. The copy at the bottom of the image tells the audience to “download the app” and “scan the advertisement” to reveal more about the product line. The theme blends older, classic products from the 1990s (CK One denim, underwear, and fragrance) with the newer, more modern direction the brand is headed in. The Asian woman at the center of the image has the same hairstyle that was popular among models in beauty advertising—short, black hair with blunt bangs. Here, where there are also men with longer hair and models with eclectic personal styles, the haircut evokes stereotypical styling and appearance of Asian women, as well as unusual and different beauty standards, and the blending of past and future can also be observed in the individuals chosen to represent the brand.

The apparel itself that Asian women are chosen to model also tends to be boyish and alternative, paralleling themes of living active and daring lifestyles. High-end Italian design house Diesel, for example, is known for its innovative approach to marketing and use of emerging technology—it was one of the first fashion brands to utilize the Internet, feature a gay couple in its advertising, and market its products through video games (O’Connor, 2013). Several of its recent advertisements feature famous Asian models wearing its designs, which cater to a young and edgy audience. Supermodel Liu Wen again appears in these advertisements, and she models casual, menswear-inspired clothing—leather jackets, denim shirts, and trousers. The advertising campaign uses a strange, avant-garde aesthetic to express it, rather than recognizable scenes or settings in the image. The models hold giant hammers, set a dollhouse on fire, and Liu Wen sits on a
giant egg—the imagery is surreal and nonsensical. It may be an extension of Diesel’s original slogan from a couple of years prior: “Be Stupid.” The models, men and women alike, perform dangerous, wild, or otherwise bizarre activities in the photographs. Noticeably, however, many of the models (mostly female) in the campaign are in underwear or are close to nude, but the Asian models—Liu Wen and Japanese model Kiko Mizuhara, who also dons a leather jacket—are not (See Appendix, Fig. 11). While still styled attractively and fashionably, they lack sex appeal, which is unexpected given the provocative nature of Diesel’s advertising strategy and the long cinematic history of Asian femininity correlating with hypersexuality. Instead, they embody a more relaxed, masculine appeal—Liu Wen, for example, poses with the same slouched posture and open-legged sitting position that male models are often seen in. This theme of risk-taking can also be found in an advertisement for a fashion week collection at mainstream retailer Macy’s. Among a group of four women, the Asian woman is once again the only one not smiling, embodying a darker, more serious style. She wears a navy blue suit and black hat, and the copy on the advertisement reveals that the collection is called “Impulse”—meant to express the “most cutting-edge talent” in fashion week, “inspired by [the city’s] people and informed by its streets.” Once again, Asianness is present when the message is that a particular brand is creating bold, exciting, and unprecedented designs.

American clothing line Guess also cast its first Asian model in one of its advertising campaigns in fall 2013. The advertisements appeared around the same time Guess received attention for casting its first South Asian spokesmodel, Indian actress Priyanka Chopra (Marikar, 2014). They star Chinese model Liu Dan, and the text on them credit Chinese photographer Chen Man. Guess is known for its young, all-American
style, especially its denim clothing—its website references the “American dream” and its status as a “symbol of a young, sexy, and adventurous lifestyle.” Its advertisements usually feature voluptuous models—“bombshells” who wear casual clothing. The photography is often in black and white, emphasizing the classic, retro style of the theme and setting. However, this recent advertisement with Liu Dan instead takes place in the Grand Canyon, with the model on a motorcycle, at the edge of a cliff, and in lingerie in different photographs. There appears to be dirt on her skin, and her hair is styled to look windswept and unkempt. The photographs blend the rugged imagery associated with the American West with glamour and sexuality—a rather original approach for the brand. It casts an Asian woman to represent this, further emphasized by one image in particular, in which Liu poses in silky lingerie, with a bright red lacquer frame around her and a design of artificially red-tinted bonsai trees extending diagonally across the frame, overlapping her body. The coloring, posing, and theme of the image make it stand out starkly from the rest and appears to serve little purpose other than to emphasize the model’s ethnic background. At the surface, she does seem to fit in with the “Guess girl” trend—her youth and physique, as well as the all-American theme of the advertisements, all align with Guess’s branding—yet, she is also used to represent a daring and edginess, as well as an exoticism, through the images. Although Priyanka Chopra’s advertisements had not been printed in magazines yet, they suggest an even bigger variety of Asian representations for the future. Her photographs (available only online so far) are set in a park and in a swanky living room, and she wears blouses and gowns, in contrast to Liu Dan’s distressed jeans and form-fitting tees. Thus, this sample also highlights the fact that in advertising, East Asians make up such a disproportionate amount of the representation
that it is difficult to see what kind of spectrum or various types of roles Asian people of other ethnicities might be typecast in later on.

Asian femininity is also increasingly related to and seen alongside progressiveness and innovation of design and style in the fashion industry, which often translate to futuristic settings and minimalistic design. French high fashion house Chanel advertised its clothing in late 2013 through a series of ads in magazines like *Vogue* that more clearly uses Asianness to characterize a romantic world of the future and of technological advancement. It features the same three women in both images: one white woman in front and two Asian women, who stand together in the background (See Appendix, Fig. 12). The color scheme is black, white, and metallic throughout, but the two Asian women in the background provide the bulk of what is alternative and futuristic to the photographs. They hold the same pose, and their makeup is pale, with just stripes of black across the eyelids; by contrast, the woman in the front is more animated and has messy hair. She is also styled with more natural, conventional makeup. In the other images, the two Asian women once again wear matching clothing and float in midair. They again perfectly mirror each other’s positions and their legs are straight out, and they are both knitting and holding flowers—seemingly combining the mundane and traditionally feminine with the new and unexpected. The repetition and uniformity lend a robotic, technological element to the image, and their presence in the background merely contribute to an aesthetic rather than appeal to consumers with individual selling points, as the model in front does. The Asian women’s bodies, droid-like and clad in leather, yet wearing skirts and acting out stereotypically feminine activities—holding purses and flowers, knitting—are used as a hybrid of a more traditional appeal of women’s clothing
and the “cutting-edge” future of high fashion. They are not meant to be relatable to consumers; rather, the futuristic styling and robotic posing create an avant-garde otherness that serves as a backdrop for the more everyday, consumable product.

Across multiple advertisements, Asian femininity acts as an effective way of signaling a brand’s innovative, edgy style, as well as an “alternative femininity” whose appeal lies in a boyish, disheveled, work-worn appearance rather than looking polished and delicate. If it is meant to be sexually appealing, it is not in a romantic way, but in an adventurous or aggressive nature not typically associated with femininity. There are several advertisements in which this futuristic aesthetic is made more accessible and mainstream for more casual clothing meant for everyday wear. In another advertisement for Kenneth Cole, an Asian woman wears metallic silver high heels, carries a silver handbag, and wears black leather gloves. An LED light banner scrolls vertically across the image with messages about modern technology: “12% of people check emails in their place of worship…OMG.” The motif of technology helps to illustrate the cutting-edge in fashion and lifestyle and the excitement of being a bold, young, trendy consumer.

Advertisements for fashion house Kenzo use bright colors in its clothing and neon lights in the background instead, but still create a novel and unconventional aesthetic. The Asian model, for example, has the familiar short haircut with bangs, but her hair is white instead of black—a more trendy, unusual twist on the hairstyle. As with many previous luxury fashion advertisements, there is no call-to-action or even a focus on the products; instead, the advertisements create an exciting, surrealistic setting in which fashion is daring and the entire image represents originality. While the Asian models are not used to
represent stereotypes in these settings, they appear to be typecast as risk-taking and unusual women of the future.

This theme extends into other markets, as well; although Asian women do not appear in nearly as many products on the mass market, the ones they do appear in often contain similar characters who take risks and embody the boldness that the brand seeks to display. In advertisements for Scope mouthwash, a young Asian woman kisses a man as she crowd-surfs during a concert. The text reads: “Comfort zones were made to be broken.” In another similar ad, the slogan is “Let personal spaces collide/Courage Encouraged.” Stoli Vodka advertises its product with a female deejay who appears to be shouting or cheering in the middle of a party, leaning in to receive a kiss from a fellow deejay, and the “Cointreau-versial” and “Unconventional” French spirit brand Cointreau sets the scene in a lively at-home party scene with an Asian woman playing poker with a group of men. The style contrasts with many other advertisements for alcohol, including those featuring Filipino boxer Manny Pacquiao or actor Bruce Lee, which are in black-and-white or muted colors and focus on themes of tradition, success, or quality. Asian femininity is used to represent an exciting, modern and trendy lifestyle, supporting branding meant to attract hip, affluent, young crowds.

**Asian Models and Tech Advertising**

Consistent with previous literature, Asian models had very high representation in advertisements for technology products—it was the second most popular market for Asian models to appear in, after fashion advertising. For the most part, consumer technology products and products used for businesses feature Asian models as
professional, white collar employees using the product and attesting to its usefulness and innovative features. Samsung, for example, launched a new line of products supporting a “New Business Experience” developed specifically meant for use in offices for more efficient communication and interactive work. In both of the advertisements from the campaign that are in this sample, Asian models are shown using the products—a copy machine, computer, and software—in office settings. The copy says that the products are “elevating your business to…extraordinary standards;” the ads market the products in terms of their usefulness and quality; not their attractiveness. As expected in a technology advertisement, there is also an element of modernity to the branding more explicit than that of the fashion and style-related advertising; it emphasizes the novelty and forward-thinking nature of the company and technology.

Broadband company Verizon, whose services are usually for personal use, recently advertised to professionals for work use, also using images of Asian professionals in business attire and using tech tools. One photo shows an Asian woman and another man looking at dozens of different windows and personal electronic devices, but the ad targets business owners specifically. The copy reads: “Share everything: Now, for your business.” Another Verizon ad shows a different young, Asian woman with different devices and the line: “The power of your office when you’re on the go.” The ad then lists different functions of the network, including “access to all your important data” and tools to “create public websites to market your business.” Similarly, a Windows 8 advertisement sells its “enterprise-ready” suite, which caters to “today’s businesses” and features an Asian woman in her office using an electronic tablet. These advertisements all associate Asian models with effective use of technology products, especially ones used
for business, not leisure—this is consistent with and adds a layer to the past literature on advertising, which found that Asians tend to be featured most in work settings and in advertisements for tech and business. These examples show that it is especially true for images whose setting is the intersection of the two.

By contrast, advertisements for tech products meant for personal or recreational use, as opposed to for professional or office use, do not feature Asian models as much. Microsoft Windows 8, for example, has advertisements for personal computers that center on the products themselves, but whose screens contain photos of some Asian people. This perhaps implies that the owner of the computers is Asian, and the photographs, while small and subtle, depict Asian models in a family setting—rare in this sample and in previous literature. Depending on the product and advertisement, the copy is different, highlighting various features of the products. One talks about the computer’s ability to give live updates, allowing users to stay connected with others at all times; another focuses on its compatibility with different games and media, calling the laptop “the next generation of PCs;” yet another emphasizes the versatility of the laptop, which allows users to “put the top down and relax.” The great number of Asian models featured in this series may be another case of typecasting in the tech market; however, the advertisements use these same models alongside products meant for both work and play, to keep track of information and files as well as connected with family and friends. Another advertisement for AT&T’s LTE network also shows a mobile device with a video playing on its screen of an Asian mother and her daughter. The ad sells the LTE network’s quality and speed—“Faster is better” for keeping up with and communicating with family. However, these were the only advertisements from a tech company that
featured Asian models in a family setting, and some of the only ones in non-work-related settings. The presence of Asian people in the ad may still be an instance of typecasting and meant to signal adeptness with technology, but they were presented in a diverse range of settings, many of which have been largely absent from advertising in the past.

Another advertisement for Norton anti-virus software, however, draws on the “Asian nerd” personality, bringing to mind some stereotypical film roles for Asian men. The ad campaign reminds readers of the excitement and happiness that new electronics bring them—a feeling they dub “Newphoria.” The ad then reminds readers that they should install the anti-virus program right away, when their devices are new. The model in the advertisement is a tech-savvy, young Asian man. He happily hugs his laptop to his chest and looks giddy, as if in love—the copy confirms that there is meant to be a romantic attraction between the man and his laptop depicted: “If you kiss your new device and get the feeling that it’s kissing you back, you may have Newphoria.” From his physicality down to his costume (button-down, bow tie, large watch, thick-framed glasses), he is clearly meant to be a tech geek character. Asianness appears to be an important factor in signaling nerddiness or tech-savviness, especially since the other advertisements in this series (which did not appear alongside this one in print) do not style the characters in the same way or to be nerdy or geeky. One of the other advertisements, for example, features a white man holding a cell phone. He also smiles and embodies the “Newphoria” state, but is not wearing any accessories or extra styling, and there is no allusion to love or romance with respect to technology (See Appendix, Fig. 13). The Asian man is de-sexed, in love with an object instead, and his diverted sexuality is unattractive and comedic, as opposed to Bruce Lee’s strength and honor in
lieu of sexuality. Further, the Asian man and two women appear only in one advertisement each, while the white male model appears in a few different ones. The low representation of Asian people in consumer, rather than business-related tech products, makes it difficult to tell what kind of qualities they could be associated with in that segment. But, the handful in this sample seem to sit on far ends of a spectrum—some depicting Asian families in settings of leisure and others showing a stereotypical, desexualized male nerd character.

The general typecasting of Asian models in tech product advertisements also extends to people who are famous or featured as expert testimony. There were five advertisements of this nature in this sample, which exceeds the number of advertisements in which an Asian “everyday user” is featured. These advertisements usually center around the way a certain product helps various industry experts do their work and features photos of the person, as well as quotes or a bio from them. Fujifilm’s advertisements for its X-Series point-and-shoot cameras highlight the photography and testimony of Dane Shitagi, an artist whose work became popular on the Internet despite not being a renowned photographer. The advertisement features a photograph he took of a woman, with a picture of him underneath, along with a quote explaining how his camera contributed to his work. He mentions the “unsurpassed image quality” of the camera multiple times and the fact that he can travel around the world with it easily. The ad then explains different technical aspects of the camera, with the bolded line “Sacrifice nothing/Uncompromised engineering, unsurpassed image quality.” It uses Dane Shitagi’s work to illustrate and attest to the quality of the product, whose appeal again centers around its technical features and dependability. Likewise, Citrix’s online video
conferencing software, GoToMeeting, features the endorsements of different Asian-American business executives in its advertisements to affirm the quality of the product. Similar to many of the office products, the presence of Asian consumers is used multiple times to sell a tech item meant for professional use. In another advertisement, a company CMO, Jascha Kaykas-Wolff, says that the program is “that key driver for successful collaborations.” He is pictured on a tablet screen using the program, along with an unknown Asian woman in the center of the image. Once again, the presence of Asian people is related to selling points of success and productivity in the workplace. In these advertisements, Asianness comes to signal trustworthiness when it comes to opinions about business or professional achievement and work life.

However, even within this sample of technology advertisements, there exists a wider range of representations for Asian Americans as expert endorsements. Adobe Systems, known for its multimedia and creativity software programs, dedicated a spread to a brief biography of Tze Chun, a “multi-hyphenate talent” and filmmaker. Themes of futurism and innovation are scattered across the page—the first passage introduces him as “reinventing,” “redefining,” and “revolutionizing” film and storytelling media in a “new age,” and the title of the advertising section is “Framing the Future of Film.” The introduction explains that in his work, Chun often oversees several stages of the filmmaking process. In editing, he chose to use the Adobe CS6 program. Thus, although the advertisement is themed around Chun’s expertise and work ethic, as well as his work, which is ushering in new methods and art, it positions him as an artist first and foremost; not a businessman or high-achieving figure. The introduction speaks about both his technical and creative abilities and elaborates quite a bit about his artistic vision and
inspirations. Perhaps more striking than the extended outlining of his career and works is the photographs that spans the entire two pages of the spread, which is of Chun in a movie studio. Sitting in a director’s chair and holding a script, there is no mistaking he is a leader in his work environment; yet, he also dons boots and a leather jacket and sits hunched, the lighting dim and blue-toned. Rather than feature photos of Chun using the software or of stills from his work, the advertisement is striking simply because of his presence, unlike in the other advertisements. In contrast to most of the Asian men in tech advertising, he is built and masculine, down to his rugged attire and the dramatic lighting used. Despite his career being the focus of the copy, his body and appearance are clearly meant to grab viewers’ attention, even in the entertainment/pop culture magazine in which it appears (Vanity Fair). This advertisement seems unique in deploying an expert’s endorsement, when that person is an Asian male artist, and even more in its willingness to portray him seemingly without any fixation on his tech-savviness and photographing him as a serious, traditionally masculine figure.

Smartphone manufacturer HTC also features Asian-American artists in its print advertising, covering American band Young the Giant, fronted by Indian-American Sameer Gadhia. The advertisement is, like Adobe’s, an introduction to the music group and its history. It is comprised of quotes and photographs of the singers, both working and traveling in California for leisure, taken with an HTC phone camera. Perhaps, as with the other advertisement featuring Tze Chun, or with spokesmodels who are the face of cosmetics or fashion brands, more prominent figures who work in media and entertainment are given more freedom in their portrayals, as audiences are presumably already familiar with them. Regardless, their presence in tech advertising—along with the
more expected presence of business executives, and the fact that they were chosen to appear alone as sole representatives, not in a group—show that perhaps within markets that are actually more stereotypically associated with Asian presence, we may more easily see an incorporation of a broader spectrum of representations as time goes on. Notably, however, these advertisements all feature Asian men—women, to whom the tech nerd stereotype has not applied as much, are instead shown not as industry experts but as professionals in offices. A more even gender balance was seen in the business-related tech product advertisements, but can also be seen in advertising for technology or financial companies more generally.

In advertising for technology, science, or business industries, Asian men and women alike are featured heavily, and the setting is usually meant to signal professionalism and trustworthiness when it comes to doing business. Many of these advertisements also emphasize themes of globalism and helping to expand companies internationally. An advertisement from banking and financial services company Wells Fargo talks about its “award-winning services,” which assist clients when they are “ready to expand [their] international business,” and lists several international banking services it provides to “help your business grow globally.” Another Wells Fargo ad again sells its services to help firms “meet their global business needs.” An advertisement from FedEx shows an Asian woman working in an office, with the words in bold across the photographs: “One word: Growth. Grow your business with FedEx international services.” Embraer Executive Jets shows two businesswomen shaking hands for “the deal of a lifetime,” the private jet in the background, outside their building—a reminder of the distance traveled for them to be able to do business overseas.
Other advertisements also featuring Asian people focus on the forward-thinking, creative nature of their financial services—World Financial Group says that their services are “something different” and provide a “revolutionary platform” for families, while Barclays talks about helping “innovative companies” by “financing the future, beginning today.” Others have Asian models as the “face” of the company and not just in a vague position in a photograph: First Republic Bank uses actual employee quotes and photos in their advertisements (“First Republic feels more like a friend than a business,” “Banking with First Republic is a highly personal experience”). Tony Hsieh, CEO of online retailer Zappos, appears in an advertisement for UPS endorsing its fast shipping and the success it brings his company, while an employee’s face serves as the background for describing the “life-saving…missions that matter” that consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton leads. Whatever the explicit messages, it seems Asianness is often present in business advertising partly because of the connection between globalism and the need to partner up with experts—a link that becomes even clearer in looking at advertisements which use Asian objects, rather than just people, to sell their products and services.

Interestingly, several advertisements in this sample are for cars, and as they target working professionals, seem similar in target demographic as many tech products. The auto industry advertises a range of features to customers, from sleek designs to fuel efficiency and affordability. As a product, it blends the appeal of fashion and technology, and its advertising reflects it. An ad for Lincoln Motors’ new luxury cars in 2013 explicitly says in its copy, “Introducing the car for the 42-year-old, urban-dwelling businessman” to emphasize that many people, even within the category of middle-aged wealthy men, might consider buying it and feel it is a good fit. The ad shows pictures of
12 different men who fit this profile, including three men of color, one of whom is Asian. In a similar advertisement for the same car, the copy asks, “If we were all the same, how would anyone be special?” The photograph shows 12 images of professional chefs, one of whom is an Asian woman. The two models’ presence contributes to a larger theme of diversity and individuality used to sell the car, but is also attached to the potential buyer’s profile of luxury-seeking professional.

This luxury theme is emphasized in some of the other advertisements, including one for Honda’s 2013 Accord car. While middle-of-the-line in terms of price, the advertisement focuses on its safety features and features an Asian businessman in a suit. Similarly, the 2014 Chevrolet Malibu uses a photo of three young Asian women on the beach, with the slogan “Mutual funds or mutual friends?” Because of the car’s fuel efficiency, the ad says, it is for the “richest guys on Earth.” Although the car’s potential customers may already have “mutual funds,” they are young, social professionals, and so instead may consider a non-luxury car. The three women in the ad represent this demographic—young and wealthy, but investing smartly. One Mercedes-Benz advertisement appeals to those who want a luxury vehicle and actually features a heavily made-up supermodel, Sui He (styled by fashion editor Carine Roitfeld) (See Appendix, Fig. 14). The message at the top states that the car is “The new maximalism.” The connection to high-end style, affluence, and modernity place the ad at the intersection between fashion and tech; it seems to combine the themes seen in both of these markets, as well as call to mind the tradition of using women’s bodies to sell automobiles. He’s red lips are puckered as she appears to hold the car in her hand and blow on it into motion; with her presence, the car is thus associated with sex appeal and style. The auto
industry, with its popular selling points of style, efficiency, and technical features blends many of the features that are also popular in tech, fashion, and business. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Asian people tend to be represented more heavily in this industry, too.
Conclusion

While Asian representation in the magazines is proportional to the population of Asian Americans, the sample skews heavily toward both people and objects of East Asian descent. While large East Asian cities such as Shanghai and Tokyo are used as a setting to indicate growth and the future, for example, photographs of small towns and rural areas used to illustrate charity, developmental, or infrastructure work are often of places in South or Southeast Asia. This, along with the lack of Asian models who are not Korean, Chinese, or Japanese show the severe limitations of the range of Asian people represented. As is suggested by Priyanka Chopra’s photographs for Guess Co., the stereotypes and imagery, as with filmic stereotypes, vary greatly, and the trends mentioned here apply mostly to East Asian models only because they dominate the sample.

The print ads in this sample indicate that people of Asian descent are often used to signal affluence and the cutting edge, especially of innovative elements in technology and fashion—two industries that are especially forward-facing and progressive. In some instances, early tropes from film, such as the de-sexed man, exotic female beauty, or technologically savvy nerd, still appear. For the most part, many of today’s advertisements find Asian models representing professional success, youth, and a fresh, modern sense of style. Nevertheless, expressing themes of innovation and modernity in industries like fashion often take the form of Asian people representing unconventional beauty and the avant-garde. The alternative images of masculinity and femininity depicted in these advertisements show that while Asian men and women are present, the range of their depictions is narrow and marginal. Asianness is still Other; rather than
representing the average American, it embodies the unfamiliar and visually striking, and is added to a scene or backdrop to construct an edgy aesthetic and appeal to offbeat markets and consumers.

These representations of Asian men and women, skewed toward unconventional styles, also demonstrate that much of the literature on gender differences in media representation do not apply as cleanly or accurately to Asian bodies. It has often been observed that men are generally portrayed as more powerful in advertising—this is done through giving him material success and sexual prowess or control over women in an image. On the other hand, women are often depicted as delicate and submissive, and are often shown in the home. Asian representations in advertising, however, do not fulfill these tropes as readily; instead, they occupy a narrower range of roles, never achieving the full profile of masculinity or femininity that the literature describes. Asian men are shown in positions of financial success, but are never presented as being sexually attractive, physically strong, or commanding. While Asian women are sexualized and exoticized, their styling is also masculinized as opposed to romantic, classic, or all-American. This deviation from traditional gender expressions and roles is a departure from being hypersexualized and pitted against white women in movies for years, but they nevertheless signify the relegation of Asian people to only roles of the marginal and unconventional. Further, the concentration of biracial models and models who appear ethnically ambiguous in advertising for mass rather than luxury products suggests that a very specific, racially specific look is desired for high-end goods—indeed, Chanel used yellowface in 2010 to advertise its Shanghai-inspired collection before embracing Asian models in more recent campaigns.
Ultimately, the advertisements project an image of Asianness as embodying a type of Otherness that is fashionable and interesting, but non-threatening. Asian people are presented as business partners and technicians who, rather than competition for American companies, are a potential asset for the future. As models, they are unconventionally attractive. Men are de-sexed, while women are upheld for select physical features—they embody alternative masculinities and femininities and do not upset Euroamerican beauty ideals. This points to a rewriting of the model minority stereotype; the inclusion of Asian models in almost exclusively upscale advertisements perpetuates the association between Asian people and affluence, and the many portrayals of Asian professionals and diverted sexuality in Asian models paints them as wealthy but harmless resources, justifying their continued marginal representations and contrast against other “problem minorities.”

**Future Research Directions**

While we cannot know whether the presence of Asian people in mainstream advertising is an attempt to reach out to Asian-American consumers, Asian Americans still view them and are aware of them as a form of media. An Asian-American mother interviewed in BBC’s segment on “Why Asian American spending power catches advertisers” (2012) says that advertising can hopefully help defy stereotypes in the media, and Asian-American news blogs like Angry Asian Man, 8Asians, or Disgrasian continually cover advertisements with Asian representation, both negative and positive. Future research may examine advertising content developed by agencies run by Asian Americans, such as DAE, started when its founders realized that the “Asian-American market was not well served by advertising and marketing,” or interTrend
Communications, who seeks to “provide messaging that maximizes impact in the Asian market” through “understanding cultural insights.” Firms like these created the Chinese New Year advertisements this year, and target non-English speaking audiences, as well, including Chinese newspaper readerships. Thus, there are most likely generational and cultural differences that can be found in these advertisements, against which mainstream advertising can also be compared.

Looking at television commercials, which have larger audiences and budgets and usually contain dialogue, would also shed light on the kind of characters Asian actors play in advertising. Recent commercials starring Asian Americans are promising in their portrayals; bloggers like Phil Yu of Angry Asian Man note the “all-American family” themes in several commercials, including a Target ad of an Asian-American mother and her children, and a P&G commercial interviewing U.S. women’s ice hockey player Julie Chu and her mother. Johnnie Walker Blue Label scotch recently hired a team to digitally bring back Bruce Lee for its commercial in a rare instance combining Asian masculinity and sex appeal. Old Spice deodorants also cast a young Asian-American actor who is “made a sexy man” on a date as he uses the product, while his mother observes. These commercials show the more varied and relatable depictions that can emerge when Asianness is not simply synonymous with wealth or exoticism. The still pictures of magazine print advertising too often portray a static image of Asianness. By including Asian models on the edge—mostly to signal progressiveness or alterity in upscale fashion, business, and cosmetic advertisements—this cultural medium adapts Orientalism for the twenty-first century. It seems to have forgotten that Asian Americans are also diverse, everyday consumers of mass-market items.
References


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Appendix

Fig. 1. Chinese lanterns as a backdrop for technological advancement. Source: *Fortune Magazine*, 7/22/2013

Fig. 2: Chinese lanterns and dragons symbolize adventure and discovery. Source: *Food Network Magazine*, 10/2013
Fig. 3: Three models display results of the “Even Skintone Illuminator.” Source: *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, 7/2012

Fig. 4: Use of Asian model in luxury, “scientific” skincare product. Source: *Glamour Magazine*, 8/2013
Fig. 5: Asian women in high-tech, “intelligent” skincare advertising. Source: *Glamour Magazine*, 8/2013

Fig. 6: Bold colors and edgy style in advertising high-end haircare. Source: *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, 6/2013
Fig. 7: Rare eyeliner advertisement featuring an Asian woman with “Doll Eyes” tutorial. Source: *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, 9/2013

Fig. 8: Multicultural advertising for a modern, all-American clothing line. Source: *Vanity Fair*, 3/2013
Fig. 9: Upscale and unique professional clothing choices shown on an Asian man. Source: Esquire Magazine, 9/2013

Fig. 10: Menswear-inspired clothing for women. Source: Vanity Fair, 9/2012
Fig. 11: Contrasting femininities in Asian and white models. Source: *Vogue*, 2/2012

Fig. 12: Asian models as stylish, futuristic, and robotic props. Source: *Vogue*, 8/2013
Fig. 13: Asian male sexuality diverted to a tech gadget. Source: Rolling Stone, 3/14/13

Fig. 14: Asian female sexuality, technology, and fashion combined. Source: Vogue, 9/2013