

Screening a hidden minority:
The representation of the British Chinese on UK television
and how this relates to British Chinese youth self-perceptions of
cultural identity

Sylvia Su Yeon Wong

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Supervisor : Giorgia Aiello

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Abstract

This critical study explores an area of visual communications, namely the media representations of the British Chinese on UK television. A textual analysis of three media samples was conducted, which were triangulated with interviews with third generation British Chinese youths. It compares the accuracy of media portrayals with the experiences of the British Chinese, highlighting the importance of cultural identity, which remains largely undefined in the UK. As such, the study also investigates whether British Chinese stereotypes and popular stereotypes of the Chinese such as the notions of Yellow Peril, Exoticism and Madame Butterfly narratives are still perpetuated in contemporary media. The essay concludes that media presentations still depicted elements of these stereotypes, but also notes that they were significant in portraying the British Chinese identity crisis. Finally, it is suggested that the British Chinese community should undertake a more active role to amend their lack of visibility in the media.

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Introduction

Despite the presence of Chinese settlement in Britain for more than two centuries, it is only recently that the relative absence of British Chinese voices in public culture has been emphasized and the question of British Chinese identity has been broached by an emerging generation of young Chinese people. The Chinese constitute the fourth-largest ethnic minority group in the UK, and the largest South East Asian minority in the UK (ONS, 2009). ‘British Chinese’ (hereafter referred to as the BC) is essentially a hybrid ethnic identity and represents a branch of Diaspora China (McKeown, 1999). Still, while there are numerous publications that interrogate Chinese diaspora identities in the US, Australia and other European countries, little has been written academically on the BC specifically. The relatively small size of the population, their spatial dispersal and the perception of BC as politically quiescent are all reasons why academics have only recently begun to study this minority group. Recent academic literature as well as a proliferation of press articles also call into question an overlooked cultural minority that still feel ‘invisible’ in mainstream UK culture (Pratten, 2012). Furthermore, there are clear examples in the social world of a distinct BC identity such as the recent *Between East and West* portrait exhibition by BC photographer Mike Tsang.

While the representation of other ethnic minorities in the UK has been well documented and the BC has been studied on their educational and economic prowess (Archer and Francis, 2006), the BC in the media continues to be an academic topic that has been left relatively untouched. The representation of the Chinese on television have been conducted in so far as official studies looking more broadly at ethnic minorities in general but these studies fail to extend past simply frequency of representations to the deeper meaning behind such portrayals.

This critical study attempts to explore the representation of the BC on UK television. Focusing particularly on the genres of soap, drama and documentary, it investigates the extent to which media portrayals influence in-group self-perceptions, and relates to broader academic discourses on racial representation: Are the BC represented differently to popular images of Chinese people? Can traces of stereotypes be seen? Do portrayals reflect the BC experience in society? Are credible representations possible?

The academic literature that forms the contextual basis of this study comes from the extensive body of research on racial representation in the media. The notion of Orientalism in particular has been used as a theoretical guide to critically analyze BC characters. In order to establish whether BC representations are stereotypical, well-established stereotypes of the Chinese need to be identified. Hence, the study draws on themes identified in numerous publications on the media representation of the sizeable Asian American population in the United States. Furthermore, studies on other cultural minorities in the UK (namely the Afro-Caribbean and South Asian communities) are discussed to discern the relational status of the BC.

Despite being a numerically small minority group, the increase in 3rd generation Chinese families has meant that they now constitute 20% of the UK population (700,000), a figure that is projected to rise at an annual rate of 9.9% (ONS, 2009). As a branch of Chinese diaspora, it is also important to acknowledge how their host country regards members of these dual cultures and subsequently, how they see themselves. Finally, the analysis of BC representations contributes to ongoing debates about the place of ethnic minority communities in the UK and the future of Britain as a multicultural society. Especially with regards to whether the ethno-national Anglo-Saxon population recognizes ethnic minorities as British. Hence, the study contributes to a growing scholarly interest into transnational practices and identities.

Literature Review

Representation and Stereotypes

Media representations of race have been a longstanding topic of academic study especially in the construction of stereotypical images, whether positive or negative, that viewers develop. Audiences may draw parallels between their viewing of constructed realities on television with real life (Gerbner et al., 2002) and inaccurate media representations can therefore be problematic if people begin to perceive dichotomized and hierarchal stereotypes as ‘natural’. This indicates that the media can have a significant impact on cultural identity and intergroup relations. Stereotypical representations are particularly damaging for a small and dispersed population like the BC. For this reason, it is critical to consider the presentation of characters in detail with an emphasis on their connection to pre-existing stereotypes.

The concept of stereotyping was introduced in Lippmann's (1922) *Public Opinion*, where he defines stereotypes as 'pictures in our heads' that aid efforts to assess the world around us. Current understanding of stereotypes bears negative connotations for its association with overgeneralizations and factual inaccuracy (Kanahara, 2006). In short, stereotypes function to 'reduce, naturalize and fix difference' (Hall, 1997, p.258). Greenberg (1988) notes that certain presentations that stand out to viewers may be more significant in formation of racial attitudes than mere number of appearances of minority characters. Interrogating these practices further, a number of social psychologists have argued that the formation of stereotypes is rooted in an 'economy of effort', which refers to the tendency of individuals to habitually retain thoughts that reduce cognitive effort when encountering new experiences or contradictory evidence (Seiter, 1986).

Nonetheless, television can also potentially change prejudiced racial attitudes through stressing similarities between the majority and minority groups; presenting a multicultural cast; or communicating an explicitly clear anti-discrimination message (Vrij et al., 1996). Despite this more optimistic stance, accurate anti-stereotypical presentations of ethnic groups are still rarely present within the media, which more often magnifies stereotypes (Ross, 2003).

Orientalism

Maykovich (1972, p.876) explains that stereotyping occurs where there are gross inequalities of power, stressing that the societal function of stereotypes is to define 'the power relationships of dominant versus minority in a given social structure' to facilitate the binding of the insiders into 'one imagined community' (ibid.). The connection between reductionist racial images and power is reified by the notion of Orientalism. Said's (1978) seminal work of the same title enquired into 'a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and 'the Occident', and supports Mayovich's (1972) emphasis on the instrumental function of stereotypes to inferiorize the minority group. By presenting this groundbreaking observation, Said (1978) highlighted a form of racialized knowledge that constitutes 'the Other' deeply implicated in the operations of Imperialist power. In his view, Orientalist discourse serves as a means 'by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically,

sociologically, militarily and ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively' as inferior to the West (Said, 1978).

While this was a pivotal development in academic understanding of Race and Ideology, Said's (1978) theory still suffers from numerous caveats, raising questions over the legitimacy of his argument. For example, his criticisms of Orientalist scholars can in turn be levied at himself for writing in a manner that presents the West as a hegemonic mass, stereotyping its characteristics (MacKenzie, 1995). In his review of Said's work, Varisco (2007) also noted that he focused largely on the Middle East and neglected Far East regions. Hence, one may argue that Said contradicts his denouncement of the West's homogenization of the East in his own generalization of 'the Orient' to one specific region. This is a significant oversight as Said's ideas are certainly applicable to the representations of East Asian cultures and people, as reflected in the proliferation of new academic disciplines such as Asian American Studies and theories such as Techno-Orientalism (Napier, 2001). Wang Ning (1997) also highlights Said's failure to acknowledge literature outside of the English-speaking regions of the world, thus hindering the extent of cross-cultural validity of his claims. Said's Orientalism is relevant to this study as the notion of 'Othering' is rooted in an understanding of identity as a fundamentally relational construct, and of visual communications as 'a power-laden site for the textual (re)production of identities' (Aiello, 2012, p.58).

Yellow Peril, The Chinese Exotic and *Madame Butterfly* narratives.

For the purpose of this research, Orientalist theories applied to the Chinese will be used to deconstruct British Chinese media representations in UK television programs. Popular conceptions of the Chinese in the West revolve around sentiments of Sinophobia and Sinophilia. Within this dichotomy, Jun Xing (1998) identifies three formulaic traditions that represent staples of the popular imagination of Orientals: The Yellow Peril formula, The Chinese Exotic and *Madame Butterfly* narratives.

The former stems from the Yellow Peril threat that had been prominent during the late 19th century, epitomized by popular culture figures such as Fu Manchu. Perceptions associated with the Yellow Peril stereotype were 'immorality, treachery, unscrupulous competition, and subversive intent' (Maykovich, 1971, p.448). According to Xing (1998), Asian ethnics, no matter if they have been born in the country, are still regarded as foreigners, thus animating a

territorial response. Adding to this, they are often perceived as inviting crimes, as reflected in recurrent images of criminal behavior set in various China Towns have become ubiquitous in the standard police drama series (Wong, 1978). However, Dorfman and Mattelart (1975) note that a mythical image is often constructed in the media to mask the reality of a threatening figure to the dominant group in society. Referring specifically to the Chinese, the authors note how Disney's release of the animated film *Mulan* coincided with China's ascension in the global economy to provide a sanitized and harmless portrayal of a new economic adversary. Within this frame, famous Chinese figures such as Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan, along with the popularity of martial arts films, are noted as the developmental influences behind the popular archetype of the kung fu fighter; a caricature ingrained into popular consciousness due to its consistent incorporation in various cultural products such as advertisements. On the other hand, a new order of good Asian representations was introduced by the Detective Charlie Chen series in 1930s America, where the benevolent Charlie Chen became the anti-thesis to the diabolical Fu Manchu. While this was a clear improvement, Xing (1998) still noted that Charlie Chen characters also spawned an unflattering narrative tradition of depicting Asian males as stealthy, non-assertive, sexless or effeminate.

Sinophilia refers to the expressed fascination with the exotic aspects of the Chinese culture. Olivia Khoo's (2007) *The Chinese Exotic* articulates how visual devices such as the dragon dress, swords and Chinese symbols, signify exoticism of the Chinese in visual culture. She also illustrates how Western appreciation for chinoiserie and the Western invention of the Chinese takeaway box are forms of mass exoticism. The former signifies a cultural entity that has lost its novelty in becoming a mass produced product, and the latter represents how food cultures have become a sign of cosmopolitan consumption. In terms of media representations, Park and Wilkins (2005) refer to an 'East Asian aesthetic' which describes the cost of the rising popularity of East Asian media content: the flattening of Asian culture and its people. Hollywood blockbusters, such as *Charlie's Angels* (2000), *Kill Bill* (2004) and the *Last Samurai* (2004) are cited as embodiments of the merge between 'stereotyping patterns of the past with a more self-conscious politically liberal twist' (Park and Wilkins, 2005, p.7). Additionally, the new branded cinematic genre of 'Asian Extreme' exemplifies how exoticism is configured in contemporary society through a re-branding of cultural films into 'exotic and cinematic thrills for the Western audience' (Needham, 2006, p.11). At the same time, 5th Generation Chinese Films that were exported to the West were 'self-packaged' in that they acknowledged Orientalism and the West's impulse to primitivise. In this sense, they projected

self-displayed exhibitionism of their culture in cinema - the 'Oriental's Orientalism' (Chow, 1995, p.171).

Said (1978) argued that there is a feminization of the Orient because of history of colonialism and rhetoric of feminine penetrability. As such, Parker (1998) asserted that the gendered exoticisation of Eastern food and overwhelmingly male clientele of Chinese takeaways attaches a very particular set of meanings to Chinese takeaway food and those serving it over the counter (Parker, 1998). More importantly, this association has created spectacularised images of Chinese femininity. For instance, stereotypes of Asian/ Asian American women created and perpetuated by American media include the China doll, geisha girl and dragon lady stereotypes (Wu, 2010). Masculine romantic desire is also often an oriental motif and Hollywood's glamorization of inter-racial romance between White males and Asian females serves this ideological purpose (Xing, 1998, p.68). These relationships as well as stereotypical representations of the submissive sexualized Asian female can be found in popular media examples such as *Madame Butterfly* and *Miss Saigon*, both of which feature tragic endings where the exoticised Oriental woman eventually leads to the downfall of the Western male. Furthermore, the projection of Oriental women as utterly feminine and delicate serves to legitimize their subordination.

However, these recurrent stereotypes are challenged by the notion of Neo Orientalism. A concept that takes into account new diasporic Chinese modernities that have emerged out of rapid economic development, especially in the 'tiger economies' of Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea. What is exotic now is no longer the powerless colonized Asia but a predatory and empowered modern Asia that is cosmopolitan, rich, modern and technological (Ding, 2007). These associations have resulted in a new image of Chinese femininity: the exotic cosmopolitan woman who can be cast into Western roles. For instance, Asian American actresses being used to update television series like *Miami Vice* and *Charlie's Angels*. Still, it is both images of Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism that are condensed into the mythology of 'Chinese-ness', which is naturalized through our exposure to recurrent Chinese stereotypes in the media.

Ethnic Minority Representation on UK Television

How ethnic minorities are presented in the UK media more generally may provide useful contextual information regarding why certain BC representations exist or are absent on

television. Over the years, the visibility of South Asians and Afro-Caribbeans have progressed in media through increased employment of Black and South Asian reporters and presenters; casting in cultural staple shows such as *Eastenders*; and people in authoritative positions in industry. However, many theorists have questioned whether this can truly be regarded as progression in racial representation.

Blackstone et al. (2005, p.121) have asserted that both Channel 4 and BBC ethnic programming have ‘failed to effectively challenge assumptions of British White society’. They refer to past initiatives, such as the Annan Report (1977), that were drafted as action plans to promote ethnic minorities in the media but instead, resulted in programs that had the adverse effect of emphasizing the divide of Sikh and Hindu and reinforced ideas of the Communist Chinese myth (Blackstone et al. 2005, p.146). Additionally, they acknowledged that while some progress has been made, ethnic minority actors were still very limited and restrictive in both frequency and variety of roles. Most fiction roles granted to these minorities could be described as comic or villainous and it was doubtful whether the majority of roles could have been said to contribute towards racial harmony. In fact, according to Jaspal and Cinnerella (2010), the large volume of academic publications on the representation of British South Asians and Afro-Caribbeans are due to their ‘normalized’ positions in popular soaps, literature and reality television. Their ‘hypervisibility’ is primarily negative, which encourages negative social representation. For instance, British Muslims are constructed as a hybridized threat to the ethno-national in-group (ibid.). Hence, Blackstone et al. (2005) conclude that while there was the will to improve racial media images, there was not the right expertise to execute these programs.

The (British) Chinese in the UK Media

Unlike Asian Americans, there has been little comprehensive investigation into whether the BC face discrimination in British society. As the BC are largely silent and kept out the media, it becomes a taken for granted fact that they do not face racial abuse. Whether or not this is truly the case, racial stereotypes continue to inform society’s views of the BC.

To understand popular understanding of the BC in British culture, it is necessary to investigate the socio-historical context of this cultural minority. While there appears to be varied interpretations of the historical settlement of the Chinese in Britain, Benton and Gomez (2007) have been credited for covering the area extensively. According to these writers, the

first settlement of Chinese people in the UK dates from the early 19th century around port cities such as Liverpool and London. In the 1880s, London's first Chinatown emerged and more Chinese families began to settle across Britain after immigration was made easier in 1914. Today, most of the British Chinese are people or are descended from people who were overseas Chinese when they entered the United Kingdom. By 2000, Chinese communities were present in major British cities including London, Birmingham and Manchester. Demographically, the Chinese encompass a numerically smaller proportion of the overall national population in comparison to the South Asian and Afro-Caribbean minorities; and unlike other immigrants who tended to congregate in certain major industrial and urban areas, they are dispersed across the country.

The Chinese are severely under-represented in the British political sphere. However, the appointment of Lord Nat Wei, the first and only active BC peer in the House of Lords, is a sign of improvement in this area, especially given his expressed desire to encourage more political participation from the BC community. There is also a lack of informal figures as BC celebrities are largely unheard of in the UK media as well as amongst the British and BC communities (*The Missing Chink*, 2004). However, this could be partially explained by lack of employment opportunities open to ethnic minority artists more generally (Blackstone et al., 2005).

One of the most prominent writers on the British Chinese is David Parker (1995) whose publications examine the BC youth and while he does begin to investigate BC media representations, there has still been no attempt to enquire into how the group feels about these representations and the degree in which these portrayals affect how they see themselves collectively in British society. However, he has collated a useful and comprehensive list of sources about the Chinese in Britain (Parker, 1994). While the number of Chinese personalities on British TV is scarce, in those programs that feature them, common recycled racial images are used. Such programs provide the popular press with a 'repertoire of images that are readily drawn upon when they mention Chinese people in Britain' (Parker, 1995, p.68). Key themes that have emerged from this collection can be used to examine how the BC had come to be understood over time. For the most part, press articles, mostly written by members of this minority, present the BC as a marginalized, lonely and nostalgic minority. Earlier press articles appear to incite a fear of the Chinese, or the Yellow Peril, through spectacularized stories about criminal and hidden triad gangs.

Another theme that can be derived from reviewing these articles is the reporting of racism to the Chinese in the political sphere, especially regarding immigration policies for people from Hong Kong. The ‘model minority’ image of the successful entrepreneur is also a common theme, seen in articles praising how the Chinese have revolutionized British catering in the past ten years but this is also set against more jocular pieces on how the Chinese are being restricted to catering employment. Benton and Gomez (2007) explained that British soldiers who had served in the Far East created a new customer base for Chinese cuisine and by 1985, thus 90% of the employed Chinese worked in the catering industry. By 2004, this number had halved and younger generations are breaking away from this traditional career route. However, the centrality of catering is still depicted through the iconic Chinese takeaway in television shows.

Parker (1998) also drew parallels between popular conceptions of the Chinese with their portrayal on UK television. He noted how television police dramas commonly featured storylines set in Chinatown involving drugs, gambling and extortion. Still, he asserts that such images are hard to change, as Chinese actors are often ‘hard pressed to find parts other than as gang members’ (Parker, 1998, p.69). The first and only show to feature a Chinese leading character, *The Chinese Detective* (1981), deviated from this popular media image. It was also significant in being the first televised BC protagonist. In this sense, the show is often cited as a positive example of BC representation. Based on my own primary research, there have only been a total of 4 characters on two of the most popular and longstanding soap drama series on UK terrestrial television *EastEnders* and *Coronation Street*, three of which are the female counterparts of the interracial relationships of main characters and one male takeaway owner with poor English. Parker (1994) identified several short documentaries on the Chinese culture such as religion, travel and food and programs that attempt to showcase reality of Chinese migrant culture, which mask the gap of BC presence in fictional television productions.

British Chinese Identity Crisis: ‘British-ness’ and ‘Chinese-ness’

According to Joppke (1999, p.224), the idea of an ‘ethnic marker’ determining whether or not one is British is limited by the increasing number of second-generation immigrants born and raised in the UK. Due to this, the state has been encouraged to accept different ethnic groups in its definition of ‘nation’ (ibid.). At the same time, there is the Conservative and radical

nationalist belief that foreigners, especially of different skin colour, could never become 'English' (Kalinova, 2003). This division of opinion has raised questions over what constitutes British identity in multicultural Britain, or rather 'British-ness'. To illustrate this concept, Cinnerella (2000) cites some of the main visual symbols we would associate with British-ness: the Union Jack flag; the national anthem 'God Save the Queen'; the bulldog and the popular colloquial saying 'an Englishman's home is his castle', reflecting the British value over the privacy and security of their home and that they are isolationists.

Prolonged residence in a foreign country and the increase of third generation migrants has also raised questions on what constitutes 'Chinese-ness' in the globalized diasporic world. Studies conducted on BC engagement with online communities, language and healthcare confirms how members of this cultural minority are uncertain of how and where they fit in British society and a general sentiment of feeling misunderstood.

One of the most well-known popular Chinese diaspora institutions is the website Huaren, which depicts the Chinese diasporic experience specifically in terms of loss of identity and stresses the need for restoration and to unite these disconnected groups. The acceptance of one's primordial 'Chinese-ness' is the legitimation behind Huaren's goal. 'From this point of view, any Chinese American or Chinese Canadian would do well, to all intents and purposes, to be Chinese first, and American or Canadian only second' (Ang, 2003, p.5). Offline, this same need for cultural preservation is evident in the proliferation of Chinese community language schools around the UK to support BC children in learning about the Chinese language and culture.

These schools highlight the traditional value on the native Mandarin language as linguistically constitutive of 'Chinese-ness'. However, Ien Ang's (2001) *On Not Speaking Chinese* argues that there is now a lack of theoretical scrutiny into the connections between the possession of Mandarin language skills and asserting Chinese ethnicity. This view is supported by the findings of Li Wei's (1994) comprehensive ethnographic study on the sociolinguistic practices among the BC community. In his sample of 58 British Born minority children, the subjects used English more in their daily lives due to social networks, as younger generations tend to relate more with the host community compared to older generations. This highlights the importance of adequate language proficiency for assimilation, as it is significant advantage for developing network ties with the English speaking ethno-national in-group.

The contestation of cultures that composite the British Chinese identity has been acknowledged by scholars of disciplines outside of communications such as Gervais and Jovchelovitch's (1998)'s study on BC conceptions of healthcare. They concluded that members of this community have to negotiate the differences inherent in two knowledge systems of Chinese traditions and Western biomedical expertise, demonstrating how Chinese diaspora members can become conflicted in situations where they are required to access their traditional knowledge, and subsequently call into question an entire way of life. The effort is most salient in those detached from their Chinese roots. At the same time, young students in the sample still held on to traditional Chinese values and knowledge as 'a privileged means to assert that, somehow, one remains Chinese' and 'a means of belonging when this is no longer easy' (Gervais and Jovchelovitch, 1998, p.6). Thus rather than considering their traditional beliefs and scientific knowledge as incompatible domains of thought, 'the contradictory nature of the representation is functional: it enables the community both to sustain and defend its cultural identity, and to cope with the challenges posed by the host environment' (Gervais and Jovchelovitch, 1998, p.1). As such, Ien Ang (2003, p.8) described his own cultural identity as 'disembedded from Asia yet somehow enduringly attached to it emotionally' and wishes to 'hold onto this hybrid in-betweenness not because it is a comfortable position to be in, but because its very ambivalence is a source of cultural permeability and vulnerability that is a necessary condition for living together in difference'.

Gervais and Jovchelovitch (1998) also offer a useful taxonomy of the Chinese community in England today and identify three key generations that constitute this demographic:

- The elderly generation comprises early settlers as well as the parents of later immigrants who brought their relatives over. They speak little or no English and therefore remain confined to their community.
- The middle generation comprise of newcomers and the children of early migrants. Some do not speak English, are involved in the catering industry and live within the boundaries of the Chinese community while others are functionally integrated into the host society, bilingual and highly educated professionals.
- The younger generation encompasses the growing numbers of British-born Chinese adolescents and children as well as the large number of foreign students.

This particular study will engage specifically with the latter generation group, excluding foreign students as they do not fit the description of the BC identity. It is concerned with

those individuals who were born and raised in England. In terms of discourse, members of this group are colloquially referred to as 'bananas' - yellow on the outside, white on the inside. Conversely, it is a label that alludes to their struggle with their own conflicting values and holds negated connotations of being 'too Westernised' (Parker, 1995). This describes the authenticity dilemma coined by Mia Tuan (1999) in her study of Asian Americans, which applies to the BC in terms of how they find themselves confronted with questions of not being 'Chinese enough' in the way they conduct themselves or their lifestyles. In their interactions with non-Asians, they must contend with the expectations of others who believe them to be closer to their ethnic roots than to their British ones. At the same time, they also face resistance to being seen as 'real' Britons.

An alternative position that may explain the lack of attention paid to the BC posits Chinese people as lacking investment in British based national identifications. Interestingly, Parker's research into young Chinese respondents contends that Britain has little significance to the lives of the Chinese as opposed to the salience of Hong Kong:

Any understanding of British Chinese identity must recognize the opening up of a new dimension, the return to HK, which complicates simple notions of either assimilation or British-based cultural hybridity... In fact it is often only when BC people return to HK that a self-definition in terms of national category like British Chinese becomes prominent (Parker, 1998, p.66)

The *Understanding Society* household survey highlights how the Chinese, along with 'Other' Whites and Afro-Caribbeans, associate least closely with 'British-ness' (McFall, 2012). Manning and Roy's (2007) study on immigrant cultures in the UK also found that newly arrived immigrants were less likely to regard themselves as British. However, both studies did note that instances of association were higher among children and grandchildren of migrants: 'These later generation immigrants are only slightly less likely to think of themselves as British than the white UK-born population and it seems that the gap narrows further with each generation' (ibid., p.74). Therefore, this should be an area that needs to be revisited.

Methodology

From the literature reviewed, three key themes were deduced as being integral to deconstructing the media image of the BC:

1. Orientalist Stereotypes
2. British Chinese Stereotypes

3. British Chinese Identity Crisis

These themes are articulated further in the following sections and their prominence was evaluated through a textual analysis of three television examples featuring BC characters, the findings of which were triangulated through interviews with BC youths.

Procedure

This study has been conducted using a two-part methodology designed to garner rich and relational data. The first part involved a textual analysis of three selected media clips that feature BC characters on UK television while the second portion of the study involved interviews with BC youths based on these clips. This arrangement was intended so that the clips could act as media stimuli by which the real life experiences of the BC can be compared against. Furthermore, textual analysis strengthened the validity of the study through contributions to methodological and analytical dimensions. Methodologically, observations were used to inform planning of the second part of the study. Analytically, findings were cross-referenced against interview narratives in the Discussion section.

Unlike media effects studies, which tend to be more empirically based, research into the *relationship between audience and media* requires more qualitative data as it is not a question of causality. Interviews, especially when conducted face-to-face, are a far more personal method of collecting information. Kvale (1996, p.1) justified the use of the interview in research by asserting that ‘if you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk to them?’. While there is the potential issues of neutrality and user expectancy, this method is appropriate for the primary aim of this study in that it provides access to personal accounts and allow for the opportunity to probe participants with follow up questions. Additionally, Kvale (1996) asserted that it is a method that seeks to describe the meanings of central themes. In this case, themes pertaining to what the viewers obtain out of viewing British Chinese on UK television.

Although focus groups were initially considered, individual interviews were chosen based on the fact that identity is a highly personal matter that should not be made susceptible to the influence of peers. Additionally, participants may be unwilling to divulge private information in a group scenario, such as admitting subscription to an unpopular show. There is also the potential problem of preventing all group members from talking at once, and an unstructured group interview also risks straying from vital relevant information. Furthermore, while focus

groups expose participants to a range of opinions, information gathered from a collective may not reveal much about individual identity. Interviews with members of the out-group (the ethno-national British) were not conducted as they lack personal investment in the subject matter of the clips and may be more focused on how the White British characters are represented, but for future research their inclusion may provide further insight into what factors contribute to the media portrayals of the BC as well as their position in society.

Participants were selected via purposive sampling. Only BC youths who have either been born here or lived here for a minimum of 10 years were sampled. This decision was informed by Manning and Roy's (2007) observations that the vast majority of those born in Britain, of whatever ethnicity or religion, regard themselves as British and that while newly arrived immigrants tend not to identify themselves as British, the longer they remain in the UK, the more likely it is that they do. Previous studies conducted on ethnic minorities in the UK also support the view that 'second generation immigrants are only slightly less likely to think of themselves as British than the white UK-born population and it seems that the gap narrows further with each generation' (ibid., p.74). 10 British Born Chinese youths were recruited through the University of Leeds 'British Born Chinese Society's online network. While the sample size is not wide enough to justify generalization to the entire BC population, this narrow selection was predicated on the need to generate 'thick description' (Geertz, 1994). Additionally, interviews are time-intensive and often reach a 'saturation point' after a certain number of individuals (Bowen, 2008).

The interviews were conducted following a semi-structured format so that subjects could be directed to particular issues, but there is still room for the conversation to define its own agenda for discussion. Moreover, closed-ended interviews would exclude other extraneous variables that may not have been considered by the interviewer. Participants were asked a series of preliminary questions before viewing the clips in order to gauge their degree of cultural identification as well as prior media exposure (see Appendix A1). This information would also help to identify any influential factors that may have contributed to answers to later questions. Following this stage, the media stimuli were presented.

The selected clips have been derived from three different genres and time periods in an attempt to compile the most comprehensive sample of BC representation on UK television.

- Clip 1.: A section of an episode of popular soap *Coronation Street* (2011) featuring the longest recurring Chinese character in this genre, Xin, an illegal immigrant female, who marries an Englishman (Graeme) to obtain residence in the UK. The content of the clip shows them preparing for an interview with an immigration officer to prove the validity of their marriage.
 - Clip 2.: A section of the pilot episode for *The Chinese Detective* (1981) - the first and only show on British TV with a Chinese male lead, played by BC actor David Yip.
 - Clip 3.: A full episode of Channel 4's *The Missing Chink* (2004) documentary produced by two British Chinese comedians discussing the lack of Chinese actors in the UK media.

The clips were purposely sequenced as such so that the two dramatic examples were introduced first, the more contemporary example followed by the more historical example. The intention behind this order was also to encourage interviewees to draw comparisons between the two texts. The documentary was presented last not only because it refers to the second clip but also as an appropriate means to extend the line of enquiry established by viewing the previous two clips.

After presenting each clip, there was space allowed for participants to voice their initial thoughts in order to garner responses unfettered by guiding questions and to extract relevant information such as their opinions of characters, any prominent stereotypes they noticed and whether they were offended by the content of the clips. The interview schedule was standardized in order to increase the consistency of the data collected. For Clip 1 and Clip 2, participants were asked to ascribe ratings on a Likert scale of 1-10 regarding the accuracy of the character portrayals to an actual BC person. The inclusion of quantitative scales bolstered interview findings by allowing for the numerical measurement of subjective matter that can be used for objective comparison. At the end of the interviews, all participants then received an overarching question that applied to all three clips (see Appendix A4). A tape recorder was used to record the sessions, and were transcribed electronically immediately afterwards (see Appendix C). All responses were collated in table form and categorized according to the questions to facilitate easier identification of commonalities and dissimilarities (see Appendix D). Data was searched for recurring themes and items of interest such as events or views that were unusual, noteworthy or contradictory and categories were determined to reflect as many of these nuances as possible. However, analyzing subjective data requires the researchers own interpretation, which raises potential issues such as 'elite bias' and 'holistic fallacy' (Miles and

Huherman, 1984). During the course of developing themes, transcripts were repeatedly referred to in order to check data in an attempt to avoid these two common qualitative research problems. Furthermore, if participants are not previously informed about the disclosure and purpose of the interview, this is seen as an unethical violation of privacy. For this reason, participants were required to sign a consent form prior to the interviews in order to ensure that they were comfortable with the publication of their names in this study (see Appendix B).

Themes

Theme 1: Orientalist Stereotypes

Extensive research has shown that Orientalist stereotypes of the Chinese exist in the media, and while this has been related to the representation of Asian Americans, whether or not the BC are portrayed in the same ways is still left unanswered. It is critical to investigate whether such stereotypes are still perpetuated in the media due to its potential impact on propagating misconceptions about the Chinese people, which includes the BC.

Theme 2: British Chinese Stereotypes

As opposed to the Asian Americans, media coverage of the BC is both limited and less pronounced. Still in review of past media coverage, it can be discerned that the British public have come to understand the BC around Chinese cuisine, their entrepreneurial success in catering and the various Chinatowns scattered throughout the nation. Additionally, past fictional programs have also depicted the BC in negative terms as villains or petty criminals. The extent that the biased racially loaded BC-specific stereotypes of the past still remain prevalent was examined.

Efforts to improve racial representations of ethnic minorities on UK television have been criticized on their effectiveness, which raises the question of whether positive portrayals of the BC can be promoted. With the exception of certain programs, it is clear that most of these television programs were not designed with the BC community audience in mind and most minority programming is catered to blacks and South Asians (Blackstone et al., 2005). In turn, the needs of the BC with regards to the media will be overshadowed by institutional attention on these two more dominant ethnic groups. Still, one of the fundamental questions that concern the BC on their media representation is how they can be improved, and whether it

would be through more presence on entertainment programs or the production of more documentary-style programs such as *The Missing Chink* (2004).

Theme 3: British Chinese Identity Crisis

Previous scholarly work on the BC indicates that the latter generations now face intense confusion over their identity, especially for those detached from their heritage. This is especially problematic when they are required to access their knowledge of Chinese culture. Areas where they struggle to balance their dual cultures such as language and healthcare attitudes were cited. Therefore whether or not this dimension of the BC experience is documented in the media is an area that needs to be investigated. Alternatively, it may be the case that Parker's counter-argument has more salience, in that Hong Kong holds more significance than Britain to their identity. On the other hand, it is important to identify whether media representations adhere to the BC youths described by Gervais and Jovchelovitch (1998, p.6), 'who hardly speak the dialect of their parents, who refuse to enter the catering trade, who reject their parents' expectations and yet honour them, who suffer discrimination because they look Chinese but cannot be proud of a culture which is no longer theirs'.

Findings

Textual Analysis of Media Clips

In the production of fictional programs, conscious choices have been made, which means that the images presented through this medium are never neutral (Hall, 1997). Hence, it was critical to deconstruct the meaning behind the media clips through textual analysis. Textual analysis also provides insight into whether clips reinforce or challenge any prior perceptions. However, Creeber (2006) reminds that images on television cannot be removed from narrative and genre conventions. Therefore these aspects have been considered in relation to the visual components of the following clips. Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) *Reading Images* as well as Van Leeuwen's (2001) *Handbook of Visual Analysis* were both key resources that provided a 'toolkit' by which to comprehend these media texts. The clips were repeated three times each to acquire a thorough reading of their content. The first viewing was strictly shallow watching; the second viewing included note-taking on textual components of character, narrative and setting; and the third viewing included note-taking on any noteworthy visual signifiers.

Clip 1: Coronation Street Episode

Coronation Street is primarily known as a television program aimed at a working class audience. This is reflected in the clip through the setting of the brownstone residential area as well as the attire of the White British characters, suggesting that the characters possess associated values and attitudes. Notably, despite Xin's unconventional appearance on the show,



Figure 1 11:58

there are no exoticised visual elements; her clothing, hairstyle and color, tanned skin all communicate Westernization. The mention of her favorite food being 'kippers' also reinforces her connection with the British culture.



Figure 1 07:39

However, Xin's interracial relationship suggests exoticisation of the Chinese female. As with most Chinese female-Anglo male relationships in the media, Madame Butterfly narrative elements are present and are most visible in three instances. Firstly, Graeme's apparent lack of knowledge on Xin's preferences and history at the beginning of the clip demonstrates the

conventional trope of the Oriental woman in media as inaccessible and different. Secondly, Chinese female passivity is evident through the visual framing of scenes where she is trapped by her surroundings. Thirdly, the couple's relationship alludes to the moral downfall of the Western male in his commitment of partaking in a fraud marriage. Still, the implication of resistance is challenged by the older British woman's acceptance of their relationship, who smiles at the young couple and offers her help in preparing for their interview.

Xin's subordination is also seen in the later portion of the episode. For instance, she abruptly stands up when Graeme returns from calling the immigration officer, indicating a sense of servitude. On top of this, she is then aggressively pointed at (to stay put where she is).

Although she is shot on a higher plane than Graeme, the action functions as a power asserting

gesture to 'keep her in her place'. A command reiterated by the door being forcefully closed on her, creating tighter visual framing that connotes entrapment not only in the van, but also by her situation as an illegal immigrant. She is separated from the residential setting that represents British life and confined to the enclosed claustrophobic space of the vehicle, which becomes symbolic of her imminent departure. This social distance is also reflected in the far position of the camera relative to Xin, which lingers over her confused expression through the glass of the door (Figure 2).



Figure 2 05:16

Clip 2: The Chinese Detective

The Chinese Detective has clearly been inspired by the popularity of the Charlie Chen Detective series in America. However, it deviates from the original by placing a BC actor in the lead role. Conventional elements of a crime drama are noticeable in this clip. For instance, the clip opens to the familiar sterile setting of a police station, specifically the interrogation room. The opposition of

Yellow Peril narratives is communicated in the composition of the frame. Even without prior knowledge from the show's title, familiarity with crime drama conventions will enable viewers to recognize that the seating positions of the two characters indicate that the White British female assumes the role of the criminal and the Chinese male embodies the role of law enforcer. The camera is positioned over the shoulder of the woman and the oblique camera angle also implies a sense of detachment on the part of the viewer, who has no choice but to view the Detective through the lens of the woman, who is clearly puzzled by the appearance of Ho in this context (Figure 3). Ho's occupation, along with this formal environment, attributes his character with the associated qualities of respect, justice and authority. However, Ho does not receive this respect from the British woman who immediately bluntly calls attention to his unnatural presence ('Who are you?', 'What are you?'). Additionally, unlike stereotypical police detective series, the male lead is not presented as hyper-masculine or sexually desirable.



Figure 4 06:36



Figure 5 06:49

In the woman's home, Ho is initially stood at the doorway, which functions similar to Clip 1 as an in-between zone between the British domestic private space and the foreign 'Outsider' space. The Anglo female is stood in the foreground in close proximity to him and height difference becomes apparent, allowing for her to look down upon him - all of which suggests a perceived sense of authority over him (Figure 4). Her disdain is also translated across to the viewer through aggressive hand gestures, such as waving her cigarette as she speaks. However, the fact that Ho maintains eye contact conveys his composure and calm demeanor in this situation, even in response to the offensive racial statements. For this reason, the audience is poised to be sympathetic to his character as well as respect him further. At the same time, his lack of an emotional response should also be noted as an unusual quality in an ethnic minority character on television. The contrast between the two characters serves to highlight and establish the character of Ho as morally upstanding.

As the woman retreats into the kitchen, she stops to gaze upon Sergeant Ho still standing at the door, who does not return her gaze and is turned away from her (Figure 5). Through this positioning, the viewer is encouraged to gaze voyeuristically upon him in the same way - to treat him as a spectacle.

In the kitchen, the woman frantically moves around the enclosed space while Ho exhibits minimal movement and casual laidback body



Figure 6: 07:32

language. His relaxed posture and placement of his hands in his pockets connotes an impression of feeling at home. His back is turned towards the camera and focus is shifted onto the woman instead, indicating an establishment of trust between the two characters, which juxtaposes her initial skepticism at the station.

Clip 3: The Missing Chink

The clip opens with interlaced scenes of British locals (none of whom are Chinese) interviewed on the street in the familiar vox pop style, a common documentary convention, which reiterates the programs connection with reality. This then shifts to an establishing shot of a Chinese takeaway where the two presenters watch the interviews through a small old-fashioned television set (Figure 7). The placement of the TV is relevant and appropriate not



Figure 7: 00:28

only because it symbolizes the ritualistic practice of ‘looking’ and encountering media images in everyday life, but also it is significant in separating the spaces of reality (as situated on the screen) and the semi-fictional domain (the Chinese takeaway). The fact that the scene is situated in a

takeaway functions as a deliberate ironic statement of the stereotypical notion of ‘the natural habitat’ of the BC, especially given the mise en scene which is cluttered with tawdry Chinese décor to the verge of excess.

The camera jumps back and forth between the two comedians as they criticize, in conversation style, the state of their cultural group’s visibility in the media. They go through the topic of Chinese and Japanese actors on UK television playing interchangeable roles, but the entrance of David Yip forms an abrupt interruption to the climax of the conversation. The frame centers on his presence and lingers on his face, as to suggest that he is an important individual. Hence, the subtext of this scene relies on the viewer’s prior familiarity of *The Chinese Detective*. One of the comedians raises his eyebrows as if to hint to viewers of this newcomer’s celebrity but their nonchalant interaction indicates their dismissal or unawareness of his identity.

Serving Chinese food from Chinese server to Chinese patron also serves as a balance of power as opposed to the traditional image of a Western patron being served over the counter. Again, this enclosure functions as an establishment of the balance of power and separation of different cultural spaces. The credits roll over the same intercut vox pop style street interviews at the beginning, only this time with Chinese people; the viewers are re-connected with the real world, where the BC are numerous and varied.

Interviews with the British Chinese Youth

The BC sample of this study could only name one or two BC personalities on television, and many of them cited takeaway owners and martial art artists as the most common characters in which they encounter Chinese people in the media. As one interviewee notes, the roles for Chinese people appear to be extremely limited in being ‘either the standard mysterious foreigner with different tastes, or as a side character with very little involvement in the storyline’ (BC3, Male, 20). In saying this, he expresses that ‘it's disappointing to see them receiving 3rd class roles’ (ibid.).

The interview findings support previous arguments made by Parker about a cultural identity crisis amongst the BC youth. For instance, one interviewee expressed how her cultural disposition obstructs her from developing a sense of belonging to a home country: ‘When you go abroad, they consider you more British, but here you are seen as more Chinese’ (BC6, Female, 18). Although when asked about how they would respond if asked where they came from, many of the interviewees stated that they would name their hometowns in England, but they also acknowledged that their answers often do not suffice for their questioners. ‘I say I’m from Leeds, but then they rephrase it immediately afterwards to “Where are you originally from?” or “Where are your parents from?”’ (BC2, Female, 24). Extending this further, the sample expressed that the ethno-national group have difficulty distinguishing BC people from the influx of Chinese students and businessmen. However, there are factors that do determine the degree by which British people can accept and interact with the BC. One of these crucial factors is the importance of fluent English speaking ability. ‘If you speak fluent English, you don’t get treated any differently’ (BC5, Female, 22); ‘People just think oh you speak fluent English so you’re just like us’ (BC4, Male, 21). Furthermore, the BC are distinguished by their absence of a foreign accent and knowledge of colloquialisms, a trait that often surprises British locals, especially if they have not been exposed to BC people in the past. This highlights the expectation of many British people, especially in rural regions, that ‘all Chinese

people to have poor English and a strong distinctly Chinese accent' (BC1, Female, 20), thus one interviewee articulates, 'if you have a bit of a Chinese accent, you do get treated differently' (BC2, Female, 24). Hence, it is clear that language and accent comprise a key factor on whether a member of an ethnic minority can claim British nationality. One participant explained that, 'If you didn't look at me and only heard my voice over the phone, you wouldn't think I was Chinese, you'd assume I was British' (BC8, Female, 20). These remarks correlate with the responses in Tuan's (1999) study, where Asian Americans note how without the benefit of sight or knowledge of last name, their American accents lead to the reaction of surprise when those they speak with realize their ethnicity. However, BC8 (Female, 20) does not express discomfort over the regularity with which people cannot believe that she doesn't 'sound' Chinese over the phone.

Regarding ratings on the accuracy of portrayals, Clip 2 scored significantly higher than Clip 1 with the average score of 7 as opposed to an average score of 4. A sizeable portion of interviewees justified their grading by referring to the fluency of the actor's English as well as the strength of their accent. All of the BC representative characters possessed a strong command of English and a Western accent, but interestingly, interviewees were divided in their opinions on whether or not Xin (Clip 1) was in fact BC as several participants claimed she had an American accent. Still, the fact that other participants did not question the classification suggests there is ambiguity in the identification of BC in society, even amongst the community themselves.

Many of the respondents acknowledged that the narrative of Clip 1 was clearly influenced by the contentious issue of foreign migrants abusing British immigration regulation as covered by the press and almost all participants exhibited strong feelings over this misguided perception of the BC: 'If you're not BC, its true that there are illegal immigrants in UK but it's suggesting that all BC are illegal immigrants and are cheating the system!' (BC2, Female 24); 'obviously we've grown up here so we are not immigrants' (BC7, Male, 20). In this sense, several criticized her excellent command of English as supporting the interpretation of her character as deceptive. However, these same respondents acknowledged that this oversight might have been due to a need to cater to the standard soap audience and render the foreign character more accessible (BC9, Male, 21). Additionally, one BC interviewee noted that even if a Chinese 'illegal immigrant' was portrayed with a strong Pidgin English accent, it could potentially be offensive and 'may risk bordering on racism' (BC8, Female, 20).

Overall, the interviewees felt that while race had been mentioned at numerous points in Clip 1, it was neither overly emphasized nor negative. For instance, one participant drew attention to the dialogue exchange between Xin and the older woman in Clip 1 where the latter argues that despite different native languages, they are still the same people - in that when they love someone, it is experienced in the same way. Participants that noticed this commended the gesture as a progressive leap from the British woman in Clip 2, who is far less accepting of a Chinese person being a detective as well as being westernized. This is apparent in the racial remarks in her scripted dialogue ('What are you?', 'What did you think I was going to wheel out, crispy duck, egg foo yung?'). In this sense, most participants agreed that Clip 2 did overly emphasize race. However, most participants also praised the main character of Sergeant Ho as a positive portrayal as a departure from the stereotypical roles and professions that they had listed earlier in the preliminary questions. However, the commentators in Clip 3 noted that this was still an unrealistic representation, which the interviewees supported in their affirmation that they did not in fact know any BC familiars in this profession, but knew plenty of takeaway owners and doctors. This realization inclined one interviewee to make the profound point that due to this, 'it is hard to discern whether TV is stereotypical as there is an element of truth' (BC3, Male, 20).

Another positive aspect of Clip 2 mentioned by participants was Sergeant Ho's calm reaction to the racist remarks. One BC male noted how it is clear that Sergeant Ho considers himself no different and is comfortable in his identity, which is why he does not react strongly to the racial comments. For this, he commended how the show doesn't linger too long on these tensions and 'they just got on with it' (BC10, Male, 19). On the other hand, one interviewee recounts her childhood with her brother to illustrate the difference between their identifications and consequent treatment by society:

He identified himself more as Chinese, and so would take those kinds of comments as an attack. But because I saw myself as more British, that sort of comment I never saw it as an attack as much as he did (BC8, Female, 20).

Her strong association with the British culture was further reinforced by her identification with Ho ('That's what I do!' (BC8, Female, 20) when asked 'What are you anyway, Chinese or something?' to which he answers 'Cockney'.

Still, participants noted that the name of the show itself automatically centralizes race even if it is not explicit in the clip. A number of BC respondents suspected that the title and concept of the show itself might have been purposely chosen to deliver shock value during a time when BC were relatively unheard of. They also include that if the show had been named more generically and the male lead just so happened to be Chinese, or even a BC, this would have been a far more positive and beneficial racial representation.

Personally, I'd hoped that he would play up more to his Chinese-ness. I think it's stupid that he's completely normal yet they call it *The Chinese Detective* so they are obviously making a massive point that this guy is Chinese. If you're going to do that, why don't you make it very stereotypical cause it would be better that way. By making a show like that they are just trying to make us feel like we're included, like we're aware of you guys, but they're just trying to fill the racial quota (BC5, Female, 22).

Additionally, while several BC interviewees did agree with the observations in Clip 3, they did not feel that the production of more programs of this nature would be the solution to incentivize better media representations. The title of the show along with its content only further distinguishes the BC as a distinct group and highlights the disparity between the in-group and out-group, thereby counteracting the possibility of neutrality. Hence, the popular consensus on how racial representation can be improved for the BC on UK TV was that there should be less emphasis on racial difference through tailored titles and roles for Chinese people on television, as well as fewer programs that perpetuate misconceptions about the BC. Interviewees agreed that conditions for Chinese people on TV can only improve if there is less disparity between the Chinese and British, and that those of BC identity facilitate this bridging of cultures seeing as the Western culture is part of them. One interviewee asserted that more BC people should publicize their talents but adds that, in doing so, they must also 'downplay Asian-ness' (BC5, Female, 22). However, one member scrutinized the effectiveness of this approach in stating that:

In films and TV shows, I don't think being BC would help much because you still look Chinese, and so you will get allocated those stock roles for Chinese faces regardless of how in touch of Western culture you are (BC10, Male, 19).

Many of the interviewees also highlighted the problem of the lack of BC interest in joining the entertainment industry. The cultural factor of pressure from Chinese parents to strive for traditionally approved careers also contributes to the scarcity of BC actors and presenters (BC9, Male, 21). When asked about whether or not they felt proud of being a BC, most interviewees would hesitate before expressing a shared disappointment over a lack of BC role

models. The absence of informal institutional support figures in the media may explain why they have not felt motivated to aim for media related professions. Nevertheless, it would appear that the popular sentiment is that it needs to be the BC themselves that have to be responsible for changing the condition of their representation in the media.

I think for the change to come it has to come from Chinese people themselves. It is often the obligation of the media boards to showcase ethnic minorities and there are a lot of black presenters but we are nowhere to be seen even though we are historically underrepresented. It has to come from people pushing for that politically and socially, because at the moment who do you know that cares? So until that changes and we do start caring, nothings going change on TV for us (BC4, Male, 21).

While the BC challenge deep-seated beliefs of Chinese people, whether or not this is enough to facilitate their assimilation into British society is still debatable. Adding to this is the apparent cultural divide amongst 3rd generation BC in that ‘there are some BC who know a lot about their culture and proud of their culture, and are very in touch with their roots, and there are some who are completely Westernized and out of touch with their culture’ (BC5, Female, 22). Therefore while the BC are often referred to in homogeneous terms, they are actually a community that encompasses manifold complex identities.

Discussion

Insights gathered from the two research methods enable parallels to be drawn between the real life experiences of the BC in the UK with what is presented in the media, which was then used to inform consequent analysis of how concepts, theories and ideas proposed in the literature relate to the BC representations on television. The textual analysis revealed how certain Orientalist stereotypes are still perpetuated in these media examples, while others are re-appropriated or not entirely visible. Consequently, the BC interviewees were divided in terms of the quality of representations. On one hand, some argued that they are skewed while others defended that the stereotypes depict the true condition of the BC living in UK. This dichotomy is examined in the following discussion.

British Chinese and Orientalist Stereotypes

While all clips displayed no overt Yellow Peril images, elements of this Orientalist theme was still inherent in the subtext. *The Chinese Detective* broke boundaries by not only placing a BC person on TV but also in showing a Chinese person in a position of authority. However, in line with Dorman and Mattelart’s (1975) argument about the sanitization of threatening figures, Ho’s occupation as a detective may have been perceived as threatening given that the

show had been broadcasted during a period where the BC were a significantly smaller cultural minority and strong attitudes towards foreign immigrants were more prominent. Hence, despite the conventional construction of the television detective as a masculinized role, Ho, like Charlie Chen, is devoid of such traits- he is de-masculinized in order to detract from a power-laden profession tied to the British legal system. Furthermore, Xin's status as an illegal immigrant accesses deep-seated beliefs of Chinese people 'cheating the system' through sham marriages, student visas and other means. Interviewers also noted how her fluent English raises suspicion and suggests an underlying layer of deception to her character. Still, despite possessing good English, a Westernized appearance and no exoticised visual motifs, Xin is still another Oriental female counterpart in an inter-racial relationship. More significantly, her romantic relationship fulfills the Madame Butterfly narrative, with Xin playing the role of the submissive docile Oriental woman who ultimately lures her British male victim to commit fraud. The interviewees criticized this portrayal for negative portrayal of Chinese and BC women (seen in their ratings) and mentioned the need for more modern Neo-Orientalist images of Chinese women. In saying this, there appears to be a lack of Neo-Orientalist images across all clips. However, this could be partially due to the fact that Clip 2 and Clip 3 were produced over 5 years ago, where such images were only starting to surface.

In keeping with the literature on Exoticism and previous articles on the centrality of catering, Chinese cuisine is a common trope in all clips; from the mention of Graeme's favorite meal being 'kung pao chicken' in Clip 1 to the derogatory 'egg foo yung' comment in Clip 2 and the Chinese takeaway environment in Clip 3. However, instead of these symbols 'flattening' the BC into simple images as previous representations had done in the past, they draw attention to limited/restricted access of the British locals with Chinese culture. Exoticism is thus used as a critical device to contest reductionist conceptions of the Chinese as isolated to the tradition of catering and Chinese food. Clip 3 stands out as being the only production out of the three made by BC people themselves. Thus, it is here that the 'Oriental's Orientalism' is exercised through the irony of the locale.

While the clips do present the BC in a negative light, the findings of the textual analysis and the interviewee responses indicate that it is interestingly the ethno-national group that is more unfavorably portrayed. This is apparent in how characters are depicted as ignorant of Chinese culture. In Clip 1, Graeme fails to pass the relationship test by not only answering the question on Xin's birthplace wrong, but also in his mispronunciation of the actual name of the

province (although, he is corrected by the older British woman.) In Clip 2, the female's aggressive questioning of Ho is punctuated by condescending remarks that draw upon a limited knowledge of Chinese cuisine. In Clip 3, the opening sequence of street interviews shows how the non-BC public is largely unaware of BC people in the UK.

Parker's assertion over the BC's lack of identification with 'British-ness' and, with the exception of one anomalous participant, the salience of Hong Kong does not seem to apply to this sample of BC youths. Characters also exhibit their identification with 'British-ness': Xin in wanting to be a British citizen; Ho in not being phased by verbal attacks; and the two comedians in their decision to make a British-style documentary. But while there may be a strong sense of British nationality, their acceptance as such is depicted as problematized by both the character interactions in the clips as well as in the accounts of the BC youths themselves.

British Chinese Cultural Identity

The contentious depiction of Xin as an illegal immigrant exacerbates existing problems of distinction between recent Chinese immigrants from BC people in British society. Previous press coverage on public attitudes towards UK immigration policies for Hong Kong people contribute to how the BC are still seen as foreigners despite being born and raised in the UK. Hence, the production choice to feature this in the soap could be due to catering to the territorial response of the ethno-national group towards all ethnic minorities. Chinese immigrants who move to the UK to study or work often bring with them the cultural and religious differences and limited proficiency in English that distinguish them from other Britons. Yet, for the BC who have been born and raised in the country, received national education, are dressed in British attire and have no distinguishable foreign accent, they become categorized along with these recent immigrants. This is especially reflective in the subtext of the question posed to interviewees on where they are from, which refers instead to their parents country of origin. The underlying meaning highlights how such questions are expected to elicit an answer that is more in keeping with their fixed notions of the Chinese being exclusively foreign. This real life interaction relates closely with that of the British woman and Ho in Clip 2. Firstly, in her initial distrust in him at the beginning, embodied by the crude 'What are you?' statement, and secondly in her dismissal of his answer that he is not Chinese, but 'Cockney'.

Finally, the BC sample interviewed suggested that ethno-nationals might distinguish BC people from other Chinese immigrants through speech elements. Interestingly, the interviewees also used the language, accent and colloquial usage of the television characters to determine if they were accurate representations of a BC person. Still, even this proves to be a vague means of judging authenticity, as demonstrated by the opposing views regarding Xin's national identity. While the Mandarin language is briefly referred to in Clip 1, none of the characters employ the tongue once in the entirety of the clips, moreover, it is not even mentioned if they are able to. Hence, BC characters deviate from previous portrayals of non-BC Chinese in the UK media. However, while this may be an improvement, Ang's (2001) contention that the link between the possession of Mandarin language skills in asserting Chinese ethnicity and cultural value is false means that characters can still be treated as distinctly Chinese and 'foreign' despite their excellent command of English.

The BC characters presented in all three clips are typified as such through Western cultural signifiers, namely object signs such as attire and physiognomic attributes. With the exception of Clip 3 where the Chinese takeaway is a clear signifier, there is a lack of visual signs that are stereotypically Chinese. As a result, visually, there is a de-emphasis on their Chinese ethnic appearance and identity. Linking this to real life experiences of the BC sample group, there seems to be a dominant view that acceptance is only achievable by downplaying their 'Chinese-ness'. Moreover, the degree by which one associates themselves as British is said to have a profound impact on how BC members may respond to derogatory racial abuse. Hence, this correlates with Gervais and Jovchelovitch's (1998) contention that the BC youths often have to negotiate their Chinese and English cultures to cope with the challenges posed by the host environment. Sometimes this involves separating spaces for expressing of their dual cultures, as is the case of BC8 (Female, 20), who leaves 'her Chinese life at home and lives her English life outside of home'. This compromise has been visually communicated in the clips through vectors that establish boundaries between the local and foreign spaces such as doorways, the takeaway counter and the television set. The personal accounts of the interviewees demonstrate how the present day generation of BC exercise a great deal of choice regarding the elements of traditional ethnic culture they wish to incorporate in their personal lives. They can pursue further knowledge about their cultural heritage if they please, which indicates how ethnicity has indeed become optional in the personal lives of the sample. Hence, the Chinese ethnicity is treated as a cultural position that the BC youths can choose to

access or ignore. In fact, it is only through downplaying his ethnicity that Detective Ho is able to lower the guard of his witness and eventually extract the information needed for his case.

But at the same time, as previously mentioned, societal expectations for the BC to perform their ethnicity remain. Despite how far removed they are from their immigrant roots or how much they differ from their foreign-born counterparts, the ethno-national group is said to express dissatisfaction when the BC do not comply with their conception of the foreign 'Other'. Thus the BC 'identity crisis' is deepened by their contesting obligations to be both Chinese and *not* Chinese in order to gain acceptance. A condition that is conveyed in the clips through the visual trope of enclosure and claustrophobic spaces, as exemplified by the van, the interrogation room, doorways and the narrow takeaway counter.

Conclusion

In lieu of these realities, monolithic representations that suggest a single homogeneous BC community in Britain, fundamentally positioned as 'Other', do not reflect the multi-layered and varied way in which the BC may construct hybrid bi-cultural identities. While the study benefits from a sample of British Chinese youths that come from various regions around the UK, over half of the BC interviewed were not regular television viewers. Nevertheless, the rarity of Chinese appearances in the UK media is evident in their view that they expected national audiences, and admittedly they themselves, would be surprised to encounter a Chinese person on UK television. Additionally, what is more disturbing is how the BC youths in the study were not able to recall more than two BC personalities in the media. While this is displayed in a comical manner in *The Missing Chink* (2004), it highlights the true extent by which BC people are disconnected from the media and the general lack of BC representatives, negative or positive, in the media. As the BC community continues to grow, later generations will become more embedded in the UK culture and strive for careers that veer outside of the traditional professions associated with the BC, a conscious effort should be made to not only improve the visibility of this group but also to produce non-reductionist and derogatory media representations to facilitate easier integration into a predominantly Anglo-Saxon society.

This study provides only a 'snapshot' of BC sentiments at a particular moment therefore, future research could verify claims made in my research through a longitudinal study, or in the addition of content analysis on the frequency and nature of BC television appearances over the course of a set time frame. Additionally, portrayals of the BC on other forms of

media should be interrogated to check if they correlate with observations in this study. Nevertheless, this study is significant in that it offers a glimpse into construction of the BC within UK popular culture and the perpetuation of popular ethnic stereotypes in contemporary media texts. Furthermore, it finally gives this silent 'hidden minority' an opportunity to voice their opinions on their media representations as well as their feelings of cultural belonging, which may be useful to media planning bodies or governmental institutions concerned with this group's interests.

In the same way that the British language and accent of the BC challenge deep-seated beliefs about Chinese people, the research also suggests that BC people can serve to be ideal vehicles to challenge other stereotypes of this ethnic group in the media. More BC characters on television can be beneficial by presenting new alternative images of the Chinese and improve intergroup relations in the process. Furthermore, stock Asian roles based around long-standing stereotypes can be nullified by BC personalities who do not fit the generic archetypes of these one-dimensional characters. Only when Chinese people can finally be on television without a racial agenda or need to fill a racial quota, can we expect an improvement in both out-group and self-perceptions of the BC in society.

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Appendix A: List of Interview Questions

1. Preliminary Questions

1. How do you respond when people ask where you are from?
2. How regularly do you watch British TV?
3. Can you name any Chinese personalities in the media?
4. What types of media roles for Chinese people are you familiar with?
5. How do you think the UK public view the British Chinese in society?

2. Post Viewing Clip 1 and Clip 2 Stimulus Questions

1. Does this strike you as a negative or positive example of the British Chinese?
Why?
2. Is race being overly emphasized?
3. On a scale of 1-10 how accurate do you feel this representation is to a British Chinese person?

3. Post Viewing Clip 3 Stimulus

1. On a scale of 1-10 How much would you say you agree with what is being said in this clip?
2. Which areas do you most strongly agree with?
3. If more similar productions were made, do you believe it would be helpful to promote positive BC representations?

4. Final Question

Do you feel proud to be British Chinese?

Appendix B: Sample Consent Form

Consent Form

I.....agree to participate in this research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview to be tape-recorded

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

(Please tick one box:)

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

Signed.....

Date.....

Appendix C: Sample Interviewee Transcript

The following sample transcript is derived from the interview conducted with BC8 (Female, 20). Interview questions have been italicized and points of interest have been underlined.

Preliminary Questions

How do you respond when people ask where you are from?

Usually Lincoln but they always ask me after where are your parents from so I say Hong Kong

How regularly do you watch British TV?

Not often

Can you name any Chinese personalities in the media?

On face value, Gok Wan but he plays down the Chinese aspect and relates more to the British public. There was also Cho Chang, but never seen her in anything again. She had such a strong Scottish accent, which fit the book's character but I didn't identify with her in any way, she was just that Chinese girl.

What types of media roles for Chinese people are you familiar with?

Britains got Talent – either they're shown as super talented or as a joke

How do you think the UK public view the British Chinese in society?

I think they see me as British more than Chinese. When I compare myself to my brother, who was always more in tune with his Chinese side than I was, watching anime and Dragon Ball Z but he got bullied for that. I never went to school saying oh just watched Sailor Moon, I just sort of blended in with culture so I was never bullied growing up.

(Post Clip 1 Viewing)

Initial thoughts

She's not your typical illegal immigrant, she seems like she was raised in International School or America, she has an American accent. I compare her to my Mainland Chinese friend and they sound nothing alike. They could have cast someone better to play an illegal immigrant but it's a touchy subject though because if you go too far the other way, you could be criticized for being racist.

Does this strike you as a negative or positive example of the British Chinese? Why?

I'd say mostly positive.

Is race being overly emphasized?

Not in a negative way. The woman was being nice about in the end, saying we may speak different native languages but we're all the same really. If you love someone, it's all the same.

On a scale of 1-10 how accurate do you feel this representation is to a British Chinese person?

7 – the interracial relationship aspect is accurate to me, but the illegal immigrant aspect is questionable.

(Post Clip 2 Viewing)

Initial thoughts

It's quite racist. When I compare it to the first clip, the woman is far less accepting that Chinese people can be in a policeman role and Westernized, compared to the first clip where the woman was like you belong here as much as we do.

Does this strike you as a negative or positive example of the British Chinese? Why?

Positive – he's obviously an intelligent man who works things out without much information but a negative portrayal of the woman as a British person for her ignorance. He's laid back about the racial comments, almost like he is any different to her. When asked what are you, to a person who wholly identifies themselves as Chinese, they'd defend themselves and say I'm Chinese! He's obviously comfortable with who he is, otherwise he would have been more offended. My brother, who identified himself more as Chinese, he'd take those comments as an attack. But because I saw myself as more British, that sort of comment I never saw it as an attack as much as he did. I also like how he replied to the woman with the Cockney comment. That's what I do!

Is race being overly emphasized?

Only by the woman.

On a scale of 1-10 how accurate do you feel this representation is to a British Chinese person?

8 - He acts like there's nothing wrong, brushes it off his shoulder. That is what a lot of us do. Plus the speech fits. If you didn't look at me and only heard my voice over the phone, you wouldn't think I was Chinese, you'd assume I was British.

(Post Clip 3 Viewing)

Initial thoughts

It's made 8-9 years ago and things haven't improved since then. I don't know if it says more about UK TV or people who live and study in Britain, I didn't know a lot of Chinese people growing up who wanted to be an actor, they always wanted to go into business or finance type jobs.

On a scale of 1-10 How much would you say you agree with what is being said in this clip?

9/10 – When you do think of Chinese people in UK, you do think of them in jobs such as herbalist and accountants, but not as people on TV. When you asked me earlier can you name any on UK TV, I can't name one. Which is a problem.

Which areas do you most strongly agree with?

They probably made TCD as a gimmick, for maybe the shock value fact that people aren't used to seeing a Chinese person. It's something different to watch.

If more similar productions were made, do you believe it would be helpful to promote positive BC representations?

Maybe make people think oh yeah that's a really good point but wouldn't do much to help. I think it's more about a lack of Chinese people getting into that industry

Do you feel proud to be British Chinese?

Yeah I do! I'm a big fan of the whole dual nationality thing and part of it was because I didn't get a lot of flak growing up. It's not that I was ashamed of my heritage but when you grow up in a different country, you have no choice but to adopt that culture. I mean when I was at home with family, I spoke Chinese to my family, ate Chinese food, watched Chinese TV shows and if I met Chinese person on the street I'd speak Chinese to them but when I was growing up in primary school surrounded by white kids, I'd obviously act like everyone. Whereas when I'm home, I'm more in touch with my Chinese side. It's very much Chinese life at home and English life outside of home. They're kept apart. At the moment I'd say I'm more British, and language ability is a big part of that. My parents don't speak good English, so I have to talk to them in Chinese. Maybe I'd be closer to them if I could speak better Chinese there's issues that I'd like to talk to them about but I couldn't because of the language barrier, I can't articulate in the way that I'd like to them so that puts up a wall between us. And I wouldn't have that problem if I weren't British Born I guess.

Appendix D: Sample Interview Findings Table (Preliminary Questions)

The following table is an example of the format used to organize interview findings post transcription. Headings were organized according to the interview questions and interviewee number. By presenting data in this form, it facilitated easier identification of commonalities and dissimilarities in participant responses.

No.	Question 1.1	Question 1.2	Question 1.3	Question 1.4	Question 1.5	Question 1.6
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						