Constructing the Other: A Critical Reading of The Joy Luck Club

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This article is a critical reading of the movie The Joy Luck Club. Grounded on Stuart Hall’s theory of articulation, the author explored how the movie text constructed Chinese culture as the sexist, oppressive, mysterious, inscrutable, exotic, and savage cultural/racial Other. The representation of the negative Other in turn sustains the myth of the White middle-class American culture as the positive Self. This construction reflects the new Orientalist/Assimilationist paradigm, which poses a double bind on minority groups. On the one hand, it insists that members of minority groups need to cast off their cultural identities and to obey and follow the rules of the dominant group. However, on the other hand, it insists on the exotic otherness of minority group members. A close examination of the movie text is part of a political project that treats popular culture as resources for public pedagogy. That is, engaging in popular culture should be more than a process of deconstruction. It should also strive to provide the possibility for alternative narratives to counter negative media representations.

KEYWORDS Other, culture, articulation, Chinese culture, Chinese Americans, Orientalist/Assimilationist paradigm, public pedagogy

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In 1993, Amy Tan’s (1989) best-seller novel *The Joy Luck Club* was made into a movie with the same title by Disney. With the two-million-copy book sale, Tan became an overnight celebrity in the early 1990s. Tan’s enormous success symbolized the acceptance of Asian Americans to the mainstream American culture. The movie production further added to this fervor. The movie, *The Joy Luck Club* (directed by Wayne Wang), soon proved a box-office hit. It was ranked 48 in terms of box-office income in the fiscal year of 1993. It generated approximately $32,901,136 in the U.S. domestic market alone. *The New York Times*’ Century Box Office ranked this movie as one of the Top Three Movies of that year.

The movie, just like the book, was hailed by many for two reasons: (a) the universal female theme and (b) Asian actors moving into mainstream. For example, Linda Lopez McAlister (1993) applauded the movie for the universal mother-daughter bonding:

And though these mothers and daughters are specifically Chinese, the theme is universal and speaks to every woman who ever had a mother and/or a daughter, across ethnic and racial differences.

Film critic Roger Ebert (1993) credited the movie as a breakthrough for Asian actors moving from margin to center:

The movie is a celebration, too, of the richness of Asian-American acting talent...But often they were marginalized, or used in “exotic” roles, or placed in stories that were based on what made them different from the dominant culture, instead of what makes them human and universal. “The Joy Luck Club” is like a flowering of talent that has been waiting so long to be celebrated.

*The Washington Post* praised this film as “nourishing for its avoidance of Asian stereotypes” (Howe, 1993). In fact, another review in *The Washington Post* blamed the movie for its eagerness to present Asian American women in a positive light to fit its “feminist ideology” (Hinson, 1993).

All these reviews shared the same theme—Asians or Asian Americans are not “human and universal” until they become acceptable to the mainstream (dominant culture). The claim of universality is essentially problematic in that rather than representing a full range of human beings, it in fact projects or naturalizes particular groups—for example, White, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied, male, etc.—as “human and universal,” while it designates others as less human. Thus, the claim of universality works as a mechanism of exclusion that perpetuates existing social hierarchies and power structures.

The claim of universality works in all social domains involving power. This particular film, however, concentrates this claim on the issue of race.
Asians or Asian Americans can be upgraded to the “human and universal”
category only if they can produce elements shared by the White audience.
This assumption requires Asians or Asian Americans, or all racial or ethnic
minorities for that matter, to give up their own cultural values in order to
be assimilated into the mainstream U.S. culture (M. McAlister, 1992; Yep,
2002).

Despite the universality that critics credited it with, the movie *The Joy
Luck Club* reinforced stereotypical images of Chinese and Chinese Ameri-
cans. In her website titled “Why *The Joy Luck Club* Sucks,” Al Wong
(1997), a Chinese-American, wrote that the movie is full of stereotypes of
Chinese Americans or Asian Americans. For example, the movie actually per-
petuated the stereotype of Chinese women as sexual objects, the “China
Doll” (e.g., see Sun, 2003, for a review of stereotypical media portrayals of
Asian American women).

Moreover, rather than breaking stereotypes, this movie further reaf-
ffirmed the notion of Asia as the monolithic Other. Indeed this Hollywood
presentation confounded the negotiations and struggles over identities
engaged in by Asian Americans or Asians. Kathleen Wong(Lau) (2002) docu-
mented one incident in which a well-meaning White woman claimed to have
learned a lot about her Korean American colleague’s culture from this movie.
Thus, although Asian Americans are permitted to join the elite class finan-
cially as the “model minority,” they still could not escape cultural and polit-
cical marginalization. They are seen as forever foreign although they have
been living in the United States for several generations, longer than many
European descents (Nakayama, 1988). This double bind is what M. McAlister
(1992) called the *new Orientalist/Assimilationist paradigm*, which “simul-
taneously insists on the exotic ‘otherness’ of Asian culture and the necess-
ity—for Asian Americans—of putting aside all but the most superficial
elements of that culture in order to be assimilated into America” (p. 104).

The popularity and the ostensible progressiveness of *The Joy Luck Club*
made it the representative voice of Asian Americans. A couple of years ago,
several White female colleagues of mine, after viewing this movie, showed
tremendous sympathy toward me, the “poor” (oppressed) Chinese girl. Sho-
hat (1991, p. 51) argued that Western films assume “the ethnographic and
quasi-archaeological power” in presenting Others and in turn defining the
“Western” self. It constructs Chineseness, Asianness, and Asian Americanness
for its audiences, Asian or non-Asian alike. Unlike Tan’s novel, which has
been both praised and criticized (e.g., V. Chen, 1995; M. McAlister, 1992),
with the exception of Al Wong’s (1997) critique of stereotypes, the film has
not been critically analyzed as a politically charged cultural text. The movie
deserves scholarly attention especially in the context that the U.S. cultural
politics reduces the experience of racial minorities into mere ornamentation
to sustain the myth of a diverse society without fundamentally challenging
the racial hierarchy (M. McAlister, 1992). A critical examination of the movie
The Joy Luck Club can help us disentangle how such cultural politics and media representations contribute to the struggle of meanings over cultural or racial identities.

ARTICULATING THE MOVIE TEXT

Many communication researchers agree that the mass media are the most powerful storytellers in modern society (Severin & Tankard, 1997). Indeed the original motivation for communication study in the United States was the fear of mischievous effects of the media (McQuail, 1987). The media have become an important source of information and interpretation, especially for what could not be obtained through first-hand experiences (Nimmo & Comb, 1990). Western films, as a form of popular culture, function as “Philosophy, Egyptology, Anthropology, Historiography and Geography” in constructing other (non-Western) cultures (Shohat, 1991). A very useful way to tackle the discursive power of a movie is to examine it as socially, politically, culturally, and historically situated text.

My treatment of the text draws from critical and cultural studies. This tradition of research focuses on two central issues: (a) the politics of textuality (the nature of signification) and (b) the relationship between the cultural and the social (Grossberg, 1984). These two central issues lead to dual tasks for the researcher: a hermeneutics of faith and a hermeneutics of suspicion. A hermeneutics of faith deals with interpreting the meaning of the text; whereas a hermeneutics of suspicion requires examining the connection between the text and the context in which the text is produced, distributed, and consumed. The intersection of these two hermeneutics defines the “ideological function” of the text (Grossberg, 1984, p. 393).

Examining textual power from this perspective, Althusser (1971) argued that rather than merely reflecting the social order, or producing a system of meaning supporting the existing social order, the media text works as practices that present its own meaning system as real or natural. Thus, the power of the text is not reflecting or confirming, but normalizing or naturalizing certain practices. Building on Althusser’s argument and Ernesto Laclau’s (1977) book Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory, Stuart Hall (1986) contended that the mechanism of the media text to reinforce normalcy as well as marginality is “articulation.” That is, the media text does not simply distort or misrepresent the reality (consciously or unconsciously). Rather, it works through the process that forms “the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions” (p. 53). This connection is “a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute, and essential for all time” (p. 53). In other words, articulation is the connection between two distinct discursive elements that would not ordinarily or naturally be connected. It is through articulation that a linkage is established. The discursive unity
created by articulation is arbitrary and contingent. Thus, articulation is also a process of intervention of ideology into language. The dominant group that has institutional, material, and discursive resources naturalizes its own practices through the control of articulation. The struggle over meaning is essentially the struggle over articulation.

The theory of articulation is not confined to the domain of discourse. It also has implications for social forces. Unlike orthodox Marxists, Hall (1986) rejected the necessary correlation between ideology and social class (or social forces). He maintained that ideological elements do not have necessary belongingness. A particular form of ideology does not intrinsically belong to a particular social-economic class. Rather, such connection is contingent and non-necessary. One’s social identity (class, gender, race, sexuality, etc.) does not necessarily determine one’s consciousness. It is through articulation that an ideology discovers and speaks to its political subjects. An ideology that enables people to make sense of the world and their own positions can also function to unify those people, political subjects, as a social force or class. For example, being a female does not necessarily make a woman a feminist. She can be a feminist only if she accepts the articulation of feminist ideology and uses it to interpret social affairs. By the same token, a man can also subscribe to feminist ideology even if he does not have a female identity.

It is precisely because articulation is not necessary, inherent, or determined that any articulation can be broken down and rearticulated in different ways (Hall, 1986). This is where the role of human agency comes into play. Rather than merely the products of dominant discourse, human beings, as social actors, can intervene in the articulation process. Thus, they can resist the dominant discourse through a process of deconstruction-reconstruction.

Therefore, the investigation of the process of how certain meanings and practices are “articulated” or made a coherent unity not only is important to understand the function of media texts in naturalizing dominant experiences and identities while marginalizing those of the dominated, but also is critical for challenging the dominant discourse and producing the possibility of hope. Giroux (2000) argued that “texts are now not only as objects of struggle in challenging dominant modes of racial and colonial authority but also as pedagogical resources to rewrite the possibilities for new narratives, identities, and cultural spaces” (p. 494). His contention that media texts should be treated as forms of public pedagogical resource involves more than deconstruction, it further includes a process of re-construction or re-articulation.

A critique of the movie *The Joy Luck Club* is an excellent way to engage in public pedagogy. This film was accepted by many in the United States as a “classic,” “the representative voice of Asian-Americans.” Indeed, intercultural communication researchers and educators even use this movie (as well as Tan’s book) to teach Chinese cultural values and communication styles (e.g., Athanases, 1993; Hamilton, 1999; Sueda, 1993). Feminist critics either
challenge this movie as an example of female oppression in China, or cel-
ebrate it as alternative female narratives or Asian American feminist literature
(e.g., V. Chen, 1995; X. Chen, 1994; Lu, 1998). Many viewers (including Asian
Americans) believe that this movie represented authentic Chineseness or
even Asianness. A Caucasian woman claimed this movie taught her a lot
about her Korean American colleague’s culture (Wong(Lau), 2002). Many
of my American students argue that this movie is very accurate, authentic,
and non-stereotypical because Amy Tan and Wayne Wang (the director of
the film) are Asian Americans. When hearing my project on *The Joy Luck
Club*, colleagues, friends, and students always would question me “How
on earth could you bash such a nice (positive) movie about Chinese culture?”
The “ethnographic” power that this movie assumed in the mainstream U.S.
culture makes it problematic and dangerous in the increasingly diverse
society in which we dwell. Thus, we need to critically read this Hollywood
movie to explore how the articulation process contributes to the struggle
over meanings of cultural or racial identities.

My reading of *The Joy Luck Club* is grounded in sociolinguistics and criti-
cal discourse analysis. Sociolinguistics studies the use of language with
regard to the interlocutors’ social/cultural identities, relations, and contexts
(e.g., Fowler, 1996; Gee, 1999; Halliday, 1971; Hatch, 1992). For example,
Fowler’s (1996) theory of “point of view” of a narrative tackles the relations-
ships among characters and with the larger context. Critical discourse analy-
sis deals with “the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of
dominance” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 367). van Dijk (1988a, 1988b, 1997) and
Fairclough (1992, 1995) examined how the dominant ideology is perpetuated
by the structure and content of news. The integration of these two
approaches enables the researcher to not only interpret the meanings of
the film, but also discern the ideologies articulated in the movie text.

My treatment of this film is not a typical “textual analysis.” Textual ana-
lysts seldom delineate their methods in their research, they, nevertheless,
primarily rely on Freudian, Foucaultian, or Lacanian psychoanalysis of
“desire,” which is manifested is the gendered “gaze” (Olesen, 1998). The
theory of “gaze” deals with how the power relations between the origin of
the gaze (e.g., Western males) and the object of the gaze (e.g., women,
non-Western cultures, nature, etc) are communicated in visual terms (Chow,
1995). Critics of the psychoanalytical film approach contend that the pre-
occupation on sexual desires ignores other factors such as race and class,
as well as the importance of the context (e.g., Pribram, 1988). De Lauretis
(1984) proposed to explore alternative film analysis methods, for example,
semiotic theories of iconicity and narrativity. Therefore, rather than focusing
on the subconscious psyche, my approach emphasizes the actual use of
language in the movie text. Inspired by sociolinguistics and critical discourse
analysis, I examine the film *The Joy Luck Club* as a socially, politically, cultu-
really, and historically situated text.
Hall’s theory of articulation directs our attention to the connections between certain meanings and practices established by the text. My analysis of the movie *The Joy Luck Club* focuses on the articulation process by which the movie text associated specific meanings with Chinese and American cultures.

This movie presents a series of stories about four Chinese mothers and their American-born daughters. The development of the mother/daughter relationships centered on conflicts, with the mothers’ attempts to maintain control on the one hand and the daughters’ wishes to run free. Contrary to what film critics claimed to be universal women bonding, the movie articulated the mother/daughter conflicts as clashes between the American and Chinese cultures.

An example of such construction is June’s piano lessons. June had no interest in the piano; however, her mother forced her to play it in order to compete with Auntie Lindo, whose daughter was a gifted chess champion. Lacking genuine interest and internal motivation, June resented the piano lessons. As a result, her debut ended in disaster. After that, June saw no reason to continue this torture, but her mother would not give up the idea. Then a conflict took place (see Example 1).

Example 1:

2. June: I am not gonna play anymore. Why should I?
3. Mother: What did you say?
4. June: I am not your slave. This isn’t China. You can’t make me!
5. Mother: Get up!
6. June: No! No, I won’t! No!
7. Mother: (grabs June and forces her to sit in front of the piano).
8. June: You want me to be someone I am not. I’ll never be the kind of daughter you want me to be.
9. Mother: There two kind of daughters, obedient or follow own mind. Only one kind of daughter could live in this house, obedient kind.
10. June: Then I wish I wasn’t your daughter! I wish you weren’t my Mom!

This story was narrated from June’s point of view. June, as the narrator, was the center of the sympathetic portrayal. She was a child who had her own will and opinion. She resisted her mother’s imposing things on her against her own will. In Lines 2 and 6, she verbally declared that she would
not continue practicing the piano, which she perceived as an imposition. For her, she could only be what she is rather than “someone I am not” (Line 8). In addition to this declaration, she resorted to her right of freedom by saying “I am not your slave!” (Line 4). In the same line she backed her utterance up by insisting that such imposition was not the norm in the United States, “This is not China. You can’t make me!”

A story can be constructed in different ways from different perspectives. The point of view of a narrative determines the relationships among characters and with the outside world. It reflects the ideology of the author (or the film makers) (Fowler, 1996). In this case, the character June was given the power to define her relationship with her mother and to make sense of the world. Her insistence on individual freedom echoes the myth of the American culture, which makes her the “normal.”

The construction of her mother was through June’s eyes. The mother was portrayed as a bit abusive, verbally and physically. She tried to shape her daughter’s future according to her own ideal without considering her daughter’s feelings. Faced with June’s resistance, the mother resorted to verbal demands “get up” (Line 5), physical force (Line 7), and her authority by virtue of her status as mother. She put emphasis on the obligations of the daughter and used it as a threat, “There two kinds of daughters, obedient or follow own mind. Only one kind of daughter could live in this house, obedient kind” (Lines 10—11).

From June’s point of view, her mother’s action was defined as imposition and her intention was defined as unjustified, using June to compete with Auntie Lindo. The mother’s perspective was ignored, as a result, she was deprived of the power to voice her interpretation of the issue. Furthermore, the mother’s reasoning—asking the daughter to be obedient—does not resonate with the norms and values of the mainstream U.S. American culture, which makes her abnormal or less humane. The mother, thus, contrary to June, was presented as the oppressive Other.

Cross-generation conflict may not be particular to any culture, but what needs to be noted here is that the conflicts in this movie were constructed as cultural rather than idiosyncratic or universal. Throughout the movie, the mother—daughter conflicts were constructed in one pattern, that is, all the daughters were trying to assert their well-deserved individuality, where the mothers tried to prevent that for reasons that were bizarre or ridiculous. For example, Lindo, Waverly’s mother, used her daughter’s chess championship to show off in Chinatown, which was seen as an embarrassment by Waverly. In a quarrel with her mother, Waverly also perceived her mother as a force of repression: “I’m never gonna play chess again! You can’t make me! You can torture me all you want. I still won’t!”

Thus, by representing the conflicts as patterned, this movie suggests that those conflicts were in fact clashes between the American and Chinese cultures. With the absence of a White center, the American-born daughters,
who were eager to be assimilated into the White middle-class American culture, were promoted to the center, while the Chinese mothers represented the Other, Chinese culture. In addition, this movie further associated specific values with each culture. The American culture was linked to freedom and humanism, whereas Chinese culture was connected to abuse (e.g., “You can torture me all you want”), coercion, and irrationality. Through this type of articulation, the movie constructed the dichotomy between the humane Self and the sexist, oppressive, mysterious, inscrutable, exotic, and savage cultural/racial Other (Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978). The reinforcement of the Other in turn sustains the myth of the positive and normal Western Self (Jandt & Tanno, 2001).

In this movie, the construction of the two cultures was accomplished through dichotomized articulation. The American culture was presented as normal and competent, while Chinese culture was depicted as deficient. This manifested in the languages that the mothers and daughters speak. Although both mothers and daughters speak English on most occasions, the mothers’ English is broken or fractured with a Chinese accent, (e.g., “What I say” in Line 1 and “There two kind of daughters, obedient or follow own mind” in Line 10 in Example 1). This kind of pidgin English was viewed as deficient or stupid by their daughters. In sharp contrast to their mothers, the daughters speak perfect White middle-class American English. This both reflects and reinforces the linguistic prejudice that is prevalent in the American society. The so-called “standard English” (i.e., that of White middle class), is considered as intelligent and uplifting. Any deviation from this norm is seen as stupid, uneducated, or deficient. In this movie, the mothers’ less perfect English was a source of embarrassment for the daughters. At times, they assumed that their mothers were too incompetent to communicate with others so they volunteered to serve as translators. By so doing, they helped silence the mothers.

However, contrary to the contempt of the mothers’ failure in acquiring a second language, English, the daughters’ inability to understand their mothers’ Chinese was represented as unproblematic. The Chinese language, which was impenetrable to the daughters, was linked to conspiracy or corruption. The two different types of speech codes—systems of symbols, which can be more than one language (Philipsen, 1992)—thus, were articulated in association with different values: one stupid, impenetrable, and cunning; the other competent, promising, and uplifting. Indeed, White middle-class American English was treated as the norm against which the mothers’ language was evaluated and judged. The Chinese language was constructed as a barrier to assimilation into the mainstream American culture.

This dichotomized articulation is also manifested in the construction of the rational Self versus the irrational Other. American cultural values, represented by the daughters, were presented as rational and reasonable, whereas Chinese cultural values associated with the mothers were made to appear
irrational or ridiculous. The mother—daughter bonding stories were indeed a cluster of value collisions. For example, Lindo and Waverley’s conflicts were often around cultural/relational assumptions. They had an argument before Waverley’s wedding (see Example 2). Waverly had offered to accompany her mother to the beauty parlor before the wedding, but later she called Lindo to excuse herself.

Example 2:

14 Mother: So you see I still kept my promise to my mother. But years later, things were somewhat different with my daughter Waverly’s wedding.
15 (Phone rings)
16 Mother: Wei.
17 Waverly: Ma, It’s me.
18 Mother: Oh, Waverly-ya, you already at the beauty parlor?
19 Waverly: No.
20 Mother: No?
21 Waverly: No. I’m... I have a headache.
22 Mother: Headache? You have a headache so you cannot keep your promise to your mother?
23 Waverly: Ma!
24 Mother: No, don’t come. Why should I want you to come? Why not you telling me you don’t want to come?
25 Waverly: Ma, that’s not what I said!
26 Mother: What’s wrong with the way I look now. I just go to wedding with my old hair. (hangs up the phone)
27 Waverly: Shit! She always does that!

In this story, two different assumptions were underlying their communication. For the mother, a daughter should not consider herself as the center of everything, and she should give higher priority to her mother. Once a promise is made to the mother, it should be kept (e.g., Lines 14–15, 23–24). However, for Waverly, breaking an arrangement is no big deal, and it can hardly be seen as breaking a serious promise. Her individual interests should be given highest priority in any consideration. It is not necessary for her to sacrifice herself for her mother. She could cancel a previous arrangement with her mother for a good reason, “I’m... I have a headache” (Line 22).

The different assumptions resulted in frustration on both sides. Lindo and Waverly both assumed that the other party was insincere and manipulative.
The mother perceived that her daughter was not willing to be there for her
(Lines 26–27) and was telling her excuses, that is, a “headache” (Line 23). The daughter interpreted that her mother was ignoring her personal will and need. For Waverly, her mother was very authoritarian and tried to coerce her to do things against her own wish.

Unlike the story of June’s piano lesson, this story was narrated from the mother’s point of view. However, like the previous story, this story did not shed positive light on the mother. Walter Fisher (1984, 1985, 1987) argued that persuasion can take place only if audiences accept the truthfulness of the text. By truthfulness, Fisher does not mean the authenticity of the text or some notion of absolute truth. It is whether the text resonates with the values shared by audiences. In this case, to most of the middle-class audience members in the United States, who share individualistic beliefs and values, Waverly’s reason for not going to the beauty parlor is more acceptable than her mother’s request to keep her promise. Lindo’s requests were based on collectivistic assumptions. They do not ring true to American audiences. As a result, she sounded demanding and needy. By merely presenting the mother’s behavior without necessary contextualization (i.e., to put those behaviors in their historical, cultural backgrounds within which those behaviors were generated and shared), the movie constructed Chinese cultural values as strange, oppressive, and less humane. Once more, Chinese culture was articulated as the strange, exotic, mysterious, and inscrutable cultural/racial Other, as opposed to the normal positive American Self.

REPRESENTATION OF CULTURES

The movie *The Joy Luck Club* as part of the new orientalist/assimilationist discourse simultaneously insists on “universality” and “otherness” (M. McAlister, 1992). In other words, it directs Asians or Asian Americans to be assimilated into the mainstream American culture, at the same time it denies them the opportunity for full participation (Yep, 2002). On the one hand, cultural heritages of ethnic or racial minorities were always associated with negative meanings, such as uncivilized, backward, poverty, etc.5 This results in self-hatred and hatred of the Other. Shedding those cultural identities was made an imperative for liberation, freedom, and prosperity (Morris, 2004). However, on the other hand, ethnic or racial minorities are forever seen as foreign. Certain cultural symbols such as Chinatown, sushi, and karate were insisted upon to maintain the exotic “otherness” (M. McAlister, 1992). In this section, I will use this film as a case study to delineate the articulation strategies of new orientalist/assimilationist discourses.

The media text works through conditioning audience members’ interpretations (Hall, 1980). Audience members from marginalized groups might
be able to read the text oppositionally, but to do so requires extra work and the access to counter-rhetorics (Condit, 1991). That is, members of marginalized groups need to realize the dominant meaning of the text before they can engage in oppositional readings. Although recognizing the potential resistance of audience members, this study focuses on the process through which the text exercises its ideological power through different articulations (S. Hall, 1986).

In this section, I will focus on three types of articulation through which the movie text established certain discursive connections to construct the positive Self and the negative Other. These three types of articulation include: selective presentation, attribution, and subsumption.

Selective Presentation

The primary power of media text is selective presentation (S. Hall, 1980). In the process of selection and representation, certain discursive elements were allowed to appear in the text, while others were excluded. This selection-representation process defines the range of potential interpretations (Corner, 1983). Wolfe (1992) argued that, rather than idiosyncratic, interpretation of the text is “a culturally determined practice rooted in codes shared by message-makers and -consumers belonging to the same culture” (p. 272). The text constitutes meanings for the audience by highlighting certain meanings while excluding others (Carragee, 1990). Even when the audience engages in critical or oppositional reading, he or she still first realizes the preferred reading of the text (Condit, 1991; Corner, 1983). Thus, what is included in and what is excluded from a text are crucial to understand the ideological nature of the text.

The film *The Joy Luck Club*, like any other forms of cultural texts, is the product of selective representation. The producers of the film, consciously or unconsciously, chose to include only the negative aspects of Chinese culture, while excluding the positives. All the mothers’ stories, which took place in China, were tragedies.

Lindo’s mother arranged for her to marry a 10-year-or-so-old boy whom she had never met before the wedding. Her cruel mother-in-law treated her as a reproduction machine and constantly blamed her for not having a baby with the boy, who was too young to be a husband. Yingying was married to a womanizer husband. She killed her own baby because of the rage she felt due to her husband’s infidelity and abuse. Suyan left her twin baby girls in the street while taking refuge during the war. An Mei lived in the misery of her mother. An Mei’s mother was thrown out of the family by her own mother because she had been raped on a trip. Homeless and pregnant, An Mei’s mother was forced to marry the rapist. Eventually, she committed suicide to end her suffering.
All these Chinese stories were presented as examples of irrationality or madness. The movie discourse invites the audience to believe that it is Chinese culture, which is cruel, oppressive, and irrational, that predetermined and caused the mothers’ agony. Leaving Chinese culture is a literal and figurative escape from misery and suffering. The representation of the mothers’ stories thus articulated Chinese culture as the negative, sexist, repressive, and inhumane cultural Other.

Contrary to the negative Other, Chinese culture, the representation of the American culture showed the positives only. The United States was constructed as a haven for the oppressed mothers. Only in the United States could they leave that suffering behind. And only in the new country were they able to provide their daughters with material comfort. The only thing that prevented them from further prospering is the baggage that they carried from China. This baggage was not only the barrier that prevented them from being assimilated into the mainstream American culture, but also the cause of the mother—daughter conflicts. Indeed, the movie constructed the mothers as the carriers of the negative Other, Chinese culture, who would pollute the positive Self.

Although American culture was not constructed as homogeneous as in the case of Chinese culture, it included only the middle-class culture. The middle class was projected as the universal class in the United States. The movie implies that anyone who comes to the United States will automatically become a member of the middle class. All the Chinese mothers, who had been miserable in China, got married, had children, and bought big houses after they came to the United States. Any deviation from the “American dream” can be attributed to laziness or stupidity of the individual. And none of them had a place in this movie.

The daughters’ stories further conformed to this theme. Unlike their mothers’ experiences in China, the daughters’ encounters in the United States were constructed as generally positive. Waverly’s White middle class fiancée had genuine interests in Waverly as an individual and her cultural baggage, her family. He made efforts to adapt to exotic Chinese customs. Rose’s husband rescued her from his mother’s blatant racism. It was Rose’s subservient Chinese character and lack of spirit that made her unlovable. Once she got rid of them, her husband fell in love with her all over again. The only incident that was completely negative was Lena’s marriage to a Chinese American man, who was not fully American. This Chinese American man was Lena’s employer and made seven times more than she did. However, this calculating man insisted on Lena paying 50 percent for all their expenses.

This movie thus associated Chinese culture with the negative—war and chaos, lack of freedom, gender inequality, brutality, and savageness—while it connected the American culture to the positive—freedom, prosperity, and civilization. Selective presentation is critical to the construction of the dichotomous relationship of the positive Self and the negative Other, because the
positive Self image is possible only when it is placed against the negative Other that represents the lack of values (Jandt & Tanno, 2001). This film *The Joy Luck Club* presented a direct contrast of the Self and the Other in the opening narration:

> On her journey she [the Chinese woman] cooed to the swan: “In America I will have a daughter, just like me. But over there, nobody will say her worth is measured by the loudness of her husband’s belch. Over there, nobody will look down on her, because I will make her speak only perfect American English. And over there, she will always be too full to swallow any sorrow.”

This narration juxtaposed the negative China and the promises of the new land, the United States. Compared with China, the patriarchal and hierarchical society, the United States was presented as a place that promised gender equality and free competition based on individual ability and achievement—being able to “speak only perfect American English.” Above all, the United States was associated with happiness or pleasure, as opposed to China, which was connected to “sorrow.” In this movie, the abstract concept of happiness or pleasure was further substantiated with consumerism in June’s narration:

> Now the woman was old. And she had a daughter growing up speaking only English, and swallowing more Coca-Cola than sorrow.

The selective representation was achieved not only through the principle of inclusion/exclusion, but also through de-contextualization. In addition to representing the negatives only, this film abstracted Chinese communicative acts out of the socio-cultural contexts in which they are socially constructed, shared, and intelligible.

Philipsen (1992) argued that any type of talk (or other communicative acts) is culturally and historically constituted. It reflects a distinct way of thinking or distinct system of meanings. It can be understood properly only in that local context. Once the communicative act is removed from its local context, misinterpretation or misunderstanding might occur. *The Joy Luck Club* abstracted some Chinese communicative acts, which are based on Chinese frame of reference, and re-signified them into the White middle-class American system of meanings. This process of appropriation robs off the original meanings—bound by the historical and cultural forces yet multicaentuate (Fowler, 1996)—and enciphers them into the system that fits American middle class ideology (Ono & Buescher, 2001). The issue here is not that re-signification or appropriation distorts some authentic meaning. Rather, it contributes to establish, maintain, and reinforce certain ideology—White middle class American ideology in this case—while challenging, contesting, and undermining others (i.e., Chinese cultural values).
For example, one theme throughout the movie is the notion of “hope.” In her introduction to the Joy Luck Club, a casual association of the Chinese mothers, June narrated:

For so many years these women feasted, forgot past wrongs, laughed and played, lost and won, and told the best stories. Each week they hoped to be lucky. And that hope was their only joy. Their connections with each other had more to do with hope than joy or luck.

This notion of “hope” was originated in Chinese culture and was bounded by its historical and cultural contexts. In Chinese culture, people are understood in regards to their relations to the collective rather than as individuals (Chen & Starosta, 1998). A person is not a complete entity without considering his or her origins (ancestors) and decedents. The ancestor–self–offspring circle constitutes the past–present–future entity of the individual. The notion of hope needs to be interpreted in relation to the Chinese notion of personhood. It is more than the wish that one has for oneself. It is something that people wish, expect, plan, and attempt for themselves and their offspring. Oftentimes a hope for a particular family member would also mean sacrifice on the part of other members. The family, as a whole, would work toward that hope. Thus, hope involves more than wishes. It is associated with interdependence, sacrifice, and hard work. Hopes for children are considered as a responsibility of parents. Not being able to fulfill this responsibility is viewed as the failure of being a person.

However, the term hope was deprived of its historical–cultural contexts in the film and was re-contextualized and given the frame of reference of the White middle-class American culture. As a result, the Chinese notion of hope, with the presence of its form only, was interpreted as restraints and burdens on the free will of the individual. The daughters, who identify themselves with middle-class Americans, resented this Chinese version of hope and perceived it as a barrier to being “normal” and “free.”

In the film The Joy Luck Club, selective representation is the primary form of articulation that constructed Chinese culture as the negative Other, and the middle-class American culture as the positive Self. Through strategic exclusion, it represented Chinese culture as the composite of the lack of values, the racial Other, which in turn confirmed the positive Self image of the United States. Moreover, the articulation process is more than establishing connections. It is achieved also through obscuring or disengaging connections that would not serve the interest of the dominant group. This film disconnected Chinese communicative acts of their culture-specific interpretive framework in which they are constituted and socially shared. By so doing, it denied the potential for positive interpretations of Chinese cultural values and communicative acts.
Culture vs. Personality

Another type of articulation in this film is attribution. Attribution is the process of making sense of certain behaviors or events. Attribution is an attempt for people to explain human experiences by locating some sort of cause. It provides a sense of closure for people. Attribution, however, is also a means of articulation because it makes connections of human actions to specific reasons, thus assigning specific meanings to those actions.

The movie *The Joy Luck Club* used different attribution mechanisms in representing Chinese and American cultures. The mothers’ miserable experiences were attributed to Chinese culture. However, the daughters’ encounters with mean people in the American society were attributed to individual personalities.

In this movie, Chinese culture was constructed as a monolithic collective. Each member was a representative or a part of the whole entity. Any individual negative incident or wrongdoing was rooted in the collective. Culture, in this case, is treated as a script, which determines the behaviors of its members (B. ‘J.’ Hall, 1992). It is the cruel, sexist, irrational nature of the culture that predetermined the fates of all the four women (the mothers). Compared to the negative force of the culture, individual efforts and struggles for change were futile or negligible.

All the four mothers’ stories, as argued earlier, were tragedies. Although different women have different experiences, all those experiences were represented in similar ways. They all happened in an irrational manner, in madness. The audience was told that there was no rationality in Chinese culture and that Chinese people were different. In fact, Mark R. Leeper (1993) remarked on the movie:

> Yet by the time the full story is revealed we have seen how different mainland Chinese culture is from our own and we will come to understand Suyuan’s actions. (emphasis added)

The attribution of the mothers’ dreadful experiences to Chinese culture rather than particular situations accented the notion of Chinese culture as the cruel, sexist, inscrutable, irrational Other. This reaffirmed that all the Chinese cultural values were opposite to enlightenment, freedom, or humanity. Thus it reinforced the notion that members of minority groups need to cast off their cultural values in order to be liberated or emancipated (Morris, 2004).

Contrary to the representation of Chinese culture, the American culture was constructed as an aggregation of individuals. Each individual is responsible for his or her own rational choices rather than for the group as a whole. Negative experiences in American culture can be interpreted as encountering particular kinds of individuals, some jerks, who are different from the “decent” middle class. In this case, culture is viewed as a loosely structured
community, in which all the rational members reside. Culture, thus, is not directly connected to individual incidents. Nor is it deterministic force on personal actions. Individuals (i.e., their personalities, psyches, or pathology) are responsible for their behaviors and the subsequent consequences. As a result, members of this community can change their lives by alternating their behaviors.

Ignoring inequalities caused by the social political system in the United States, the movie constructed a free world, the positive Self, which promises everyone equal opportunity. It connected the U.S. American culture to “true humanity,” or universal humanity. This humanity is also that standard against which all other cultures should be evaluated and judged.

Specifically, in this movie, the unpleasant experiences in the daughters' stories were attributed to the individuals rather than culture. For example, in her marriage to a Chinese American man, Lena had to pay for 50 percent of their expenses, despite the fact that Lena worked for that man and only made one-seventh of his salary. This Chinese-American man, unlike Chinese men in China who were blatantly brutal, was portrayed as a jerk as opposed to the model immigrants that the daughters represented. Thus, the movie implied that what kind of person one turns out to be in American culture is completely a personal matter. Any link between the devious behavior of a particular person and the American culture or the whole system was denied. Furthermore, the jerk image of the Chinese-American man also reaffirmed the notion that Asian-Americans, by their association with the negative Other, were not fully American. They remain as outsider or foreigner no matter what.

Unlike Lena’s Chinese American husband, the White males in Waverly and Rose's lives were represented as positive. Waverly's fiancée was a lovely White middle-class man, who was interested in exploring the exotic Chinese American culture. In order to be accepted by his future in-laws, he even tried to acquire some exotic Chinese customs, for example, using chopsticks to eat. However, this “well-meaning” White person was still rejected by the mean, picky, authoritative, and inscrutable Chinese mother, Lindo. This story invites audiences to view Chinese culture through the voyeurist lens. Chinese culture, like any racial Others, is treated as a primitive land, which invites the White man to venture and to conquer.

Rose’s White upper-class husband, Ted, had a more heroic image in this movie. When she first met Ted’s parents, Rose was faced with Ted’s mother’s blatant racism (see Example 3). Mrs. Jordan, Ted’s mother, like many White people who are blind to their own discriminative attitude and behavior, claimed that her family was a “liberal family” (Line 3). However, despite that claim, she felt no hesitation to express her objection to Rose because of her cultural or racial background (Lines 35–37). She further justified her discrimination by saying that is “the way the world is,” (Line 41) and “how unpopular Vietnam is” (Lines 41–42).
Example 3:

32 Mrs. Jordan: I want you to know, Rose, that we’re a very liberal family.
33 Rose narrating: I couldn’t believe what she was telling me. It came straight out of some awful racist movie, like *The World of Susie Wang*.
34 Mrs. Jordan: Ted is going to be working with his father’s company, and he’s going to be judged by people of a different standard, publishers, authors, critics and their wives. And they wouldn’t be as understanding as we are.
35 Rose: Mrs. Jordan, you sound as if Ted and I are getting married. That is hardly the case.
36 Mrs. Jordan: Oh, I know dear, It’s just, that well the way the world is, how unpopular Vietnam is.
37 Rose: I am not a Vietnamese. I am an American.
38 Mrs. Jordan: Of course you are. It’s just, I understand you. That’s all I am trying to say. Do you understand?
39 Ted: Mom.
40 Mrs. Jordan: Hello, darling. We’re having a wonderful conversation.
41 Ted: You know I always knew you were a... jerk. But shit, this is the first time in my life I am ashamed of you.
42 Mrs. Jordan: How dare you use that language? I think you better apologize right now!
43 Ted: I’m sorry Mom, you made a fucking asshole of yourself in front of the woman I love. We’re out of here Rose.

Although the movie exposed and criticizes the racist elements in American culture, it still constructed racism as an individual matter. Mrs. Jordan was depicted as a super-conservative and hypocritical woman, who was not to be seen as a representative of the whole culture. Rose’s narration in Lines 33–34 implied that this was an atypical encounter for a Chinese American like herself. By presenting racism as aberrant incidents, the movie further projected the United States as a free land with no systematic inequalities. That is, although some terrible incidents might happen, the system in the United States is generally good. Rose’s response further confirmed this projection. Instead of claiming her Chinese heritage, Rose defended herself by avowing her identity as “an American” (Line 43). This assertion was a double bind. It was of course Rose’s attempt to fight back against Mrs. Jordan’s discrimination and to gain an equal standing. At the same time, however, it assumed that the identity of “an American” was superior to any other. It also reflected the illusion that model minorities such as the daughters were permitted to become full members of the mainstream U.S. American culture.
As the story developed, Ted came to Rose’s rescue. He confronted his mother by declaring “I always know you were a... jerk” (Lines 48—49). This again convinced the audience that the presence of racism depends on the particular individual. Therefore, racism has nothing to do with the social structure or larger ideology. Furthermore, the conflict pertaining to the racial issue was revolved in a sexist fashion in which the female was weak and needed to be rescued by her hero.

In a nutshell, attribution is another means of articulation in the constructing of cultures in this movie. The mothers’ sufferings were attributed to the collective, Chinese culture, which was portrayed as homogenous. Chinese culture predetermined the fates of its people, which could not be changed by human efforts. The attribution to the collective deprived Chinese people of human agency and made Chinese culture into the negative Other, which is opposite to the positive or normal Self. On the other hand, negative incidents in United States were explained as a result of individuals (jerks) who should be accountable for their own actions. This attribution transformed societal or system issues into the personal. It thus denied the need for collective actions to challenge the existing social and political relationships.

Class, Gender vs. Culture

Still another type of articulation in the movie The Joy Luck Club is the subsumption of class and gender to culture. Ono and Buescher (2001) noted that in Disney’s appropriation of other cultures, the boundaries of class, gender, and race collapse, that is, racism and sexism are intertwined in the process of commodification. The media text evokes racial and gender inequality simultaneously. Therefore it should not be read through a single lens. However, in any text, not all the three elements have equal weight. One may be more prominent. It subordinates the other two. In The Joy Luck Club, the issues of class and gender are subsumed to the issue of culture (race). Class and gender are denied or translated into the cultural or racial terms.

For instance, in this movie, class was never a real issue. In Chinese culture, where human suffering was pervasive, class was somehow not the cause of grief. Chinese people lived dreadful lives regardless of their socio-economic standings. A rich girl (Yingying) was married to a womanizer husband; a wealthy widow (An Mei’s mother) was raped by brutal rich guy and was deserted by her own family; a wife of a military officer (Suyuan) lost her babies during the war. Even in the case of Lindo, who came from a poor family and was married into a rich one through a family arrangement, class was not accented as the cause of Lindo’s misery. She was not sold because of the situation of her family. It was the bizarre “arranged marriage” custom in Chinese culture that resulted in her unhappy life. By rendering socio-economic classes irrelevant or negligible, The Joy Luck Club laid the blame on Chinese culture, the negative Other.
In American culture, class was further diminished. All the Chinese immigrants and their descendants were model immigrants, who join the middle class through working hard in the free land. All the Americans that those Chinese immigrant encountered were middle or upper-middle class. Class struggles did not exist in the movie. The concept of class itself becomes an invisible category beyond commonsense.

The subsumption of class into culture helped construct a hierarchy of cultures, with Chinese culture at the bottom, American culture at the top, and Chinese American culture in the middle. In this movie the American White middle-class was the center of true humanity, to which Chinese culture, the negative Other, was the complete opposite. Unlike their mothers, who were the real exotic Other, the Chinese American daughters were becoming closer to the mainstream American culture through assimilation. When the White center was absent, the American-born daughters were promoted to the center as model minorities to confirm that the system in the United States is working (Nakayama, 1988). Such subsumption reinforces the idea that shedding one’s cultural identity is the only means of liberation and prosperity (Morris, 2004).

Although the movie temporarily promoted the daughters to the center with the absence of the White center, it still managed to construct the Chinese-American culture as a collective. When the White center did appear, the American-born daughters were demoted to the margin again. Thus, despite their economic success, Asian Americans are never real members of the Self no matter how hard they have been trying (Takaki, 1998; Yep, 2002). They are required to keep certain cultural elements as ornaments to sustain their Otherness. Contrary to mainstream film critics’ arguments, The Joy Luck Club reinforced stereotypical images of Chinese or Chinese American women as “the lotus baby” or “China doll,” the sexual object (Sun, 2003) and Chinese men as sexist and brutal. Those stereotypes perpetuate the foreignness or otherness of Chinese Americans who have lived in the United States for generations.

Unlike class, gender did play a major role in this movie. However, instead of patriarchy, the movie attributed female issues to Chinese culture, the cultural/racial Other. Rather than men, this movie depicted those Chinese women who endorsed cruel cultural customs as the real cause of female sufferings. Lindo’s unhappy marriage was arranged by her own mother, although her father was also present in the movie. It was not the cruel and insensitive boy-husband, but her ridiculous mother-in-law who expected her to have a baby with the 10-year-old husband. Instead of the man who raped her, the grief endured by An Mei’s mother was caused by her own mother and that man’s second wife. Her own mother’s intolerance forced her to marry the rapist. And that man’s second wife had trapped An Mei’s mother for the rape and later took her baby away. It was women themselves, rather than men, who caused pain for other women. Unlike feminist scholars
who argue that in the process of hegemony women are inscribed in dominant patriarchal ideology (e.g., hooks, 1994), this movie ascribed it to Chinese culture. Gender thus collapses into the cultural in the film *The Joy Luck Club*.

What needs to be noted is that although this movie challenged women’s problems in the context of Chinese culture, it turned blind to gender issues in the United States. The movie defined the gender issue as a unique Chinese problem, which did not exist in the United States. It projected that in the United States, women would enjoy equal rights as men do, a myth ascribed by people both in and outside the United States. For example, June’s mother believed: “In America I will have a daughter, just like me. But over there, nobody will say her worth is measured by the loudness of her husband’s belch.”

Even in cases when the gender issue did arise, such as in Rose’s marriage, the movie managed to categorize it as a Chinese problem. Rose gave up her chance to study abroad in order to support her husband’s career. However, after a while her husband found her boring and had an extramarital affair. Instead of addressing it as a gender issue, the movie constructed that it was the Chinese cultural baggage that prevented Rose from speaking up for herself. An Mei, Rose’s mother, explained the situation in the following words:

> I tell you the story because I was raised the Chinese way. I was taught to desire nothing, to swallow other people’s misery, and to eat my own bitterness. And even though I taught my daughter the opposite, but still she came out the same way. Maybe it is because she was born to me and she was born a girl, I was born to my mother and I was born a girl. All of us like stairs, one after another, going up, going down, but always the same way.

The different articulation of gender issues in this movie subsumed gender to culture. It in fact reaffirmed the racist “saving brown women from brown men” ideology (Shohat, 1991). Ironically, while constantly lamenting the cruel treatments of women in China, and presuming that women have the rights they deserve in the United States, this movie actually helped to legitimize and perpetuate the vulnerable images of females by presenting them as objects of being protected, rescued, and loved by males. Rose was rescued by her boyfriend from the insult of his “jerk” mother and thus fell in love with her hero.

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

This study used Stuart Hall’s theory of articulation to analyze the film *The Joy Luck Club*. Through articulation, this movie constructed Chinese culture as
the sexist, oppressive, mysterious, inscrutable, exotic, and savage cultural Other (Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978). The representation of the negative Other in turn sustains the myth of the White middle-class American culture as the positive Self. This construction reflects the new Orientalist/Assimilationist paradigm, which simultaneously requires Asian Americans to be assimilated into mainstream American culture and maintains the exotic “otherness” of Asian cultures (M. McAlister, 1992). On the one hand, it insists that members of minority groups need to cast off their cultural identities and to obey and follow the rules of the dominant group. On the other hand, however, it would not permit those people to fully particulate in creating those rules (Yep, 2002).

My reading of the film *The Joy Luck Club* in this study may not represent the interpretations of average audience members. Radway (1984) reminded us that the audiences or readers may use interpretive strategies different from literary critics. Textual analysis is elitist for it privileges the readings of scholars rather than those of the average audience (Turner, 1990). The arguments made in this article may be different from the interpretations of ordinary audience members. However, a critical examination of popular culture texts is a political project that aims at empowerment and emancipation. It is an attempt to understand the power of the film as a politically charged cultural text and as part of public pedagogy (Giroux, 2002).

Scholars such as Tanno (1997), Tanno and Jandt (1993/1994) and Jandt and Tanno (2001) have raised our awareness about the knowledge production process that perpetuates the monolithic cultural Other as the object of research. They argue that we need to encode self-determination through “appreciation of differences” and “label appropriation” (the practice of labeling through conscious choices) in multicultural research and education. Popular culture is equally, if not more, powerful in the creation and perpetuation of the negative cultural/racial Other. It has ethnographical power in constructing non-Western cultures (Shohat, 1991). Treating popular culture as resources for public pedagogy involves more than a critical analysis (deconstruction) of a particular cultural text. Rather it should be seen as an opportunity for empowerment, that is, it should include the possibility for alternative narratives or reconstruction. Tanno and Jandt’s suggestions would certainly be very helpful in teaching popular culture as public pedagogy. However, the real appreciation of differences can only be realized when conscious choices have been made to reverse the negative representation of non-Western cultures. Asante (1998) reminded us that what members of minority groups desperately need is positive interpretations of their cultural values. A productive reconstruction of popular texts should strive to go beyond challenging the myths associated with the negative cultural Other to provide positive and contextualized interpretations of those cultural values.
NOTES

1. For mainstream film critics and the White middle class American audience, Asian or Asian-Americans all look alike. They seem to see no need to differentiate Asians from Asian-Americans, or Chinese/Chinese Americans from other groups of Asians/Asian Americans.

2. Certainly audience members could read this movie in multiple ways. V. N. Volosinov’s (Mikhail Bakhtin’s) (1986) theories of polyphony and multiaccentuality and John Fiske’s (1987) notion of polysemy suggest that the media text provides semantic potentials for multiple interpretations. Reception researchers demonstrate such multiple interpretations in their audience research (e.g., Liebes, 1988, 1990; Lull, 1980a, 1980b, 1982; Morley, 1980, 1986; Radway, 1983, 1984). The text, nevertheless, conditions audience members’ interpretations (S. Hall, 1980). The use of words in the text tends to reduce the polyphonic, multi-accentual, or polysemic nature of signs and symbols to one direction by suppressing other meanings (Fowler, 1996). Audience members could restore the polyphony or multiaccentuality in critical reading, however they often need to realize the “primary” meaning before they could apply a different frame of reference to the text (Corner, 1983; Hay, 1989; Wolfe, 1992).

3. Raymond Williams (1976, p. 87) noted “culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.” He outlined the three most widely accepted uses of this term: (a) “a general process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development,” (b) “a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general,” and (c) “the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity” (p. 90). In this particular case, I adopted the second definition of culture, which is based on ethnicity or race, and sometimes class.

4. The movie is not a simple translation of Tan’s book. It is a reproduction—a new process of articulation. Compared to Tan’s book, this movie is more complicit to the dominant ideology and leaves less room for different interpretations.

5. Such ideology in fact confounds class with ethnicity, race, or culture. It also disguises the system structure that work against all marginalized groups (Wong(Lau), 2004).

6. Sun (2003) argued that Asian American males are more silenced, marginalized and stereotyped in media representation than their female counterparts. When Asian American females were getting a certain amount of recognition, Asian American males were virtually non-existent in the media.

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