



HWA CHONG INSTITUTION (HIGH SCHOOL SECTION) HUMANITIES PROJECT WORK 2021

Group ID: 2A-14

A STUDY OF HOW HOLLYWOOD PORTRAYS ASIA

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1. INTRODUCTION

Hollywood films have been the subject of numerous counts of criticism, including issues such as the lack of diversity and sexual harassment. Hollywood has indeed been an industry leader in its field, but at what cost?

The lack of racial and ethnic diversity within casts and production crews is a concerning sight, causing the international community to catch sight of America returning to its once isolationist and supremacist self. While changes and reforms such as including a more diverse range of actors have been attempted in this generation of Hollywood, they have been of little to no avail. This can be seen in the recent study by the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, which showed that Asian Americans only represented 1% of all leading roles in Hollywood. (Smith, 2016) In addition, only one actor of Asian descent has ever won an Academy Award for best actor, that being Ben Kingsly in 1983. Thus, it is imperative we understand the reasons for this, and perhaps discover underlying societal issues in Hollywood.

Hollywood is losing the Asian market to its formidable Asian foes, with reasons such as not being diverse enough and the lack of accurate representation. Asian theatres are further innovating to create better and more relatable films for the Asian market. According to data from Chinese ticketing platform Maoyan Entertainment, China took the crown from the U.S. as the world's No. 1 movie market with a revenue of 20.4 billion yuan (US\$3.2 billion), with overseas films accounting for only 16% of the ticket receipts. (Zhao, 2021)

2. AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

2.1 Aims

This project examines whether Hollywood promotes adequate Asian diversity and whether Asian representation is accurate in such Hollywood films.

Our aims for this project are

- To examine how Asian characters and settings are portrayed in Hollywood.
- To highlight the differences between the portrayal of Asians in different Hollywood movies like Doctor Strange and Raya and the Last Dragon.
- To find out the underlying reasons for Hollywood's portrayal of Asians.

2.2 Research Questions

- How are Asians portrayed in different Hollywood films in aspects such as characterization and their stereotyped behaviour based on their racial profile?
- What are the underlying reasons behind the manner of the portrayal of Asians in Hollywood films?
- What are the differences in the portrayal of Asians in different Hollywood films?

2.3 Thesis statement

The inaccurate portrayal of Asians and lack of Asian representation in Hollywood films boils down to Cultural Imperialism and existent racial stereotypes.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Analysis of Racial Representation in Hollywood

3.1.1 Evidence on the stereotypical portrayal of Asians in Hollywood films

Asians have often fallen victim to stereotyping and under-representation in the world of Hollywood. Cast members in Hollywood films portraying Asian characters are often mostly white and rarely consist of anyone with any Asian roots or background, rendering Asians invisible to Western audiences (Paner, 2018). However, in the rare instances that Asians *are* given their roles to portray Asian characters rightfully, they are then stereotyped (Rajopal, 2010). In an industry where 8.2% of characters shown on-screen are Asian but only 1% of actors filling lead roles are Asian (Sun, 2019), *Crazy Rich Asians* attempts to challenge this norm by being the first film or show in Hollywood to feature an all-Asian cast in 25 years.

However, the common consensus seems to be that *Crazy Rich Asians* has done badly in portraying Singapore's multiracial society (Sun 2019). The film has totally ignored the minority races that have made Singapore as culturally rich as it is today. For example, people of minority races are often portrayed as cheap labour in Hollywood productions; and this film seems to empower this exact practice.



In *Crazy Rich Asians*, the *only* time any minority race appears in the film, they are shown as security guards.

This will give Western audiences the wrong ideas about the racial proportions in Singapore's multiracial society, and as a result, completely ignore the other minority races that make up Singapore and render them invisible when mentioning Singapore in instances such as political discussions or online forums. In reality, as of 2019, minority races make up 23.8% of Singapore's population.

Representation in films not only affects how minority races view themselves, but also how others view minority races. By reducing minority races to "extras", they will feel as if they do not hold a place in today's society, robbing them of their national and personal identity. In a study (Elbaba, 2019), 144 middle and high school students were interviewed about seeing people like themselves being represented, or not, on the big screen. "I do think it's powerful for people of a minority race to be represented in pop culture to really show a message that everybody has a place in this world", said Alec Fields, a junior at Forest High School in Pennsylvania. When Kimore Willis, a junior at Etiwanda High School in California was asked about the effects of under-representation on those affected, he responded by saying, "[It] kind of brings your self-esteem down".

"Racism, in the form of job exclusion and racially stereotyped roles, has defined the Hollywood film industry since its birth in the early 1900s," the sociologist Nancy Wang Yuen writes in her book, *Reel Inequality: Hollywood Actors and Racism*. She is not wrong: Asians have frequently

been stereotyped by clichés and other Asian stereotypes in the entire history of Hollywood productions. Back in the '40s, Asians, more specifically East-Asians, have been depicted as people who pose an existential danger to the Western world (Paner, 2018).

The practice of “yellowface” was also prominent in the '40s; many western producers would cast westerners to act as Asians in Hollywood productions, where white actors would apply artificial makeup to make their faces appear yellow and use prosthetics to slant their eyes (Keith 2013). This practice of “yellowface” cultivates the idea that only Western actors should play parts written for Asian characters; It perpetuates the idea that Asians should be silenced, made invisible, and spoken about only by Western actors: the idea that Asians do not and perhaps should not have a voice of their own (Fishwick, 2015). As such, the practice of “yellowface” enables Hollywood executives to impose their American ideals onto Asian culture, and subsequently undermine Asian culture.

In the '60s, all Asians were often deemed to be identical looking. And from the '80s onwards, Asians were often portrayed as store owners, nerdy students or technicians, and all knew martial arts (Silver, 2007). This all leads to the current stereotypes present in our modern-day society, especially in western countries. A study found out that Chinese individuals were stereotyped as sly, conservative, tradition-loving and loyal to family ties (Katz and Braly 1933). These stereotypes might be derived from Asian portrayals in Hollywood films as nerdy students and humble store owners. The martial arts style of Hollywood films also promoted the stereotype that Asians are skilled at Kung Fu (Marchetti 2012). Thus, this goes to show that Hollywood has inaccurately portrayed Asians in its productions.

Therefore, through our literature review, we have come to the conclusion that Asians are incorrectly portrayed in Hollywood films. The film *Crazy Rich Asians* has done poorly in portraying Singapore's multiracial community. For example, the film enforced the common trope of using racial minorities as “extras” and the common stereotype that racial minorities are only used as cheap labour. Stereotypical portrayals of Asians in Hollywood productions also contribute to common stereotypes of Asians

Our literature review has also shown that Hollywood executives and filmmakers have often been making use of the great influence Hollywood films have across the world to further their agenda and spread the ideology of exceptionalism and superiority in American culture.

3.1.2 Evidence to show that Hollywood films have done well in portraying Asians

A recent Hollywood film that has been successful in portraying Southeast Asian culture is *Raya and the Last Dragon*. The film has mostly showcased Southeast Asian cuisines as easter eggs in the background of various scenes and was not explicitly named for the most part. The film portrayed fruits that can be found all over Southeast Asia, and many different Asian dishes. The film has also used food as a catalyst for relationships to blossom and uses food as a symbol of unity.

This is important in showing the representation of Southeast Asia as according to scriptwriter Adele Lim, “when you look at everything that’s wonderful about our culture, and particularly our street food, it’s wonderful *because* of all these different elements. Food is also our language of love and our language of the community.” It shows the choice for characters to bond over a meal, was heavily influenced by the importance of food in Southeast Asia and was thus portrayed as so. Thus by both showing the importance of food in Southeast Asia and incorporating small details about cuisines in the film, *Raya and the Last Dragon* has successfully represented important parts of Southeast Asian culture and has managed to diversify Hollywood’s portrayal of Asians, showing that there are certain aspects of Asian portrayal that Hollywood has done well in.

However, this stand can be easily disagreed upon as *Raya and the Last Dragon* has only been a recent exception in the Hollywood film industry when talking about Hollywood films that do not stereotype Asians. Using *Raya and the Last Dragon* to represent Hollywood films as a whole

would only provide a narrow view of the issue, as *Raya and the Last Dragon* does not apply to all Hollywood movies as a whole. *Raya and the Last Dragon* does not erase Hollywood's long history of stereotyping Asians in its films, and Hollywood still has a long way to go in combating its stereotypical behaviour towards Asians.

3.2 Characteristics and Objectives of Hollywood Films

Understanding some of the key characteristics present in Hollywood films will allow us to develop a clearer reason as to why the representation of Asia as a whole in Hollywood films might be stereotypical. Hollywood films have come to dominate audiences and filmmakers in their way of thinking. The main objective of Hollywood films is to “sell America to the world”, and it has so far successfully done so, with the major revenue generated by these films and the influence they have had on different parts of society. Widespread western influences all over the world, such as the influx of western fashion, western cuisine, and western philosophy in non-western countries are examples of westernisation, and proof that Hollywood films have already succeeded in selling America to the world.

Hollywood films are the American ideological medium of mass communication, and it has influences on other key film industries. “Hollywood has often drawn upon the national ethos of the United States for Cinematic inspiration.” Most films with settings outside of America must have an injection of American ideals one way or another. Hollywood is largely defined as the system of the US entertainment industry revolving around six major film companies e.g. Paramount Pictures. “Hollywood serves to extol the virtues of the American way of life, promotes major industrial products and builds and reinforces a positive national image.” In order to maintain a strong influence on the world, Hollywood has had to deviate from solely American storylines (Ibbi, 2013).

Hence, by imposing upon Asian culture American ideals and imperialistic ideals, Hollywood films undermine Asian cultures which do not promote the “American way of living”. Subsequently, allowing American culture to dominate the Hollywood media, allowing it to further its agenda and objective of spreading the ideology of exceptionalism and American culture, leading people to believe that America is an “exceptional nation”. This leads to the demolition of Asian cultures portrayed in Hollywood films, or the misinterpretation of Asian cultures.

Hence, this understanding of why Asia as a whole might be inaccurately represented in such films due to the objectives of Hollywood films and their characteristics would aid us in our study.

3.3 Stereotyping and discrimination of Asians in America

We will delve deeper into understanding the underlying racial issues in American society as a whole. Issues regarding stereotyping of Asians have been surfacing recently in Hollywood. Asians are frequently subjected to a distinct set of stereotypes, such as the incorrect portrayal of Asian Americans as being intelligent, well-adapted and technologically savvy, which makes them invisible in discussions of race and racism in the United States (Paner, 2018).

The stereotype stated above is the most persistent and detrimental stereotype about Asian Americans. The fallacy is so widespread, according to research, 99.4% of 165 Asian American high school students have encountered the stereotype at least once (Thompson, Taylor, Kiang, Lisa, 2010).

Asian Americans, like other ethnic minorities, have also faced gendered racism. Asian American men are frequently regarded as effeminate, whilst Asian American women are regarded as sexually

attractive (Abrams, 2019). Participants in one research of race and occupational roles rated Asian men as significantly more hireable for librarian jobs and significantly less hireable for security guard jobs than African American and Caucasian males (Erika V. Hall, Adam D. Galinsky and Katherine W. Phillips, 2015).

This practice of stereotyping has also spread to the media. While progress has been made in representing Asian actors in television shows and films, such as *Crazy Rich Asians* and *Fresh Off the Boat*, stereotypes continue to be a problem. Asian actors are frequently cast in films that depict stereotypes of Asians. In the majority of cases, they play sex workers, nerds, foreigners, and doctors. For example, Rajesh Koothrapalli, played by British actor Kunal Nayyar, is an Indian and is portrayed in *The Big Bang Theory* as being unable to build romantic relationships or converse with women. This is shown through his family consistently trying to find him a wife through arranged marriages. Hence, this shows that Hollywood is being stereotypical, as it is not true for most Indians that they are unable to build romantic relationships with women.

As TV shows and films have such a huge influence on people's perspective on foreign cultures, these incorrect representations of Asians will influence how they view Asians, as they will be inclined to think that Asians really act and think as portrayed in these films.

3.4 Methodology

Our group has chosen to make use of Cultural Imperialism to further research on films in question. The theory will be utilised in investigating how American culture dominates Hollywood and the resulting effect on Asian culture. Our research will also make use of the analysis of different scenes in Hollywood films to observe how the film in question portrays Asia and its people at large while identifying the impacts.

3.4.1 Cultural Imperialism Theory

The term “Culture Imperialism” refers to the domination of a particular culture over another in which values, practices, traditions, behaviour and meanings of a powerful foreign culture are imposed upon one or more native cultures (Encyclopedia Britannica). “Cultural Imperialism” used in the case of our research states that American culture dominates the Hollywood media, which are heavily circulated around the world. This subsequently has a powerful effect on Asian culture by imposing on them American views. This leads to the demolition of Asian cultures portrayed in Hollywood films, or the misinterpretation of Asian cultures.

Herbert Schiller argues about ontological assumptions of this theory that humans do not have the free will to choose how they feel, act, think, and live in his 1973 thesis, *“Communication and Cultural Domination”*. They react to what they see on television as there is nothing else to compare it to besides their own lives. As long as Asian and Third World countries continue to air Western Civilization's programs, then they will always believe they should act, feel, think, and live in the same way that Western Civilizations do.

According to Galtung’s theory of imperialism, the world is divided into a dominant Centre [the powerful western countries and interests and dominated Peripheries (the undeveloped countries)] (Phillipson, 2008). Cultural imperialism is defined as a kind of cultural domination by powerful nations over weaker nations and is viewed as purposeful and intentional because it corresponds to their political interests. Galtung’s theory of imperialism will be utilised by investigating the influence of Western countries on films produced by Hollywood.

4. LIMITATIONS

With the wide range of available films to analyse and discuss, we had to decide on two films which would be the most suitable. The films we chose had to be “blockbusters” in order to prevent the argument that Asians can be portrayed in such a manner due to the small role they play, and also have a clear focus on its Asian characters. Thus, we decided on the films Doctor Strange and Raya and the Last Dragon.

5. RESEARCH PROCESS, RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Doctor Strange

This film has a clear focus on an Asian character, with the character being subject to claims of whitewashing, these aspects would add value to our research, and thus the film was chosen to be part of the research.

5.1.1 Casting and the presence of whitewashing in film

Casting and the presence of whitewashing in Doctor Strange were reasons for the poor Asian representation in it. The Ancient One has always been a long-lasting and prominent character within the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) and the Doctor Strange line of comics. In the original Marvel comic, the character is a Tibetan man, a mystic who mentors Dr Strange. Fans were visibly confused when Swinton's casting was first announced—even though casting white actors in roles originally occupied by non-white characters happens frequently in Hollywood. People expected Marvel, a reputable film company, to stick to their original comic series and to cast an Asian actor. In the Doctor Strange film, the character will be Celtic rather than Tibetan. Marvel's choice to replace the racial profile of the character once again shows the normalcy of whitewashing in Hollywood. This decision shows the inherent characteristics of Hollywood to underrepresent Asians (Paner, 2018) in order to better suit the ideals of American film. (Ibbi, 2013) Marvel says they replaced the character as a way to move away from the traditional Asian stereotype. Director Scott Derrickson addressed the character change, saying the new Ancient One was written specifically for Swinton and was always going to be of Celtic origin. (Derrickson, 2016) While Marvel tries to make a convincing argument, it still does not rid them of taking the responsibility of whitewashing in an age of racial diversity and

sensitivity. The decision of the producers to whitewash the character shows that the producers make decisions based on what leads to the film's success, instead of considering other factors such as racial diversity. (Litman, 2006) Marvel had previously been supporters of diversity in film, as mentioned by Marvel Studios EVP of Production Victoria Alonso who says the Disney-owned studio is "actively" working towards a more diverse and inclusive Marvel Cinematic Universe. (Alonso, 2019) More has to be done to improve the diversity in film, with improvements in casting and the representation of characters needing to be made to ensure complete diversity. However, the decision to whitewash the character contradicts Marvel's claims of diversity, and they did not in fact manage to accomplish what they had hoped from replacing the character.

Marvel has come out to defend this decision of theirs. Marvel Studios president Kevin Fiege, said that "I think if you look at some of the early incarnations of the Ancient One in the comics, they are what we would consider today to be quite, sort of, stereotypical. They don't hold up to what would work today." (Fiege, 2021) There are several reasons for the whitewashing of characters, including the ones given by Marvel themselves.

5.1.2 Cultural imperialism in film

From the standpoint of Cultural Imperialism, the directors and writers of the film have attempted to suppress Asian culture and to allow American culture to dominate over it. This is in an attempt to whitewash the film in order to make the characters more relatable to the American market. Doctor Strange's method of imposing Cultural Imperialism is to simply replace an Asian character with a Celtic. This allows the American market to relate to someone who has closer "genetics" and identifies more with the majority American race. Thus, the American market can better accept this character, as the filmmakers know that it is crucial that their main market is accepting of this film in order for the film to do well as a whole. (Zipin, 2021) Even Marvel President, Kevin Fiege, spoke out to the public about the casting of "The Ancient One." He says that they thought they were being smart by casting a non-Asian character and breaking away from the stereotype, but they ended up regretting this decision. (Fiege, 2021) This shows that the director does indeed acknowledge the

mistake of casting a non-Asian actor, and wants to spread the message that Asians can indeed be cast in prominent Hollywood roles, extinguishing the cultural stereotypes around them.

In conclusion, the film Doctor Strange perpetuates whitewashing in film and shows a lack of Asian representation in Hollywood. It is more crucial that Hollywood is able to think of solutions to move away from Asian stereotypes, while also being able to cast Asian actors in such films.



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¹The **Ancient One** is a fictional character appearing in American comic books published by Marvel Comics. He was the mentor of Doctor Strange and was his predecessor as Sorcerer Supreme. The Ancient One was born in Kamar-Taj, "a hidden land high in the Himalayas", making him Tibetan and an Asian character by nature

²The character of the ancient one was played by Tilda Swinton in the 2016 film Doctor Strange, however she is a Scottish actress, and not an asian one, although the traditional character is evidently a man of Asian descent, as seen in the first picture.

5.1.3 Setting and the portrayal of the “Far East”

In Doctor Strange, the settings of Asian locations and the portrayal of the “Far East” creates an unhealthy obsession and stereotype of Asians as being different from the average human by having different mystical powers. (Anonymous, 2016) The East is seen as somewhere where monks make up the majority of people, and somehow these “monks” possess magical powers which are out of this world. This fact is further cited by author Barry Taylor in the book Entertainment Theology (Cultural Exegesis): New-Edge Spirituality in a Digital Democracy (Taylor, 2008). The book explores Hollywood’s obsession with the mysterious East, explaining that from the beginning, Hollywood has been a location for the perpetuation of the idea of the mysterious East. The book specifically explains the example of Tibet, a land filled with “tales of amazing spiritual feats, demons, and tales of magic and mystery, that continues to hold a special fascination.” Tibet is still largely seen as the “cure for an ever-ailing Western civilization, a tonic to cure the spirit.” The perception of Tibet in the book is closely aligned with that in the film.

In conclusion, the setting and portrayal of the “Far East” in Hollywood films have been imperative in shaping the stereotypes surrounding Asians. It is crucial that Hollywood stays away from these ideal stereotypes from the perspective of a film-goer, in order to better and more accurately portray Asians.



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³The land of Kamar-Taj is where all believers of the “mystic arts” reside, and largely represents a rural asian village with different areas of architecture representing Asian culture

⁴The picture shows the protagonist and a few other characters, mostly of Asian descent, practising their spells in portal opening and “shield creation”. This provides an inaccurate and unhealthy portrayal of normal Asians, as the Hollywood audience would stereotype Asians as humans with magical powers.

5.2 Raya and the Last Dragon

Raya and the Last Dragon was released in March 2021 and is the debut of the first Southeast Asian Disney princess. Raya and the Last Dragon was released both in theatres and on Disney Plus for a premium price of \$30 US dollars. Additionally, Disney+ had over 100 million subscribers as of 9 March. Thus Raya and the Last Dragon would have far-reaching impacts due to it having a large global audience. As Raya and the Last Dragon is the first animated feature where a Southeast Asian actor leads the film and is the first Disney film inspired by Southeast Asian culture, it is a landmark moment for Southeast Asian representation.

It is important that a Western audience is given a proper representation of Southeast Asians so that the Western Audience is able to understand their perspectives, culture and experiences. This is necessary to overcome the stereotypes of Southeast Asians as being inferior or uncivilized and the overlooking or exclusion of Southeast Asians in Western society. Southeast Asians have been reported to feel like “other Asians” and being stereotyped as being inferior to East Asian Americans. (Nadal, 2020). Thus, by portraying Southeast Asians in Hollywood Cinema accurately, not only will Southeast Asians be represented in Western media and would not be overlooked, but Southeast Asians will also be portrayed with their rich and diverse culture with unique practices. With a deeper understanding of Southeast Asians, the stereotyping and marginalization of Southeast Asians can be overcome. However, the film has its flaws, being the fact that there is a lack of Southeast Asian actors in the movie’s cast and the film’s approach of mixing various influences from different Southeast Asian countries into one film.

5.2.1 East Asian Casting

There is one alarming issue with *Raya and the Last Dragon*'s casting. Despite the film being set in a Southeast Asian inspired land, many of the voice actors in the film are not actually of Southeast Asian descent. Other than Kelly Marie Tran, of Vietnamese descent, and teen actors Izzac Wang and Thalia Tran, of Laotian and Vietnamese descent respectively, most of the other voice actors are of East Asian descent. This becomes a problem as it is a huge missed opportunity by Hollywood to cast a full Southeast Asian cast especially since the film has been billed as "The first Southeast Asian-inspired Disney film". This has also been a huge missed opportunity to diversify Hollywood's actors, and boost the careers of Southeast Asian actors who are marginalized even within the larger Asian media (Prakash Krishnan & Patricia Petit Liang, 2021).

By using Cultural Imperialism to examine how the film has cast its actors, we can see how Hollywood has misrepresented Southeast Asian culture as despite the film being inspired by Southeast Asian culture, the East Asian culture has taken precedence over the portrayal of Southeast Asian culture, through casting a majority of East Asian actors over Southeast Asian actors. This misrepresents the Southeast Asian community as a voice actor is able to convey parts of their identities and cultures through their voices, and having a majority of East Asian voice actors undermines and contradicts the film's goals of portraying Southeast Asian culture. This is supported by Katie Do, who is a programming coordinator at Asian CineVision, who says that "There's so much to tell in a voice," and "I bet the way that I speak has been influenced by listening to Vietnamese, which is a very tonal language." (Kat Moon, 2021) As such, the film has misrepresented Southeast Asian culture as through its casting of East Asians, it is unable to properly flesh out Southeast Asian culture like speech mannerisms and patterns. Thus by failing to properly represent

Southeast Asian culture, it perpetuates the view that all Asian Americans are East Asians. This view comes from the results of the AAPI data survey in 2016, which shows that “ the dominant understanding of Asian Americans often defaults to East Asians ”. This results in the film’s casting choices influencing a Western Audience’s view of who Southeast Asians are. This causes a major problem as it sets the stage for further films featuring Asian Americans to cast East Asians, instead of other groups of Asians, resulting in other groups of Asians being excluded from Western media, perpetuating the pre-existing views that “Asians” usually refers to East Asians (Nadal, 2020) This can be seen through many recent animations like Netflix’s “Over the Moon” and Dreamworks’ “Abominable” based and led by East Asians. This would lead to even less diversity in Hollywood as other groups of Asians like Southeast Asians are not cast into Hollywood films, and films about other Asian groups cast East Asians. Therefore, Hollywood has portrayed Southeast Asia inaccurately.

5.2.2 Film’s approach to portraying Southeast Asian cultures

Another criticism regarding the film’s portrayal of Southeast Asia however, is that the film was a mishmash of various unique Southeast Asian cultures into five tribes. Although the film did portray the different Southeast Asian cultures, it resulted in the different cultures mixing with each other, leading to many feeling that the film had not actually represented anyone, given that there was no one culture being represented alone. The film has mixed Cambodian architecture with Thai decor, Filipino weaponry with Thai weaponry and mixed Vietnamese and Indonesian fighting styles. As a result, the well-intentioned, extensive research has actually flattened and caused the different cultures to be intertwined with one another, and the striking differences and diversity between the different cultures have been reduced to one giant melting pot of Southeast Asia. This can lead to the misrepresentation of Southeast Asia as many people, especially the Western target audience may not be able to note the differences between the different cultures in Southeast

Asia. This is unlike a person from one of the many countries in Southeast Asia, who are educated on Southeast Asian cultures and know that different aspects of Kumandra, the film's fictional land, were actually inspired by different parts of Southeast Asia. While Southeast Asian viewers are able to appreciate the numerous easter eggs to the different cultures, many still criticise the film for their approach of making Kumandra a buffet of Southeast Asian cultures. This is because it implies to an uneducated audience that all of Southeast Asia is essentially the same, with no diversity within Southeast Asia itself, leading many to feel that the film has misrepresented Southeast Asia. This bolsters the idea in Hollywood, that all Southeast Asian countries and cultures are the same (Reyzando Nawara, 2021). This is important as unlike other Disney animated films like *Beauty and the Beast*, *Snow White and Sleeping Beauty*, which represent France, Germany and Italy respectively, Europe has not been represented as a mishmash of various cultures. Thus, as the various Southeast Asian cultures have not been explicitly diversified and set differently from one another, *Raya and the Last Dragon* has not been an accurate representation of Southeast Asia, and Hollywood has failed to portray Southeast Asia accurately.

6. CONCLUSION

In Hollywood films depicting Asians or Asian Americans, the main portrayal of Asians are typically overgeneralized or are simply incorrect. Asian cultures are being mixed up together in a film, with no distinct representation of different Asian cultures. This leads to Asia being classified as one homogenous society, which is thoroughly incorrect with the unique diversity present in Asia. The setting of Asian locations in films has also played a part in contributing to the misrepresentation of Asians, with Asia being largely labelled as a mysterious land of the East. With the manner in which Asians are portrayed, Cultural Imperialism and a greater appeal to America are reasons which were identified through our research. Hollywood filmmakers do uphold the objectives of Hollywood in spreading the American way of life, as mentioned in our literature review. Thus,

Cultural Imperialism has emerged in modern-age cinema, with Asian culture being dominated over American culture in some films and East Asian culture dominating over other Asian cultures in other films, resulting in misrepresentation. In addition, whitewashing has become a prominent issue with the rise in appeal of the American market. Hollywood directors are well aware of the importance of this market, and thus are making the decision to whitewash Asian roles. This has not only caused inaccurate portrayals in film but has also reduced the diversity within Hollywood. Thus, it can be argued that Hollywood has failed in its ability to accurately portray Asians and ensure adequate representation of Asian actors in film.

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