The Manipulation and Role of Stereotypes in the *Rush Hour* Trilogy

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Abstract

While the Rush Hour *trilogy is one of the most commercially successful biracial martial arts action comedies, the films are known for stereotyping characters. Through a content analysis, the author coded each scene and character in the films based on the ethnicity, stereotype, and implication of the stereotype presented. While the films perpetuate a number of stereotypes, most of them are generalizations exaggerated for comedic reasons. The film communicates them mostly through dialogue and behaviors for humor, yet the trilogy does include positive stereotypes that divert from the norm. These findings may contribute to the discussion of stereotypes in films and provide insight into how stereotypes are manipulated and presented to influence audiences.*

I. Introduction

Racial stereotypes often permeate films, especially comedy. In most cases, audiences will find racial stereotypes in comedies inoffensive, as the explicit joke is made enjoyable through humor (Gates, 2012). In this form, however, racial stereotypes are naturalized and perpetuated, "thereby making viewers susceptible to the beliefs of racial difference" (Park, Gabbadon, & Chernin, 2006, p. 173). One of the most racially motivated films, *Rush Hour,* follows a black police officer and an Asian detective. This biracial martial arts buddy action comedy is full of stereotypes and yet the film broke box office records and spawned two sequels, *Rush Hour 2* and *Rush Hour 3.*

In the first *Rush Hour,* Detective Yan Naing Lee (Jackie Chan) travels to Los Angeles. He meets Detective James Carter (Chris Tucker), who is ordered to "babysit" Lee and keep him from the investigation of the Chinese consulate's missing daughter. The two overcome their differences and work together to solve the case. In *Rush Hour 2,* Lee and Carter reunite for a vacation in Hong Kong. After exploring the city, the two stumble upon a Fu-Cang-Long Triad gang smuggling counterfeit money to the United States. The two travel back to Los Angeles and then to Las Vegas and must work together again to solve the crime. In *Rush Hour 3,* Lee and Carter join forces to protect the Chinese consulate's daughter after his attempted assassination. The two end up in Paris to confront the Triad and a mysterious crime lord.

Each film in the *Rush Hour* trilogy exemplifies common racial stereotypes of Asians, Blacks, Whites, Latinos, and French. Despite of the film stereotypes of many races, audiences flocked to see the movie in theaters. Overall, the three films were a commercial success at the box office, making more than $500 million domestically and more than $850 million worldwide (*Box office*, 2016). All three films are among the top five highest grossing martial arts films of all time with *Rush Hour 2* at number one. *Rush Hour 2,*

the most commercially successful of the trilogy, became the 11th highest-grossing film of 2001 worldwide ("Action", 2016). Therefore, it seems as though the use of stereotypes in this film had little effect on the box office ratings. This project examined the use of stereotypes in *Rush Hour*, *Rush Hour 2*, and *Rush Hour 3* to analyze how the stereotypes are distributed, evolved and intensified as the series continued.

II. Literature Review

This paper reviewed literature on social identity theory and how Chinese and Blacks have been portrayed in Hollywood film. The author also examined previous studies on the *Rush Hour* films.

Key Concepts

It is important to first distinguish the difference between prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. Prejudice is a cognitive reflection or attitude of another group based on a certain belief; stereotypes are attributions of a certain trait to a specific group; and discrimination is the biased behavior of a group based on a belief or trait (Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick, & Esses, 2010). In this paper, the author looked specifically at stereotypes and how they are portrayed in the *Rush Hour* films.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory seeks to explain how people identify themselves. It says that people's idea of who they are can be based on their categorization of their identity (Tajifel & Turner, 1986). The first phase of the social identity theory is categorization, which is based on an intergroup, a process of self-identification to a certain group based on similar appearances, social class, personalities, or occupations (Dovidio et al., 2010). Tajifel notes that identifying with a certain group adds to a person's self-image and, consequently, intensifies one's tendency to place one group higher than another. This categorization leads to social comparison and stereotypes, as people who identify with an intergroup tend to categorize differences and similarities between theirs and another in-group leading to prejudices and discrimination (Dovidio et al., 2010). Therefore, they propose "intergroup relations begin when people begin thinking about themselves as 'we,' and others as 'them,' instead of seeing group members as distinct individuals" (Dovidio et al., 2010, p. 15). For example, in *Rush Hour,* when Detective Carter first meets Detective Lee, he assumes that, because Lee is Asian, he will have a hard time understanding English. It is later revealed that Lee speaks fluent English as he says, "I didn't say I didn't [speak English]. You assumed I didn't" (Ratner, 1998). Social identity theory is the explanation for why Carter believes Lee will not speak English. Carter identifies himself as someone who speaks English and anyone he compares as different must then have a difficult time speaking English. Therefore, the concept of social identity theory explains the formation of stereotypes and how they become perpetuated in society and through film.

Identifying Racist Discourse

Most stereotypes happen at a micro-level, meaning that everyday talk and actions produce ideological and structural stereotypes (Myers & Williamson, 2001). For example, Myers and Williamson's study analyzed the insinuation of racist speech. They found that when their participant, Janet, asked her Black male friend "why he did not wear a chain," she was associating Black rappers who wear chains to her Black friend (Myers & Williamson, 2001, p. 20). Berg identifies stereotypes through 11 theses: rigid logic, basis in fact, generalizations, worthwhile predictors, uncontextualized dialogue, dominant majority, ideological motives, in-group influence, repetition, normalized beliefs, and ignorance (Berg, 2002). Through these 11 theses, Berg is able to identify stereotypes discussed at a micro-level. Similarly, Kapur uses a textual methodology of identifying stereotypes. He categorizes micro-level stereotypes through reduction, segregation, pride, association, belittlement, latent hate, denial, indifference, and presumption (Kapur, 1999). Both Berg and Kapur have created coding systems of identifying racist language.

Chinese Stereotypes in Hollywood Film

Chinese people have been portrayed in film in varying ways throughout history. From the time of silent films and the dawn of motion picture, Caucasians regularly portrayed Chinese individuals by painting their

faces yellow with theatrical makeup (Cai & Zhu, 2013). During the 1930s, the Chinese characters in films were portrayed mostly negatively with the rise of Fu Manchu, a fictional character created by a British author. Cai and Zhu note that Fu Manchu is a "revengeful, merciless, frightening evil with a long mustache, darkly painted eyebrows with heavy eyeliner and long fingernails" (Cai & Zhu, 2013, p. 9). Fu Manchu inspired other Asian villains, such as the ruthless Emperor Ming in *Flash Gordon* (Xing, 1998).

At the same time, however, another Chinese character named Charlie Chan rose to fame. Chan was a direct contrast to the "yellow-peril" of Fu Manchu, a benevolent, intelligent, and quiet figure. Xing proposes that the Japanese, during World War II, inspired Chan's positive traits. The fact that the Chinese fought against the Japanese, an American enemy, supported the idea that the Chinese were benevolent, thus influencing Chan's character (Xing, 1998, p. 55). After World War II, the next character to pervade Hollywood was Bruce Lee in the 1960s. Lee represented a combination of Fu Manchu's viciousness and Chan's heroism. The martial arts style of Lee's Hollywood films also promoted the stereotype that Asians are skilled at Kung Fu (Marchetti, 2012). The final Chinese character in Hollywood is Jackie Chan, who has become the modern stereotype of a Chinese person. In Chan's Hollywood films, his characters tend to be "the heroic, funny, desexualized unthreatening oriental male" (Park et al., 2006, p. 163). Gates writes, "Chan demonstrates the vulnerability of the male body in a way that would appeal to the female viewership as well as the male viewer" (Gates, 2012, p. 86).

Cai and Zhu analyzed the content of three films from each period in which Hollywood featured a dominant Chinese figure: *Marlowe* (1969), *Big Brawl* (1980), and *Rush Hour* (1998). They found that Bruce Lee in *Marlowe* exemplified a cruel, callous devious character who had hostile relations with Americans. In contrast, Jackie Chan's character in *Big Brawl* was intelligent, impulsive, confident, and hardworking with mixed relations with Americans. Finally, Chan's character in *Rush Hour* was responsible, warm, and honorable with friendly relations with Americans. Cai and Zhu concluded that Chinese characters in modern times have been mostly represented as good guys with hardworking and honorable characteristics.

Black Stereotypes in Hollywood Films

Black representation in film can be traced back to the minstrel show, in which Whites painted their face black in order to portray a Black man. In 1915, *Birth of a Nation* exemplified the minstrel show on film with some White actors portraying African Americans (Berry, 2009). Director D.W. Griffith, known for glorifying the Ku Klux Klan and negatively depicting African Americans, controversially stereotyped Black men as unintelligent and sexually aggressive toward White women. In the 1940s, Schulman describes how African Americans were now able to portray themselves, but in roles such as, "the nurturing Mammy figure, the deferential Uncle Tom, the flashy con-artist, [and] the happy-go-lucky Negro whose banjo has been replaced by a 'boom box'" (Schulman, 1992, p. 2). All these characters in films during this time were subsequently depicted as unintelligent with incomprehensible dialect, poor grammar, and extreme innocence. W. E. B. Dubois argued on behalf of the NAACP that films with Black actors must be about them, by them, for them, and near them in theaters (Marchetti, 2012).

In the 1950s and 1960s, a new type of film called "the Negro Cycle" became popular in which films were produced by Whites but humanized Blacks on screen (Nishime, 2004). Berry (2009) proposes that the Civil Rights movement of this time led to the creation of more roles for Black people even if under the supervision of White directors. In the 1970s, blaxploitation films represented issues Blacks faced including poverty and interracial marriage and became popular, but did so in a stereotypical and caricatured way (Schulman 1992). Berry content-analyzed *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967) and *Guess Who?* (2005). The original version featured a White doctor whose daughter brought home a Black unemployed man. Berry found that the 2005 remake simply reversed stereotypes placing Blacks in the role of the doctors and Whites as the unemployed. Berry essentially concluded that Blacks were simply being put into White roles instead of having roles written for them (Berry, 2009). Though Blacks began to have roles written for them, they were always subordinate to their White counterpart, who acted as their "gatekeepers" (Marchetti, 2012). In cases such as *Lethal Weapon* and *Die Hard with a Vengance*, White actors, Mel Gibson and Bruce Willis, respectively, were paid more and had more screen time than the Black co-stars, Danny Glover and Samuel L. Jackson (Nishime, 2004). By the late 1990s and early 2000s, Black stars, such as Eddie Murphy and Chris Tucker, had gained top billing in films and more screen time, but were stereotyped as "infantile comedians eating fried chicken while saying 'mack out'" (Park et al., 2006, p. 163). Nishime argues that Asians have replaced Whites as "gatekeepers" for Blacks saying, "Asians are pawns that stand in for Whites to police and repress Blacks" (Nishime, 2004, p. 43).

Rush Hour *Comedy and Stereotypes*

The *Rush Hour* trilogy worked to mitigate the stereotypes of Chinese and Blacks in Hollywood films. Actor Tzi Ma, who plays Consul Han, said, "To the best of my knowledge, this is the first Hollywood film with two heroes of color. This movie is really a melting pot" (Gates, 2012, p. 88). African Americans, after blaxploitation, flocked to see martial arts films in which "the heroes of the film are set in opposition to White authority on both sides of the law" (Nishime, 2004, p. 51). Marchetti (2012) notes that long after the "kung fu craze" of Bruce Lee in the early 1970s, African Americans remained loyal to the art of martial arts films. Many Asians went to see the films, as Gates describes, because "Asian heroes became honorary American heroes" (Gates, 2012, p. 90). The *Rush Hour* film became a trailblazer, putting minorities at the forefront and changing their role from racial politics to multiculturalism. Though the *Rush Hour* trilogy forge a step toward multiculturalism, the films still revert back to common stereotypes that exaggerate race (Nishime, 2004).

Yet, audience members were able to overlook the racist stereotypes because minorities were making the racial jokes, the jokes went across color lines, the stereotypes were relevant to the plot and characterizations, and the two leading men with the stereotypes were portrayed as friends (Park et al., 2006). Thus, Rush Hour's ability to depict an Asian and an African American in a positive image overruled the racist stereotypes in the film. However, some authors like Gates argue that the stereotypes in comedy form mask the embedded racism. He says, "These Hollywood films with their Asian heroes are not intended to inspire America's increasingly ethnically diverse demographic but to pacify and entertain America's White mainstream" (Gates, 2012, p. 92). Park expounds on this idea concluding that racial stereotypes in the Rush Hour films validate and enable viewers to naturalize the stereotypes through humor.

Scholars are divided on whether the diversity in the Rush Hour films justifies the overt racial stereotypes. While other research had looked at offensiveness in specific Rush Hour films, the author examined the stereotypes throughout the trilogy, specifically how the stereotypes evolved and grew throughout the Rush Hour series and how they were distributed among various ethnic groups:

RQ1: What is the distribution of stereotypes among the ethnicities portrayed?

RQ2: How are the ethnicities portrayed?

RQ3: What is the purpose of the stereotypes identified?

RQ4: Do the overall stereotypes increase in the sequels?

This study used a content analysis to identify, quantify, and categorize the implicit use of stereotypes in the *Rush Hour* films.

III. Methods

This content analysis was adopted to identify the use of stereotypes throughout each *Rush Hour* film of the trilogy. This method goes "outside the immediately observable physical vehicles of communication and relies on their symbolic qualities, thus rendering the unobserved context of the data analyzable" (Krippendorff, 1989, p. 403). Therefore, a content analysis ventures beyond the surface-level qualities and quantifies a deeper understanding of the context. The analysis included a careful examination of the three films, with pauses to record the script, behavior, and coding outlined below. Despite subjectivity involved in the coding, the analysis was based on thorough examination of the stereotype.

Character Record

To answer RQ1, each major character in the film was identified and categorized. The characters were recorded based on their race (Asian, African American, etc.), role in the film (villain, hero, extra, etc.), three key characteristics (loud, shy, impulsive, etc.) and appearance (costuming, makeup, etc.). Through the character record, the author was able to identify the number of times each race was invoked in a stereotype as well as how each stereotype was exemplified by race, characteristic, or costuming. The unit analysis included the specific character as well as the specific identification of the stereotype.

Identifying Stereotypes in the Films

Once identifying who was stereotyped, the author analyzed both the denotative and connotative meaning of each stereotype (Krippendorff, 1989). To answer RQ2, the author recorded any incident or episode in the *Rush Hour* films that used an explicit or implicit stereotype. As defined earlier, stereotypes are attributions of a certain trait to a specific group of people. The author categorized any stereotyped dialogue, behavior, or song based on Berg's (2002) 11 theses of stereotypes and Kapur's (1999) categorizations of racism. A stereotype was depicted when Tucker punched Chan and said, "I'm sorry! All you all look alike" (Ratner, 2001). The author counted the remark that "all Asians look alike" as a stereotype against Asians, more specifically a stereotype under Berg's thesis of generalization.

Manifest Categorization

Using Berg's theses of stereotypes, the author also categorized the actual content of the stereotypes. The first category, physical stereotypes, defines a stereotype as associating a physical trait with a group of people because they are of that race (Berg, 2002). For example, the following statement would be categorized as rigid logic: "If Chan is Asian, then he must be short because all Asians are short." The second category, historical stereotype, defines a stereotype as a trait rooted in history or the media. For example, Tucker knew that Chan is Asian, invoked a stereotype that Asians know kung-fu, and assumed that he must know kung-fu; perhaps this is informed based on numerous kung-fu movies featuring mainly Asians. The final category, behavioral stereotype, defines stereotypes that associate a certain behavior with a person of a certain race. For example, Chan assuming that Tucker wants some fried chicken because he is African American would be categorized as a behavioral stereotype. Some of the stereotypes may fall into more than one category.

Latent Categorization

Using Kapur's (1998) categorization of racism, the author answered RQ2. Each stereotype was defined as either positive or negative. Positive stereotypes put the people of that race in a favorable light, whereas negative stereotypes cast the people of that race in a negative light. Positive stereotypes were noted in three categories: superior ability, diverting from the norm, and moral excellence. For example, Tucker believing that Chan is skilled at kung-fu would be a positive stereotype of superior ability; Tucker eating Chinese food would be a positive stereotype because it diverts from the norm; and Chan saying all White people are noble would fall under moral excellence. Negative stereotypes were on the opposite side: weakness, generalization, and moral shortcoming. For example, Chan stating that Tucker talks too much would fall under weakness; Tucker saying Chan looks like all other Asians would be generalization; and Tucker explaining that all White people are racist would be a moral shortcoming. Similar to the manifest categorization, some latent stereotypes can fall under more than one category.

Purpose of the Stereotype

To answer RQ3, the author expanded on Berry's (2009) method and defined the role the stereotype played in the film. The purpose each stereotype serves was categorized as humor, plot point, or transition. For example, Tucker commenting that Chan looks like all the other Asians is for humor; Tucker saying to follow the rich White man is plot point; and Chan explaining that they should go to a Chinese restaurant is transition. This element of coding involves some qualitative subjectivity as the director's true intention for the stereotype may differ from the author's interpretation.

IV. Findings & Discussion

Distribution of Stereotypes Among Ethnicities

Use of stereotypes totaled 113 incidents in the *Rush Hour* trilogy. The sequels have more stereotypes than the original; the film with the most stereotypes is *Rush Hour 2*. The longest film in the series, *Rush Hour 1* (97 minutes)*,* contains the fewest stereotypes while the shortest film in the series, *Rush Hour 2* (90 minutes)*,* features the most stereotypes.

The *Rush Hour* films have more stereotypes of Asians than any other ethnic group. Asians were stereotyped 61 times throughout the series, in comparison with African Americans, who were stereotyped 35 times. Asians tended to be stereotyped less in the final film than the previous two, while African Americans were stereotyped equally in the three. Other ethnic groups were not exempted; but they were stereotyped minimally, especially compared to Asians and African Americans (See Table 1). Whites were featured in all three films and had 12 stereotypes in total. In both *Rush Hour 1* and *Rush Hour 2*, a Hispanic woman character is featured, but only the character in the second film is stereotyped. More ethnicities are portrayed in the third installment with some French and Arab stereotypes featured in *Rush Hour 3*. Most of the stereotypes include the ethnicities of the two stars, Chan representing the Asians and Tucker representing the African Americans.

Table 1: The three movies' stereotypical portrayal of ethnicities

	African Americans	Asians	Whites	Hispanics	French	Arabs	Total
Rush Hour 1	9	19	3	0	0	0	31
Rush Hour 2	13	26	8	1	0	0	48
Rush Hour 3	13	16	1	0	3	1	34
Total	35	61	12	1	3	1	113

In all three films, African Americans are committing most of the stereotyping, followed by Asians, Whites, French and Movie (See Table 2). This is mainly due to Tucker's lines being the overwhelming vehicle for the stereotypes. The movie itself stereotypes characters with its music and editing cuts.

Table 2: The number of stereotyping used by actors of different ethnic groups

	African Americans	Asians	Whites	Movie*	French	Total
Rush Hour 1	21	5	3	2	0	31
Rush Hour 2	32	13	3	0	0	48
Rush Hour 3	16	9	2	1	6	34
Total	69	27	8	3	6	113

Notes: The movie* column shows how the movie itself does the stereotyping through music or dialogue, in which case no specific ethnic group did the stereotyping.

Analyzing the Nature of the Stereotypes

Most of the stereotypes in the trilogy are classified as behavioral and historical (See Table 3). More of the stereotypes are focused on the person's behavior (54.1%) or historical background (31.6%) rather than their actual physical appearance (14.3%). A common behavioral stereotype in all of the films is based on the ethnicity's food. For example, in Rush Hour 1, Carter asks Lee if he wants a Cup O' Noodle. In Rush Hour 2, Carter says he wants his chicken "dead and deep fried. Have you ever heard of Popeye's?" (Ratner, 2001). In Rush Hour 3, the Frenchman says he will drink a knockoff Starbucks cup so he can be an American.

Table 3: The context of the stereotypes in the films

	Rush Hour 1	*Rush Hour 2*	*Rush Hour 3*	Total
Historical	16	15	11	42 (31.6%)
Behavioral	17	30	25	72 (54.1%)
Physical	7	10	2	19 (14.3%)

Some of the content analyzed contains two stereotypes. For example, when Carter takes Lee to Chinatown, he says, "Looks just like home. I've never been to China but I'm sure it looks just like this. You may see one of your cousins walking around here" (Ratner, 1998). This dialogue implies that Lee's cousin might be in Chinatown based on the notion that all Asians look alike, a physical stereotype. Yet another stereotype implicit in this dialogue is that the Chinatown in Los Angeles resembles China because of its temples and lanterns. This stereotype is motivated not on physicality, such as the first stereotype, but based on historical context that oriental-looking temples are Chinese.

Most of the stereotypes in the film are suggested through dialogue and behavior (See Table 4). For example, in *Rush Hour 2*, Lee is able to run on a truck to avoid getting hit while Carter rolls along the truck because he does not have kung-fu skills. This behavior, though comedic through the editing, portrays Lee as a skilled karate hero and accentuates Carter's reputation as the loud-mouthed, trouble-making sidekick. Another example of an implicit stereotype is when Carter corrects Lee saying, "You mean Tito. Toto is what we ate last night for dinner" (Ratner, 2001). This comment expounds upon the historical context that Asians eat dogs. In both the behavioral and dialogue instances, the stereotype used is more repressed than blatantly addressing the stereotype.

Table 4: Use of the stereotypes in different forms

	Rush Hour 1	*Rush Hour 2*	*Rush Hour 3*	Total
Dialogue	19	36	19	74
Behavior	10	11	13	34
Skill	3	2	2	7

As the films progressed, the stereotypes became more blatant. In *Rush Hour 2*, Carter accidentally punches Lee saying, "Sorry! All y'all look alike" (Ratner, 2001). Carter just outright says that Asians all look alike rather than its predecessor film saying, "You may see one of your cousins here [in Chinatown]" (Ratner, 1998). In *Rush Hour 3*, the Arab stereotype came when Carter said, "We all knew them Iranians were terrorists," but it is revealed that the Iranians are scientists (Ratner, 2007). Carter specifically addresses the stereotype that Arabs are terrorists.

Most of the song stereotypes are used as transitions. For example in *Rush Hour 1*, once it is revealed that Lee speaks English, a Chinese gong rings. There are also instances in which the song personifies the characters. For example, Carter listens to Jay-Z and Lee listens to the Beach Boys, both say each is classic American music. In *Rush Hour 2*, an Asian man sings Michael Jackson in a Chinese accent. Carter says, "This man is destroying a classic" and proceeds to take the stage from him and sing the song himself (Ratner, 2001). This stereotype counted as *skill* because it implies that Chinese people cannot sing Michael Jackson like African Americans, a specific skill.

Positive and Negative Portrayals

All groups are portrayed more negatively than positively. Stereotype incidents averaged about 42 in each film, with 10 positive stereotypes and 32 negative incidents. The group portrayed most positively in all three films is Asians with 15 positive stereotypes, but they are also the most negatively portrayed with 51 stereotypes (See Tables 5 & 6). African Americans, represented mainly by Tucker, are the second most positively (12) and negatively (29) stereotyped group. Whites are only represented positively twice and negatively 11 times. Most of the White characters in the film are cruel, greedy, and evil. In *Rush Hour 2*,

Carter says, "Follow the rich White man," believing the White man is the logical villain (Ratner, 2001). In all three films, the main villain is a White male.

Table 5: Distribution of positive stereotypes among ethnicities

	Rush Hour 1	*Rush Hour 2*	*Rush Hour 3*	Total
Positive Asians	3	7	5	15
Positive African Americans	3	5	4	12
Positive Whites	0	2	0	2
Positive Hispanics	0	0	0	0
Positive French	0	0	1	1
Positive Arabs	0	0	0	0
Total	6	14	10	30

Table 6: Distribution of negative stereotypes among ethnicities

	Rush Hour 1	*Rush Hour 2*	*Rush Hour 3*	Total
Negative Asians	17	21	13	51
Negative African Americans	7	10	12	29
Negative Whites	3	7	1	11
Negative Hispanics	0	1	0	1
Negative French	0	0	2	2
Negative Arabs	0	0	1	1
Total	27	39	29	95

Though Asians have the most negative stereotypes, most of those are generalizations, such as Carter insinuating that all Asians are from Beijing. Yet Asians also possess the most weaknesses with 14 incidents in this category (see Table 7). Many of these weaknesses included their inability to understand or communicate in English. In *Rush Hour 1*, Carter says his famous line, "Do you understand the words that are coming out of my mouth?" (Ratner, 1998). In the sequel, Carter answers his own question, "Nobody understands the words that are coming out of your mouth" (Ratner, 2001). A perpetuating joke throughout the trilogy is Lee's inability to speak English. Even in the film's bloopers, most incidents include Chan fumbling the lines or mispronouncing words.

Table 7: Classification of each stereotype in all three *Rush Hour* films

	Moral Excellence (+)	Diverting from the Norm (+)	Improved Ability (+)	Moral Shortcoming (-)	Generalization (-)	Weakness (-)	Total
African Americans	2	5	8	6	22	6	49
Asians	3	6	9	5	42	14	79
Whites	1	1	0	8	5	3	18
Hispanics	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
French	0	1	1	0	1	1	4
Arabs	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Total	6	13	18	20	72	24	153

African Americans in the film have some positive stereotypes, especially when Carter is able to divert from his normal blabbering and fight alongside Lee. On the negative side, African Americans have mostly generalizations with an even amount of moral shortcomings and weakness, all second to other ethnic groups. These consisted of mostly historical generalizations of African Americans hating cops, eating soul food, and listening to Michael Jackson. An interesting example of weaknesses displayed is whenever African Americans diverted from their culture. For example, in *Rush Hour 2,* Carter criticizes Kenny for being an African American owning a Chinese restaurant on Crenshaw.

Whites have the most moral shortcomings, as the main villain in *Rush Hour 1* and *Rush Hour 3* are White men. Aside from these villains, Carter consistently portrays Whites as being greedy criminals saying, "I don't want to get jumped by any of these rich White folks" (Ratner, 2001). The one case of Hispanic stereotyping occurs when Carter generalizes that the woman knows "Pedro Morales Magonzales Morotto Malosso Megusto" as he completely stereotypes a Hispanic name. The French are mostly portrayed negatively as the commissioner and the taxi driver are unwelcoming and judgmental of Americans. Yet they are portrayed positively as the taxi driver diverts from the norm, shooting the bad guy and saving Carter and Lee.

Purpose of the Stereotypes

The main uses of the stereotypes are for humor with 84 incidents being used for comedic purposes (See Table 8). Three incidents of stereotypes were used for transitions, in which music or songs are stereotypical for a race. Only 35 stereotyped incidents are used to move the plot along or accentuate a character as a plot point.

Table 8: Distribution of purpose for each stereotype

	Purpose *Rush Hour 1*	Purpose *Rush Hour 2*	Purpose *Rush Hour 3*	Total
Humor	20	37	27	84
Plot Point	11	12	12	35
Transition	2	0	1	3

V. Conclusion

This study sought to identify how the *Rush Hour* films used and manipulated stereotypes. The *Rush Hour* trilogy all featured more stereotypes of Asians than any other ethnicities. Each film portrayed more positive and negative stereotypes of Asians than any other ethnicities. Whites were overwhelmingly portrayed as negative in regards to their moral shortcomings. All ethnicities had more negative stereotypes than positive ones. Most of the stereotypes identified were for humor rather than for the plot. The number of stereotypes has increased in the sequels but the most stereotypes occurred in *Rush Hour 2.*

The *Rush Hour* trilogy is groundbreaking in many ways. Even though the three films contain more than one hundred stereotypes, they featured two heroes of a minority background, which is a unique instance in Hollywood films. While most of the stereotypes were negative, the film did portray the minority duo in a positive light, as the two individuals were the heroes of the day. In the films the two minorities overcame their stereotypes and created a new norm. For example in *Rush Hour 3*, Lee ate fried chicken and watched an African documentary while Carter ate Chinese takeout and watched the Asian boy in *Indiana Jones*. The characters may have played into their stereotypes, but they also showed that the stereotypes can be broken. In doing so, the films did what social identity theory proposes: Forming new roles for each ethnicity to identify with while exaggerating current stereotypes.

The films were able to cover stereotypes of multiple ethnicities; however, some ethnicities were targeted more than others. Whites featured in the films were mainly portrayed negatively as the cruel, greedy white male. One could argue that this negative portrayal could be balanced out with the overwhelming White majority and star power in Hollywood. African Americans received many positive and negative stereotypes in the trilogy. Tucker's character, with his loud talking and trouble-making nature, only perpetuated the stereotypical happy-go-lucky Negro of early 1900s Hollywood films. Yet Tucker was able to break away from the "White gatekeepers" that limit African Americans in today's films, as the only Whites in the film were supporting characters or villains. Nishime argued that Asians now act as those gatekeepers, but in each film Lee relied on Carter to rescue him.

Asians in the *Rush Hour* films continued to follow the stereotypes of current and past Hollywood films. Chan's character matched the modern day stereotype of Asians as hardworking, responsible, and honorable. Yet there were instances in which Asians in the films revert back to the yellow-peril days. Each film has an Asian villain who is cruel, crazy and evil reflecting the Asian stereotypical character of Fu Manchu. Analysis of stereotypes can be subjective as in a case where Carter took Lee to Chinatown and showed him John Wayne's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. It may be a coincidence, but John Wayne's career is forever marked by his role as Ghengis Khan in *The Conqueror.* As the Telegraph Film wrote, "Wayne was transformed into an Asian with makeup and fake eyelids. He was also told to grow a Fu Manchu style moustache. There you go: unmistakably Mongolian" ("Movie," 2015). Wayne is historically famous for this role as audiences were critical of his portrayal of an Asian, especially since he continued to use his famous Western accent. Of all the stars to show Lee on the Walk of Fame, Carter specifically chose to show him Wayne.

While the films perpetuate a number of stereotypes, most of the stereotypes are generalizations exaggerated for comedic reasons. The film communicates them mostly through dialogue and behaviors for humor and does include positive stereotypes that divert from the norm. One study concluded from a focus group that "racial audiences enjoy racial jokes and humor in comedy and are also more inclined to see truth in racial stereotypes than to cast doubt on them" (Park et al., 2006, P.173). The findings of this study can contribute to the discussion of the offensiveness of the films.

The *Rush Hour* trilogy influenced numerous other biracial action comedies and led to the recent creation of the *Rush Hour* television show on CBS. Scholars can now use this coding and compare and contrast the different ways other biracial action comedies use stereotypes. It may also be worth comparing the films with the television series to see in what ways the same stereotypes are perpetuated or adapted. Since identifying the stereotypes is subjective, one coder is not desirable, a limitation to this study.

Acknowledgements

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