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Running Head: BATTLING YELLOW FEVER: AN ANALYSIS OF HOW FETISHIZED BODIES MANAGE IDENTITY

Battling Yellow Fever:
An Analysis of How Fetishized Bodies Manage Identity
Organizational Communication Capstone Project
University of Portland
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Abstract

This study works to improve the understanding of how identity is managed through power dynamics. More specifically this study aims to observe how fetishized bodies manage identity within Western and patriarchal structures. Through the exploration of defining fetishization, the socialization of Western ideologies through colonization, and the theoretical framework of identity management, this question was explored through analyzing interviews and stories gathered through digital media outlets involving Asian woman interacting in sites and environments where their bodies are systematically fetishized. Two main themes emerged from the research: protecting identity through defense and strengthening identity through offense. An analysis of these interview and stories telling the experiences of fetishized bodies in sites of power reveals the power of storytelling to create empowerment, strengthen identity, and be used as a medium to break away from the dominant discourses that have dismissed their experiences as Asian women.

Introduction

“Hypersexuality for Asian American women is a network of social forces that ground their legibility in culture, as terms for self-recognition and as condition of social marginalization that lead to opportunities for creative self-invention.” (Shimizu, 2007, p. 17) Shimizu’s statement from “the Hypersexuality of Race” highlights that society may create labels for identity and want to put you in a box, however these site of power and control can also provide as inspiration to think outside that box in order to understand the different experiences of others and how it relates to understanding the self. The misconception of Asian/American women as exoticized and hypersexualized through multiple mediums of social structure (film, dating websites, pornography, etc.) not only normalizes hypermasculine and rape culture, but creates a struggle for these women to understand their identity allowing for feelings of displacement and disconnect between their intercultural identities. With no sense of identity and belonging Asian/American constantly feel regarded as outsiders or “forever foreigners.” (Shankar, 2013,p. 164)

Literature Review

In the following review of literature the phenomenon of concern is understood through analysis of other scholarly work surrounding fetishized bodies as they are objectified in patriarchal structures and how identity is navigated. Studies circulating through academia in relation to the issue of fetishized bodies and identity theory of the Asian/American community are gathered to better understand the phenomenon. It is organized by defining fetish specific to the Asian/American community as yellow fever, the patriarchal objectification of minorities through the colonization of identities to socialize them into Western narratives and ideologies, and negotiating identity as it is socially constructed and managed.

The literature review will begin with defining fetishized bodies pertaining to the Asian/American women as yellow fever, the historical and systemic patriarchal objectification of minority bodies through colonization and socialization of Western values and ideologies, and understanding identity as socially constructed and managed.

Fetishized Bodies

Zheng (2016) defines racial fetish as “a person’s exclusive or near-exclusive preference for sexual intimacy with others belonging to a specific racial *out-group*.” (p. 401). The argument that one may make in defense for racial fetishes is that it is merely a preference, which Zheng (2016) labels the Mere Preference Argument, or MPA (p. 402). MPA covers three principles that argue that there is nothing morally wrong with having a preference over phenotypic traits that are nonracialized, there is no difference between having a preference for nonracialized physical traits and phenotypic traits that are nonracialized, thus having a preference for racialized phenotypic traits are not morally wrong. However, this argument is easily objectionable when it is realized that stereotypes and generalization of race are progressively seen as an issue in the social world. It can be acknowledged that when we isolate phenotypic traits into something that is merely physical, it may seem like there is nothing wrong against having a preference towards certain racial groups. Although, it cannot be ignored that we live in a socially constructed world where verbal and nonverbal communication carries weight and meaning. This can be observed through the social acceptance of stereotyping Asians as “Model Minorities” because of its positive connotation and connections to traits such as work ethic and economic success.

Yellow Fever

The social phenomenon known as yellow fever is not a viral infection contracted by mosquito bites, but is the name for when men, usually White males, have a sexual preference for

Asian women (and men) (p. 401). To explain the emergence of yellow fever, the origins of this hypersexualization must be acknowledged. In Shimizu's (2007) *The Hypersexuality of Race* she lays out the history that demonstrates how Asian women have been sexualized from the beginning of their immigration to America. Chinese women as prostitutes, Japanese women as "picture brides" and "war brides", Filipino women as "mail-order brides" – women of color served as pleasurable objects (Shimizu, 2007, p. 16).

The real experiences of these women in America are translated onto the Western cinema screen and rendered into sexual objects recognized as the "dragon lady and lotus blossom dichotomy" (Shimizu, 2007, p. 18). One represents the obedience and domestication to society – the lotus blossom, while the other signifies a seductive and non-normative deviant – the dragon lady. The docile is then intertwined with the rebellious to create a category of the sexual model minority, "ideal in their union of sex appeal with family-centered values and a strong work ethic," which is what is desired by men with yellow fever (Zheng, 2016, p. 405). The duality of the Asian/American women as sexual model minorities portrays them as "'alluring, provocative, and mysterious as well as passive, yielding, and vulnerable,'" to uphold white masculine hegemony (Nemoto, 2006, p. 28).

Fetish Imposed on Asian American Identity

The narrative for Asian/American experiences seems to be hidden or erased from mainstream narratives of racial discrimination as they are not as obviously observed within Black and Latinx groups. This is not to say that the subjugation and discrimination of a particular group should be made more important than the other. However, this does not conclude with the idea that Asian/American groups do not experience injustice, but rather this double layering of invisibility within the dominant White Western culture and racial minority culture is a unique

phenomenon that contributed to societal acceptance of the unspoken fetishization towards Asian/American women. Not being able to recognize these discourses and interactions as one that is discriminatory is what prevents them from “articulating the racialized nature of certain social experiences,” leaving them unequipped to process and cope with the racism that they deal with on a regular basis (Zheng, 2016, p. 403).

Racial fetishes imposed upon the Asian/American community does harm to their personal and cultural identity. To fetishize this community is to depersonalize their experiences and turn them into otherized targets (Zheng, 2016, p. 412). When a person’s identity is otherized and depersonalized, they are no longer seen as human and are used as objects. In addition to the objectification of Asian women’s bodies that could lead to sexual harassment and violence from men who target them. These women also experience tensions between fulfilling, resisting, and negotiating these racial stereotypes that take a significant amount of emotional labor (Zheng, 2016, p. 405). People of color must constantly adjust to the bias, prejudice, and discrimination they experience at the individual or institutional level. They must constantly negotiate the problem and their identity as they move through these situations that occur overtly and covertly.

Patriarchal Objectification of Gender & Racial Minorities

The sexualizing and racializing of Asian women points directly to Asian cultural traits being highlighted and emphasized as it appeals to the dominant society maintained in western culture attitudes and beliefs. Although it may seem at first that Asian women are sought after by Westernized men for the fetishization of their foreign culture and how those differences are fantasized, previous research analyzes that in addition to the romanization of the other also points to underlying themes that more so reinforces western cultural values and beliefs.

Colonization of Gender & Racial Bodies

This idea originates from the act of claiming and domination of the other through colonialism to use the female Asian body as a form for commodification and global capitalism. So (2006) recognizes the intersections between the fetishization of Asian bodies and the fantasies of colonialism imposed upon them by westernized men through her discourse and critique in the media's representation of mail-order bride marriages. Through the study's analysis, it is found that Asian women fill the void of American men that American women have left in them because of their economic independence. Thus, obtaining a woman and relationship where westernized men can feel comforted and secure leads them to look elsewhere in places they can find narratives similar and familiar to their traditional culture and beliefs.

Western Patriarchal society's perception of Asian/American women and their adherence to patriarchal and westernized cultural structures functions as a form of body commodification and capitalism through U.S. family and domestic narratives. The connection of the female Asian body as a commodity and form of labor is made evident by Valsco (2013) in the study "Performing the Filipina 'mail-order bride.'" Velasco argues that the ability for nuclear family to function as a self-sufficient and independent economic unit is reliant upon women of color and Third World women and the subordination of their labor. The study highlights how global capitalization's emphasis on Filipino women's cultural traits of accommodation and "hospitality" the service of men and their families racializes and essentializes their identities as a market to be capitalized off of (Velasco, 2013, p. 363). This concept is supported and explained by Pehar (2003) who examines how international dating sites alike are exploitive and reaffirms patriarchal and heteronormative systems that contribute to the oppressions of the women who are affected. Vehar explains how mail-order bride websites and the industry act as a vehicle to solidify the American western values of imperialistic power and the romanticizing of a new age

colonialism (Pehar, 2003, p. 4). Thus, the woman's body is not her own nor in her control, but rather a production of the hegemonic values of the mail-order bride industry and patriarchal society.

Socialization of Nuclear Family & Domesticity in Western Ideologies

as retaining all the feministic traits that a man is looking for while also maintaining traits that are redeemed as the best "Asian physical characteristics and personality traits, while being just 'Americanized' enough to be for the American male" (So, 2006, p. 405). The specific traits and characteristics that are labelled as "Americanized" follows the traditional and nuclear family attitudes that patriarchal societies uphold. The Asian women is described as being devoted to her husband, hard-working, and humble, which opposes the attitudes of American women that American men reject.

The contrast between depictions of Asian women and American women is acknowledged by Yakushko and Rajan (2017) when American women are depicted as being the polar opposites of what men find redeemable in Asian women. The study informs how American women are portrayed as "selfish, career obsessed, possession-focused, and unwilling to enter marriages that place their husbands' needs ahead of their own" (Yakushko & Rajan, 2017, p. 194). Therefore, American men assess American women as lacking family values and a threat to the patriarchal value system and ideologies that they uphold. This leads to the idea that the aggressive value structure of men assimilated into patriarchal society celebrate a women who is feminine, but feel threatened by women who portray any act of a feminist. The issue here is that American women are demonized for expressing their progress and liberation from patriarchal values when this society creates narratives that oppress all women for capital gain.

Negotiating Identity

According to Ting-Toomey, “Members who subscribe to individualistic values tend to be more self-face oriented and members who subscribe to group-oriented values tend to be more other-or mutual-face-oriented in conflict negotiations” (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 84). Self-face orientation is the degree to which an individual will direct their attention and energy towards conflict message, where face refers to the tie between the , “emotional significance and estimated calculations that we attach to our own social self-worth and the social self-worth of others” (p.73). Based on an individual’s level of emotional reaction and recognition of the conflict, face can be threatened, enhanced, reduced, and negotiated.

The particular mechanisms within Ting-Toomey’s Face Negotiation theory (2005) recognized within the dynamic of reduced disclosure and the presence of awkwardness is “dominating” and “obliging” (p. 74). Dominating refers to face negotiation tactics that emphasize the advocacy for a person’s own position above another person’s interest in conflict, while obliging indicates the person accommodating to the needs and interests of the other person due to higher concern and interest of the other person’s interest in the conflict.

Identity as Socially Constructed

A majority of scholars will recognize that race and ethnicity are socially constructions that are not primordially determined by biology. Instead, identity within race and ethnicity are theoretically understood to be “fluid and mutable, but in the everyday realm of private and public institutions the languages of race and ethnicity are spoken as if they were coherent and static.” (Kim & ElDakhkhny, 2017, p. 12) Hall (1990) recognizes identity as being a matter involving becoming identity and then being it (p. 225). It is unfixed and constantly in flux across space and time.

Through this phase they go through cycles of searching, meaning making, and reflecting the categories of information they have perceived. The last phase is inclusive acceptance, which is defined by individuals letting go of their egos to resolve cognitive and affective tensions raised by dissimilarities. This led to more inclusion where information derived from the self is shared, reviewed, and reconstructed to create a new commonly shared meaning (Rusaw, 1998).

Managing Identity

According to Imahori and Cupach (2005), Identity Management theory “attempts to explain how people negotiate cultural identities throughout interpersonal relationships, from initial meetings to intimacy” while giving an explanation of what identity issues to expect while engaged in intercultural interactions and offers ways of managing them (Imahori & Cupach, 2005, p. 195-210). The particular mechanism within Identity Management theory recognized within the dynamic of reduced disclosure and the presence of awkwardness is the coping strategy known as other negative -face support. This coping mechanism occurs when tensions arises due to avoiding “cultural freezing”, “Cultural identity constraints due to stereotypes or being viewed as having a particular cultural identity” (Imahori & Cupach, 2005, p. 195-210). Other negative-face support is enacted by supporting the other person’s identity or bringing the focus away from another’s cultural identity in order to give them time to support their own identity.

According to Rusaw (1998), individuals will adopt values and shared meanings of the dominant group (or culture) in order to resolve conflict and tension. This concept is reflected through Imahori and Cupach’s (2005) coping strategy of other positive-face support where the face of the other is supported rather than oneself. This includes making sacrifices to come to a positive outcome that is assumed to be beneficial for the majority or the ones in the dominant group.

We need to ask the following research question because there is not a substantial amount of research and study on Asian/American women based on how they navigate their identity. The research out there does not touch upon positive mechanisms used for identity management. Racial minority women are especially in a position where their voices and experiences need to be heard. They are representative of voices who have been silenced by systematic oppression, whether it is implicit or explicit in discourses. This research question attempts to add to the constant awareness and critiquing of patriarchal structures that try to control, dominate, and oppress minority groups and identities. This project attempts to ask how fetishized bodies manage identity within Western and patriarchal structures. The fetishizing of bodies needs to be explored because it is toxic and harmful in identity development throughout life span. This research question aims to understand how they interpret and understand identity through sites of systematic Western patriarchal structures.

Research Question

RQ: How do fetishized bodies manage identity within Western and patriarchal structures?

Method

Data Collection

Data was collected through gathering articles and interviews from various forms of digital media and publications to help provide different perspectives. The article was retrieved from *New York Times* website titled “Stop Calling Asian Women Adorable” written by R.O. Kwon (2019). Interviews documented through transcript was retrieved from several locations. *Vice Media*

Company provided Lillian's interview with Jade Jackman (2018) titled "The Meme Account Hilariously Exposing Creepy Asian Fetish Guys on Tinder." *The Public Broadcasting Service* (PBS) provided Debbie Lum's interview titled "Director Debbie Lum on Romance, "Rice Kings," and Reluctantly Appearing in Her Film," (2013). The interview provided by the *Huffington Post Website* was conducted by Brittany Wong (2017) titled "Asian Women Review 'How to Get an Asian Girlfriend,' A Book That Actually Exists." This interview was documented through video and later made into a transcription for analysis. These interviews and article were chosen because they represented Asian woman interacting in sites and environments where their bodies are systematically fetishized. This brings out the potential to observe how fetishize bodies manage identities within these sites.

Data Analysis

The one article and three interviews all underwent the primary and secondary coding procedures. Each line of article and interview were coded into a thought or phrase to summarize the events taking place and then written onto the margins of the paper. During the secondary coding phase, the article and interviews were reexamined for a second time to go back and analyze the word or phrase and highlight the underlying meaning. Once the underlying meanings were highlighted to represent the coded words and short phrases, the process of categorizing the sections begins. The piles of the category are first determined by similarities or repetition between underlying meanings. The process is done a second time to minimize piles and condense categories for connecting similar words or phrases. The last process of organizing piles developed the reduced categories into two major themes.

Findings

In reviewing the data collected from gathering interviews and articles through different digital media forms and organizing underlying meanings into categories and subcategories, two themes emerged: protecting identity through defense and strengthening identity through offense.

Protecting Identity Through Defense

Shield of Strength. In situations where identity and body experienced fetishization, the individual acted as a barrier, or a shield of protection, against sexualized and harmful generalizations of the wider Asian female community and collective identity. The intention of this act is to use their vulnerabilities in their experiences of fetishization as a tool to educate, relate, and empower the wider Asian female community. By having their interviews or stories available for public viewing on social platforms, there is a sense of vulnerability in that their personal experiences that hold a level or desire of privacy is invaded upon by anyone who may view it. Therefore, there is a risk in sharing their personal experiences as it is revealing layers of identity. Acting as a shield of strength to protect identity occurred repeatedly, but notably in Lillian's Vice interview. Lillian reflects upon the sexual harassments she has received from men fetishizing her body and tells the Vice interviewer, Jackman (2018):

“To be honest, sometimes I get very scared,” Lillian tell me. “I have got threats in the past but not from people that I actually know. It has always been strangers on the internet. Of course, it shocks you and you do get worried for your own safety. I can be overwhelming but my account is also a coping strategy to make something out of it and share with others who are going through similar things.” (Jackman, 2018)

Lillian recounts that she feared her own safety from the messages she received from men on these dating sites. However, she found that she could provide strength and protection to others when she realized that she could, “use [Tinder] to talk about those experiences – and help others find validation through them too.” (Jackman, 2018) Although there is a level of danger apparent

from continuing to be present on the dating website, she finds strength to continue through knowing that there are other Asian female identities going through similar experiences that need someone to relate to and obtain support as well.

Debbie Lum reflects on a similar feeling while directing *Seeking Asian Female* in her interview with PBS (2013). While thinking back to the time when she was filming her documentary, Lum describes, “I am very self-conscious about being the center of attention and never wanted to make a personal documentary,” and details that, “I spent a lot of time in the very uncomfortable position of being keenly focused on the type of man who would make me extremely uncomfortable in my personal life.” However, she proclaims that she had begun to understand her purpose by revealing, “I realized that by including my story, I would be able to capture a story that is never shown on camera – how it feels to be objectified as an Asian American woman.” (PBS, 2013)

Although she felt weary and uncomfortable being in the presence of another person that represents the men that fetishize her identity as an Asian female, Lum was more aware of the lack of exposure to the issue beyond the community and identities of Asian females. By capturing her experiences within the documentary not only does her voice get to be heard, but also the voices of the collective experiences of the other women whose bodies are objectified. The outreach that these Asian women’s platforms have act as a tool that shields the Asian female community, while their vulnerable and personal experiences represent the strength that these identities can acquire through adherence to a collective sense of identity.

Hiding the Scars. To protect self-identity, these encounters demonstrate how individuals felt the need to dismiss or minimize themselves and avoid confrontation. This was done primarily through physically diminishing their presence or using humor as a defensive

mechanism to hide their discomfort and pain. This occurred in Lum's interview when noting her initial discomfort with the attention she was receiving from the man she was filming through her documentary:

But whenever I filmed Steven, it was very clear that because I am an Asian American woman he gave me amazing access and could also never really ignore me as I filmed him. I would tell him, "Don't talk to me. I am a fly on the wall." (PBS, 2013)

The attention she received from Steven caused her to become hyperaware of her identity as an Asian American woman. Lum's discomfort reminded her that she too is a body that acts as a fetishized commodity in the presence of this man, which gave her the instinct to react by giving Steven the permission to ignore its presence. Lum wanted to be invisible rather than have her presence be acknowledged, to conceal the issues of identity within herself and find comfort in hiding.

The act of concealing the pains of identity was also noted in R.O. Kwon's New York Times article, *Stop Calling Asian Women Adorable* (Kwon, 2019). This moment that Kwon presents is interesting in that the use of joking and humor is intended as a tool to relieve pain as she relives the misunderstanding of her identity and of fellow Asian American women peers in different encounters:

I have a running joke with close Asian-American writer friends that if we have never been called by each other's names, we might not be friends. This joke is born of pain, of a hundred too many times someone has called me by another Asian woman's name, and vice versa. I've been mixed up with women many years younger or older than I am, and with East Asians and South Asians and Southeast Asians. (Kwon, 2019)

The inside joke between Kwon and her female Asian American peers reveals the repetitive violation of their identity and the dismissal of their credibility as writers in the professional space because, "white men don't generally get elided like this. Asian people do." (Kwon, 2019). They find that making a painful situation light-hearted through jokes and humor

serves as a coping mechanism. The ability to produce comedy out of their identities being diminished allows Kwon and her peers to find comfort in their collective understanding of their fetishized bodies. To protect and keep this running joke alive is to keep their dignities intact.

Protection Through Pride. Support and protection is offered to the identity of fetishized bodies through figures in the public that speak to resonate with their community. Kwon is reminded that there has been improvement in recognizing the complex and multidimensional experiences of female Asian identities:

It [the film, “Crazy Rich Asians”] was a huge commercial success, and many East Asian-Americans said they saw themselves represented in a meaningful way at the movies for the first time. For a while, it seemed that everyone I knew was streaming the Netflix movie “To All the Boys I’ve Ever Loved Before,” based on Jenny Han’s bestselling novel and with Lana Condor as the lead. (Kwon, 2019)

The accomplishments of women in the Asian community stand by and for Asian women that offers support. She continues to talk about the accomplishments and strides that actress Constance Wu has made for the Asian American community in admiration:

Constance Wu the lead in “Crazy Rich Asians” and one of the best known Asian-American actors, has become a vocal advocate for the better, wider presentation. At the Women’s March in 2018, she said: “I march today for Asian-American women who have been ignored, or judged, or fetishized, or expected to be a certain way to fulfill a certain idea of what a sweet girl should be. To that, I say you can be anyone you want to be.” (Kwon, 2019)

Knowing that they are seen and heard by notable figures in their communities and society helps them to feel secure in their identities. Recognizable figures in the public sphere bring about pride for Kwon and being understood by knowing that someone is representing them and fighting for them in defense

Strengthening Identity Through Offense

Humiliation. Shaming the offenses of body fetishization is a tactic used to embarrass those who have violated the identities of Asian women. These women were bewildered by the

absurdity in masculine and patriarchal interpretations of how Asian women should behave and be dominated in the dating world. In these situations the women found humor in the absurdity and caused them to laugh finding their statements hilarious, “‘To be honest, you can’t not laugh at the shit that happens on Tinder,’ Lillian says. ‘It is content that writes itself!’” (Jackman, 2018) Although she receives harassment and abuse from men on these dating websites, Lillian has seen it as an opportunity to expose them with a humorous tone. These women are aware of how wrong these men are in their interpretation of Asian women and make fun of their overt inaccuracy.

The women also use humor and comedy to discredit the men and their inaccuracies about the experiences of Asian women and dating. Brittany Wong directs her fellow female Asian American comedians in a video where they review a book written to guide men who want to date women based on sexualized and historical stereotypes. Throughout the reviews from the female Asian American comedians they are constantly stuck in laughter and shocked by how wrong the author and the book portray their experiences as Asian women. Kristina Wong elaborates and uses sarcasm to invoke her opinion about the book:

Kristina Wong: “Have you ever wiped your ass on a sheet of toilet paper, and though, [breathes deeply] ‘hmm, maybe I should self-publish this on Amazon?’ No? Well here’s a guy who did just that [Holds up book] Derek Strong’s, ‘How To Get An Asian Girlfriend.’ [Sniffs the book in disgust] (Wong, 2017)

Instead of reflecting on how their identities have been violated and wrong through this book’s interpretations, they direct their attention at attacking the author with jokes and shame to remove his credibility. After reading through some of the book’s content Asa Akira judges, “This book should be called: ‘How to Not Get Laid, Ever,’” (Wong, 2017) They speak loudly and give dramatic pauses to exaggerate their reactions to the book’s content making sure to enunciate the parts that seem the most inaccurate and absurd. They are almost in disbelief by the false

statements about Asian women. However, the ability to point out these offenses and make fun of them gives strength and security in their identities. To dictate what's wrong about this author's advice to men on how Asian women should be treated validates their experiences to find the confidence in shaming the book and the author.

Disciplining. When the women were experiencing or observing a moment when bodies were being fetishized, they immediately sense their actions as needing critique or discipline. They don't conceal their thoughts and instead demand that their actions be corrected. Tram Le gives a comment on the book about how to get an Asian girlfriend and directs her speech at the author after he makes a generalization about Asian women, "I don't know, I love beards. He's wrong. Asian chicks don't hate beards, they hate you." (Wong, 2017). Le shifts the critique that author has made about Asian women to be a critique about the author's false statement and directs her attention in disciplining the author and disposing his credibility by making a comment about Asian women hating him.

Lynn Chen also disciplinary action towards the author when he makes another wrong statement about Asian women when she physically throws the book in her lap with disappointment and says, "Wrong, Derek Strong, wrong!" (Wong, 2017) The women use discipline to shame the author for being "wrong" about Asian women. They attack his identity and credibility to reestablish their own as the women that the author is trying to fetishize.

Discipline can also be more demanding and overt, as a guiding rule that needs to be followed. In Kwon's New York Times article, she reflect on a moment where she felt her identity as a female Asian writer was being discredited when a women came up to her and wouldn't stop commenting on how "adorable" she was and that she wanted to "adopt" her:

I think of that book-signing line at the Georgia literary festival and of the regret I felt afterward at not having responded to the stranger's remark. I wish I'd said more; I'm

saying it now. If someone is talking to you about her work, consider not calling her adorable. In fact, don't comment on her appearance at all. (Kwon, 2019)

Kwon was tired of the repeated offenses she has received from countless people: "It's impossible for me to catalog all the times I've been in a professional setting when someone thought it appropriate to tell me about my appearance." (Kwon, 2019) She also tries to discipline by correcting a moment when her colleagues commented on her skin being the color of "alabaster": "My skin's not especially pale, and even if it were, this would be weird, and diminishing. It's objectifying." (Kwon, 2019) After receiving the comments fetishizing her identity she's realized that she's had enough and demands respect from others and that one should not say anything about a woman's appearance to her face when she is in a professional space: "But when I'm at these events, I am at work. I am talking about my profession, not my hair or skin or any perceived cuteness." (Kwon, 2019)

Exposing. Through informing and educating, identity can be strengthened and fought for by exposing those that have fetishized their bodies within their experiences and historical contexts. Lillian provides insight into her historical knowledge of Western exploitation of Asian bodies to show where the perpetuation of her identity and others in her community derives from:

"The West has an extended history of exploiting and penetrating Asia for profit and gain," she explains. "I believe that this power dynamic, combined with stereotypical and shallow representations of Asian women in the media, causes this global power dynamic to be replicated on a smaller scale with women of color. Men genuinely seem to think that Asian women are submissive and are desperate to be dominated." (Jackman, 2018)

Lum identifies these types of men as "Asiaphile", "Rice Kings", and obtaining "Yellow Fever" as they are commonly labelled by Asian American women who have been fetishized by their community (PBS, 2013). She goes on to explain in detail the acts and behaviors these men obtain to display their power and dominance over their perception of Asian women as submissive and petit when she describes, "We hear stories about men like this who frequent sex

tours in Thailand or go searching for young wives in rural Philippines, exploiting the inequities between “first world” and “third world” and preying on victimized women.” (PBS, 2013)

Lillian and Lum’s identification and description of predatory men who seek Asian women for these sexualized and racialized traits reveal the true intentions for their infatuation that is not usually discussed in dominant discourse.

Kwon offers a perspective in identity strengthening through exposure mechanisms to uncover that the fetishization of Asian bodies does not have to be an obvious and overt act, it can be performed in way that are obstructed from our view and by people who do not claim to violate Asian women’s bodies. While referring to an instance at a writer’s convention, she narrates a situation when a women came to give her praise about her book, and then diminished her identity to being “cute”, “adorable”, and like a “pixie”: “It’s not just the obvious villains, neo-Nazis, who espouse and support racism. Sometimes it’s also those of us who believe ourselves to be firmly on the side of inclusion.” (Kwon, 2019) She notes that these people could be considered progressive, feminists, or generally people who would not be considered racist, however she exposes that they would be dismayed to know that their comments about her appearance partakes of the act in reality.

Challenging. Questioning the central ideas developed within Western patriarchal structures reveals the perspectives that are made invisible within dominant society and discourses. By challenging these standards that have been accepted, these Asian women are able to offer the perspectives of their experiences along with the issues they face being fetishized and having their identities violated. Kwon offers a perspective by imagining an alternate world where dominant and recognized identities were to be treated as Asian women are by others in the professional environment: “Try to imagine someone commenting on a white male writer’s

appearance during his Q and A. Try to imagine having his appearance repeatedly brought up in a professional setting, as though it's the part of him that matter most." (Kwon, 2019). By juxtaposing their realities in the same situation she provokes the idea that this type of treatment sounds wrong when the position is taken by white men. Thus, she proves her point further that it should not be done to Asian women as well. By picturing others in her position she fights for the argument that her identity deserves to be validated too.

Lillian also challenges the wider community by juxtaposing her experiences on dating sites as an Asian American women with her white female peers to show that the treatment of her body as a fetishized commodity is an issue in reality for others that are alike her, compared to more privileged identities in society: "I noticed that I was getting a lot of terrible messages that my white female friends would not," she says. "Often those messages fetishized me." [CITE] What seems like a subtle observation for others is an obvious issue for her and other Asian women who have experienced being sexualized by men on dating websites, however when they address the problem they reveal they get "shut down" when she notes, "Instagram and other digital media platforms seem quicker to shut down feminist accounts that show nudity," she says. "They censor them but aren't so quick to respond to harassment claims or when people are receiving racist abuse." (Jackman, 2018) She calls out the social platforms as well hinting at the misuse of their power and turning their heads from the real issues that female Asian American, and females in general, identities have to suffer with.

Lum utilized challenging as a mechanism to manage identity in a slightly different way. By using her director skills as a tool, the camera becomes the device to attack those that violate Asian women's bodies. The way she felt vulnerable and exposed by the comments and behaviors of men who have fetishized her are now the subject of attention by "turning the tables":

I intended to examine “Yellow Fever” head on by “turning the tables” on men who had stared at me. I thought pointing the camera in their direction and analyzing the causes, the that dissecting how Western men see, think about and desire Asian women would perhaps say a lot about Asian American identity and women’s identity as well. (PBS, 2013)

To challenge the other identity that has inflicted damage upon her own, she demonstrates to them what it feels like to be inspected with discomfort by pointing the camera, and the eyes, at them. By inspecting the other and observing how “Western men see” she reveals the flaws in their misconceptions and what insecurities arise in their desire for Asian women. She in return gains a sense of understanding in her own identity, and through the realization becomes strengthened by it.

Discussion

The fetishization of a community or group of people is harmful and diminishes the recognition of their identities in ways that are overt and covert. This research gives more insight into how gender and racial minorities through the fetishizing of their bodies manage their identities within structures that have been known to historically and systematically oppress groups from the ability to express their identity, or being confined by limiting constructions of identity that are misinterpreted and misrepresented. It allows us to think about how the sexualizing and fetishizing of certain bodies affect identity and in a broader sense their community and culture. For gender and racial minorities, different experiences and realities lead to different ways of navigating and negotiating identities.

Additionally, this research is adding knowledge and awareness to what fetishized bodies are in gender and racial negotiations and implications of the phenomenon. It allows us to think about what are the implications of fetishizing certain bodies on identity as well as their

community and culture as a whole. The inability to recognize the harms of fetishizing bodies diminishes the realities of their issues to deem them as invisible and the blind acceptance and affirmation of white, masculine hegemony that continues to benefit a small powerful group that oppresses a large population of communities through perpetuated power dynamics this happens to many marginalized groups, most specifically Asian American women.

The initial research question at hand attempts to discover how fetishized bodies manage identity with Western patriarchal structures. This research was studied through analyzing interviews and an article provided by media outlets that encompassed the experiences of Asian women experiencing body fetishization in sites that represent systematic Western patriarchal structures. By analyzing the collected data through coding procedures, two major themes emerged: protecting identity through defense and strengthening identity through offense.

The study matters theoretically as it makes connections to the historical and social perpetuations of race, gender, and sexuality to understand that these identities are socially constructed. Identity within race is not rigid and static, they are "fluid and mutable," meaning that identity is constantly changing and evolving (Kim & ElDakhakhny, 2017). However, the habit of creating strict guidelines for identities is what causes some to be invisible to society. Layering invisibility is caused by labelling identities that are not representative of White Western culture leading to identifying these groups as otherized targets allowing them to be seen as objects instead of humans (Zheng, 2016). This allows "otherized" bodies to be exploited and used as commodities to solidify colonialist values held through Western and American history (Pehar, 2003).

The study adds to the conversation and bridges a gap between the types of mechanism fetishized bodies use to cope with their identities being violated and misconstrued for dominant

discourses to perpetuate through society. The study gives practical significance to demonstrate and acknowledge the experiences of identities that feel misunderstood and marginalized. Throughout the study, the analysis brings a common and significant connection between the power of storytelling in empowering identity. Storytelling as theoretical gives insight and detail into the lived experiences of an individual and community. It recognizes humanity as a shared experience, while at the same time reveals the uniqueness and novelty that makes our experiences different. Stories can change the way we see the lives of others, and can bring potential good by allowing others to tell the story that has been misconstrued by power dynamics and dominant discourses. Therefore, storytelling gives those who feel invisible and marginalized by dominant societies a voice when they feel that they aren't being heard.

Some limitations experienced during the study occurred through the data collection process. Because the data wasn't collected through IRB processes involving in-person interviews and observations, it could be assumed that the data could develop more rich detail and description if it were done through IRB processes. Additionally, limitations through research on how other marginalized identities cope through similar processes could be acquired to compare these processes among different groups.

With the discoveries and understandings made through this study, there is potential for practical application through intervention. A possible intervention would be to create a platform using social media outlets for Asian women to connect and share their experiences through the issues of body fetishization. In the realization of storytelling being a valuable tool to promote identity empowerment, creating an environment where these women can find common ground can help to cope with and find strength in a collective sense through media. This could be utilized through a medium similar to forums and blogs where individuals can post or read freely.

Additionally, another benefit of a social media platform is to inform and educate not only the group that participates, but the wider community in understanding that Asian women identity is beyond their appearances and the fetishized characteristics that has been fed by society. Since the study and intervention focuses on how Asian women are portrayed in aspects of dating and sexuality, this intervention would be most suitable for teenage users and above. This is suitable for the intervention in that identity development and changes occur frequently through this time as individuals navigate social life and milestones.

Through this study, it has been discovered that fetishized bodies manage identity within Western and patriarchal structures through various ways conducted through the themes of protecting identity through defense and strengthening identity through offense. The themes emphasize an important connection to storytelling as a way to empower individual identity and collective identity to show that we can still find belonging and bond through our unique experiences. It is important to pass and share our stories because of the power they hold. They can teach us not only about ourselves and our identities but of others whom we never knew.

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