The Prevalence and Portrayal of Asian and Pacific Islanders across 1,300 Popular Films

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USCAnnenberg
*Inclusion Initiative*

AMAZON STUDIOS

UTA Foundation

ASIANS & PACIFIC ISLANDERS ACROSS 1,300 POPULAR FILMS

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&

ANNENBERG INCLUSION INITIATIVE

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API CHARACTERS ARE ABSENT IN POPULAR FILMS

API speaking characters across 1,300 top movies, 2007-2019, in percentages

'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19
3.5	7.5	4.9	5.1	4.9	5.2	4.7	5.6	5.1	7.2	5.8	9.6	8.4
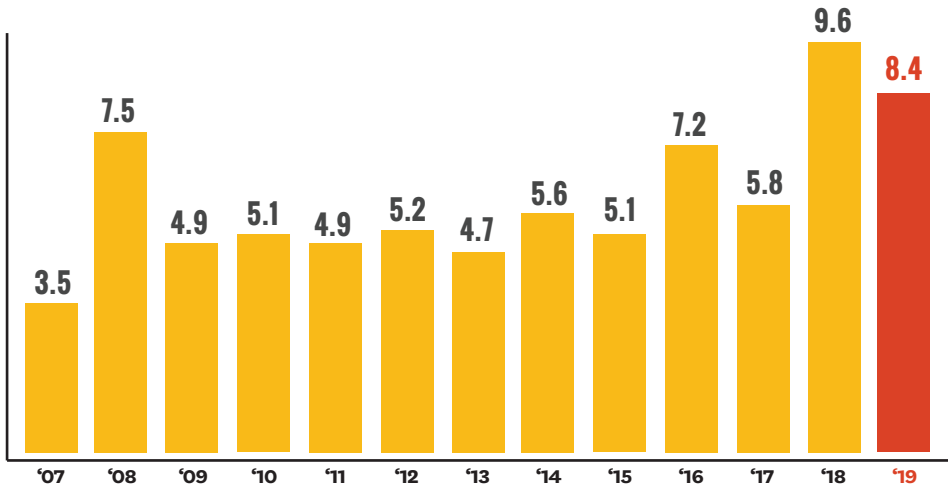
A total of 3,034 API speaking characters appeared across 1,300 films

Percentage of API characters overall **5.9%**
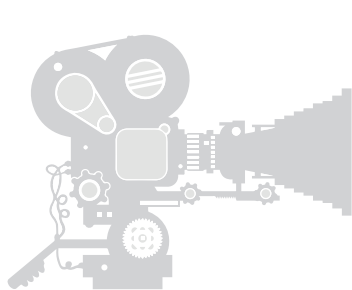
Ratio of API males to API females **1.7 : 1**

Total number of speaking characters **51,159**

API LEADS/CO LEADS ARE RARE IN FILM

Of the 1,300 top films from 2007-2019...

44 Films Depicted an **API Lead** or **Co Lead**

And of those 44 films*...

29 Films had an **Asian** lead/co lead

21 Films had a **Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander** lead/co lead

Excludes films w/ensemble leads

OF THE 44 FILMS WITH **API LEADS/CO LEADS**	OF THE 44 FILMS WITH **API LEADS/CO LEADS**	OF THE 44 FILMS WITH **API LEADS/CO LEADS**	OF THE 44 FILMS WITH **API LEADS/CO LEADS**
6 WERE GIRLS/WOMEN	**0** WERE WOMEN 40+YEARS OF AGE	**0** WERE LGBTQ	**14** WERE DWAYNE JOHNSON

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TOP FILMS CONSISTENTLY LACK API LEADS/CO LEADS

Of the individual lead/co leads across 1,300 top-grossing films...

WHITE MALE ACTORS NAMED

BEN, CHRIS, DANIEL, JAMES, JASON, JOHN, JOSH, MICHAEL, ROBERT, SEAN, OR TOM

WERE FAR MORE LIKELY TO BE HIRED AS THE
TOP ACTOR IN A FILM THAN AN

API WOMAN ACTOR

WITH ANY NAME
AUDITIONING IN ALL OF HOLLYWOOD

API LEADS/CO LEADS ACROSS 1,300 TOP-GROSSING FILMS

ACTOR NAME	# OF FILMS	ACTOR NAME	# OF FILMS
DWAYNE JOHNSON	14	CHLOE BENNET	1
KEANU REEVES	5	CHOI WOO SHIK	1
JOHN CHO	3	DAVE BAUTISTA	1
CONSTANCE WU	2	HIMESH PATEL	1
DEV PATEL	2	JASON MOMOA	1
HAILEE STEINFELD	2	MANISH DAYAL	1
JACKIE CHAN	2	NEEL SETHI	1
KAL PENN	2	RAIN	1
KUMAIL NANJIANI	2	RYAN POTTER	1
ALI FAZAL	1	STEVEN YEUN	1
AULI'I CRAVALHO	1	SURAJ SHARMA	1

59%

OF API LEAD ACTORS
HAD **ONE**
LEAD/CO LEAD ROLE
IN A TOP-GROSSING MOVIE
ACROSS 13 YEARS

API ACTORS ARE LEFT OUT OF LEAD/CO LEAD ROLES

API actors across 1,300 top-grossing films, 2007-2019

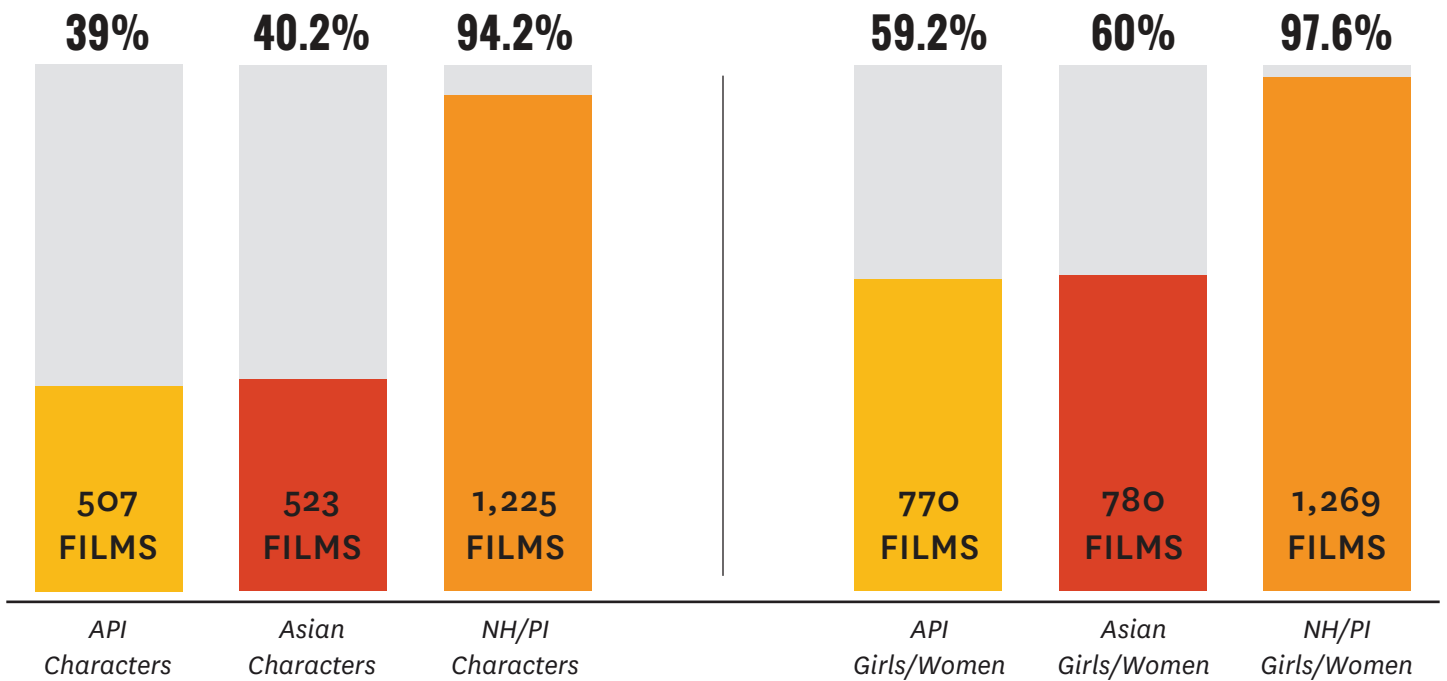ACROSS THE TOP 1,300 FILMS FROM 2007 TO 2019...

THERE WERE	AND	THIS IS A RATIO OF
22	**336**	**15.3**
INDIVIDUAL API ACTORS	INDIVIDUAL WHITE MALE ACTORS	WHITE MALE ACTORS TO EVERY 1 API ACTOR

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THE EPIDEMIC OF INVISIBILITY FACING API CHARACTERS IN FILM

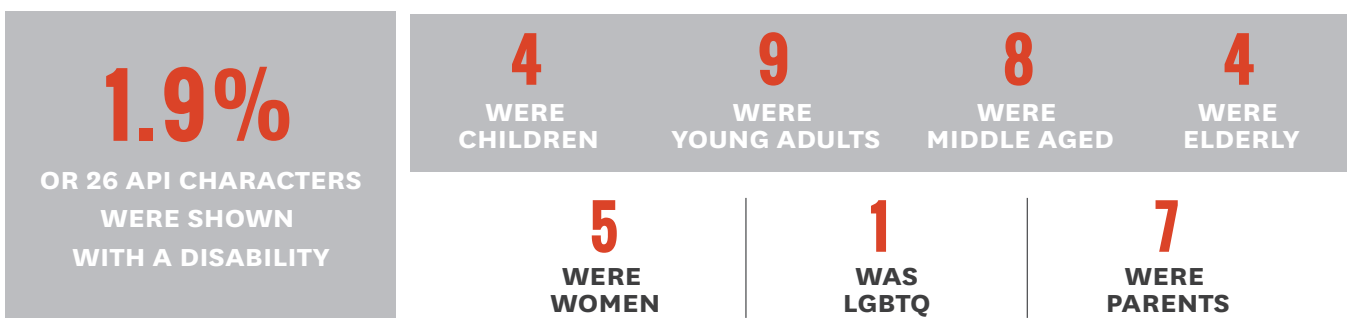*Percentage and number of films missing API characters out of 1,300 movies, 2007-2019*

39%	40.2%	94.2%		59.2%	60%	97.6%
507 FILMS	523 FILMS	1,225 FILMS		770 FILMS	780 FILMS	1,269 FILMS
API Characters	Asian Characters	NH/PI Characters		API Girls/Women	Asian Girls/Women	NH/PI Girls/Women

API CHARACTERS ARE RARELY SHOWN AS LGBTQ

Number of API characters who were LGBTQ across 600 films, 2014-2019

15 API CHARACTERS WERE LGBTQ

9 WERE GAY

5 WERE LESBIAN

1 WAS BISEXUAL
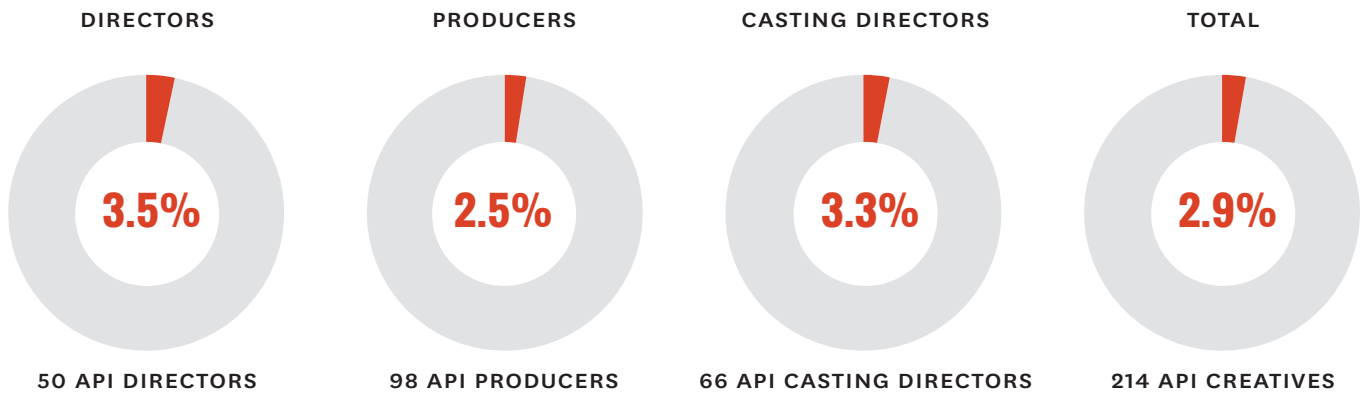
0 WERE TRANSGENDER

ONLY 1 API CHARACTER WHO WAS LGBTQ WAS SHOWN AS A PARENT

FEW API CHARACTERS ARE SHOWN WITH A DISABILITY

API characters with a disability across 500 top-grossing films, 2015-2019

1.9% OR 26 API CHARACTERS WERE SHOWN WITH A DISABILITY

4 WERE CHILDREN

9 WERE YOUNG ADULTS

8 WERE MIDDLE AGED

4 WERE ELDERLY

5 WERE WOMEN

1 WAS LGBTQ

7 WERE PARENTS

FEW API CREATORS WORK BEHIND THE SCENES IN FILM

API content creators by position across the top 1,300 films, 2007-2019

DIRECTORS	PRODUCERS	CASTING DIRECTORS	TOTAL
3.5%	**2.5%**	**3.3%**	**2.9%**
50 API DIRECTORS	98 API PRODUCERS	66 API CASTING DIRECTORS	214 API CREATIVES

API DIRECTORS OVER TIME

API directors by year across the top 1,300 films, 2007-2019

		'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	
50 OUT OF **1,447** DIRECTORS		3	3	1	4	4	2	6	0	6	5	5	4	7	**3** API WOMEN DIRECTORS
		112	112	111	109	108	121	107	107	107	120	109	112	112	

API DIRECTORS ACROSS 1,300 TOP-GROSSING FILMS

Anand Tucker	Loveleen Tandan
Aneesh Chaganty	M. Night Shyamalan
Ang Lee	Michael Dougherty
Bong Joon Ho	Oxide Pang Chun
Danny Pang	Peter Sohn
Dean Devlin	Pierre Coffin
Destin Daniel Cretton	Raman Hui
Galen T. Chu	Ronnie del Carmen
James Wan	Taika Waititi
Jay Chandrasekhar	Tarsem Singh
Jennifer Yuh Nelson	Tatsuya Nagamine
Jon M. Chu	Yimou Zhang
Justin Lin	

THERE WERE 25 INDIVIDUAL API DIRECTORS BETWEEN 2007 & 2019

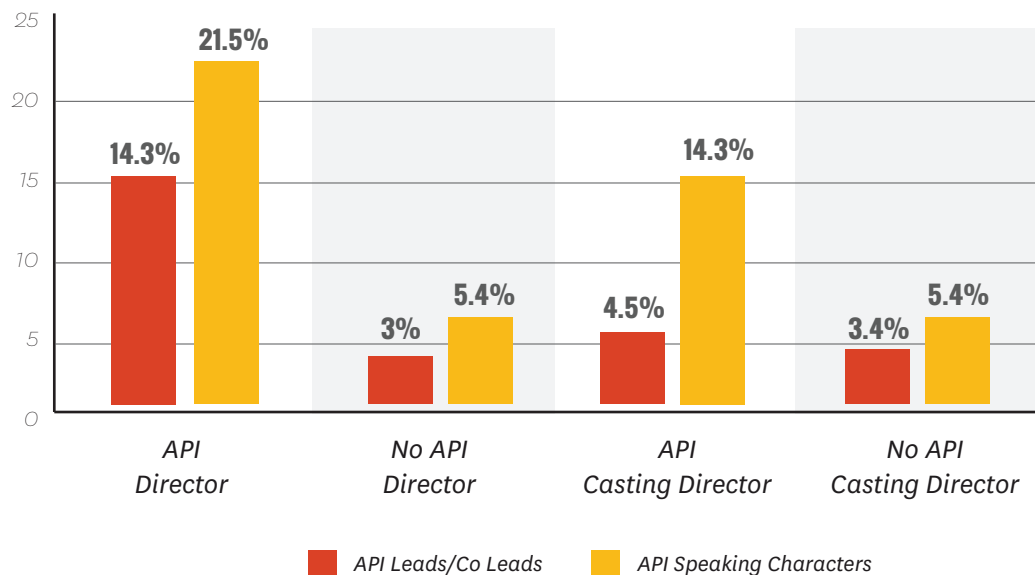**NO API WOMAN WAS CREDITED AS THE SOLE DIRECTOR OF A LIVE ACTION TOP-GROSSING FEATURE FILM BETWEEN 2007 & 2019**

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API CREATIVES WIELD INFLUENCE ON SCREEN

Association between behind-the-camera creatives and API leads and characters on screen

25
20
15
10
5
0

21.5%
14.3%
14.3%
5.4%
5.4%
4.5%
3.4%
3%

API Director | No API Director | API Casting Director | No API Casting Director

■ *API Leads/Co Leads*   ■ *API Speaking Characters*

ON SCREEN PATTERNS CHANGE WHEN API INCLUSION OCCURS BEHIND-THE-CAMERA

API WOMEN ARE SEXUALIZED ON SCREEN

API girls/women across three hypersexualization indicators across 1,200 films, 2007-2018

SEXY ATTIRE

23.3%

vs. 7% of API boys/men

SOME NUDITY

21.3%

vs. 9.3% of API boys/men

ATTRACTIVE

8.2%

vs. 2.3% of API boys/men
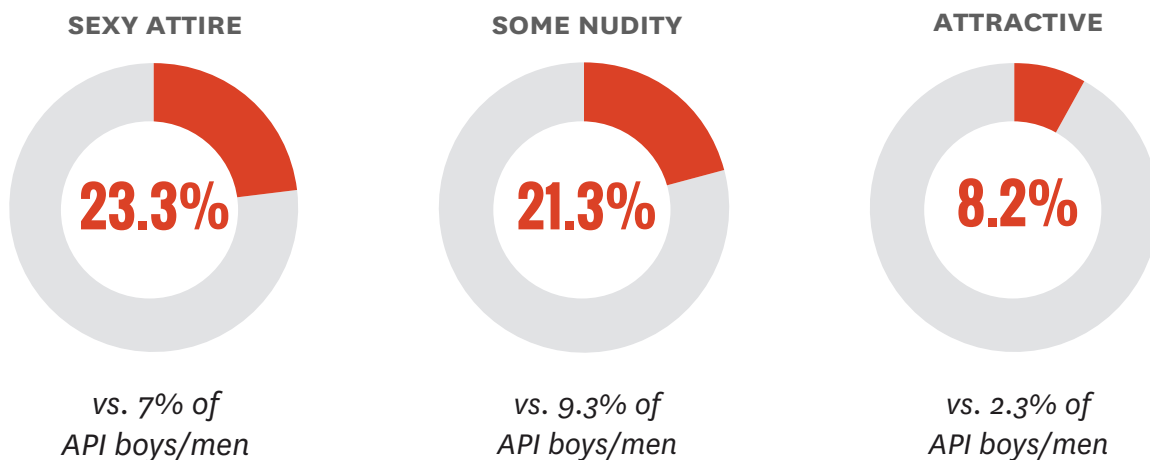
API WOMEN ARE MISSING IN LEADING ROLES

ACROSS THE TOP 1,300 FILMS FROM 2007 TO 2019, THERE WERE 10.5 TIMES AS MANY ANTHROPOMORPHIZED ANIMALS AS LEADS/CO LEADS AS THERE WERE API WOMEN

63 FILMS

VS

6 FILMS

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API CHARACTERS ARE MARGINALIZED IN TOP MOVIES

API characters across 200 top-grossing films, 2018 & 2019

OUT OF
200
TOP FILMS

58 DID NOT DEPICT ANY API CHARACTERS

36 ONLY DEPICTED API CHARACTERS WITH 5 LINES OR LESS

NEARLY
HALF
OF THE TOP FILMS OF 2018 & 2019 DID NOT HAVE ANY API CHARACTERS OR ONLY GAVE THEM 5 OR FEWER LINES OF DIALOGUE
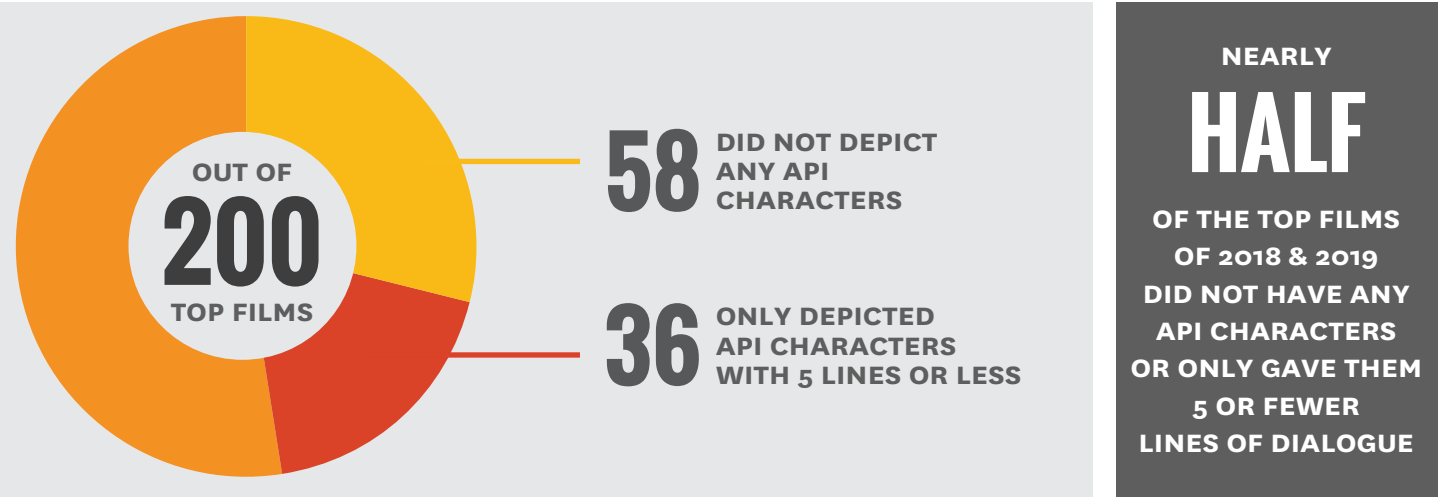
74.7% OF THE 507 TERTIARY API CHARACTERS IN 200 TOP MOVIES FROM 2018 & 2019 SPOKE FIVE LINES OR LESS

API COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION VARIES BY REGION

Regional heritage of API leads/co leads and actors

API ACTORS ACROSS 200 FILMS

65.4% WERE EAST ASIAN

17.4% WERE SOUTH ASIAN

13.3% WERE SOUTHEAST ASIAN

6.5% WERE POLYNESIAN

API LEADS/CO LEADS ACROSS 1,300 FILMS

45.5% WERE EAST ASIAN

36.4% WERE SOUTH ASIAN

9.1% WERE SOUTHEAST ASIAN

18.2% WERE POLYNESIAN

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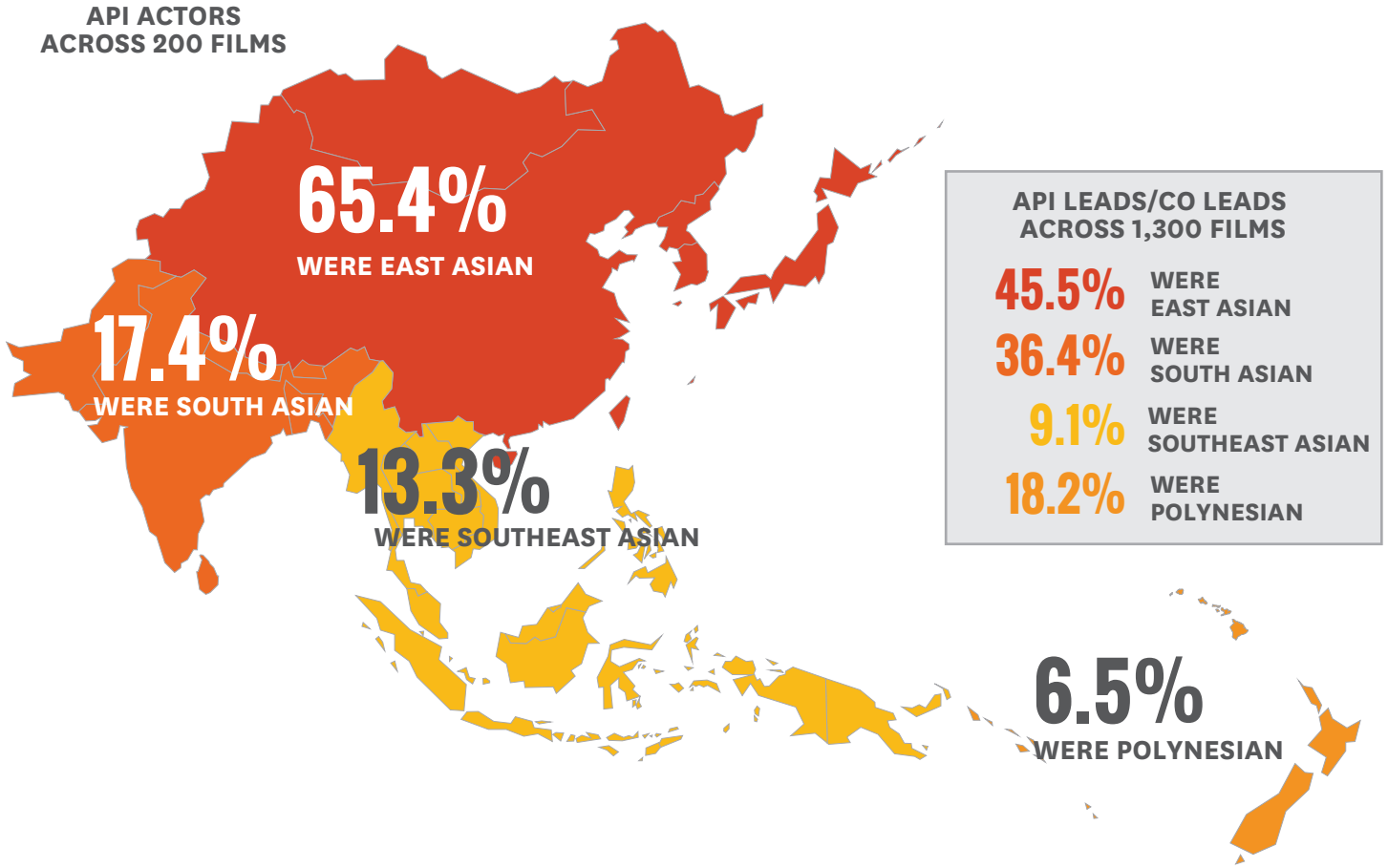
API COMMUNITIES ARE NOT EQUALLY REPRESENTED ON SCREEN

Ethnic heritage or background of API actors across 200 films, 2018-2019

ETHNIC HERITAGE	#	%	ETHNIC HERITAGE	#	%
CHINESE	185	36.3%	NATIVE BORNEAN	3	<1%
INDIAN	81	15.9%	THAI	3	<1%
KOREAN	80	15.7%	BURMESE	2	<1%
JAPANESE	78	15.3%	LAOTIAN	2	<1%
FILIPINO	31	6.1%	POLYNESIAN (UNSPECIFIED)	2	<1%
VIETNAMESE	17	3.9%	TONGAN	2	<1%
SAMOAN	10	3.3%	MALAY	1	<1%
MAORI	7	2%	SRI LANKAN	1	<1%
INDONESIAN	7	1.4%	BENGALI	1	<1%
PAKISTANI	4	1.4%	NEPALESE	1	<1%
NATIVE HAWAIIAN	4	<1%	CAMBODIAN	1	<1%

THE U.S. POPULATION OUTPACES HOLLYWOOD

API characters and proportional representation across 1,300 popular films, 2007-2019

7.1%
OF THE
U.S. POPULATION
IS API
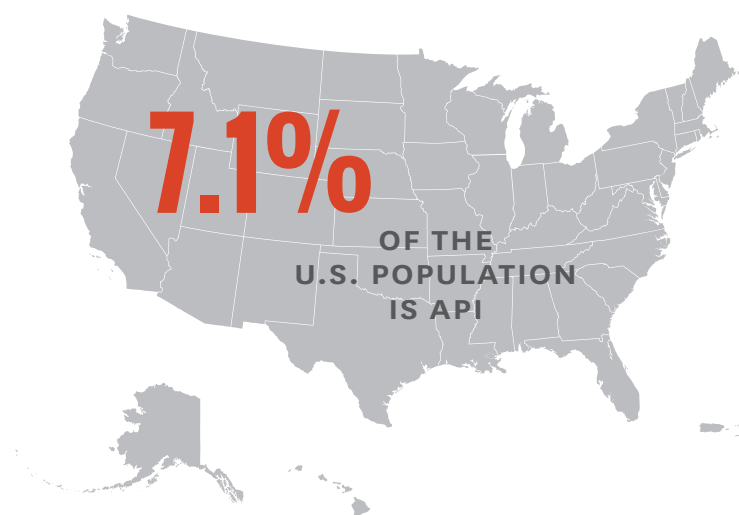
5.9%
OF ALL SPEAKING CHARACTERS
ACROSS 1,300 POPULAR FILMS
FROM 2007 TO 2019 WERE API

15.7%
OF 1,300 POPULAR FILMS MET
PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION
OF THE API COMMUNITY

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NO FILM DISTRIBUTOR EXCELS AT API REPRESENTATION

API inclusion indicators by company for 2018-2019

COMPANY	LEADS/ CO LEADS	AT/ABOVE PROP. REP.	DIRECTORS	PRODUCERS	CASTING DIRECTORS	TOTAL FILMS
20th Century	2/9%	9/43%	1/5%	2/9%	**2/9%**	21
Amazon Studios	1/5%	5/28%	**2/11%**	3/17%	O	18
Paramount Pictures	1/5%	6/33%	O	O	O	18
Lionsgate	1/5%	8/36%	O	3/14%	O	22
Sony Pictures Entertainment	1/4%	12/46%	1/4%	1/4%	2/8%	26
Netflix	10/8%	55/44%	4/3%	19/15%	9/7%	126
Warner Bros.	3/9%	**17/53%**	2/6%	**9/28%**	2/6%	32
Universal Pictures	**5/14%**	16/44%	O	6/17%	2/6%	36
Walt Disney Studios	O	9/47%	O	1/5%	1/5%	19

Note: Six key indicators were included in the distributor analyses using definitions and measures presented in the report. Only top-grossing films were included for the majors and mini-majors whereas all streaming movies distributed by Amazon Studios and Netflix were assessed.

"INCLUSION OF THE API COMMUNITY THUS FAR HAS BEEN LITTLE MORE THAN LIP SERVICE. OPENING UP OPPORTUNITY BEHIND THE CAMERA FOR THE API COMMUNITY AND IN PARTICULAR, API WOMEN, IS ESSENTIAL TO SEEING MORE AUTHENTIC, HUMANIZED PORTRAYALS ON SCREEN." —DR. STACY L. SMITH
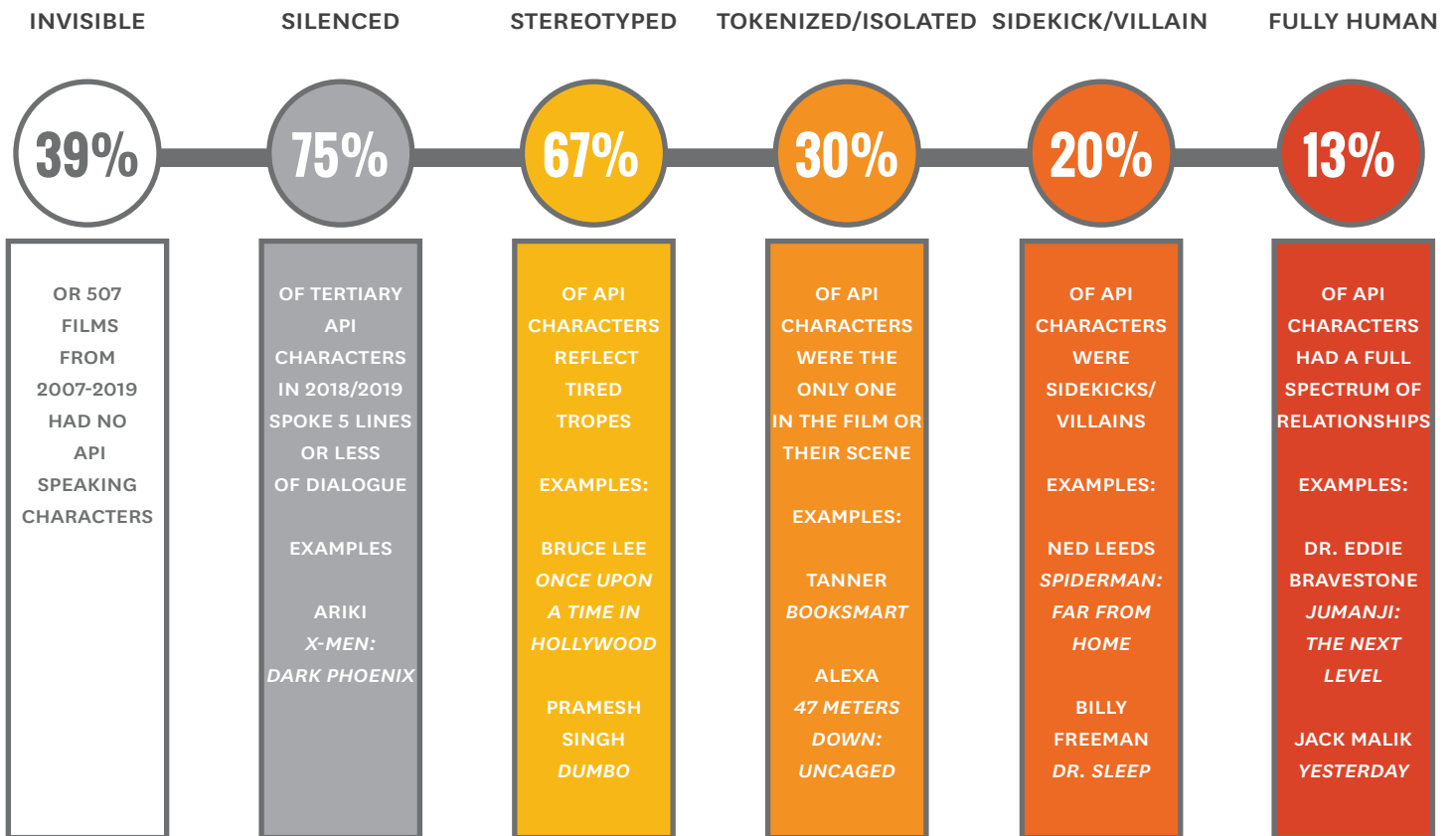
API FILM EXECUTIVES AT MAJOR STUDIOS

API executives in leadership positions across 8 film studios/distributors

CHAIR	0
PRESIDENT/CHIEF	5.8%
EVP/SVP	8.3%
OVERALL	6.4%

8 OF THE 13 API EXECS WERE WOMEN
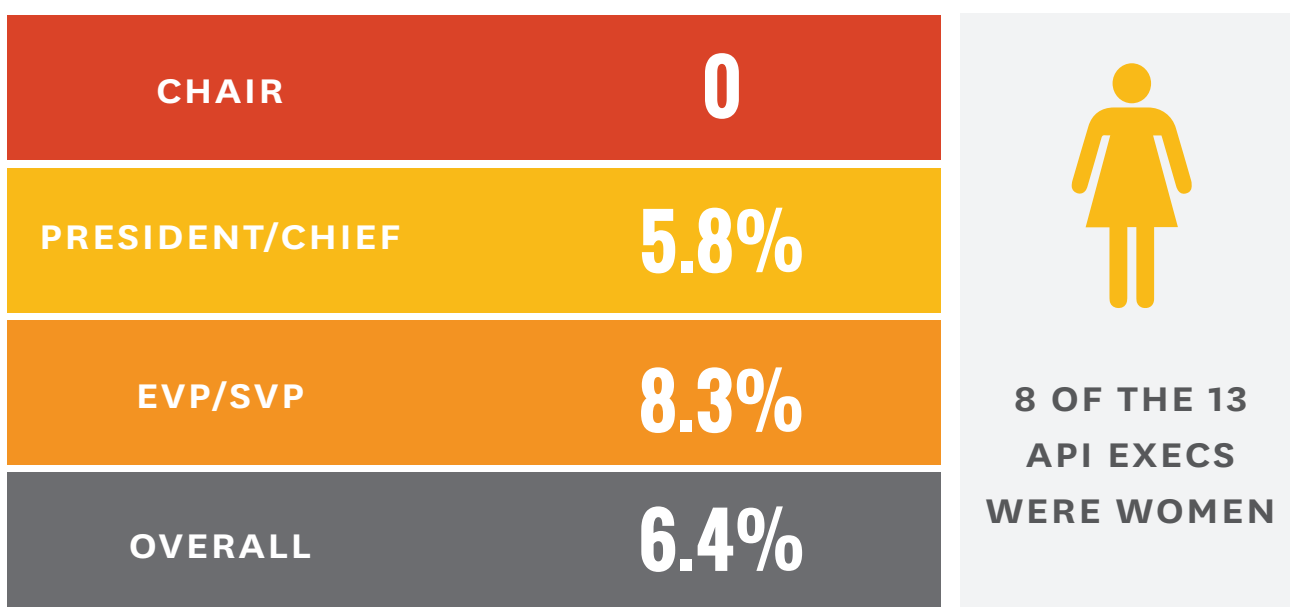
Note: The senior executive leadership team for each major and mini-major film studio and the film executives at Amazon Studios and Netflix were included in the analysis.
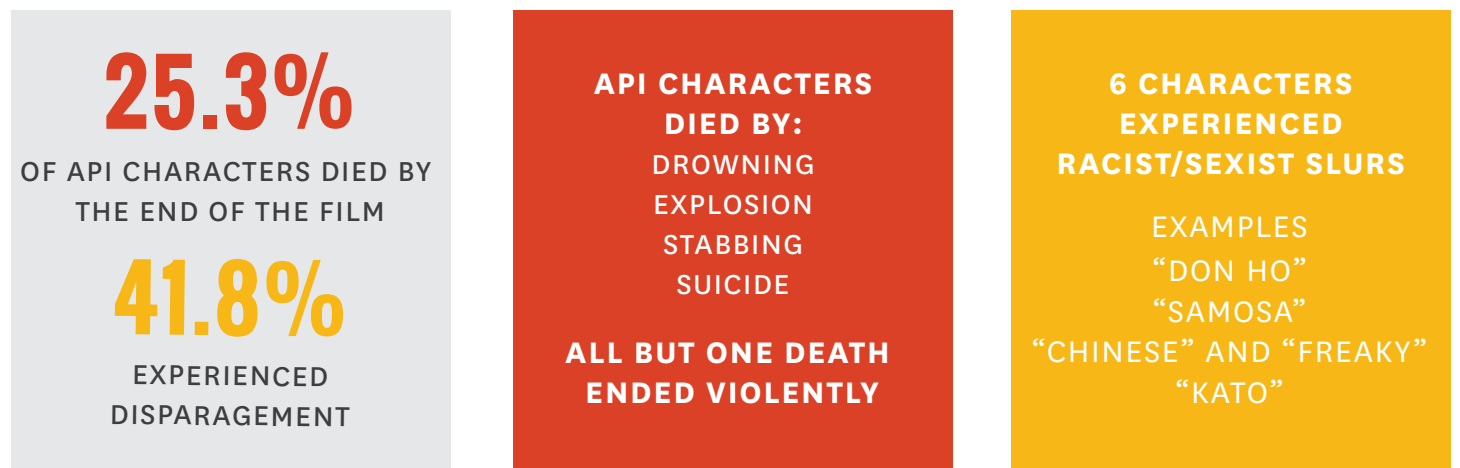
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THE SPECTRUM OF API REPRESENTATION IS SHORT

API characters are often invisible, stereotyped, tokenized, or isolated across top films from 2019

INVISIBLE	SILENCED	STEREOTYPED	TOKENIZED/ISOLATED	SIDEKICK/VILLAIN	FULLY HUMAN
39%	**75%**	**67%**	**30%**	**20%**	**13%**
OR 507 FILMS FROM 2007-2019 HAD NO API SPEAKING CHARACTERS	OF TERTIARY API CHARACTERS IN 2018/2019 SPOKE 5 LINES OR LESS OF DIALOGUE EXAMPLES ARIKI *X-MEN: DARK PHOENIX*	OF API CHARACTERS REFLECT TIRED TROPES EXAMPLES: BRUCE LEE *ONCE UPON A TIME IN HOLLYWOOD* PRAMESH SINGH *DUMBO*	OF API CHARACTERS WERE THE ONLY ONE IN THE FILM OR THEIR SCENE EXAMPLES: TANNER *BOOKSMART* ALEXA *47 METERS DOWN: UNCAGED*	OF API CHARACTERS WERE SIDEKICKS/ VILLAINS EXAMPLES: NED LEEDS *SPIDERMAN: FAR FROM HOME* BILLY FREEMAN *DR. SLEEP*	OF API CHARACTERS HAD A FULL SPECTRUM OF RELATIONSHIPS EXAMPLES: DR. EDDIE BRAVESTONE *JUMANJI: THE NEXT LEVEL* JACK MALIK *YESTERDAY*

API CHARACTERS DIE 'A THOUSAND DEATHS'

Trends across a qualitative analysis of 79 primary and secondary API characters from 2019

25.3%
OF API CHARACTERS DIED BY THE END OF THE FILM

41.8%
EXPERIENCED DISPARAGEMENT

API CHARACTERS DIED BY:
DROWNING
EXPLOSION
STABBING
SUICIDE

ALL BUT ONE DEATH ENDED VIOLENTLY

6 CHARACTERS EXPERIENCED RACIST/SEXIST SLURS

EXAMPLES
"DON HO"
"SAMOSA"
"CHINESE" AND "FREAKY"
"KATO"

6,603 INCIDENTSOF DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST THE API COMMUNITY WERE REPORTED BETWEEN 2020 AND 2021*
12.6% OF THOSE WERE PHYSICAL ASSAULTS
65.2% OF THOSE WERE VERBAL HARASSMENT

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STEREOTYPES STILL FACE API CHARACTERS ON SCREEN

Qualitative findings across 79 primary & secondary characters from top-grossing films, 2019

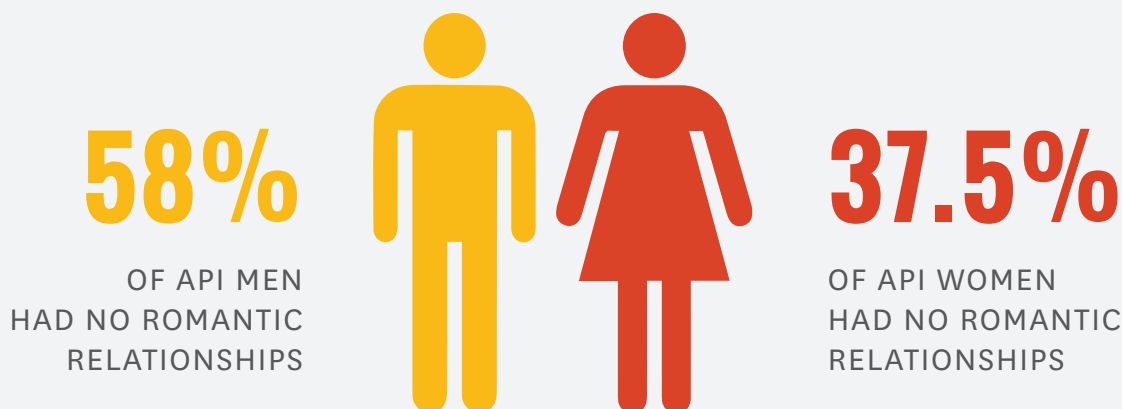## PERPETUAL FOREIGNER
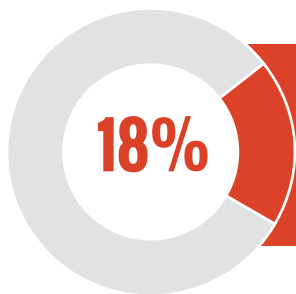
18% OF PRIMARY & SECONDARY API CHARACTERS IN 2019 SPOKE ENGLISH WITH A NON-U.S. ACCENT

"THE ACCENT OFTEN SERVES AS A FORM OF RACIST HUMOR—BLURRING RACE, EXAGGERATED SPEECH, AND CARICATURE INTO A SINGLE COMEDIC MOMENT. CONSEQUENTLY, FOREIGN ACCENTS ARE RARELY AUTHENTIC."
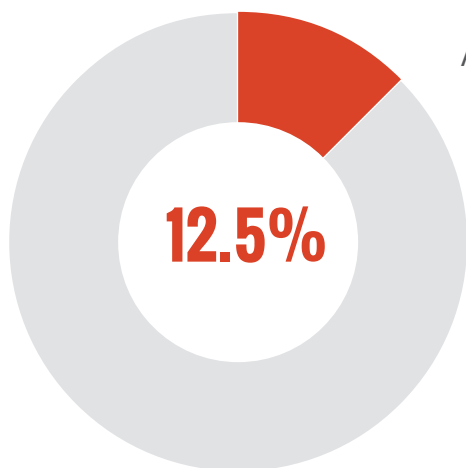—DR. NANCY WANG YUEN, *REEL INEQUALITY: HOLLYWOOD ACTORS AND RACISM*

EMASCULATION

58% OF API MEN HAD NO ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

37.5% OF API WOMEN HAD NO ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

ONE API MAN WAS TOLD "NO ONE WANTS TO HAVE SEX WITH YOU."

HYPERSEXUALIZATION

12.5%

API GIRLS/WOMEN WERE MORE OFTEN SHOWN IN SEXY ATTIRE, WITH SOME NUDITY, AND REFERENCED AS ATTRACTIVE THAN API BOYS/MEN

3 OF 24 API WOMEN IN 2019 WERE HYPERSEXUALIZED, INCLUDING ONE WOMAN IN A COMPLEX LEADING ROLE

"YOU'RE NEW, YOU'RE FUCKING GORGEOUS, **YOU'RE ASIAN**… IT'S LIKE A TRIPLE THREAT."
—*HUSTLERS*

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**The Prevalence and Portrayal of Asian and Pacific Islanders
across 1,300 Popular Films**

The purpose of this study was to examine API representation across the 100 top-grossing films from 2007-2019. API constituted any character who was Asian, Pacific Islander, and/or Native Hawaiian alone or in combination with other races/ethnicities, using the U.S. Census designations. The study had both a quantitative and qualitative component. Quantitatively, we assessed the prevalence and portrayal (i.e., gender, age, LGBTQ, disability, parental status, sexualization) of all API speaking characters and leads/co leads as well as API directors, producers and casting directors. API executives across 9 major film distributors were also examined.

Qualitatively, we captured stereotypes of the API community including, but are not limited to, sexualization, tokenism, social behaviors, wardrobe, violence, immigration, and language. This qualitative assessment was conducted by 13 API researchers at the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative at USC. Below, we highlight key findings from each major section of the report. To our knowledge, this is the most comprehensive analysis of API characters in film.

Key Findings

On Screen Prevalence

Out of 1,300 top-grossing movies, only 44 or 3.4% featured an ***API lead or co lead***. The 44 films with API leads/co leads were driven by 22 individual actors that worked one or more times as a protagonist.

Six of these API leads/co leads were female (5 Asian, 1 NHPI/Asian). These roles were played by four female actors: Constance Wu (2 films), Hailee Steinfeld (2 films), Auli'i Cravalho, and Chloe Bennet. In contrast, there were 336 unique white male actors driving the storylines as leads/co leads across the 13-year time frame. This is a ratio of 84 white male actors to every 1 API female actor. Put differently, our data reveal that white male actors named Ben, Chris, Daniel, James, Jason, John, Josh, Michael, Robert, Sean, or Tom were more likely to be hired as the top actor in a film than any API female actor with any name auditioning in all of Hollywood.

Over time, little deviation in API leads/co leads emerged. 2019 (7%) featured a higher percentage of API leads/co leads than did 2007 (2%) but did not differ from 2018 (6%). Out of 13 years, only 1 year (2019) was at proportional representation with U.S. Census (7.1%).

Looking to ***ethnic heritage,*** the majority of the 22 leads/co leads were of Indian (31.8%) followed by Chinese (18.2%) and Korean (18.2%) descent. By region, East Asian (45.5%) outnumbered South Asian (36.4%), Polynesian (18.2%), and Southeast Asian (9.1%) actors as leads/co leads. Turning to ***nationality*** (country of birth and present U.S. residency), half of API leads were U.S. born (50%) and almost three-quarters are currently living in the U.S. (72.7%).

Of the 51,159 ***speaking characters*** across the 1,300 top-grossing films from 2007 to 2019, 5.9% (*n*=3,034) were Asian, Asian American or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (API) and 94.1% (*n*=48,125) were not. Overall, the percentage of API characters across 13 years of top movies falls slightly below the percentage of API people in the U.S. population (7.1%).

There has been no meaningful change over time. 2019 (8.4%) was just shy of a 5 percentage point difference from 2007 (3.5%) and did not differ from 2018 (9.6%).

Disaggregating our API variable, the vast majority of characters were Asian or Asian American (94.6%) and only 5.9% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (NHPI). Fourteen characters in the sample were both Asian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Only 15.7% of the 1,300 movies depicted **proportional representation** of the API community with U.S. Census (7.1%). A full 67.4% of movies fell below proportional representation and 16.9% were above. 2019 (18 films) did not differ from 2018 (17 films) or 2007 (16 films) in the number of films depicting proportional representation of the API community on screen.

In terms of **invisibility,** a full 39% of 1,300 movies erased API speaking or named characters altogether. While 2019 (30%) did not differ from 2018 (28%), it was lower than 2007 (46%). For Asians, 40.2% of 1,300 movies were completely devoid of Asian speaking or named characters on screen. While 2019 (33%) was not meaningfully different from 2018 (29%), the number of films missing Asian speaking characters was lower than 2007 (47%). Each year, 93% or more of the 100 top films across 13 years erased the NHPI community save three years: 2015 (88%), 2017 (88%), and 2018 (88%).

Our last set of prevalence measures took a deeper dive into aspects of the story and actor identity across the 100 top films of 2018 and 2019. In terms of **role** of API characters, 23.6% were supporting and 72.5% were inconsequential to the plot. To examine character depth on screen, we assessed the percentage of supporting and tertiary API characters speaking **5 lines or less per film**. Supporting characters (9.1%) rarely had fewer than 5 lines across a film with an increase from 2018 (5.3%) to 2019 (12.2%). Of the 507 tertiary characters coded, 74.7% spoke 5 lines or less which did not deviate meaningfully by year.

Focusing on **ethnic heritage**, Chinese, Indian, Korean, and Japanese actors were the most likely to work across the 200 top-grossing films. A full 65.4% of all API actors were East Asian, 17.4% were South Asian, 13.3% were Southeast Asian, and 6.5% were Polynesian. Turning to **country of birth**, 33.8% were born in the U.S. and 66.2% were born internationally. By continent, 44.4% were born in North America, 40% in Asia, 10.1% in Europe, 4% in Australia/New Zealand, and 1.5% in Africa. Currently, 51.2% of the known API actors with discernable information are living in the U.S.

On Screen Portrayal

The **gender** analyses of API speaking and named characters revealed that males (63%) far outnumbered females (37%) across 1,300 popular films. The percentage of girls and women in 2019 (33.4%) was substantially lower than 2018 (44%) or 2007 (39.6%). 59.2% of the 1,300 movies did not depict a single API girl or woman speaking on screen. Virtually all films erased girls and women from the Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander community across the 13-year sample.

Only 19.6% of API women were **40 years of age or older** across the 1,300 top films from 2007 to 2019. 2019 (21.3%) featured fewer API women 40 years of age or older than did 2018 (34.9%) or 2007 (32.6%).

Parental and relational status were gendered onscreen for API roles. API women (43.9%) were more likely to be shown as parents than were API men (36.3%) and slightly more likely to be depicted in a committed romantic relationship (46.6% vs. 42.4%). API females were far more likely to be **depicted in sexy clothes** (23.3%), **partially naked** (21.3%) and **referenced as physically attractive** (8.2%) than were males (7%, 9.3%, 2.3% respectively). The same pattern emerged with physical attractiveness.

Using a sample of 600 films from 2014 to 2019, only 15 API characters were shown as **LGBTQ**. Of these, 9 were gay, 5 were lesbian and 1 was bisexual. No API characters were transgender. Three of the LGB characters were teens (13-20 years old), 3 were middle aged (40-64 years old), and 9 were young adults (21-

39 years old). Only 1 API character was an LGB parent. Eight of the LGB characters were either married or shown in a committed romantic relationship.

Disability was measured across 500 films starting in 2015 using a modified version of the ADA definition. Only 26 API characters (1.9%) were shown with a physical, cognitive or communicative disability. Under a fifth (19.2%) of these API characters with a disability were girls/women and 4 were children (0-12 years of age), 9 were young adult (21-39 years of age), 8 were middle aged (40-64 years of age), and 4 were elderly (65 years of age or older). Seven out of the twenty-three API characters with a disability were shown as parents or caregivers.

Behind the Camera & Executive Ranks

A total of 1,447 ***directors*** were credited across the 1,300 top-grossing movies from 2007 to 2019. Of these, 3.5% were API. Forty-seven API directors were men and only 3 were women. Jennifer Yuh Nelson was credited twice on the *Kung Fu Panda* franchise and Loveleen Tandan on *Slumdog Millionaire*. Matter of fact, not one API woman received sole directing credit of a live action film across 1,300 of the top-grossing movies from 2007-2019. The 50 directing credits reduced to a total of 25 API helmers that worked one or more times across the sample time frame.

Only 2.5% of the 3,952 credited film ***producers*** were Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. 85.7% of these API producers were men and only 14.3% were women. In terms of over time trends, the percentage of API producers was higher in 2019 (7.1%) than 2018 (<1%) or 2007 (1.5%).

Only 3.3% of ***casting directors*** were API across 1,300 movies. 84.9% of the casters were API women and only 15.1% were API men. Across the 13-year time frame, little deviation emerged in the hiring of API casting directors. API casting directors were no more prevalent in 2019 (4.4%) than they were in 2018 (5%) or 2007 (1.9%).

Films with an API director attached featured more API leads/co leads then those films without an API director attached. A similar but less pronounced pattern emerged with producers (API Producer=8.9%, No API producer=3%). The presence of an API casting director was not associated with the prevalence of API leads and co leads.

For speaking characters, a slightly different pattern merged. Films with an API director (21.5%) or caster (14.3%) depicted more API cast than films without an API director (5.4%) or caster (5.4%). The prevalence of an API producer (yes=8.7%, no=5.8%) was not associated with API speaking or named characters on screen, however.

We assessed all ***film executives*** (*n*=202) that were part of the senior leadership across 8 film and streaming companies (i.e., Amazon Studios, Lionsgate, Netflix, Paramount Pictures, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Universal Pictures, Walt Disney Company including 20th Century, and Warner Bros.). 6.4% of all executives were from the API community. None were at the pinnacle of power as Chairs or CEOs. Just under 6% were at the President or C-suite level and 7 were Executive or Senior Vice Presidents (EVPs/SPVs). Just over half (61.5%) of the executives were women.

Distributor

Across 9 major distributors and streaming companies, we assessed the prevalence of API leads/co leads, on screen roles, and above the line creatives (directors, producers, casters) for the 200 top films of 2018-2019.

We examined both numerical counts and percentages based on the total number of films distributed in 2018/2019 across the 200 top movies as well as on streaming platforms.

Netflix featured the highest number of API leads/co leads, films with proportional representation, API directors, API producers, and API casters across the 9 companies evaluated. Netflix also distributed 126 fictional U.S. films on its platform across 2018 and 2019, allowing for greater breadth and depth of hiring on screen and behind the camera. In fact, 4 out of 5 indicators on Netflix films were above proportional representation using U.S. Census.

Focusing on the percentage of API representation per indicator as a share of a company's 2018/2019 slate, there is no clear "top performer." Rather, different companies seem to be excelling in slightly different ways. Warner Bros. leads with the highest percentage of movies with proportional representation (or higher) of API characters in their films as well as API producers. Both Lionsgate and the Walt Disney Company had two indicators where there was no representation and Paramount Pictures had three.

Qualitative Findings

The 100 top films of 2019 were characterized by *tokenism and isolation*. 30% of Asian and PI characters were either tokenized as the only API character in the movie or isolated by never interacting with another API character.

Stereotypes of API characters persist on screen. In 2019, 67% of API primary and secondary characters fell into stereotyped tropes. In terms of the *perpetual foreigner,* nearly one-fifth (18%) of the API primary and secondary characters in the 100 top films of 2019 either spoke English with a non-American accent or a non-English language. Focusing on *violent deaths*, just over a quarter of Asian and Pacific Islander primary and secondary characters died by the end of the film and all but one death ended violently.

Asian men have a history of *emasculation*--particularly in Hollywood. More than half (58%) of API men had no romantic relationships compared to 37.5% of Asian and PI women. Among Asian men, a subset (14.5%) experienced direct emasculation in how other characters spoke to or about them. A total of 41.8% (*n*=33 of 79) of API characters experienced disparagement of some sort, six of which were *racist/sexist slurs*. When racist/sexist slurs are used merely to insult an API character without historical context, consequence or critique, the slurs can reinforce and exacerbate existent bigotry.

The *Sidekick* or the *Villain* are character types that Asians and PIs are often relegated to. In these narrow roles, Asians and PIs either provide support or foil to the more complex and prominent white leads. In 2019, 20% of API primary and secondary characters were either sidekicks or villains.

Few fully human roles exist for APIs in 2019. One way for API characters to be fully human is to have a full spectrum of relationships. Audiences know about their family, friends and romantic interests. Only 12.6% (10/79) of the Asian and PI characters in 2019 were multidimensional when it came to relationships.

**The Prevalence and Portrayal of Asian American and Pacific Islanders
across 1,300 Popular Films**

Dr. Nancy Yuen, Dr. Stacy L. Smith, more
Annenberg Inclusion Initiative

The violence and vitriol aimed at the Asian American and Pacific Islander (API) community has increased over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to reports on hate crimes and hate incidents.[1] The increasing danger to API people is rooted in complex causes, but one factor that can contribute to negative attitudes, perceptions, and even anti-social behaviors toward this community is the mass media. Whether through the absence of API characters or via stereotypical depictions, entertainment can be a vehicle that perpetuates inaccurate and dehumanizing portrayals of the API community.

To understand the messages that one area of entertainment communicates to audiences, Dr. Stacy L. Smith and the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative have teamed with Dr. Nancy Wang Yuen to investigate the API community across top movies. Drawing on the Initiative's database of 1,300 top-grossing films from 2007 to 2019, the quantitative data is a secondary analysis of the on screen prevalence of API characters across a variety of indicators (e.g., gender, LGBTQ status, disability) as well as how often API people work behind the camera (i.e., director, producer, casting).[2] We also evaluate the top-grossing films of 2018 and 2019 to understand the ethnic heritage of API actors as well as the frequency of those speaking 5 lines or less on screen. Finally, we explore the current executive ranks of top entertainment companies producing or distributing movies for the presence of API leadership overseeing film.

The investigation also has a qualitative component. Informed by the work of Dr. Yuen and scholars such as Dr. Teresa Mok, a series of measures were created to tap stereotypes of the API community.[3] These include, but are not limited to, sexualization, tokenism, social behaviors, wardrobe, violence, immigration, and language. Top-grossing movies from 2019 were examined for these factors, and the emerging patterns and themes are reported here. While over 750 students evaluated top-grossing films for the quantitative portion of the analysis, our qualitative assessment was conducted by a group of 13 API students from USC.

Given the size and scope of the analysis, we believe this is the most comprehensive report to date on the prevalence and portrayal of the API community in popular films. The report begins by overviewing the quantitative data and then focuses on the qualitative analysis. Finally, an overall conclusion with solutions is provided. Throughout the quantitative section, in order to avoid emphasizing trivial differences that may emerge from large sample sizes, only deviations of 5 percentage points or more are discussed.

Quantitative Findings

This quantitative section focuses on three areas of API representation: on screen prevalence and portrayal, behind the camera employment patterns (i.e., director, producer, casting), and executive leadership at major film companies. Within each section, relevant variables are italicized the first time they are presented. Over time comparisons were conducted on specific measures with 2019 patterns compared to 2018 as well as 2007.

Prevalence On Screen

Our first prevalence measure examined the **leads/co leads** driving the plot. For this analysis, each actor's race/ethnicity was evaluated and any thespian identified as Asian and/or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander alone or in combination with another race/ethnicity constituted the sample.

Out of 1,300 top-grossing movies, only 44 or 3.4% featured an API lead or co lead (see Table 1). Six of these API leads/co leads were female (5 Asian, 1 NHPI/Asian). These six roles were played by four female actors: Constance Wu (2 films), Hailee Steinfeld (2 films), Auli'i Cravalho (1 film), and Chloe Bennet (1 film).

Table 1
API Leads/Co Leads by Year: 2007-2019

Year	API Leads/Co Leads	Asians Leads/Co Leads	NHPI Leads/Co Leads
2007	2	1	1
2008	3	3	1
2009	3	1	2
2010	2	1	1
2011	1	1	0
2012	2	1	1
2013	3	1	3
2014	4	3	2
2015	1	0	1
2016	4	3	2
2017	6	5	2
2018	6	3	3
2019	7	6	2
Total	3.4% (*n*=44)	2.2% (*n*=29)	1.6% (*n*=21)

Note: Columns represent the number of films with an API-, Asian- and/or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander- (NHPI) identifying actor in a lead or co lead role. Ensemble leads are not included. Six leads/co leads identified as multiracial, thus the totals for Asian & NHPI leads/co leads does not total to the API sum.

Over time, little deviation in API leads/co leads emerged. As shown in Table 1, 2019 (7%) featured a higher percentage of API leads/co leads than did 2007 (2%) but did not differ from 2018 (6%). Out of 13 years, only 1 year (2019) was at proportional representation with U.S. Census (7.1%). It is important to note that only leads/co leads are reported here, with API actors in ensemble casts excluded from these analyses. Information on API actors in ensembles can be found in Footnote 4.

The 44 films with API leads/co leads were driven by 22 individual actors that worked one or more times as a protagonist. Each of the API leads/co leads are listed in Table 2 by name, gender and the number of times they appear in the sample of 1,300 movies.

Table 2
API Leads/Co Leads Across 1,300 Films: 2007-2019

Name	# of Films	Gender	Name	# of Films	Gender
Dwayne Johnson	14	M	Chloe Bennet	1	F
Keanu Reeves	5	M	Choi Woo Shik	1	M
John Cho	3	M	Dave Bautista	1	M
Constance Wu	2	F	Himesh Patel	1	M
Dev Patel	2	M	Jason Momoa	1	M
Hailee Steinfeld	2	F	Manish Dayal	1	M
Jackie Chan	2	M	Neel Sethi	1	M
Kal Penn	2	M	Rain	1	M
Kumail Nanjiani	2	M	Ryan Potter	1	M
Ali Fazal	1	M	Steven Yeun	1	M
Auli'i Cravalho	1	F	Suraj Sharma	1	M

Note: Actor's identity was used to determine whether the individual was part of the API community. Individuals were coded as API if they identified as Asian/Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander alone or in combination with another racial/ethnic group.

Looking to **ethnic heritage** (inherited background in conjunction with a singular or multi-cultural identification) the majority of the 22 leads/co leads were of Indian (31.8%, *n*=7) followed by Chinese (18.2%, *n*=4) and Korean (18.2%, *n*=4) descent.[5] Individuals that identify with multiple groups were accounted for in each ethnic grouping, therefore numbers do not sum to the grand total. By region, East Asian (45.5%, *n*=10) outnumbered South Asian (36.4%, *n*=8), Polynesian (18.2%, *n*=4), and Southeast Asian (9.1%, *n*=2) actors as leads/co leads. Turning to **nationality** (country of birth and present U.S. residency), half of API leads/co leads were born (50%, *n*=11) and almost three-quarters are currently living in the U.S. (72.7%, *n*=16).

Moving away from protagonists, we also examined the race/ethnicity of every independent speaking or named character in our sample. The API variable included those characters coded Asian, Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian alone or in combination with one or more races/ethnicities.

Of the 51,159 **speaking characters** across the 1,300 top-grossing films from 2007 to 2019, 5.9% (*n*=3,034) were Asian, Asian American or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (API) and 94.1% (*n*=48,125) were not. Overall, the percentage of API characters across 13 years of top movies falls slightly below the percentage of API people in the U.S. population (7.1%).[6] This translates into a ratio of 16 non API characters to every 1 API character. As shown in Table 3, there has been no meaningful change over time. 2019 (8.4%) was just shy of a 5 percentage point difference from 2007 (3.5%) and did not differ from 2018 (9.6%).

Table 3
API Speaking Characters by Year: 2007-2019

Year	API	Not API	Total Characters
2007	3.5% (*n*=144)	96.5% (*n*=3,985)	4,129
2008	7.5% (*n*=303)	92.5% (*n*=3,713)	4,016
2009	4.9% (*n*=195)	95.1% (*n*=3,819)	4,014
2010	5.1% (*n*=195)	94.9% (*n*=3,652)	3,847
2011	4.9% (*n*=194)	95.1% (*n*=3,747)	3,941
2012	5.2% (*n*=209)	94.8% (*n*=3,838)	4,047
2013	4.7% (*n*=183)	95.3% (*n*=3,749)	3,932
2014	5.6% (*n*=226)	94.4% (*n*=3,798)	4,024
2015	5.1% (*n*=202)	94.9% (*n*=3,773)	3,975
2016	7.2% (*n*=269)	92.8% (*n*=3,489)	3,758
2017	5.8% (*n*=215)	94.2% (*n*=3,475)	3,690
2018	9.6% (*n*=373)	90.4% (*n*=3,522)	3,895
2019	8.4% (*n*=326)	91.6% (n=3,565)	3,891
Total	**5.9% (*n*=3,034)**	**94.1% (*n*=48,125)**	**51,159**

Note: The API column includes Asian, Pacific Islander and/or Native Hawaiian characters alone or in combination with other races and/or ethnicities.

The API category in Table 3 included both Asian and Pacific Islander communities. Here, we present the findings on these two groups separately. The vast majority of characters were Asian or Asian American (94.6%, *n*=2,870) and only 5.9% (*n*=178) were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (NHPI). There were no differences over time (see Table 4). However, three 5-percentage point deviations are important to note in 2011, 2015 and 2016. These upticks were accounted for by 4 films, ***Just Go With It*** (2011), ***Soul Surfer*** (2011), ***Aloha*** (2015) and ***Moana*** (2016).

Table 4
Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
Speaking Characters by Year: 2007-2019

	Asian/ Asian American	Pacific Islander	Total # of API Characters
2007	97.2% (*n*=140)	2.8% (*n*=4)	144
2008	95% (*n*=288)	5% (*n*=15)	303
2009	97.4% (*n*=190)	2.6% (*n*=5)	195
2010	97.9% (*n*=191)	2.1% (*n*=4)	195
2011	88.1% (*n*=171)	12.4% (*n*=24)	194
2012	98.6% (*n*=206)	1.9% (*n*=4)	209
2013	98.4% (*n*=180)	1.6% (*n*=3)	183
2014	98.2% (*n*=222)	2.2% (*n*=5)	226
2015	89.6% (*n*=181)	11.9% (*n*=24)	202

2016	89.2% (*n*=240)	11.2% (*n*=30)	269
2017	94% (*n*=202)	7% (*n*=15)	215
2018	93% (*n*=347)	8% (*n*=30)	373
2019	95.7% (*n*=312)	4.6% (*n*=15)	326
Total	**94.6% (*n*=2,870)**	**5.9% (*n*=178)**	**3,034**

Note: Some rows do not total to 100% as 14 characters were categorized as multiracial (Asian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander) across the sample.

As just demonstrated, one or two films with notable API representation can influence the overall percentage of characters from this community. Given this, it was important to disaggregate the results and examine two additional prevalence indicators. The first was ***proportional representation***. Here, we ask the question: how many films are within ±2 percentage points of the U.S. Census benchmark?

Table 5 answers this query. Only 15.7% (*n*=204) of the 1,300 movies depicted proportional representation of the API community with U.S. Census (7.1%). A full 67.4% of movies fell below proportional representation and 16.9% were above. Over time, 2019 (18 films) did not differ from 2018 (17 films) or 2007 (16 films) in the number of films depicting proportional representation of the API community on screen. However, the number of movies with API speaking characters below U.S. Census decreased from 2007 (78 films) to 2019 (54 films) and the number above increased (6 and 28 films, respectively).

Table 5
Proportional Representation of API by Year: 2007-2019

Year	# of Films w/Prop Rep API	# of Films Below Prop Rep	# of Films Above Prop Rep
2007	16	78	6
2008	15	69	16
2009	11	73	16
2010	10	75	15
2011	17	67	16
2012	16	73	11
2013	14	73	13
2014	16	68	16
2015	15	68	17
2016	14	66	20
2017	25	57	18
2018	17	55	28
2019	18	54	28
Total	**15.7% (*n*=204)**	**67.4% (*n*=876)**	**16.9% (*n*=220)**

Note: Proportional representation was defined as ±2 percentage points from U.S. Census. Films falling above or below the ±2 percentage point interval are reported in columns.

Disaggregating our API variable, we now look at the patterns for Asian vs. NHPI characters. Only 16.1% of movies depicted Asians or Asian Americans at or near U.S. Census whereas 67.8% were below this benchmark. Less than a sixth (16.1%) of movies were above proportional representation of Asian or Asian American speaking characters. As shown in Table 6, no differences emerged over time in the number of films with proportional representation (2007=15, 2018=18, 2019=17). However, the prevalence of movies below U.S. Census decreased over time (2007=78, 2018=54, 2019=52) and the prevalence above increased (2007=7, 2018=28, 2019=31).

Not surprisingly, the findings for NHPI were far more problematic. Less than 2% (*n*=25) of the films in the sample were at the U.S. Census criterion. Further, 3.9% of all movies in the sample were above proportional representation whereas 94.2% were below. As illuminated in Table 6, there has been virtually no meaningful change (5 percentage points or more) over time.

Table 6
Number of Films At, Below or Above Proportional Representation
for API Speaking Characters

Measure	Asians			Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islanders		
Year	**2007**	**2018**	**2019**	**2007**	**2018**	**2019**
At PR	15	18	17	0	3	3
Below PR	78	54	52	98	88	93
Above PR	7	28	31	2	9	4
US Census	6.8%			0.4%		

Note: Speaking characters were coded as either Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The number within the cell represents the total per column/row out of a sample of 100 movies per year. PR=proportional representation.

The second measure pertains to ***invisibility***. We were interested in the total number of films that erased the API community completely on screen by not depicting at least one speaking or named character across the plot. As shown in Table 7, a full 39% (*n*=507) of 1,300 movies were devoid of any API speaking or named characters. While 2019 (30%) did not differ from 2018 (28%), it was lower than 2007 (46%).

Similar to proportional representation, we assessed the erasure of Asians separately from Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders. For Asians, 40.2% (*n*=523) of 1,300 movies were completely devoid of Asian speaking or named characters on screen. While 2019 (33%) was not meaningfully different from 2018 (29%), the number of films missing Asian speaking characters was lower than 2007 (47%). For NHPI, the numbers were more egregious. Each year, 93% or more of the 100 top films across 13 years erased the NHPI community save three years: 2015, 2017, and 2018 (88% each).

Table 7
The Epidemic of Invisibility of API Speaking Characters by Year: 2007-2019

Year	# of Films Missing API	# of Films Missing Asians	# of Films Missing NHPI
2007	46	47	98
2008	36	37	97
2009	44	44	97
2010	48	48	97
2011	37	38	93
2012	46	47	97
2013	44	45	97
2014	41	42	97
2015	38	42	88
2016	38	39	95
2017	31	32	88
2018	28	29	88
2019	30	33	93
Total	**39% (*n*=507)**	**40.2% (*n*=523)**	**94.2% (*n*=1,225)**

Note: Films "missing" API actors were those that did not depict one independent speaking or named character coded as Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Our last set of prevalence measures took a deeper dive into aspects of the story and actor identity (i.e., ethnic heritage, nationality, place of birth) across the 100 top films of 2018 and 2019. First, we examined the centrality of API roles.[7] **Role** measures the importance of each character to the plot. Out of the 200 films, 3.9% of API characters (*n*=27) were protagonists, representing the primary driving force behind the narrative's purpose. This group includes demographic transformations of leads (e.g., both adult "Arthur" and "Young Arthur" in *Aquaman*). A total of 165 (23.6% of 699) API characters were classified as supporting, providing significant help or a hindrance to the main character(s). The remaining tertiary API characters (*n*=507, 72.5%) represent inconsequential roles with minimal impact to the plot.

We coded the number of supporting and tertiary API characters on screen that spoke **5 lines of less** (no, yes) across 200 movies.[8] To this end, the subtitled dialogue was used on screen and captured in 2D screenshots across each movie. Each screenshot constituted a "line" and when the dialogue was not subtitled, inferences were made from the number of sentences communicated. Over 90% (*n*=150) of supporting API characters spoke more than five lines and 9.1% (*n*=15) communicated fewer. This increased over time from 5.3% in 2018 to 12.2% in 2019 (see Table 8). Of the 507 tertiary characters coded, 74.7% (*n*=379) spoke 5 lines or less which did not deviate meaningfully by year.

Table 8
API Characters Speaking 5 lines or Less Across 200 Popular Films: 2018-2019

Indicator	2018	2019	Total
% of API supporting chars w/5 lines or less	5.3%	12.2%	9.1%
% of API tertiary chars w/5 lines or less	72.5%	77.3%	74.7%

We also assessed a few identity indicators of API actors. The ethnic heritage of each actor across the 200 top films of 2018 and 2019 was assessed. Here, we were able to locate actor information across 557 (79.7%) of the 699 speaking characters coded. Given that API actors may identify with a particular background alone or in combination with others, we coded each variable as present or absent. Thus, the columns in Table 9 do not total to 100%.

The background of 22 actors could not be identified for ethnic heritage and 24 roles were played by non API actors (6 in live action, 18 voiced). Two inconsequential animated API characters voiced by non API actors were from *Spies in Disguise* and *Ralph Breaks the Internet*, while all remaining iterations were a result of the English dubbing for the 2019 Japanese film *Dragon Ball Super: Broly*. Across live action, all but one case of non API actors playing API characters were multiracial/multiethnic talent acting the part of children of other API characters. The last case is that of Rami Malek playing Freddie Mercury in the 2018 film *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

Table 9
Ethnic Heritage of API Actors Across 200 Top-Grossing Films: 2018-2019

Ethnic Heritage	#	%	U.S. API Population %	Ethnic Heritage	#	%	U.S. API Population %
Chinese	185	36.3%	23%	Native Bornean	3	<1%	<1%
Indian	81	15.9%	20%	Thai	3	<1%	1%
Korean	80	15.7%	8%	Burmese	2	<1%	<1%
Japanese	78	15.3%	6%	Laotian	2	<1%	1%
Filipino	31	6.1%	18%	Polynesian Unspecified	2	<1%	n/a
Vietnamese	20	3.9%	9%	Tongan	2	<1%	<1%
Samoan	17	3.3%	<1%	Malay	1	<1%	<1%
Maori	10	2%	<1%	Sri Lankan	1	<1%	<1%
Indonesian	7	1.4%	<1%	Bengali	1	<1%	<1%
Pakistani	7	1.4%	2%	Nepalese	1	<1%	<1%
Native Hawaiian	4	<1%	3%	Cambodian	1	<1%	1%

Note: Column totals do not add to 100% as 27 actors identified with multiple API ethnic groups. U.S. API population percentages reflect U.S. Census figures for each group including individuals from multiple backgrounds.

As shown in Table 9, 22 groups were identified across the 511 actors. Chinese, Indian, Korean, and Japanese actors were the most likely to work across the 200 top-grossing films. Using this variable and the span of API backgrounds amongst the characters, each of the 511 actors were coded (no, yes) as East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, or Polynesian. A full 65.4% (*n*=334) of all API actors were East

Asian, 17.4% were South Asian (*n*=89), 13.3% (*n*=68) were Southeast Asian, and 6.5% (*n*=33) were Polynesian.

These same actors' ***country of birth*** was assessed. Of the 474 actors who were ascertainable on this measure,[9] 33.8% (*n*=160) were born in the U.S. and 66.2% (*n*=313) were born internationally. By continent, 44.4% were born in North America (*n*=210), 40% in Asia (*n*=189), 10.1% in Europe (*n*=48), 4% in Australia/New Zealand (*n*=19), and 1.5% in Africa (*n*=7). Disaggregating this measure, Table 10 features the total number of actors per birthplace. Currently, 51.2% (*n*=258 out of 504) of the known API actors with discernable information are living in the U.S.

Table 10
Birthplace of API Across 200 Top-Grossing Films: 2018-2019

Country	#	%	Country	#	%
U.S.	160	33.8%	Philippines	3	<1%
Canada	48	10.1%	Pakistan	2	<1%
U.K.	45	9.5%	Myanmar	2	<1%
South Korea	42	8.9%	Thailand	2	<1%
Japan	42	8.9%	Saint Lucia	1	<1%
China	41	8.7%	Lebanon	1	<1%
Singapore	16	3.4%	Sweden	1	<1%
India	15	3.2%	Tunisia	1	<1%
Malaysia	14	2.9%	Tanzania	1	<1%
New Zealand	13	2.7%	Spain	1	<1%
Australia	6	1.3%	Russia	1	<1%
Vietnam	5	1.1%	Mexico	1	<1%
South Africa	4	<1%	Denmark	1	<1%
Indonesia	4	<1%	Kenya	1	<1%

Overall, this section reveals that the API community was still being erased in 2018 and 2019's top-grossing films. In particular, very few leads/co leads were Asian or Asian American across 1,300 movies and even fewer were girls/women and/or NHPI. Analyses of the last two years show that the majority of API actors were born outside the U.S. and were featured in roles with 5 lines or less. Now, we turn our attention to the nature or way in which API characters were featured on screen.

Portrayal On Screen

In addition to prevalence, we measured demographics (i.e., gender, age) and attributive qualities (i.e., parental status, relational status, sexualization, LGBTQ, disability) of API characters. For these analyses, all API characters were analyzed together rather than disaggregating by race/ethnicity (Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander).

The ***gender*** analyses of API speaking and named characters revealed that males (63%, *n*=1,911) far outnumbered females (37%, *n*=1,122) across 1,300 popular films, which was somewhat consistent with overall trends we have observed independent of race/ethnicity.

However, the percentage of API female characters deviated notably by year. As shown in Table 11, the percentage of girls and women in 2019 (33.4%) was substantially lower than 2018 (44%) or 2007 (39.6%). While access and opportunity for roles were limited for the API community in top-grossing fare, Asian, Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander female actors face additional challenges compared to male actors securing on screen work.

Table 11
Percentage and Number of API Female Characters by Year: 2007-2019

Year	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
% of API females	39.6%	31.7%	36.1%	33.8%	44.8%	34.4%	31.7%	32.7%	34.2%	40.5%	42.3%	44%	33.4%
# of female chars	57	96	70	66	87	72	58	74	69	109	91	164	109

Given the lack of API girls and women on screen, we examined how many films erased or rendered *invisible* females from this community altogether. Sample wide, 59.2% of the movies (*n*=770 of 1,300) did not depict a single API girl or woman speaking on screen. For all API females as well as those that were coded as Asian, the number of films in 2019 with erasure decreased from 2007. This was not the case with females coded as NHPI. Here, virtually all films erased girls and women from this community across the 13-year sample.

Table 12
Erasure of API Girls & Women Across 1,300 Films: 2007-2019

Year	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
# of films missing API females	63	59	65	71	58	62	65	60	58	58	53	47	51
# of films missing Asian females	63	61	65	71	58	62	65	60	61	59	56	48	51
# of films missing NHPI females	100	98	99	99	96	99	100	100	93	97	94	95	99

The *apparent age* of every speaking character was also evaluated. Most API characters were 21-39 years of age (55.7%) followed by those 40 years of age and older (29.8%). Less than a tenth of all API characters were 0-12 (6.4%) or 13-20 (8%) years of age. However, API characters 21 years of age or older were gendered. Females were more likely to be 21-39 years of age (62.2%, males=51.8%) whereas males were more likely to be 40 years of age or older (35.9% vs.19.6%=females).

The lack of API women *40 years of age or older* was problematic across the 13-year sample. As shown in Table 12, 2019 (21.3%) featured a lower percentage of API women 40 years of age or older than did 2018 (34.9%) or 2007 (32.6%).

Table 13
Percentage and Number of Women API Characters
40 Years of Age or Older by Year: 2007-2019

Year	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
% of API women 40+	32.6%	25%	16.2%	24.1%	32.7%	29.4%	18.2%	9.8%	19.7%	22%	24.5%	34.9%	21.3%
# of API women 40+	14	21	6	13	18	20	12	6	15	18	13	44	19

Turning to stereotypical attributes, we assessed speaking characters for **parental status**, the presence of **a romantic relationship** and **sexualization**. These attributes are stereotypical of females in general and historically of API girls/women in particular.[10] It is important to note that because we used the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative database, some variables were not assessed in 2019 and thus not available for analysis in this study. In explanation, parental status was captured across all 13 years but relational status and sexualization indicators were not (2007-2018 only).[11]

Parental and relational status were gendered onscreen for API roles. API women (43.9%) were more likely to be shown as parents than were API men (36.3%) and slightly more likely to be depicted in a committed romantic relationship (46.6% vs. 42.4%). The same gendered trends emerged for sexualization, which tapped whether characters were shown with some nudity (present, absent), in sexually revealing attire (no, yes), and/or referenced as physically attractive by other characters (no, yes).[12] API females were far more likely to be depicted in sexy clothes (23.3%) and partially naked (21.3%) than were males (7%, 9.3% respectively). The same pattern emerged with physical attractiveness (females=8.2%, males=2.3%).

In 2014, the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative began assessing whether speaking characters were **LGBTQ**.[13] Using a sample of 600 films from 2014 to 2019, only 15 API characters were shown as part of the LGBTQ community. Of these, 9 were gay, 5 were lesbian and 1 was bisexual. No API characters were transgender. Three of the LGB characters were teens (13-20 years old), 3 were middle aged (40-64 years old), and 9 were young adults (21-39 years old). Across 600 films, only 1 API character was an LGB parent. Eight of the LGB characters were either married or shown in a committed romantic relationship.

Disability was measured across 500 films starting in 2015.[14] Similar to LGBTQ, API speaking characters with a disability were rarely depicted. Only 26 speaking or named API characters (1.9%) were shown with a physical, cognitive or communicative disability. Under a fifth (19.2%, *n*=5) of the API characters with a disability were girls/women and 4 were children (0-12 years of age), 9 were young adult (21-39 years of age), 8 were middle aged (40-64 years of age), and 4 were elderly (65 years of age or older). Seven out of the twenty-three API characters with a disability were shown as parents or caregivers.

Overall, the portrayal of API characters was consistent with what we see independent of race/ethnicity. API girls/women were depicted in a stereotypical light and few LGBTQ characters were portrayed. API characters with disabilities were very rare across movies. Given these formulaic trends, it is important to examine who is calling the shots behind the camera and the degree to which API content creators were directors, producers, and casting directors of top-grossing films. This is the focus of the next section.

Behind the Camera

We examined the prevalence of API content creators working behind the camera across the 1,300 top-grossing films from 2007 to 2019. Here, we were interested in directors, producers (capital P only) and casting directors.[15] A total of 7,412 content creators were credited across the sample and only 2.9% were API.

Table 14
Content Creators by API Status: 2007-2019

Measure	API	Non API	Total
Directors	3.5% (*n*=50)	96.5% (*n*=1,397)	1,447
Producers	2.5% (*n*=98)	97.5% (*n*=3,854)	3,952
Casting Directors	3.3% (*n*=66)	96.7% (*n*=1,947)	2,013
Total	**2.9% (*n*=214)**	**97.1% (*n*=7,198)**	**7,412**

Focusing first on ***directors***, a total of 1,447 helmers were credited across the 1,300 top-grossing movies from 2007 to 2019. Of these, 3.5% (*n*=50) were API and no change emerged over time. Forty-seven API directors were men and only 3 were women. Jennifer Yuh Nelson was credited twice on the *Kung Fu Panda* franchise and Loveleen Tandan on *Slumdog Millionaire*.[16] The 50 directing credits reduced to a total of 25 API helmers that worked one or more times across the sample time frame (see Table 16).

Table 15
API Directors by Year: 2007-2019

Measure	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
# of API dirs	3	3	1	4	4	2	6	0	6	5	5	4	7
% of API dirs	2.7%	2.7%	<1%	3.7%	3.7%	1.7%	5.6%	0	5.6%	4.2%	4.6%	3.6%	6.3%
Total	112	112	111	109	108	121	107	107	107	120	109	112	112

Table 16
API Directors By Name, Number of Films & Gender

Name	# of Films	Gender	Name	# of films	Gender
James Wan	6	M	Danny Pang	1	M
M. Night Shyamalan	6	M	Dean Devlin	1	M
Jon M. Chu	5	M	Destin Daniel Cretton	1	M
Justin Lin	4	M	Galen T. Chu	1	M
Pierre Coffin	4	M	Jay Chandrasekhar	1	M
Ang Lee	2	M	Loveleen Tandan	1	F
Jennifer Yuh Nelson	2	F	Oxide Pang Chun	1	M
Michael Dougherty	2	M	Peter Sohn	1	M
Taika Waititi	2	M	Raman Hui	1	M
Tarsem Singh	2	M	Ronnie del Carmen	1	M
Anand Tucker	1	M	Tatsuya Nagamine	1	M
Aneesh Chaganty	1	M	Yimou Zhang	1	M
Bong Joon Ho	1	M			

Besides directors, we were interested in the frequency of API **producers** credited across the 1,300 film sample.[17] Overall, only 2.5% (*n*=89) of the 3,952 credited film producers were Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. 85.7% of these API producers were men and only 14.3% were women. In terms of over time trends, the percentage of API producers was higher in 2019 (7.1%) than 2018 (<1%) or 2007 (1.5%).

Table 17
API Producers by Year: 2007-2019

Measure	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
# of API producers	4	4	2	5	2	3	7	7	10	5	22	3	24
% of API producers	1.5%	1.5%	<1%	1.7%	<1%	1%	2.2%	2.2%	3.1%	1.6%	6.7%	<1%	7.1%
Total	272	265	278	290	277	292	314	323	323	316	330	336	337

Note: Only credited "Producers" or those with a 'Produced by' credit were included in the table.

The final behind-the-camera position we assessed for API status (no, yes) was **casting directors**.[18] A full 2,013 casting directors were credited across the 1,300 films. Only 3.3% (*n*=66) were API casters. 84.9% of the casters were API women and only 15.1% were API men. Across the 13-year time frame, little deviation emerged in the hiring of API casting directors. API casting directors were no more prevalent in 2019 (4.4%) than they were 2018 (5%) or 2007 (1.9%).

Table 18
API Casting Directors by Year: 2007-2019

Measure	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
# of API casting dirs	3	5	5	4	7	4	2	8	4	7	4	7	6
% of API casting dirs	1.9%	3.1%	3.1%	2.5%	4.5%	2.5%	1.2%	5%	2.5%	5%	2.7%	5%	4.4%
Total	157	164	162	158	157	160	172	160	159	140	148	141	135

Now, we were interested in whether behind the camera inclusion of API creatives was associated with the prevalence of API speaking characters and leads/co leads on screen. To this end, we first bifurcated the sample of films into two silos: those with an API film director attached and those without. We then examined the prevalence of API leads/co leads and speaking character for these two groups. The same process was repeated for API producers and casting directors.

Figure 1
Behind the Camera and On Screen Associations
w/API Creatives and Characters
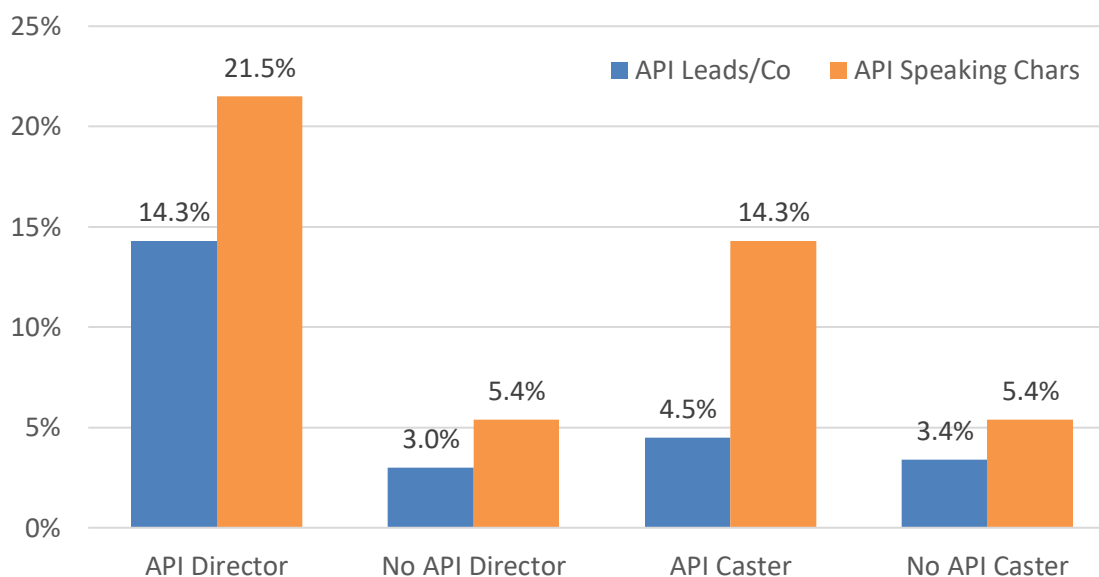
As shown in Figure 1, films with an API director attached featured more API leads/co leads then those films without an API director attached. A similar but less pronounced pattern emerged with producers (API Producer=8.9%, No API producer=3%). The presence of an API casting director was not associated with the prevalence of API leads and co leads.

For speaking characters, a slightly different pattern merged (see Figure 1). Films with an API director or caster depicted more API cast than films without an API director or caster. The prevalence of an API producer (yes=8.7%, no=5.8%) was not associated with API speaking or named characters on screen, however.

In sum, the results of this section reveal that API creatives were underrepresented behind the camera as directors, producers and casters across the 1,300 top films from 2007 to 2019. This is problematic, as on screen content patterns change when API inclusion occurs behind the camera. To examine who commissions and works with these content creators, we looked at the prevalence of API film executives in the next section.

Executive Ranks

In addition to behind the camera, we were interested in the power brokers that green light and work in the executive ranks at major film companies. To this end, we assessed all film executives (*n*=202) that were part of the senior leadership across 8 film and streaming companies (i.e., Amazon Studios, Lionsgate, Netflix, Paramount Pictures, Sony Pictures Motion Picture Group, Universal Pictures, Walt Disney Studios including 20th Century, and Warner Bros. Pictures).[19]

Table 18
Prevalence of Film Executives by API Status

Position	API	Not API	Total
Chair	0	100% (*n*=15)	15
President/Chief Level	5.8% (*n*=6)	94.2% (*n*=97)	103
EVP/SVP	8.3% (*n*=7)	91.7% (*n*=77)	84
Total	6.4% (*n*=13)	93.6% (*n*=189)	202

As shown in Table 18, 6.4% of all executives were from the API community. None were at the pinnacle of power as Chairs or CEOs. Just under 6% were at the President or C-suite level and 7 were Executive or Senior Vice Presidents (EVPs/SPVs). Almost two-thirds (61.5%) of the API executives were women (*n*=8).

Extending our analyses from the executive ranks to content and hiring patterns, we were interested in how distributor was related to API inclusion. Using the 9 companies listed above, we assessed the prevalence of API leads/co leads, on screen roles, and above the line creatives (directors, producers, casters) in Table 19. We only focused on the 200 top films of 2018-2019, to provide a recent snapshot of decision making pertaining to API hiring. Table 19 features both the numerical counts and percentages based on the total number of films distributed in 2018/2019 across the 200 top movies as well as on the streaming platforms.

Table 19
API Prevalence Metrics by Film Distributor: 2018-2019

Company	# of API Leads/ Co leads	# w/ API Prop Rep or Above	# of API Dirs	#of API Prods	#of API CDirs	Total # of 18/19 Films
20th Century	2/9%	9/43%	1/5%	2/9%	2/9%	21
Amazon	1/5%	5/28%	2/11%	3/17%	0	18
Paramount Pictures	1/5%	6/33%	0	0	0	18
Lionsgate	1/5%	8/36%	0	3/14%	0	22
Sony Pictures	1/4%	12/46%	1/4%	1/4%	2/8%	26
Netflix	10/8%	55/44%	4/3%	19/15%	9/7%	126
Warner Bros.	3/9%	17/53%	2/6%	9/28%	2/6%	32
Universal Pictures	5/14%	16/44%	0	6/17%	2/6%	36
Walt Disney	0	9/47%	0	1/5%	1/5%	19

Note: Six key indicators were included in the distributor analyses using definitions and measures presented earlier in the report. Only top-grossing films were included in Table 19 for the majors and mini majors whereas all streaming movies distributed by Amazon and Netflix were assessed.

A few trends emerged in Table 19. First and focusing on frequency, Netflix featured the highest number of API leads/co leads, films with proportional representation, API directors, API producers, and API casters across the 9 companies evaluated. Netflix also distributed 126 fictional U.S. films on its platform across 2018 and 2019, allowing for greater breadth and depth of hiring on screen and behind the camera. In fact, 4 out of 5 indicators were above proportional representation using U.S. Census.

Second and focusing on the percentage of API representation per indicator as a share of a company's 2018/2019 slate, there is no clear "top performer." Rather, different companies seem to be excelling in slightly different ways. Warner Bros. leads with the highest percentage of movies with proportional representation (or higher) of API characters in their films as well as API producers. Universal Pictures depicted the highest percentage of API leads/co leads and Amazon Studios had the highest percentage of API directors. 20th Century had the highest percentage of API casting directors. Though, multiple companies had 2 API casters attached to their movies. It is important to note that both Lionsgate and Walt Disney Company had two zeros in Table 19 and Paramount Pictures had 3.

The quantitative data in this report reveal the depth of exclusion faced by API talent throughout entertainment-- whether on screen, behind the scenes, or in the executive ranks. Yet invisibility and underrepresentation are not the only areas for concern. In the next section, we explore how portrayals of primary and secondary API characters in 2019 continue to exemplify stereotypes and tropes that have been documented for decades.

Qualitative Analysis

Apart from the quantity of API depictions in popular film, this report also investigates several qualitative aspects related to portrayals of API characters. For this analysis, we examined 79 primary and secondary API characters across the 100 most popular films of 2019. These characters appeared in a total of 39 movies. A group of API research assistants examined every portrayal for a series of different indicators related to stereotypes, drawing on the expertise of the study authors and existing literature on the

topic.[20] The resulting data was aggregated and analyzed with an eye toward how portrayals conformed or deviated from tropes about the API community that have existed historically.

We present a typology of API characters on a spectrum that starts at invisible and ends at full humans. Although there is a general progression from worst to best, many of the API characters we analyzed landed in multiple categories on this spectrum. Silenced and stereotyped API characters were frequently token and isolated. An API character can be fully human but still display stereotyped traits. By naming the barriers and stereotypes that APIs continue to face, we want to steer the Hollywood industry away from reproducing tired tropes and towards characterizing APIs as complex human beings.

Table 20
Typology of Asian and Pacific Islander Characters

Invisible	Silenced	Stereotyped	Tokenized/ Isolated	Sidekick/ Villain	Fully Human
No API characters in a film	Silenced characters speak 5 or less lines of dialogue	Characters that reproduce API stereotypes	API characters are the only one in their film or all/most of their scenes	API characters exist to support or challenge the lead	API characters have a full spectrum of relationships

Invisible

As we noted in the quantitative section, films still render the API community invisible. Thirty-nine percent of the 1,300 films included in the quantitative analysis did not feature even one API character, and more were missing API women. There are consequences to invisibility. First, it limits the career opportunities of API actors by relegating them to secondary or tertiary roles-- if they are cast at all. This prevents talented creative voices from working and achieving career sustainability. Moreover, it communicates to the millions of API youth who spend time with these stories that they do not belong at the center of storytelling and in fact may not even merit inclusion at all. According to one article, in a survey of more than 2,000 Americans, 42% responded "don't know" when asked to name a well-known Asian American; 11% named Jackie Chan and 9% stated Bruce Lee.[21] A third impact of invisibility is that it chokes the pipeline for future talent. If aspiring filmmakers or actors do not see themselves reflected in storytelling, it may decrease their own desire to work in entertainment or impact the amount of encouragement or support they receive from family and friends to pursue a career in the industry.

Silenced

When API characters speak only 5 lines (or less), they are literally silenced. In such cases, there is little to no character development and the role lacks significance. Unfortunately many API actors end up portraying such roles due to lack of options in a system that has traditionally disregarded API talent. In 2016, Korean American actor Bobby Lee called the Hollywood system "racist" when Steven Yeun had to audition for a 5-line role after starring as a regular on *The Walking Dead*.[22] In the current study, a whopping 74.7% of the 507 tertiary API characters spoke five lines or less across 200 top-grossing films. In 2019, even 4 out of 79 primary and secondary characters had 5 lines or less of dialogue. One example is Andrew Stehlin as "Ariki" in *X-Men: Dark Phoenix*.

Stereotyped Roles

Cinematic stereotypes of Asians and Pacific Islanders can hurt these communities in the United States, as members have experienced an uptick in hate incidents since 2020. With over 6,603 hate incidents reported to Stop AAPI Hate from March 19, 2020 to March 31, 2021, Hollywood needs to take responsibility for its problematic representations of APIs.[23] In 2019, 67% of API primary and secondary characters fell into stereotyped tropes. Here, we present some of the major stereotypes observed among the top 2019 films. While they do not apply evenly to every API subgroup, many have historical roots that hurt the API community as a whole.

Perpetual Foreigner

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have long grappled with the perpetual foreigner stereotype in Hollywood and beyond. Despite having a long history in the United States including indigenous status, as in the case of Native Hawaiians, the foreigner stereotype continues to endure. Nearly one-fifth (18%) of the API primary and secondary characters in the 100 top films of 2019 either spoke English with a non-American accent or a non-English language. While speaking with a foreign accent does not make anyone less American, Hollywood often pairs exaggerated accents with one-dimensional representations to conjure up the perpetual foreigner stereotype. As Dr. Nancy Wang Yuen wrote in *Reel Inequality: Hollywood Actors and Racism:* "The accent often serves as a form of racist humor--blurring race, exaggerated speech, and caricature into a single comedic moment. Consequently, foreign accents are rarely authentic. In fact, Hollywood's typical form of an Asian accent originals from the Charlie Chan character in film and television, which was first performed by white actors in yellowface."[24] To this day, Asian American actors report that they are still asked to audition with foreign accents.

One example of this is Masi Oka in the animated film *Spies in Disguise.* Oka voices the character "Kimura'' using English with a Japanese accent. The character is a buffoonish secondary villain to the main white male villain with no family, friends or romantic interests.

A Thousand Deaths

Anna May Wong, the first Chinese American film star whose career spanned from the 1920s to the late 1950s, joked that her gravestone should say, "She died a thousand deaths," for the number of times she died by suicide or was killed on screen.[25] Unfortunately, API characters were still expendable in films. In the 100 top films of 2019, just over a quarter of API primary and secondary characters died by the end of the film and all but one death ended violently.

Examples of these on screen deaths include the following:

- Brianne Tju as "Alexa" in *47 Meters Down: Uncaged* was attacked by a shark and ends up taking off her oxygen mask and trying to swim against the current until she eventually drowns; she is the only character (out of 5 characters) in the film that dies from drowning instead of a shark eating her and the only person that the camera focuses on her face when she dies.
- Benedict Wong as "Baron" in *Gemini Man*: The characters are traveling in a van together when a missile targets the van, hoping to strike Will Smith's character. The other three jump from the van in time, but Baron is trapped in the vehicle when it explodes from the missile.
- Ken Watanabe as "Dr. Ishiro Serizawa" in *Godzilla: King of the Monsters* goes on suicide mission.

- Nik Dodani as "Danny Khan" in *Escape Room* falls through a frozen body of water and gets stuck under the ice, drowning.
- Park So Dam's "Ki Jung" in *Parasite* is stabbed and bleeds to death.

Hypersexualization

Hollywood studio films have a long history of hypersexualizing Asian women. This happens even when they are leads. Examples include Nancy Kwan, who played a prostitute in *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960) and Zhang Ziyi, Gong Li and Michelle Yeoh as geishas in *Memoirs of a Geisha* (2005). When API women in leading roles are predominantly hypersexualized, such images can reduce API women to harmful stereotypes. Additionally, objectification and sexualization can have negative effects on some viewers related to appearance anxiety, body shame, or internalization of the thin ideal.[26]

As stated earlier in the report, of the 1,200 top-grossing films from 2007 to 2018, API females were far more likely to be depicted in sexy clothes (23.3%) and partially naked (21.3%) than were males (7%, 9.3% respectively). Even though in 2019, only 3 out of the 24 API primary and secondary women were hypersexualized, one of them was also a complex lead role—Constance Wu's "Destiny" in *Hustlers*. Jennifer Lopez's character, Ramona, says to Destiny that she will be successful as an exotic dancer because, "You're new, you're fucking gorgeous, you're Asian... it's like a triple threat." Coming from a woman of color in a pronounced supporting role, the equating of being "Asian" with sexualization detracts from the film's central message of female empowerment.

Emasculation

Asian men have a history of emasculation--particularly in Hollywood. More than half (58%) of API men had no romantic relationships compared to 37.5% of API women. While this is not the only way to measure emasculation, actor Daniel Dae Kim said in a 2019 interview that he'd "like to be a lead in a romantic drama" since it's something he is "fit to do but never had the opportunity."[27] In *Hellboy*, Daniel Dae Kim's "Ben Daimio" had no romantic relationship.

Among Asian men, a subset (14.5%) experienced direct emasculation in how other characters spoke to or about them. These examples make it clear how these stereotypes still operate. In *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*, Brad Pitt's "Cliff" (when asked what happened to a dented car) says, "I threw this little prick into it" while gesturing at Mike Moh's "Bruce Lee." In *Escape Room*, a character said to Nik Dodani's Danny Khan: "Stop being chivalrous, no one wants to have sex with you." In *Happy Death Day 2U*, a white female sorority girl looks at Phi Vu's "Ryan Phan" and Suraj Sharma's "Samar Ghosh" (the only two Asian and Pacific Islander characters in the film) and says, "Ew, who are these people?" She also insults Samar by calling him a samosa when he looks at her cleavage.

Racist/Sexist Slurs

A total of 41.8% (*n*=33 of 79) of API characters experienced disparagement of some sort, six of which were racist/sexist slurs. When racist/sexist slurs are used merely to insult an API character without historical context, consequence or critique, the slurs can reinforce and exacerbate existent bigotry. When the slurs are said by the white heroes/leads of the movie to or about a secondary or tertiary API character, the effects are particularly damaging since audiences generally identify with leads.

Several examples of these slurs emerged in popular movies. Kumail Nanjiani's "Stu" in *Stuber* gets a one star review from an Uber rider saying "I thought these people were good at customer service," which reinforces the stereotype that says Asians are docile and servile.

In *Happy Death Day 2U,* a sorority girl says "Hey samosa, my head's the middle" after she catches him looking at her cleavage. He asks his friends if she just called him samosa and whether they think she likes samosas. The racial name-calling is played for laughs.

There are several anti-Asian racial slurs used in *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*. Cliff (played by Brad Pitt) explains that he was laughing at Bruce Lee (played by Mike Moh) because, "you're a little man with a big mouth and a big chip," calls him a "little prick," and accuses him of lying about his hands being "registered lethal weapons." Furthermore, he calls Bruce "Kato" two times, reducing him to his Asian sidekick role in the television show, *The Green Hornet*. There is no consequence for Cliff. In fact, he comes out looking like the winner in this scene. Brad Pitt even got a best supporting actor Oscar for his performance--his first acting Oscar win.

Even in romantic comedies, racial slurs and stereotypes can appear casually. In *Last Christmas*, Kate (played by Emilia Clarke) describes Santa (played by Michelle Yeoh) to Jenna (played by Ritu Arya) as being "her usual curt, Asian self." She also tells Tom (played by Henry Golding) about Santa, saying "She's Chinese, so she's, you know, got access to some really freaky outlets." Astoundingly, these anti-Asian slurs are made in the presence of the only other Asian characters--one of whom is a love interest. There is no consequence for Kate, the main white lead who is characterized as a little rough around the edges and the main lead in the film.

In *Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw*, Shaw (played by Jason Statham) calls Hobbs (played by Dwayne Johnson) "Don Ho" and insults him with "sum bitch in your native tongue." Because the entire film is centered around their rivalry and the primary lead role played by Dwayne Johnson, the slurs may be counterbalanced by character complexity and agency unlike those endured by secondary and tertiary API characters.

Tokenism and Isolation

Tokenism is an inadequate nod at diversity. When API characters are the only ones in their movies or scenes, they are typically less complex and central to the narrative. In 2019, 30% of API characters were either tokenized as the only API character in the movie or isolated by never interacting with another API character. Specifically 7 of 79 API primary and secondary characters were tokens and 24 of 79 (including the 7 tokens) were isolated. Examples of characters who were the only Asians or Pacific Islanders in their films include Ellora Torchia's "Connie" in *Midsommar* and Thalia Tran's "Raina" in *Little.* In terms of isolation, Priyanka Chopra-Jonas as "Isabella Stone" in *Isn't It Romantic* never interacts with other API characters in the film.

Another form of isolation is a lack of relationships. Twenty percent of the API primary and secondary characters in 2019 had no friendships, family nor romantic relationships. While romance is not the only way to depict humanity, it is important to note that only 8.8% (n=7 of 79) of API characters had romantic relationships/partnerships where they stayed or ended up together at the end of the movie. Three of them appear in the same movie, *Yesterday*.

Sidekick or Villain

The sidekick or the villain are categories where API characters, along with many BIPOC, are often relegated. In these narrow roles, API characters provide either support or foil to the more complex and prominent white leads. In 2019, 20% of API primary and secondary characters were either sidekicks or villains. Examples of sidekicks to white male leads include Jacob Batalon as "Ned Leeds" in *Spiderman: Far from Home* and Cliff Curtis as "Billy Freeman" in *Dr. Sleep.* Jacob Batalon as "Ned Leeds" never interacts with other API characters and Cliff Curtis as "Billy Freeman" is the only API character in the film. Masi Oka voices "Kimura" in the animated film *Spies in Disguise* who exists mostly for comedic relief. Kimura is a secondary villain to the main white male villain and has no family, friends or romantic interests.

Fully Human

Fully human API characters can take the form of having a full spectrum of relationships. Audiences know about their family, friends and romantic interests. Unfortunately, only 12.6% (*n*=10 of 79) of API characters were multidimensional when it came to relationships. Examples of characters with multi-dimensional relationships include Dwayne Johnson as "Dr. Bravestone" in *Jumanji: The Next Level*, Himesh Patel as "Jack Malik" in *Yesterday*, Choi Woo Shik as "Ki Woo" in *Parasite*, and Constance Wu as "Destiny" in *Hustlers*.

This section reveals the persistent stereotyping that faces the API community in popular films. Across a spectrum of representation, API characters are rendered invisible, silenced, stereotyped, tokenized and isolated, relegated to the sidekick or villain roles, and rarely fully humanized. For creatives, several questions exist to guide more inclusive portrayals. First, ask whether API talent is represented at or above their population percentage? If so, do these characters have more than 5 lines? Are at least two API characters shown on screen and in conversation? Are stereotypes about sexualization, as the perpetual foreigner, or in relation to violence avoided? More specifically, are API men the object of desire, shown in romantic relationships, and caring for a family's needs? Are API women given value in the storyline apart from their appearance? Finally, are API characters represented beyond just the villain or the sidekick? Do API characters have families, friends and romantic interests? Using these questions in the writing, casting, and production process can lead to presenting API characters not only as fully human and can counter decades of stereotyping and erasure on screen.

Conclusion

The purpose of this report was to examine the prevalence and portrayal of Asian and Pacific Islander characters in top-grossing films. To that end, we conducted a quantitative analysis of 1,300 top-grossing movies from 2007 to 2019 and a qualitative assessment of popular films from 2019. The results speak to the ongoing erasure, silencing, and stereotyping of the API community from top movies. Below, we review the major findings from the investigation and offer a set of solutions to the entertainment industry to improve the inclusion of the API community in film.

The API Community is Erased From Popular Storytelling

Only 5.9% of all speaking characters across 1,300 top-grossing movies were API. This percentage falls below the 7.1% of the U.S. population that identifies as API. In addition, 67.4% of films fell below the watermark for proportional representation. Neither the overall prevalence of API speaking characters

nor the percentage of films reaching proportional representation shifted meaningfully over time. In addition to these trends, more than one-third (39%) of films did not include even one API speaking character-- a percentage that jumped to more than half (59.2%) when we considered the invisibility of API girls and women. Across these metrics it is clear that the API community is erased from popular films.

The API Community is Silenced in Popular Storytelling

This report also reveals how the API community is silenced in storytelling. This included relegating nearly three-quarters of API characters in tertiary roles in the top films of 2018 and 2019 to five lines or fewer of dialogue. Additionally, the qualitative analysis of top movies from 2019 revealed how API characters are often tokenized or isolated in films as the only API character in a story or scene. The API community is also silenced by the lack of representation behind the camera. Only 3.5% of directors, 2.5% of producers, and 3.3% of casting directors were API across the 1,300 movies studied. The voices of API creators are critical to the inclusion of more API characters, as our analysis revealed. Yet, too often API creative voices are left out of storytelling-- especially those of API women.

The API Community is Stereotyped in Popular Storytelling

The analysis of top films in 2019 reveals the depth of the stereotyping that still faces the API community in storytelling. Whether depicted as perpetual foreigners, facing emasculation or hypersexualization depending on gender, and stripped of romantic and family relationships or friendships, API characters reveal the depth of creative bias on the part of those who shepherd their stories to the screen. Most dangerously, one-quarter of API primary and secondary characters in the top films of 2019 died by the conclusion of their movie, and 41.8% faced disparagement. ***In this way, films reflect the worst impulses of an environment in which hate crimes, harassment, and violence face the API community daily***.

Solutions to Under- and Misrepresentation of the API Community

The disparities facing the API community are sharp, but solutions abound. Below, we share a set of remedies drawn from previous Annenberg Inclusion Initiative studies and provide a set of recommendations developed specifically for this report.

Address Systemic Biases. We have written extensively about the ways in which the beliefs of decision-makers can influence the presence of on-screen and behind-the-camera talent from underrepresented communities. The pattern of results in this study suggests that similar systemic misbeliefs and misconceptions about the API community persist. Whether driven by the perception that audiences are uninterested in API stories-- a belief that makes little sense in a global marketplace-- or the assumption that API talent is either unqualified or unavailable, the film industry has not supported the production, marketing, or distribution of stories centered on the API community. The first step to moving forward is exposing the biases that still exist via research, a careful review of business practices, and even self-examination on the part of decision-makers who develop, acquire, and greenlight movies. Companies can review the last five years of their filmmaking slates to understand several things: how many API actors have been cast and in what types of roles; how many API directors, writers, and producers have been hired; the degree to which API unit heads and seconds are working below the line and as vendors, suppliers, and consultants; and how many films erased API creative talent completely. From there, the solutions are straightforward.

Audits related to identity are important, but must not be the only source of accountability. Companies must not assume that by hiring inclusively the women, people of color, LGBTQ creators, or those with disabilities brought into the filmmaking process will bear the sole responsibility for advocating for diversity, inclusion, and authenticity. Rather, companies must conduct an audit of the psychological profile of decision-makers within their organizations. Examining factors such as social dominance orientation, ethnic identification, implicit associations, ambivalent sexism and other factors will help companies understand who is more or less likely to value inclusion. This will also allow organizations to provide resources and support to ensure that individual biases and orientations do not thwart efforts at inclusion.

A second element related to both types of an audit is the use of criteria to facilitate decision-making. As companies assess their own biases, specific indicators should be developed that provide a clear picture of current performance, allow for goal setting, and measure progress. Criteria should be specific, measurable, intentional, and even aspirational. What follows is a set of specific suggestions for action and places to consider how to create criteria for change.

#1 Cast API Actors. The solution to invisibility and underrepresentation of the API community is both simple and yet seems to evade content creators: cast more API talent. This should begin with committing to end the epidemic of invisibility by ensuring that no film is without an API cast member in a role of any size. While we understand historical narratives or racial/ethnic storylines that focus on a particular community may not feature API actors, most films are set in present day environments and should not hide behind "story sovereignty" as an excuse for exclusion. Even those rooted in historical storylines can feature API actors without compromising their entertainment value-- Dev Patel's *David Copperfield, Hamilton,* and *Bridgerton* offer examples of this.

But the solution does not end there. Productions should aim for proportional representation on every film-- 7.1% of all cast members as a ***starting point***. Additionally, working with writers, casting directors, producers, and directors to ensure that the on screen representation they target moves beyond tertiary roles is critical. Evaluating scripts in development for inclusion of a variety of racial/ethnic groups as well as assessing those stories before they move to principal photography is critical to catching bias in the casting process.

Casting API talent is not merely a process that must take place for minor and supporting roles. Lead/co lead roles are also a place to prioritize casting API actors. In particular, centering the stories of API women and girls is an important step to take. Actors like Mindy Kaling, Kelly Marie Tran, Lana Condor, Vanessa Hudgens, Sandra Oh, Awkwafina, Gemma Chan, Constance Wu, Ming-Na Wen, Tamlyn Tomita and many others have the talent, skill, and notoriety to fill leading and co leading roles across the ecosystem of entertainment but are consistently relegated to playing a supporting presence. Not only are these talented thespians, but business savvy entertainers who should have first-look deals at the major and mini major studios and streamers in town.

#2 Move Toward Authentic Portrayals of API Characters. Script reviews are an essential component of addressing historical bias as well. Writers must consider the ways in which their words perpetuate historical stereotypes and tropes regarding the API community. Humor that is rooted in racial/ethnic slurs-- which we noted in the qualitative analysis-- must be examined closely. Laughter may reinforce problematic portrayals and obscure the harmful nature of language use. Even as satire remains something that entertainment can provide, these stories and storytelling tools should be balanced and

ensure that messages within narratives are not contributing to potential societal harm of underrepresented groups.

Another area for examination by writers, producers, executives, and directors is the ways in which gendered narratives about API characters are often told. API women are missing and when they are there, they are hypersexualized or their characterization may fall back on tired tropes related to their role in heterosexual relationships. API men are emasculated and rarely referred to as attractive in content. Storytelling has the power to showcase a multifaceted view of the API community, one in which gender and sexuality are not the defining characteristics of this group and also presented in ways which value the inherent humanity of API people.

Finally, narratives must move away from violence and disparagement of the API community. Dehumanizing portrayals that belittle, disparage, or render API characters as isolated and expendable perpetuate a dangerous view of API people. In contrast, research shows that humanization can reduce aggression.[28] Humanizing API characters begins with using care when writing dialogue, ensuring that characterizations do not stem from racial/ethnic identity alone, and recognizing how including API characters in violence can be problematic. These steps are necessary to address the concerning way in which the API community has been depicted in film. The privilege of telling stories to mass audiences also carries with it a responsibility to recognize the power such narratives can have in concert.

#3 Hire API Storytellers. Increasing API representation on screen and reducing stereotypes begins behind the camera. API storytellers were rare as directors, producers, and casting directors across top films, but this does not mean that these individuals along with API writers are not qualified and available. For example, 5.5% (*n*=132) of submissions to the U.S. Dramatic Competition section at the 2017 and 2018 Sundance Film Festival came from Asian directors, as did 8% (*n*=776) of short films, and 5.3% (*n*=47) of episodic content.[29] Yet the pipeline limits how many of these creators move toward top movies. API talent behind the scenes should be considered, given the opportunity to pitch projects, and ultimately hired.

#4 Work with API Consultants, Vendors, and Suppliers. Because productions arrive at studios in a variety of ways, it may not always be possible to add on-screen or creative talent to existing productions in central roles. Hiring APIs to tell their own stories remains the best practice. If this is not possible, script and cultural consultants can provide insight into the ways that films without API talent in critical positions may stereotype, marginalize or otherwise perpetuate harmful portrayals of the API community. Moreover, working with vendors and suppliers from the API community also supports independent businesses and diversifies the ecosystem of filmmaking-- no matter the production location.

#5 Support Nonprofits, Festivals, and the Pipeline of API Talent. While companies have little excuse to avoid hiring API talent behind and in front of the camera, bolstering the pipeline of the next generation of API storytellers is also essential. *Nonprofits* like East West Players, Visual Communications, the Center for Asian American Media, and CAPE (Coalition of Asian Pacifics in Entertainment) have long supported, networked, and mentored API talent to ensure that the pipeline of API creative voices remains strong. CAPE has also released its third iteration of the CAPE List, a set of feature screenplays chosen in partnership with the BlackList to highlight the work of API storytellers.[30] *Film festivals* in the U.S. and globally offer the opportunity to showcase the talents, skills, and visions of API filmmakers and to support their growth through lab programs, fellowships, and networking opportunities. Philanthropists and companies can financially support all of these organizations to reach API talent and their creative

work. Underwriting these groups-- and others-- offers a crucial way to build even more API talent into the existing pipeline.

Film schools are another incubator for API talent and support current and future students, by nurturing aspiring filmmakers and honing their craft. Whether through the creation of new or support for existing programs, several opportunities exist for film schools to provide specific encouragement to API students. One is the addition of API faculty and mentors. Another is to create specific opportunities for API students to showcase their work and deepen connections to industry members. Educational programs must also be mindful of the lessons they pass on related to historical stereotypes, the value placed on films about underrepresented communities, and how ingrained and systemic biases are shared with students not only in the classroom but in advising sessions, online, and at campus-related activities.

#6 Ensure Films By, For, and About the API Community Reach Audiences. While Gold House and Gold Open are an important nonprofit solution to support the API creative community and ensure that films reach API audiences, distributors have a role to play. Examining the marketing and production budgets for films with API leads/co leads is a place to begin. In a report released with ReFrame, Dr. Stacy L. Smith, Dr. Rene Weber and the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative demonstrated that films starring underrepresented men and women receive lower production and marketing costs than those with white men in leading roles.[31] Moreover, these movies were released in fewer global territories and less likely to be released in the most profitable international market: China. Addressing the deficits in spending on films with API leads/co leads is an imperative to counter economic biases and ensure that these movies reach audiences.

#7 Elevate the Voices of API Critics, Journalists and Publicists. Critical reviews and journalistic coverage of movies, actors, and other filmmakers introduce talent and stories to audiences who may be otherwise unaware of these entities. Yet, it is important to ask whether API critics, journalists, and publicists are present to function as gatekeepers and evangelists for the community. The voices of these individuals can spotlight not only problematic content but stories that offer authentic and compelling portrayals of the API community. Film publicists and marketing departments can ensure that API journalists and critics are given opportunities to cover movies-- and not only those with API characters. Additionally, journalism schools can lift up the voices of API students and provide opportunities to deepen their skill sets. Finally, both schools and companies can support the efforts of film festivals and other groups to provide crucial opportunities to work the writing muscle in a way that inserts API critics and journalists further into the cultural conversation.

#8 A-List Allyship. In the past several months, notable voices have been raised to challenge the hate facing the API community in the U.S. However, simply tweeting, sharing an instagram post, or making a statement is not enough. A-List talent across entertainment (actors, directors, producers, executives) who have been emboldened by the crisis of violence and hate facing the API community can do more. Performative allyship is out, and casting, hiring, promoting, and supporting API talent is in. As those with influence wield it on behalf of the API community, including film school deans, editors, film festival executive directors, philanthropists and foundations, the persistent barriers to change can be reduced or eliminated.

Limitations

As with all studies, a few limitations should be noted. First, we looked at popular films so there may be movies across 2007 to 2019 that were not in the 100 top films each year which may evidence different patterns of inclusion on screen and behind the camera -- particularly those in the independent space. However, given reports from other scholars, these differences are likely to be slight and not influence the overall conclusions of the report. Second, our qualitative analysis includes only those films from 2019. Looking at earlier years or other movies might provide somewhat different findings. Given that the trends observed are rooted in historical tropes and stereotypes, however, we feel confident that this sample provides insight into the biases and practices related to writing and casting API actors.

Final Statement

The Annenberg Inclusion Initiative regularly reports on the lack of inclusion in popular movies, and studies like this provide clear evidence for both concerned consumers and film executives of where progress is needed. This paper once again reveals the lack of representation and the ongoing stereotyping on screen of the API community-- a label that belies a multifaceted culture and scope of identification. Even as we write, violence and racist attacks on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders continue to be reported and witnessed across the United States. Stories that transport us and entertain us offer an important remedy to harassment and hate by presenting worlds and characters that compel, inspire, and unite us. When filmmakers and the companies that support them harness this power, they can create real impact that opens up possibilities not only for the API community but for audiences at large.

Dedication

To Katherine and Sarah Neff:
while you've affected all the work, this one's for you. - Cece

Acknowledgements

Annenberg Inclusion Initiative Research Team

Footnotes

1. Jeung, R., Yellow Horse, A., & Cayanan, C. (2021). *Stop AAPI Hate National Report 3/19/2020-3/31/21*. Retrieved May 2021 from https://stopaapihate.org/national-report-through-march-2021/. Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism CSUSB (2021). *Fact Sheet: Anti-Asian Prejudice March 2021*. Retrieved April 2021 from: https://www.csusb.edu/sites/default/files/FACT%20SHEET-%20Anti-Asian%20Hate%202020%20rev%203.21.21.pdf.

2. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (2020). *Inequality in 1,300 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBTQ & Disability from 2007 to 2019.* http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inequality_1300_popular_films_09-08-2020.pdf. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (2020). *Inclusion in the Director's Chair: Analysis of Director Gender & Race/Ethnicity Across 1,300 Top Films from 2007 to 2019.* http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inclusion-directors-chair-20200102.pdf

3. Mok, T. A. (1998). Getting the message: Media images and stereotypes and their effect on Asian Americans. *Cultural Diversity and Mental Health, 4*(3), 185–202. See also: https://www.drteresamok.com/publicationsmedia

4. A total of 114 films (8.8%) out of 1,300 featured an ensemble cast. Ten of these films (8.8%) featured an API actor within the ensemble. The ten films featured just 12 API-identified leads (2.3% of the 525) of which ten were Asian and two were Pacific Islander: Dwayne Johnson in *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* (2017) and *Jumanji: The Next Level* (2019). The Asian leads in ensembles were Kal Penn in *Epic Movie* (2007), Doona Bae in *Cloud Atlas* (2012), Dev Patel in *The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* (2015), Hailee Steinfeld in *Pitch Perfect 2* (2015), Pierre Coffin voicing three ensemble leads in *Minions* (2015), Olivia Munn in *Office Christmas Party* (2016), Hiroyuki Sanada in *Life* (2017), and Jay Chandrasekhar in *Super Troopers 2* (2018).

5. Our research team investigated the ethnic heritage and nationality (country of birth and current country of residence) of credited actors for each speaking or named API character. Across the 699 API characters (i.e., Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial/Multiethnic) 142 (20.3%) were played or voiced by actors unknown. Of the 557 discernable actors, heritage and nationality information were sourced from published interviews, publicly available information, self-reported data, or talent representation. Twenty-four actors were of non API status. Of the remaining 533 API actors, enough information across 477 API individuals was determined to categorize their background. Once all research and communication channels were exhausted, two API researchers were able to infer the background of 34 actors with a high degree of confidence. The ethnic heritages of the remaining 22 (4.1%) actors were unable to be determined. Excluding these 22 individuals with unknown ethnic heritage, analyses are out of 511 API individuals. When reporting ethnic heritage, all multiethnic individuals are counted for each group with which they identify. For current country of residence, individuals splitting their time in the U.S. and other countries were counted for all locations.

6. U.S. Census Bureau (2021). *Quick Facts*. Retrieved April 29th, 2021 from https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/LFE046218.

7. Speaking characters were evaluated for role, as measured by the importance and centrality of the character with regard to the narrative structure and purpose of the plot. Protagonists and main characters are those trying to achieve the narrative's purpose operating as the central figure across the

storyline. Characters that are recognizable, referred to by name, recurring in appearance, and/or have a somewhat significant relationship with the main character are evaluated as supporting. Lastly, characters with little importance to the plot or inconsequential were categorized as tertiary. In situations where characters underwent demographic transformations (e.g., transforming into a supernatural entity or aging upward/downward) role would be consistently applied across all iterations of the character.

8. All subtitled speech per character was captured in screenshots of the 2D text superimposed on screen. Due to the variability in presentation of subtitled text (e.g., size, spacing, formatting), each screenshot of sequentially occurring strings of text constituted a 'line' for this study. Films were assigned to research assistants who watched and gathered evidence per character until 6 lines were presented or the film ended. All evidence was quality checked by a second research assistant and adjusted if needed. When characters' dialogue was not subtitled (e.g., background speech, secondary language), inferences were made on the number of sentences spoken by one member of the research team and confirmed by a second.

9. See Footnote 5 for the methodological approach of 'country of birth' and 'current country of residence'. Country of birth was indeterminate for 59 of the known API actors (11.1% of 533) and for one actor born in Russia, continent of birth was unknown. Additionally, we were unable to confirm the current country of residence for 52 API actors (9.8%). Given these amounts, we suggest that findings should be interpreted with caution.

10. See Smith, S.L., Choueiti, M., Pieper, K., Yao, K., Case, A., & Choi, A. (2019). *Inequality in 1,200 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT & Disability from 2007 to 2018*. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inequality-report-2019-09-03.pdf. Mok, T. A. (1998). Getting the message: Media images and stereotypes and their effect on Asian Americans. *Cultural Diversity and Mental Health, 4*(3), 185–202. See also: https://www.drteresamok.com/publicationsmedia

11. The relational status of each character captured whether the character was depicted in a committed romantic relationship for the majority of the plot. Children evaluated as 12 years old or younger were not applicable for this measure nor for parental status. Parental status measured the presence of caregiving and/or parentage of children by each character for the majority of the plot. For both of these measures, the option 'can't tell' was reserved when not enough information was presented on screen to render a decision. See Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (2020). *Inequality in 1,300 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBTQ & Disability from 2007 to 2019.* http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inequality_1300_popular_films_09-08-2020.pdf. See Smith, S.L., Choueiti, M., Pieper, K., Yao, K., Case, A., & Choi, A. (2019). *Inequality in 1,200 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT & Disability from 2007 to 2018.* Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inequality-report-2019-09-03.pdf.

12. The presence or absence of some amount of exposed skin from the mid chest to high upper thigh area was evaluated for each character with a human-like physique. Across the same area, the wearing of tight, alluring, or limited coverings worn with the purpose to exaggerate or accentuate curves and angles of the body was measured. For both of these measures, animals were not evaluated nor included in any analyses and bodies of characters not visible to the viewer were inputted as 'can't tell' and also excluded. Physical attractiveness was evaluated not by the interpretation of researchers, but by

references to or about the character in question by other characters within the narrative. See Smith, S.L., Choueiti, M., Pieper, K., Yao, K., Case, A., & Choi, A. (2019). I*nequality in 1,200 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT & Disability from 2007 to 2018*. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inequality-report-2019-09-03.pdf.

13. Apparent sexuality was measured for each speaking character based on all relevant information depicted across the plot. Dialogue spoken about attraction, sexual activity, and/or romantic partnerships, as well as self- or other-disclosed identification provided evidence to evaluate characters as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or none of the above. Characters portrayed as gender non-conforming as well as characters that identified as transgender were included as part of the LGBTQ suite of measures. See Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (2020). *Inequality in 1,300 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBTQ & Disability from 2007 to 2019.* http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inequality_1300_popular_films_09-08-2020.pdf.

14. Characters were scrutinized for the presence of any communicative, cognitive, or physical disability. Evaluating all evidence across the plot, characters were determined to have a disability using a modified version of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) https://www.ada.gov/pubs/adastatute08.htm. A disability was present if a character a) sustained a condition rooted in the form, function, or structure of their mind and/or body and b) any limitation, difficulty, interference, or non-functioning related to the condition was manifest for c) longer than six months. See Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (2020). *Inequality in 1,300 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBTQ & Disability from 2007 to 2019*. http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inequality_1300_popular_films_09-08-2020.pdf.

15. Using data collected for previous Annenberg Inclusion Initiative studies, directors, producers, and casting directors were evaluated for their API status. Credits per film were gathered from IMDbPro and individuals were researched for their gender and racial/ethnic identification using industry databases (Variety insight, Studio System) and methodology similar to the above (see footnote 6). Co-directors were included as directors and only those with the exclusive 'Producer' title (or 'Produced by') were included in any producer analyses. Casting directors were derived from IMDbPro though in cases where no individual was credited, researchers examined the opening and ending film credits to confirm none was mentioned as part of the crew. See Smith, S.L., Choueiti, M., Case, A., Pieper, K.M., Clark, H., Hernandez, K.M., Martinez, J., Lopez, B., & Mota, M. (2019). *Latinos in Film: Erasure On Screen & Behind the Camera Across 1,200 Popular Movies*. USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-study-latinos-in-film-2019.pdf.

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17. See footnote 14 for data collection related to 'Producers'. Across the 3,964 'Producers' credited for 1,300 top-grossing films, 12 were unable to be determined for racial/ethnic identity. These credits were excluded from analyses.

18. For casting directors, see footnote 14 for data collection methodology. Across 1,300 films 15 movies did not credit a casting director. The racial/ethnic identity for 8 of the 2,021 credited casting directors was not determined. These films and casting directors were not included in the subsequent analyses.

19. The senior executive leadership for each film and streaming company was collected from the company's website, Variety Insight, and press releases. The heads of subsidiary studios listed on company sites were included in the leadership roster per company. Using previous Annenberg Inclusion Initiative research, direct communication, and online databases, one of the research team members gathered gender and race/ethnicity data for each executive. Those running the studio were designated as 'Chair-level' executives. The remaining titles were categorized amongst three tiers of leadership as noted except in two cases due to differences in corporate structure: Amazon & Netflix. Netflix executives at the VP level were included as part of the EVP/SVP executives. For Amazon, heads of departments were also reported at the EVP/SVP, while those they report to were included at the President/Chief tier. Two out of the 202 executives were inferred as non API based on their family name.

Attempts were made to confirm all executives across the companies. Due to non-response from companies prior to publication, some information in this analysis is solely drawn from online databases and company websites. Because each film studio/company is structured differently, there may be executives at these companies who should be included in the analysis (according to how the studio views executive management teams) but who are not listed as such on their website or in industry databases. Including additional executives might result in slight fluctuations in the data as reported.

Unlike the executive analysis, which includes current executives at the 8 companies, our examination of distributor data is historical and thus examines films by Walt Disney Studios and 20th Century separately. As a result, we report results across a total of 9 companies.

20. Qualitative data for 2019 Top Grossing films was collected through a questionnaire written by the study authors. Questions focused on various indicators related to API stereotypes. Two or more research assistants were tasked to collect qualitative data independently for each 2019 film that presented API primary and secondary characters. After the initial data has been aggregated, each film went through a discussion phase to finalize the data for analysis.

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