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Cultural Sensitivity in Visual Communication

Yih-Chi Wang

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Cultural Sensitivity in Visual Communication

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of The College of Imaging Arts and Sciences

In Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Graduate Graphic Design Program
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April 23, 2003
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PROJECT TITLE

Cultural Sensitivity in Visual Communication

PROJECT DEFINITION

Today America is evolving into a multicultural state where its multi-ethnic groups exchange and experience the richness of each other's culture. Ethnic groups are projected to comprise 48% of the population of the United States by the year 2050. The true American culture is a collection of traditions, values, and beliefs shaped and formed by all the cultures living in it. While cultural diversity could be one of the greatest strengths of American culture, racism and prejudice persist and create barriers among people of different ethnicities.

Visual communicators residing in this multicultural environment should exercise judiciously the influence they possess in conveying powerful messages through visual forms. The absence of diligent research may result in the misuse of cultural elements and the use of stereotypes, and consequently offend the target audience.

To communicate successfully, it would be prudent for designers to try to understand and respect the diversity of tastes, values, fears, needs, desires and histories that make up the cultures and subcultures of ethnic groups in America.

In many areas of study (e.g. social work, psychology and public policy), increased effort is evident in understanding the cultures of ethnic groups in America. Yet in the area of design, there has not been enough literature to provide a structure for understanding ethnic culture and, at the same time, to demonstrate its ties to visual communication. Generalization and over-simplification of ethnic groups and their sub-groups are not uncommon in the media. This phenomena can be attributed to the lack of education and motivation to learn about other cultures.

This thesis is a new effort to help promote multicultural awareness and raise cultural sensitivity in visual communication. The author will demonstrate their importance by examining the basis of culture and the representation of a specific ethnic group (Chinese-Americans) in the recent history of the United States.

Part I – Cultural information about Chinese Americans

Using the model of culture revised by the author and Professor Paul Grebinger based on Don Locke's model in Increasing Multicultural Understanding, the thesis provides information about Chinese Americans by looking at the elements from which their culture is constructed and the factors that shape their ethnic experience.

Part II – Analysis of representations and self-representations of Asian/Chinese Americans in the printed media

This section examines the use of cultural elements in visual communication and

analyzes the portrayal of Chinese Americans appearing in the printed media. This thesis provides an information base for a specific culture and an analytical framework for examining how a specific ethnic group is represented through time. This thesis also aims to inform and educate visual communicators, heighten their sensitivity toward cultures of ethnic groups, and ultimately influence the conceptualization process of their design work. Its aspiration is that greater sensitivity in media will help foster a reduction of barriers and stereotypes, and promote inclusiveness for all cultures in an ethnically-diverse American landscape.

DELIMITATION

Although the title of this thesis is rather broad, its study focuses primarily on the culture of Chinese Americans as an example to demonstrate how the thesis could be applied to gain understanding of an ethnic group. Even though the Chinese American community is very diverse in geographical and social backgrounds, it shares similar culture values. This study and accompanying research focus on the Chinese American experiences while living in America, whether they were born here in the United States or outside of America.

The study is not about Chinese living in their motherlands of Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Singapore. However, the historical and cultural connections and ties between Chinese Americans and their origins cannot be denied. The information provided here is meant to be general enough to apply to most Chinese American families. It should be noted that over-generalizations are not intended by the author. The analysis of the representations of Chinese Americans covers examples from the turn of the twentieth century to the present.

- **Geographical constraints**: Research was conducted at institutions located in New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC in the United States.
- **Sources**: Institutions, organizations, and professionals were selected based on their focus on ethnic and cultural studies. The Balch Institute of Ethnic Studies, and The Archive Center at the National Museum of American History were chosen because their collections (especially advertising collections) offer close links between ethnicity and visual communication. The Asian/American Center at Queens College was chosen because of its concentration on the Asian-American experience in the local communities. The Chinatown History Museum was selected because it stands as a symbolic landmark for Chinese American history and experience of immigration.

ANTECEDENTS

The author first came to the United States in 1990 as a foreign student and has now become a permanent resident of this country. In the eleven years of her residence
here, the author underwent the following stages:
1) cultural shock (the values and beliefs of the new culture challenge the old)
2) crisis (the identity crisis between her own culture and the new American culture)
3) adjustment (the understanding and accepting of American culture) and
4) Integration (the two cultures are integrated and therefore coexist and
   the individual becomes an integrated member of the society)

During her life here as a new immigrant, she had the opportunity to experience
firsthand the conflict, juxtaposition, and interchange of these two cultures. In
addition to being blessed with such growth on a personal level, she has developed
a deep interest in the role culture plays in our lives. In this thesis, the author has
researched through the area of visual communication with this interest in mind, and
believes that greater effort could be made to address the absence of public education
about ethnic groups in America. To the author, visual communication is closely tied
to the society we live in. It should reflect, react, and above all, interact with the
people living in that society.

**PRECEDENTS**

**Prisoners of the Image**/AIGA Journal of Graphic Design

An article in the AIGA Journal of Graphic Design in 1994 inspired this thesis
project: *Prisoners of the Image*, written by Native-American designer Michael
Gray. Mr. Gray criticizes the abuse of Native-American images in visual
communication and how ignorance on the part of some designers and art directors
has damaged the perception of the public toward Native Americans.

As both a designer and an American Indian, Mr. Gray expressed his concern
about the misrepresentation of American Indians while perusing some major design
publications. Mr. Gray believes that “designers, art directors, illustrators and artists
know that they have the ability to affect and shape the opinions of their audiences.”
He also questioned the amount of research put into certain design solutions.

Mr. Gray expressed his outrage: “...I object to the use and misuse of American Indian
symbolism and imagery with no consideration given to its offensive or tasteless
nature.” Mr. Gray believes if designers/art directors did their homework, efforts from
research would result in different outcomes. “Designers must begin to take the high
road, avoid using images and symbols just for their aesthetic value, and realize that
the images portrayed represent real people.” His recommendation for the designer is
to “research the image, especially if it attempts to use a particular group of people.
Keep in mind that Indians exist today, not just in the past. Actively seek minority
representation at the local and national level of AIGA.”

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7ibid., 5.
8ibid., 5.
9ibid., 4.
Culture and the Ad: Exploring Otherness in the World of Advertising
by William M. O'Barr

Mr. Gray's concerns can be traced back in the history of advertising in the U.S. The dominant culture's depiction of minority groups as the primitive 'other' was well circulated through media. Cultural anthropologist William M. O'Barr demonstrates how advertisements had a history of repeating and reconstructing the stereotypes of the primitiveness and foreignness of certain ethnic groups.

In his book, Culture and the Ad: Exploring Otherness in the World of Advertising, Mr. O'Barr constructs a hypothetical exhibition called "An Exposition of Twentieth Century Print Advertisements: Depictions of African Americans." In this 'exhibition', he demonstrates the progression of African Americans being represented as the different, divergent, and as 'other' in the print ads of the early to the mid 20th century. After the 1960s, the advertising industry made an effort to be more inclusive and, as a result, certain stereotypes of African Americans no longer appeared in the media. For example, Mr. O'Barr pointed out that it is less common to see African Americans being portrayed in service positions in the later ads. Nevertheless, he suspects a new kind of stereotype is emerging which depicts African Americans primarily as sports figures and musicians. Even though there have been improvements, Mr. O'Barr argues that it does not necessarily mean that racism ceases to be perpetrated in contemporary American advertising.

A more current example is the "Find Your Voice" Advertising Campaign from Virginia Slims in 1999. The print campaign features four ethnic groups—Latin American, Caucasian, African American, and Asian. Each print ad portrays a modern independent woman with confidence except for the Asian woman. As shown in the illustration to the left, the Asian woman was the only one being portrayed as the "other", still as an exotic, foreign image of the Asian stereotype. She does not appear to live in the current time like the other three women in the campaign. The message of the ad does not seem to be consistent with the image of this Asian woman: "The mysterious power of my voice endures. My essence glows. My heart dances. My voice sings. The eyes are the messengers of the soul, but the voice reveals the spirit! Virginia Slims, Find Your Voice." If the campaign targets modern women whose confidence lives in their true voices as people, then the portrayal of the Asian woman does not fit into the campaign. She was not portrayed as just another independent woman who has her own mind. She seems like she was put into this modern world on a stage, not in the real life.

Inclusion by Design (Inclusive Design Initiative)/I.D. MAGAZINE

In the wake of the L.A. Riots in 1993, I.D. Magazine fears that America is losing its greatest strength—its diversity. I.D. fears that government is not including the emerging population of the diverse ethnic groups as part America's social fabric.

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I.D. proposes both the design community and the government agencies take on the responsibility of de-alienating the minority to promote greater participation of these groups in our society. I.D. believes that design can help the government capitalize on diversity and turn it from a social problem into an economic and civic success story for America. I.D. proposes a new “Inclusive Design Initiative” to the government for this challenge:

1) Develop and promote a universal design initiative: Implement universal design standards in all government public information and building projects
2) Visualize policy: graphics are a simple but powerful tool to communicate complex ideas directly to people
3) Revolutionize government’s tools of participation: have information designers redesign the tools of participation in government
4) Simplify the procurement process: encourage participation by minority or women-owned firms by standardizing application forms
5) Build monuments to inclusion: build accessible, inclusive design of the public arena to celebrate the richness of our diversity5

Multiculturalism/Metropolis Magazine

“Multiculturalism” is a tribute from the design magazine Metropolis to the emerging multicultural United States of America and its relations to the designers living in this society. The main article was contributed by Professor Barry M. Katz who teaches history and philosophy of design at the California College of the Arts and Crafts in San Francisco.

Mr. Katz stated, as the global village becomes a reality in the U.S., designers are being confronted with the challenges of integrating the realm in which the designer operates, with all of its inherited memories, tastes, values, obsessions, and prejudices, and the realm within which the designed artifact will take up residence and establish an independent existence. Using Euro-Disney as an example, the article explains that by not taking native cultures into consideration, this American import faced not only local resistance, but also financial losses.

Mr. Katz believes that, although the reality of multiculturalism is very old, the discourse of multiculturalism is very new. It suggests that “…designers, no less than other professionals, are bound to respect the diversity of tastes, values, fears, needs, desires, histories, and all else that make up the cultures and subcultures of the world. That the membranes separating the cultures of today’s world have grown increasingly permeable, rendering the tasks of the designers increasingly complex, seems undeniable.”

Mr. Katz’s article was accompanied by a series of other articles that identify

5Ibid.

"Rapidly increasing global interdependence has made it more and more clear that neither "we" nor "they" are neatly bounded and homogenous as once seemed to be the case... All of us inhabit an interdependent late-twentieth-century world marked by borrowing and lending across porous national and cultural boundaries that are saturated with inequality, power, and domination."

Renato Rosaldo


...culturally significant objects from around the world. Mr. Katz explains that "an object is never a wholly self-contained thing in itself, but gives and takes its meaning within a particular human, that is to say, its cultural context." The second part of the article is an informal survey for the "real-world" designers with diverse ethnicity in an effort to discover whether they are prepared to face the challenges of living and working in multicultural times. *Metropolis* believes that designers are the people who give physical form to the aspirations of a culture and thus they have the power to reshape the world in which they work. They have interviewed designers with different specialties who live in geographically diverse areas.

**Typecast: Meaning, Culture, and Identity in the Alphabet Omelet (Which Came First?) / Lift and Separate: Graphic Design and the "Vernacular"** from The Herb Lubalin Study Center of Design and Typography

In this article, Sojin Kim and Somi Kim examine the cultural connotations behind the letterforms with circulating stereotypes and cultural references in the contemporary landscape of signage in Los Angeles.

Early use of culturally thematic letterforms originated from the mid- to late-nineteenth century when a number of alphabets were designed and named to present various "others" on the basis of stereotypical, non-Western ornamental devices from non-roman alphabets. For example, the font "Japanese" mimics the look of calligraphic brush strokes of Asian writing. While these alphabets are supposed to represent a certain culture, they speak more of the departure from Western tradition than an appropriation of specific cultural sources. However, these typographic forms were not initially directed toward their cultural sources. Instead they symbolized the homogenized and familiar representations of foreign cultures.

This means of referring to other cultures persists today. As the two authors suggested, such commercial signage reflects not only the proprietor's self-conception but also his or her perception of customer expectation and association. Using such cultural representation demonstrates an awareness of the circulating conventions and stereotypes that are familiar to both the business owners and their customers. As the need for multi-lingual information increases, the authors urge designers to examine and question circulating patterns of cultural representation in all media.

**Conclusion**

This thesis provides a model of culture, one that not only includes an overview but also allows visual communicators to examine a specific culture in various essential aspects. Ultimately it engenders greater insight regarding the people brought up in that culture. The thesis also examines how a particular ethnic

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Introduction

Group is represented in the media in the U.S.—whether the group was portrayed realistically or their portrayal was a projection of how designers, art directors, even the general public perceived them. This method could also be applied to examine any other ethnic group. In short, this thesis is a new effort in raising levels of multicultural awareness and social responsibility in visual communicators. It also attempts to provide a solution to cultural insensitivity by presenting a model to foster understanding about ethnic groups in America.
The project began with an idea of promoting multicultural awareness in visual communication. The target audience would be visual communicators in the culturally diverse America. The thesis was intended to be presented in a multimedia format on a CD-ROM but later changed to an information guidebook. As previously mentioned, this thesis intends to provide a model of culture and an analysis of the representation of specific ethnic groups in the U.S. The thesis could be beneficial for art directors, copywriters designers, market researchers, strategic planners, and educators.

The author expressed an interest in this subject matter in her early essay presented to Professor Beardslee. Although the concept was a propitious beginning, the author had trouble finding ways to incorporate her personal interest in cultural anthropology with design. Outlined below was her brainstorming results with Professor Beardslee.

1. **Culture as Identification and Communication**
   Professor Beardslee pointed out that there are many ways of looking at culture and one way of thinking about identification is individual versus mass.

2. **Design Conventions in Multicultural Design as a communication of prejudices or universality?**
   Since this was not clearly defined, Professor Beardslee suggested that it might be helpful to look at visual samples from these perspectives: cognition, culture, exposure, perception, reception and reflection.

3. **The relationship between typography and language in relation to culture**
   Professor Beardslee guided the author to focus on the influences of culture/language/conventions in design.

4. **The concept of time in different cultures**
   The author eliminated this part since it lacked clarity and did not seem relevant to the core of the thesis.

After exchanging ideas with Professor Beardslee at the brainstorming session, the thesis was narrowed down to two main themes: "Culture" and "Prejudice in Visual Communication".

**CULTURE**

Based on the subject matter of the thesis, Professor Beardslee suggested to the author that she enlist Professor Paul Grebinger, an anthropologist at RIT, for her thesis committee. Professor Grebinger enlightened the author on the subject of anthropology and suggested areas where the author could explore further the contemporary study of multiculturalism.
The first step of research involved collecting writings on cultural anthropology to establish a solid understanding about the definition of culture and how it influences every aspect of our lives.

As defined by social anthropologist Robert E. Murphy, culture is an integrated system of meanings, values, and standards. The various parts of culture are adjusted to each other, make sense in terms of one another, and together form a coherent and continuous design for living. This provides people with a more consistent view of life and of the human position in the order of things.

Professor Grebinger introduced the two fundamental approaches of studying culture: **emic** and **etic**. As defined by anthropologist James Lett: “The goal of anthropological inquiry is to comprehend the human condition. To understand fully the relationship between the particular and the general, we must have full knowledge of both.”

The particular here refers to “emic” and the general here “etic.” Lett identifies the distinction between emic and etic as parallel to the distinction between the insider and the outsider, the particular and the universal, and the relative and the absolute.

An **emic**, also known as the “insider’s view” and “actor-oriented” perspective, investigates the way natives think and perceive the world. Lett gives us the definition of emic: “Emic constructs are accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the native members of the culture whose beliefs and behaviors are being studied. An emic construct is thus correctly termed emic if and only if it is in accord with the epistemological principles deemed appropriate by the insider’s culture.” Since this knowledge “can be gained either through elicitation or through inference from observation”, anthropologist Kenneth L. Pike believes that “the outsider can learn to act like an insider.”

An **etic**, known as “the outsider’s view” and “observer-oriented” perspective, focuses on the objective and comprehensive viewpoint of the observer. In anthropology, this represents the view of the anthropologist, who has to rise above his or her own en-cultured self to provide complete objectivity. To gain a comprehensive picture of a culture, the anthropologist must combine emic and etic strategies. Native statements, perceptions and opinions help anthropologists understand how culture works. As defined by Lett: “Etic constructs are accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the community of scientific observers. An etic construct is thus correctly termed etic if and only if it is in accord with the epistemological principles deemed appropriate by science; in other words, any and all etic constructs must be precise, accurate, logical, comprehensive, replicable, falsifiable, and observer-independent.” Since it’s a matter of logical and empirical analysis, Pike believes that “the insider can learn to analyze like an outsider.”

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"Ibid., 130.

"Ibid.

"Ibid., 131.
“Cultures, like species, can be enriched and strengthened by contact with outside influences. If culture is part of the problem, it is also our key to a solution. For it is through education, that vital element of culture, that we can begin to combat the rise of intolerance.”

—Federico Mayor
from The Multicultural Planet

“Different races maintain diversity, yet we have to turn diversity into advantage and transcend the limits of individual culture.”

—Edward T. Hall

These perspectives contribute to the thesis because “in a multicultural world...the discipline of anthropology also plays a vital role as an international culture broker, and cultural translation requires a detailed knowledge of emics. Emic knowledge of various cultures gives us, in addition, a valuable appreciation of the extent of human creativity and the range of human possibility.”

In addition to emic and etic, Professor Grebinger introduced the author to the concepts of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. Ethnocentrism is the tendency to view one’s own culture as best and to judge the behavior and beliefs of culturally different people by one’s own standards. In other words, ethnocentrism is based on the assumption that one’s own culture is the center of the universe and that everything should measure against it.

Cultural relativism is the position that the values and standards of cultures differ and deserve respect. Extreme relativism argues that cultures should be judged solely by their own standards. The principle of cultural relativism is that values and aesthetic criteria are understandable in their own terms, relative to their own cultures.

Ethnocentrism and cultural relativism are important to this thesis because it is essential to understand a culture within its context. One culture cannot be judged by standards derived from another culture. As Mr. Kim suggests in his article “Typecast: Meaning, Culture, and Identity in the Alphabet Omelet (Which Came First?)” (see p. 10), designers living in today’s multicultural America should exercise the necessity of “seeing others against a background of oneself, and oneself against a background of others,” a “bifocality” view that he adopted from anthropologist Michael M. J. Fischer.

MULTICULTURALISM

The second stage of research involved collecting literature about multiculturalism. This subject is written about from political, social, psychological, and ethnic points of view. In spite of each unique focus in these different areas, they all attempt to foster understanding between cultures.

As indicated by Federico Mayor, former Director of UNESCO, multiculturalism existed long before we gave it a name. Culture has been exchanged between civilizations through the ages. In the late 20th century, global upheavals have broken down old barriers to movement. People can travel freely and move to another side of the world. Information is being freely exchanged because of tremendous advances in communications technology. We are living in a new multicultural planet. While cultural differences can become battle lines for open conflicts such as the L.A. riots, this diversity in culture can also be a source of enrichment. When it comes to multiculturalism, we must examine the balance between diversity and unity. The challenge we face is how to preserve our own unique cultural identity while we try to integrate into a harmonious whole.

22Ibid.
Amy Gutmann, director of the University Center for Human Values at Princeton University, states that “Multicultural societies and communities that stand for the freedom and equality of all people rest upon mutual respect for reasonable intellectual, political, and cultural differences. Mutual respect requires a widespread willingness and ability to articulate our disagreements, to defend them before people with whom we disagree, to discern the difference between respectable and disrespectful disagreement, and to be open to changing our own minds when faced with well-reasoned criticism. The moral promise of multiculturalism depends on the exercise of these deliberative virtues.”

### Multiculturalism in America

In the book *The Multicultural Planet: The Report of a UNESCO International Expert Group*, Mr. Laszlo explained the history of multiculturalism in the United States: “Given its colonial origins, North America constituted a virtual subculture from the outset. North America, and the world in general, is largely made up of ‘societies of subcultures.’ Therefore one must immediately acknowledge the origins and the complex meld of subcultures when describing the culture of North Americans.”

Immigrants from different parts of Europe came to the ‘New World’ to seek their fortunes and to live in ‘general equality of condition’. Here in America, the settlers created a way of life distinct from that in Western Europe. They were creating new points of reference and new modes of human cohesion. The U.S. was a melting pot in which people from diverse backgrounds acquired behaviors, styles, morals and motivations that were startlingly alike.

In spite of advances in civil rights, as Laszlo argues in his book, *The Multicultural Planet*, racial problems still persist in today’s America. The recent influx of large numbers of Spanish-speaking people and migrants from South-East Asia, adds another dimension to the black-white racial problem. Laszlo indicates that “Canada started with a deep ethnic cleavage that seems to be attenuating itself, while the United States rapidly assimilated early migrants into a much greater homogeneity but is now facing growing ethnic divergence.” While the resurgence of ‘ethnicity’ reasserted confidence for minority groups, the spin-off of such phenomena can promote a greater fragmentation of society. As described in Laszlo’s book: “The current trends towards additional class-segmentation are creating barriers to localized, inter-cultural mixing, resulting in the loss of the United States’ theoretically democratic, class-less society.” But Laszlo believes that there are still opportunities in the American cultural life for the public to react as one. He mentioned such examples as John F. Kennedy’s funeral, ceremonies at the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial site in Washington DC and the 200th anniversary of the Statue of Liberty. Certainly the public response to the 9/11 tragedy could be another example.

Laszlo urges educators to “teach today’s children not only the skills to function within their own society, as in the past, but also skills enabling them to sift and

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4Ibid.

5Ibid.

6Ibid. 38

7Ibid.

8Ibid.
analyze a torrent of information coming from other societies." He adds "we must give new generations the courage to interact with other cultures and other generations. We must teach them not only to remember the past but above all to keep in mind the actions taken in the here and now from the conditions -- the history -- on which future generations will have to build."\textsuperscript{11}

In the October 1994 issue of \textit{Metropolis} featuring "Multiculturalism", Susan S. Szenasy conducted phone interviews with designers who live in geographically diverse areas in the U.S. Ms. Szenasy wanted to find out how designers respond to people's growing desire to participate in the universal, while clinging to the abiding security of the local.\textsuperscript{12} She stated that "Designers should know something about the issues that are reshaping the world in which they work. After all, they are the people among us who give physical form to the aspirations of a culture. And if we're living in multicultural times -- as everything from new TV commercials to revisionist history books seems to indicate -- are our form-givers prepared to respond to the challenge? Are they aware of the complex set of beliefs that influence taste?"\textsuperscript{13} The responses from the designers she interviewed gave us a blueprint of the inter-connection between the design industry and society. David Sterning, a New York designer responded to Ms. Szenasy's request, "Everywhere, increasing numbers of diverse individuals are saying, 'I want to be part of the world. I want to be part of a smaller group'. Millions of people are experiencing this inner conflict."\textsuperscript{14} In today's diverse ethnic map of America, we need to strive for unity by respecting the culture of others as our own. And what better way to gain that understanding by going back to the basics. Examining the essential elements of culture and understanding the ways that each unique culture is shaped can enhance our multicultural awareness.

The author of this thesis wanted to demonstrate the importance of cultural understanding in the multicultural America that we live in today. She believed that the above cannot be achieved without looking at the individual elements of culture which collectively, represent the wholeness of a Culture. Therefore she looked for ways to present cultural elements that are easy for users to follow and understand.

\textbf{Model of Culture}

In \textit{Increasing Multicultural Understanding}, author Don Locke developed a model which consists of the essential elements of culture through which any culture can be analyzed.

\textbf{Locke's Model}

Locke's model is designed to "include all the elements of personal awareness and information necessary for a person to engage in positive and productive relationships

\textsuperscript{11}Mayor, Federico, foreword to \textit{The Multicultural Planet} by Ervin Laszlo (Oxford, England: One World, 1993), x.


\textsuperscript{13}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.
Research with culturally diverse individuals or groups. Locke's model provides a solid, sound foundation for exploring ethnic differences. It is comprehensive and succinct to be useful in examining the cultural patterns, social relationships, and experiences of culturally diverse individuals and groups. The model contains three parts: self-awareness, global influences, dominant culture and cultural differences.

Locke believes it's essential to know one's own culture. Knowing one's own personal bias, values and interests will enhance one's sensitivity and respect toward other cultures. Locke's model starts from the awareness of self as the first stop to understanding others. With self-awareness as a basis, the culturally sensitive individual must be cognizant of world events and how members of various cultures translate those events into personal meaning. To gain a more complete picture of an individual's worldview, Locke thinks the knowledge of the culture of the country of origin of the individual will help.

Locke's model uses the general culture of United States as the backdrop of understanding culturally diverse individuals. These elements of the culture are sociopolitical factors, the culture's history of oppression, the experience of prejudice and racism, poverty within the culture, influence of language and the arts, influence of religious practices, child-rearing practices, family role and structure, values and attitudes, and the degree of opposition to acculturation. Immigrants to the United States will be influenced under the dominant culture while bringing with them their own set of traditions and values. For the new immigrants, these two sets of factors can work against or together to shape their experience. Locke thinks that "Americanization" process is designed to blend the many ethnic ingredients so that one nationality is produced.

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Global Influence

Culture

[Diagram showing various components of global influence and cultural understanding]

Locke's Model for Multicultural Understanding

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(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.
Revised Model for Multicultural Understanding

To better apply this model to the core of the thesis, anthropologist Paul Grebinger helped the author reorganize it into two parts. The first part consists of the **subsystems of culture**, including Family Structure, Socio-political Factors, Religious Practice, Language and the Arts, and Cultural Values and Attitudes. The second part examines the **factors that shape the ethnic experience** in society including Acculturation, Concept of Poverty, History of Oppression, Racism and Prejudice and Socialization. The revised model provides a systematic way in which to engender a greater understanding of culture.

In this thesis, although only the Chinese American culture is explored based on this model, readers can easily apply the model to any culture and gain a better understanding of a specific ethnic group. It should be noted that the information compiled here is general in nature. The author does not intend to oversimplify Chinese American culture nor to make assumptions about any subgroups of Chinese American cultural values and attitudes.
Chinese American Culture

Extensive research on Chinese American Culture was required because this thesis was intended to be used as an informational guidebook. Using the revised model of culture, the author gathered the following information that would later fit into the Model for Multicultural Understanding:

1) factors that shape the ethnic experience (acculturation, concept of poverty, history of oppression, racism and prejudice and socialization)

2) subsystems of culture (culture values and attitudes, family structure, language and the arts, religious practice and socio-political factors)

The major sources of the information were the Wallace Memorial Library at RIT and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. (Library of Congress, books cataloged since 1968, subjects searched included but was not limited to Asian Americans, Chinese Americans, Chinese American Women)

The author gathered information on Chinese Americans from numerous perspectives to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. The history of immigration, the psychological review of the mental health of ethnic groups, Chinese kinship systems, Asian American families and the Asian American experience were all explored.

In addition to books, journals were considered a current source. The following list of journals covers a broad range. Sample articles from these journals discussed everything from the in-group preference among Chinese American students to the social anxiety in Chinese American women.

1. Journal of Counseling Psychology
2. Journal of Psychology
3. Journal of Comparative Family Studies
4. International Journal of Intercultural Relations
5. International Journal of Group Tensions
6. Amerasia Journal
7. Journal of Social Issues
8. Personnel and Guidance Journal

The research included the following areas:

Statistics

The author started the research by examining “Statistical Record of Asian Americans” which provided insight into Asian Americans and Asian Canadians. This source offered information from the Asian population in the U.S. and the major metropolitan areas of Asian residents, to the languages each different Asian group speaks at home. The 1991 Census of Population on Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States provided similar information.

36Susan B. Gall and Timothy L. Gall, ed., Statistical Records of Asian Americans, Gale Research Inc.
37U.S. Census 991.
Behavioral Studies

In order to examine how Chinese Americans are represented in our society, it is essential to understand the current social status of Chinese Americans. A good source that the author found on C.A. studies was *The American Experience: Papers from the Second National Chinese American Study.* This extensive study included topics like "the current social and economic status of Chinese American women," "The portrayal of Chinese in Anglo-American literature," "The portrayal of Chinese Americans in mass media" and "Cantonese artifacts, Chinoiserie, and the formation of an early American image of the Chinese." It also had short essays on the life of C.A. in different geographical areas of the U.S.

The author also gathered articles from *The Journal of Psychology, and The Journal of Social Psychology, Sex Roles, Social Problems.* These journals raised the social issues that minorities face today. Sample articles found to be relevant were "Assertiveness and Social Anxiety in Chinese-American Woman", "Differential Fertility Within an Ethnic Minority: The Effect of 'Trying Harder' among Chinese-American Women," and "In-group Preference and Homogeneity Among African American and Chinese American Students."

Chinese American Families

The author discovered that even back in 1974, Random House Publishing had the foresight to initiate a series of books called *Ethnic Groups in Comparative Perspective.* As Peter I. Rose, the general editor at that time put it: "Those who have and use such an imagination (C. Wright Mills called it "the sociological imagination") must possess a willingness to challenge the old homilies, to get away from stereotypes and deal with real people, and to relate that which is revealed with both detachment and compassion." Seven books were published under this vision: *Italian Americans, White Southerners, Japanese Americans, America's Jews, New Minorities, Old Conflicts, Mexican Americans,* and *Chinese Americans.*

In addition to books devoted to Chinese American study, a number of essays on Chinese American families were found in books on the subject of minority families in America. The author found this a very positive sign for our society. From educators to social workers, there are growing concerns about minority families. It is evident by the extensive writing found in this area that our society has, indeed, pursued research and studied issues that concern minority families.

Reflecting a more inclusive world of children's literature is the book *A World of My Own: City Within a City—How Kids Live in New York's Chinatown.* In *City Within a City,* author Kathleen Krull tells how two young Chinese immigrants cope with their school and family lives in their newly adopted country. The concept of this series encourages kids in America to have a more open mind and helps them understand their minority classmates.

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Racism and prejudice, and history of oppression

The author began the research by reading The Persistence of Racism in America by Thomas Powell who identifies racism as "a disposition involving beliefs or attitudes of both." Powell is interested in how racism retained its appeal and how these beliefs and attitudes persisted. 4

The evidence of racism toward Chinese was found not only in print but also in the entertainment arena. The author found essays on ethnicity and the American cinema. She also discovered that the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University had hosted a forum on "Orientalism at the movies: How Hollywood Images Asian Americans" on March 27 and 28 of 1993. This forum featured movies from D.W. Griffith's "Broken Blossoms" to the recent "Year of the Dragon" and examined the way that Asian Americans were depicted in them. The forum identified that while men were often depicted as victims or vamps; the women represent the ultimate erotic exotica in these movies. 5

When Michael Cimino's film "Year of the Dragon" opened in 1985, a coalition of Asian-American associations and media groups protested at the theaters. MGM responded only after national media coverage of the story and consequently placed a disclaimer at the beginning of the movie stating that the movie does not intend to demean positive features of Asian Americans. This is a rare case of successfully fighting back at the dominant culture's ability to label the ethnic other. 6

The research was then focused on stereotypes towards Chinese Americans which led the researcher to look at Orientalism 7 and the history of anti-Chinese prejudice in America which has origins as far back as the labor shortage in the 1850 California Gold Rush. 8

5Orientalism at the movies: How Hollywood images Asian Americans" on March 27 and 28 of 1993 at NYU.
Representation of Chinese/Asian Americans in the media

As seen on page 9, it was positive to see a major design publication like *Metropolis* addressing the issues we face increasingly in the multicultural USA. However, *Metropolis* did not go as far as to examine design work in multicultural terms. The author of this thesis believed that design examples in our everyday lives will reflect best how ethnic groups are being perceived and treated in the printed media. The research was focused on Chinese Americans only. Listed below are the areas where the author found her visual examples.

Printed Materials
- **Newspaper Ads**
  - Mainstream newspapers and Chinese newspapers
- **Magazines**
  - **Mainstream magazines**
    - Asian American magazines:
      - The author found that there is a growing awareness of ethnic heritage in the Asian American community. The growth in the number of Asian American magazines demonstrates that the recognition of ethnic identity within the Asian American community is stronger than ever. (*Transpacific, Inside Asian America, Face*)

Packaged goods
- Tea Packaging, Chinese Prepared Food Packaging

Books
- *Culture and the Ad: Exploring Otherness in the World of Advertising*
  - by William M. O'Barr

Music
- Album Covers

TV
- *All-American Girls* (Korean American actress Margaret Cho)
- *Vanishing Son* (Chinese American actor Russell Wong)
- *ER* (Ming-Na)
- Commercials

The representation of Chinese Americans often reflects their current social and economic status and how they are viewed by the mainstream society. Institutions such as the Chinatown History Museum (New York City), Asian/American Center at Queens College (Flushing, NY), The Archive Center at the National Museum of American History (Washington, D.C.), and The Balch Institute of Ethnic Studies (Philadelphia) were included in the research. The following describes these institutions and their collections that's relevant to this thesis in detail.
“Everywhere, increasing numbers of diverse individuals are saying: ‘I want to be part of the world. I want to be part of a smaller group’. Millions of people are experiencing this inner conflict.”  

David Sterling  
Metropolis, October 1994.

INSTITUTIONS
The Archive Center at the National Museum of American History
Date of visit: March 3 and March 17, 1995
Location: 12 Constitution Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20560
Contact Person: Fath Davis Ruffins (202) 357-3270

The Archive Center supports the mission of the National Museum of American History by preserving and providing access to documentary evidence of America’s past. Its collections complement the Museum’s artifacts and are used for scholarly research, exhibitions, journalism, documentary productions, school programs, and other research and educational activities.

The Archive Center contains about 700 collections with topics from technology and advertising to music. These collections are rich in important historical themes. Many Center collections document entrepreneurial activity in which invention and marketing are inextricably linked. The creation of nationally recognized brands and corporate identities and commercial depictions of gender, ethnicity, and other cultural categories are well represented in the holdings. The Center acquires artifacts in all physical formats to record the complexity and richness of the American experience. (http://americanhistory.si.edu/archives/b-l.htm)

Historian Fath Ruffins recommended three sources at the Archive Center: William Helfand Phone Card Collection, SAM DeVINCENT Collection of Illustrated American Sheet Music, and the Advertising Collection.

William Helfand Phone Card Collection, ca 1980-1991
The Archive Center at the National Museum of American History

The phone card collection is not comprised of calling cards in the traditional sense. They are business cards that people in the pornography business hand out to potential clients. This collection covers ethnic groups from African Americans to Asians. In the few examples found featuring Asian women, there was a consistent visual language that meets the stereotypical perception of Asian women—friendly, submissive, and full of ‘promise’.

When the author came upon this collection, she was surprised that such materials were kept and archived at the Archive Center. These phone cards, although embarrassingly direct and explicit, may best reflect the stereotypical perception of the general public and in the popular culture.

SAM DeVINCENT Collection of Illustrated American Sheet Music, ca. 1790 – 1987
The Archive Center at the National Museum of American History
Sam DeVincent was born Salvatore DeVincenzo on January 8, 1918, in Chicago. He was a well-established musician and was the music director of WOWO, a radio station in Fort Wayne, Indiana. As a boy DeVincent had initially been attracted to song
sheets for their music. Over the years, his sheet music provided a nearly endless source of material for his performances. He also developed a fascination for the sheets themselves, with their colorful covers and amazing range of topics. He tracked down inventories of out-of-print music in old music stores, sorted through stacks in antique stores, and haunted garage sales and attics. Through shrewd purchases, swaps, and occasional donations, his collection grew. At the time the Smithsonian acquired the collection in 1998, the SAM DeVincent Collection evidently represented the largest American sheet music collection in private hands. It will be of enormous value for the understanding of our musical past: the mainstream, tributaries, and streamlets of American music. It also will shed light on American social and cultural history, and the history of graphic art. The collection is housed in and administered by the Archives Center at the National Museum of American History, with intellectual and programmatic contributions from the Division of Musical History. (http://americanhistory.si.edu/archives/d5300j.htm)

On the song sheet covers of Chinese music examples, some typefaces for headlines in this collection were created individually by hand to imitate the strokes of Chinese calligraphy. Other typefaces were created with bamboo sticks as their basic unit and every letter was composed of by at least two sticks. While retaining the readability for American audience, by alternating the classic nature of the typography, the designs also reinforce the exoticism and foreignness of its subject. Certain colors were applied heavily – primary yellow, red, orange, blue, and black were associated with Chinese at the time.

Also evident in these examples are exaggerated physical traits of Chinese Americans – slanted eyes, exposed teeth, curved back, short heights and stocky bodies. These characteristics were repeated over and over and became conventions within these song sheet covers. There also existed the generalization of Asians in America, since most Americans at that time could not distinguish Chinese from Japanese, Korean, or Vietnamese. Therefore, the presumption that all Asians shared the same traditions, customs, values, and language occurred. It was not uncommon to see a mixture of Japanese and Chinese images and cultural elements within a single song sheet cover design.

As museum curator Gail Stern at the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies explains: “song sheet covers constitute a kind of ‘packaging’ of culture. Advertisement used by the entertainment industry is usually directly tied to the content of the products represented (e.g., the plot of a film, or the lyrics of a song).” Ms. Stern thinks that song sheet covers communicate, in an abbreviated form, important cultural messages to the prospective consumer. The SAM DeVincent Collection reveals to us the conventions of perception toward Chinese Americans in the early twentieth century.

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The Advertising Collection

_The Archive Center at the National Museum of American History_

The Center for Advertising History conducts studies of numerous aspects of the history of advertising. Its archives offer rich materials for scholars and the public detailing evidence of America’s cultural, social and economic development through advertising history. The collections focus on historically significant modern ad campaigns, including those for Pepsi-Cola, Marlboro, Nike, Federal Express and many others. The Center seeks to acquire additional advertising materials that illuminate the history of significant issues, people, and eras in the advertising industry and in American culture.

The author did not find a great deal of Asian American imagery in the advertising collection. However, there were a few examples that show the inclusion of ethnic groups in advertising campaigns for big companies such as Pepsi and Nike. In these ads, ethnic groups are portrayed as integrated members of the American society. This statement was true for the following examples found at the Archive Center.

(http://americanhistory.si.edu/archives/b-1.htm)

**Pepsi-Cola Advertising History Collection**

In this “Taste that beats the others cold!” Print Ad Campaign, an African American boy congratulates his Caucasian team mates on their recent victory. The ad demonstrates that the two races are equal and shows Nike’s interest in including ethnic groups into their advertisements.

**Nike Kid’s Shoe Campaign (Nike Advertising History Collection)**

Babies of different ethnicities were featured in this Nike Kid’s shoes campaign in the late 20th Century. This ad illustrates the different ethnicities shown are part of the integrated American society.

**Nike Just Do It campaign (Nike Advertising History Collection)**

This campaign that came out in 1993 features Asian female athlete. The athletes were portrayed as confident and successful at what they do best. The series of this campaign conveys a positive image of minority groups.

**Campbell’s Soup Advertising History Collection TV Campaign**

Campbell wants to portray themselves as part of kids’ everyday lives in the U.S. In this commercial, Campbell featured the true American households and kids are of all different ethnicities.

The advertising collection is categorized by the name of companies, not by ethnic group. This has made the research more difficult for the author given the amount of time allowed for the project. After going through the collection, the author came to two conclusions; first of all, representation of Asian Americans has not been collected as an independent category. Secondly, there were very few contemporary printed
pieces that include the images of Asian Americans in this collection. Therefore the author decided to include examples from the late 19th century and the early 20th century. The same also applies to the SAM DeVINCENT collection (see page 26).

Historian Fath Ruffins was directing a research project involving ethnic representation in American Advertising history at the time. During a brief interview with the author, Ms. Ruffins provided insight on the differences between representation and self-representation of ethnic groups. She also suggested that these visual samples could be examined from different perspectives. She recommended two other sources – the Chinatown History Museum and Professor John Kuo Wei Tchen, Director of the Asian American Center at Queens College, City College of New York.

The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies

Date of visit: March 9, 1995
Location: 18 South Seventh Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106
Contact Person: Michelle McKibbin, Administrative Assistant/Museum Educator

The tagline for the institute states its mission precisely: "Turn walls into bridges." As described in its brochure: "The Balch Institute documents and presents American ethnic and racial experiences. It is a multicultural library, archive, museum, and education center. With education as its primary focus, the Institute’s mission is to promote greater intergroup understanding. It connects people with the diversity issues in our nation." The Institute wants to be a forum for people of various ages, backgrounds, and viewpoints who want to foster tolerance and mutual respect. Examples of exhibitions include The Japanese American Experience and Something Old, Something New: Ethnic Weddings in America. The Institute’s current name is The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. (www.balchinstitute.org)

There were no exhibitions relating to the subject of this thesis at the time of the author’s visit. However, the author found literatures of two past exhibitions whose subjects were closely connected to the author’s thesis. They are Ethnic Images in Advertising and Ethnic Images in Toys and Games.

Ethnic Images in Advertising

This exhibition was comprised of ethnic images used by the American advertising industry to sell products during the past century. It examined how these images were employed to market and sell products, negative or positive. It also included images from the entertainment industry such as movie posters and song sheet covers. Museum curator Gail F. Stern believes that these pieces “communicate, in abbreviated form, important cultural messages to the prospective consumer.”

Ms. Stern concludes that while unflattering stereotypes of the groups who have

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been here in America longest are disappearing, stereotypes of newer groups still persist and provide some measure of the gap that continues to exist between appearance and reality in advertising.

A significant piece of material found was an interpretive activities guide by James F. Turk, Director of Education at the Institute. Turk concludes that ethnic images are frequently used to the derision of the group depicted in a sales campaign. He advised teachers to "utilize this familiar material as a means of sensitizing students to recognize stereotyping at true value. Within this continuum, students can better understand the concept of stereotyping and the impact it had and continues to have on the accepted images of certain ethnic groups in America."

The work sheet asks students to identify their own perceptions of ethnic groups. Then it asks the student to examine these perceptions in terms of attitude and origin. Finally it asks the students to distinguish between their stereotyped perceptions of these groups as foreign nationals and American ethnic citizenry. The ultimate goal is for students to understand the impact and inadequacies of stereotyping. This exhibition was on display in 1984.  

**Ethnic Images in Toys and Games**

This exhibition looks at ethnic stereotyping in toys and games. President M. Mark Stolarik believes that the impact of these toys and games is as pervasive as in advertising and in the comics. He states that distorted images of our world have been presented to us through these means and have made it difficult for us, even as children, to respect our cultural differences. This exhibition forces us to confront the prejudices that we picked up as children and hopes to stop us from passing them on to our children. The goal of this exhibition, like many others at the Balch Institute, is to promote greater inter-group understanding. This exhibition was on display in 1990.

**Chinatown History Museum**

*Date of visit:* March 1, 1995.
*Location:* 70 Mulberry Street, Manhattan, New York
*Contact Person:* Ms. Adrian Cooper (212) 619-4785

During the visit to the Chinatown History Museum, Ms. Adrian Cooper shared late 19th Century examples of prints, cartoons, and illustrations containing anti-Chinese violence. More contemporary examples are not part of the collection at this museum.

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Asian/American Center, Queens College CUNY

Date of visit: March 2, 1995
Location: Queens College, CUNY, 163-03 Horace Harding Expressway, Flushing, NY
Contact Person: Dr. John Kuo Wei Tchen

The Asian American Center at Queens College dedicates its study to community-based research that documents the diverse Asian communities in Queens and Asians in the Americas. The goal of the Center is to build connections between the college and community and among people with different ethnic cultural backgrounds. Professor John Kuo Wei Tchen was the associate director at the time of the research in 1995.

Since the Asian/American Center focuses on community studies, there were no visual samples that the author could find there. However, the Center kindly offered a few volumes from its "Working Papers" publication series. This series is a collection of essays that focus on timely issues researched by Center staff, faculty and other scholars, and by members of the Queens and New York City Asian communities. Listed below are sample subjects of the series in "Working Papers":

*Chinese Small Businesses in Queens, New York* (Hsiang-shui Chen, 1993)
*Studying in the United States: The Experience of Chinese Students at Queens College* (Xuya Chen, 1990)

INDIVIDUALS

Dr. John Kuo Wei Tchen

Mr. John Kuo Wei Cheung is a social historian and cultural activist. Since 1975 he has been studying inter-ethnic and interracial relations of Asians and Americans, helping to build cultural organizations, and exploring how inquiry in the humanities and society can help deepen the quality of public discourse and policy.

Dr. Tchen is currently starting a new Asian/Pacific/American Studies Program and Institute at NYU, where he is an associate professor. He has authored *Genthe's Photographs of San Francisco's Old Chinatown*, which won an American Book Award, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776–1882*, and is the editor of *The Chinese Laundryman: A Study of Social Isolation*.

Dr. Tchen has written and spoken on diversity in museums, immigration, race relations, and cultural studies, and has served as a consultant for many museums. He is the cofounder of the Museum of Chinese in the Americas, in New York City.

The author visited Dr. Tchen at his home in Brooklyn, New York, in March 1995. Dr. Tchen kindly shared his books with the author. In his book *Genthe's Photographs*
of San Francisco's Old Chinatown, Dr. Tchen examines the way Genthe cropped his photographs to enhance the primitive and exotic images of Chinese in the Westerners' eyes. Dr. Tchen compares the original negatives with the retouched prints, Genthe skillfully retouched out Caucasian figures and English signages in his Chinatown photos. It is evident that Genthe try to create an untruthful view to suit the artist and his audience. The result of Genthe's altered photos portrays an artificial pure Chinese quarters in the late nineteenth Century San Francisco. Genthe's Chinatown is exotic, primitive and most of all, isolated where any signs of racial and cultural interaction were intentionally erased. Dr. Tchen also shared his precious collection of trade cards, sheet music covers, brochures, newspaper clippings and advertisements. Dr. Tchen expressed his belief that it is more important to examine the underlying patterns of stereotypes that have been carried through the printed medium rather than focus on a single piece on its own.

Research Summary
The original search for visual examples focused on current examples found in newspapers and magazines, Chinese newspapers, comic books and packaged goods. The author was able to gather some examples representative of the time. To broaden her research, the author also looked into established institutions for additional examples and directions.

It was evident that after visiting the the institutions discussed above, existing examples of the contemporary portrayal of Chinese Americans have never been gathered as one comprehensive whole. The examples that are relevant to this thesis at these institutions are limited, which presented a dilemma in the author's objective of providing a comprehensive overview of the past ten to twenty years of Chinese American representation. To compensate for this scarcity of material, the original timeframe was expanded and trade cards, ads, and song sheet music covers from the beginning of the twentieth Century were also included.

These past examples came from the Advertising Collection at the Archive Center of the Museum of American History at Washington, D.C., the Chinatown History Museum in New York, the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies and from Dr. John Kuo-Wai Tchen's personal collection.
Self-representation of Chinese Americans

The author intended to focus solely on Chinese Americans at the beginning of the research for this thesis. However, most examples on contemporary self-representation found were in the Chinese newspapers circulating in the Chinese-reading community in the United States. Given the limited exposure of the Chinese newspaper only available to Mandarin-reading audience, the author broadened the research to the wider audience of Asian Americans. Examples found are from everyday sources such as magazines, TV, and advertisements. Three major Asian American magazines found were A., Face, and Transpacific. All three are widely circulated in the U.S. and can easily be found at local bookstores and newsstands.

Print
By looking at the covers of the three Asian American magazines shown here, two distinct directions are apparent. One is to inherit the Western aesthetic, the other is to establish the aesthetic of Asian Americans. Face magazine appears to be Vogue for Asian Americans – their covers feature sexy Asian American models who fit into the Western aesthetic of beauty. In reality, there are not many Asian American women who look like these models. The cover of Transpacific follows the Western aesthetic to a lesser degree. The content of Transpacific appears to cover both Asians living in America as well as in their native countries. It covers a wide range of subjects, in other words, it is more diverse and less focused.

The only magazine that takes on the second direction and establishes its own aesthetic for Asian Americans is A. Magazine: Inside Asian America. Beginning with their Feb/Mar 1995 issue under new art direction, the magazine from cover to cover shows the dignity of Asian Americans. From the bold use of colors, simplicity of the new logo “A.” to the subjects looking straight into the camera with confidence, the portrayal of Asian Americans is straightforward, proud, and honorable. The content of A. magazine concentrates on the major issues that Asian Americans confront in real life. The articles are carefully researched and well written. A. magazine proves that Asian Americans do not have to follow trends of the dominant culture; it provides an option for Asian Americans to be true to themselves.

Television
At the time the research was conducted in 1994-1995, two TV shows took the revolutionary steps of featuring Asian Americans as protagonists. Margaret Cho's All-American Girl was the first network program to deal with a multi-generational Asian (Korean) American family. The show looked at the way that this family coped with the shifts in attitude between the traditional grandmother, the transitional parents, and the all-American grandchildren. The show’s writing staff included Caucasian, Korean and Chinese American writers. All-American Girl aired on Network TV ABC from September 1994 to March 1995.

Another show that featured Asian Americans as protagonists is Russell Wong’s
“Vanishing Son.” In contrast to “All-American Girl” which portrayed an updated view of the contemporary Asian American lives, “Vanishing Son” demonstrated the persistence of stereotypes toward Chinese Americans. This show inherits the convention that the television show “Kung-Fu” established in the 1970s. The show aired from February 1994 to May 1995.

Another positive example is the Chinese American actress Ming-Na’s recurring role on NBC’s prominent show “ER”. Ming-Na plays an attending physician who, despite being successful, struggles between her independence and her rather strict and traditional family. It is encouraging for the Asian American community to see themselves being portrayed realistically as professionals working among Caucasian and African-American peers.

**Merchandising**

In the Asian American magazines, the author found two examples of companies which feature culturally unique products with a twist of humor. Both were established by a younger generation of Asian Americans who take the cultural issues seriously but present them casually. They are *Model Minority* and *I.C.M.I.M.* Productions based in California.

**Model Minority**

Model Minority, established in 1993, is an enterprising new company in California that features “pro-Asian urban and contemporary wear” for young people. Their products are mainly purchased by high school and college students. Their line includes baseball caps, T-shirts, and a beanie. The Chinese characters “power,” “peace,” and “warriors” are embroidered individually on the caps. Another cap features the word “Coolie,” making a statement against stereotypes. On one of the T-shirts, a slogan reads: “Have a Nice Asian Day!” Founder Chan states, “‘Model Minority’ is a scapegoat phrase for the Asian cultural community... It’s a tag. There’s no truth behind it.”

**Double a Man from I.C.M.I.M. Productions**

Slogan: “Because stereotypes were meant to be broken.”

*I.C.M.I.M.* was established by Jusak Yang Bernard and Paul G. Bens. They produce a line of greeting cards aimed to fight the stereotypes of Asian men and women. According to *I.C.M.I.M.*, Asian men are usually perceived as “nerdy, unattractive, and nonsexual” and Asian women are frequently perceived as exotic and sexually available. *I.C.M.I.M.* is determined to show the opposite. One of their greeting cards features a detergent commercial from the 1970’s in which a Chinese woman with a big smile is holding a box of detergent. The headline reads: “Ancient Chinese Secret,” and the inside copy continues, “Do your fucking own laundry!” *I.C.M.I.M.* uses both humor and irony to reach their audience. Ray, one of the models says: “I thought it was about time. If not to make a difference and a statement, at least to make people see us in a different light and on a different level.”

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CONTENT

The challenge that the author faced after the research was to 1) crystallize such an abstract concept (multicultural sensitivity) into easy to understand language, and 2) to present the connection between culture, multiculturalism and visual communication.

To achieve this, the author outlined the structure for the guidebook:

1) Opening with an introduction presenting the importance of multicultural awareness (by outlining the facts of growing ethnic populations) and demonstrate the positive/negative impact of stereotypes and prejudice in our society.

2) As sociologist Geertz defines it, there is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture. Culture is embedded deeply in our lives; it is what defines us and differentiates us from one group to another. Social anthropologist Edward T. Hall states in his book Beyond Culture that "culture is man’s medium; there is no one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture. It is not innate, but learned; the various facets of culture are interrelated; it is shared and in effect defines the boundaries of different groups." To gain greater understanding toward another ethnic group, it is crucial for us to examine the different components in their culture and learn their perspectives on things. To achieve this, the author provided the model of multicultural understanding here as a learning model/tool.

3) The author then took a specific ethnic group—Chinese Americans—using the model provided, to examine the essential elements that construct as well as shape their ethnic experiences. These elements are family structure, socio-political factors, religious practice, language and the arts, acculturation, concept of poverty and history of oppression. After all the information was compiled about Chinese American Culture, the author went back to Locke's model of Culture (revised by Wang and Grebinger, see p. 17) and organized these materials according to particular categories. The author tried to provide not only a comprehensive picture of Chinese American culture, but also a fairly current portrayal. In the finished guidebook, each category has photos which accompany the text and reflect the contemporary lives of Chinese Americans. The author started out the chapter on Chinese American culture by giving a general overview of the diverse backgrounds of Chinese Americans with brief paragraphs on the past and the present lives of Chinese Americans. The author then wrote in detail about Chinese American Culture in the following categories. Each category began with an overview paragraph followed by specific subsections.

4) To build the bridge between cultural sensitivity and visual communication.

The author started the intro by looking at the positive improvement of current

\[C. \text{Geertz,} \text{ The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man, J. Platt ed., New Views of the Nature of Man, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965) 112.}\]

examples versus the negative ones in the past. To show the audience how to look at a
piece and read its meaning. The use of form, space, color and other design elements
could construct a piece that’s culturally meaningful. The same could also be achieved
by combining culturally inspired forms which could generate emotions and feelings
that are specific to the audience as well as the viewer’s own culture. By examining
these visual clues, the author demystified the connotative meaning and perceptions
behind the images. With Professor Beardslee’s help, the author analyzed these
examples by looking at the following:

The Conceptual Cliché
i. Stereotypical professions and personalities: either based on positive
attributes or negative deficiencies.
ii. Historical reference (assumptions about relationships between groups)
iii. Overgeneralization (lack of personal or regional context)
iv. Outdated descriptors (lack of contemporary reality, portrayal the
primitiveness of ethnic group)
v. Over-emphasized exoticness and foreignness
vi. The “other” (exclusion of the ethnic group whom are not being
viewed as included members of the society)

The Visual Cliché (Imagery-based conventions)
i. Color
ii. Pattern
iii. Architectural Décor
iv. Costume/Traditional Clothing
v. Physical Traits
vi. Culturally significant objects
vii. Language
viii. Typeface

Here is an example of how visual work would be analyzed.

Analysis on the AIGA’s “Living Contradictions” Conference in Miami (1994)
Art director: David Carson, Illustrator: Veyra

Perception
Outdated Descriptors
The two American Indians are being portrayed as barbaric and uncivilized without
contemporary reference to their social status. Both male and female figures in the
poster are barely dressed implying their primitiveness and lack of education, allowing
them to be exploited by the dominant culture.
Overgeneralization
The audience is not able to identify the specific tribe of the American Indian because the lack of tribal icons and patterns.

Historical Reference
The copy of the poster reads: “Having conquered Miami, the AIGA sets its sight on Seattle.” The creator of the poster probably did not realize that Seattle had the largest urban American Indian population. David Carson, the art director of the poster, argued that he didn’t mean that the American Indians in Seattle needed conquering. Nevertheless, the message from the poster came across to be rather negative for the American Indians.

The “other”
The poster represents the American Indians as the “exotic” and primitive other and they are not included as members of the dominant society. Both figures depicted in the poster look away from the audience—the lack of direct contact indicates the subject depicted is with lower social status and being dominated.

Visual Cliché
Color
Bright, unsaturated primary colors represent the primitiveness of American Indians

Costume
Warrior costume, headdress, shield

Physical Traits
Black eyes and hair

Objects
Tomahawk (stone-headed tools and weapons, Indian-owned hatchet-type instrument)
Totem

Examples being analyzed include song sheet music covers, print ads, packaging goods, comic strips, and cartoon. After reviewing the representation of Chinese Americans, it is crucial to also look at how Chinese Americans represent themselves—how they want to be perceived, academically, socially, economically and politically. Ending with this viewpoint from the ethnic group, the author believes this completes the experience of multicultural awareness which should include the insider’s (the ethnic group) and the outsider’s (the people who is of another culture) point of views.

This section is outlined as followed: improvement and progress (an overview), from the past to the present (examining printed materials), misuse of cultural elements and self-representation of Chinese Americans.

This outline provides a clear structure for the author to review her research materials and put them into where they belong.
DESIGN CONCEPT

The author wanted to transfer the content into a guidebook that would be easy to navigate. In addition, she believed that visually, the design should convey the richness and delicacy of the subject matter—culture is a rich, evolving and organic matter. Because this thesis is trying to promote multicultural awareness, the author selectively set type vertically to implicate the challenging nature of gaining understanding between cultures.

The decision to integrate Eastern elements with Western elements in the design signifies the harmony that we all hope to achieve as many cultures within one species. The author hopes to convey that our differences could be balanced by integration.

The Eastern philosophy used here are the complimentary forces of ying and yang; and the equal weight between positive and negative space in composition in Chinese Painting.
THE DESIGN APPLICATION

This project began with a general idea of promoting multicultural awareness through design. It was originally intended to be an interactive multimedia program on CD-ROM aimed at educating visual communicators about cultural diversity and promoting design sensitivity in America. CD-ROM was chosen for its ease of use, and low cost in production and delivery. It was also considered a viable medium because of its large storage capacity and would be ideal for a multimedia application comprised of music, short movies and visual examples.

Given the nature of this project, it was clear from the beginning that the emphasis would be on the writing/editing and research aspects of the undertaking. Due to time constraints, the author felt an information guidebook would be more feasible and enable the author to focus more on the writing and organizing of the materials found. Therefore the application was changed from a CD-ROM to a printed information guidebook format.

On March 22, 1995 the author submitted the revised project definition to the thesis committee. In the new plan, a guidebook and a poster would replace the original interactive CD-ROM. The initial design concept of the book was presented in this proposal. The author indicated in her proposal that, at the thesis exhibition, the poster would be displayed adjacent to the guidebook. The idea was to have a thought provoking poster lead the viewer to inspect the guidebook for additional information on the subject. The booklet, as planned in this proposal, was intended to be 5/5" x 8.5" with 30-35 pages.

The design would combine an ancient Chinese book format with a contemporary look and feel. The author also presented four pages of thumbnail layouts of the entire book for the committee to review. These four pages established the basic framework for the guidebook.

The whole book was originally designed to include Chinese elements such as the lotus and traditional paper cut art. On March 31, 1995 at a meeting with Professor Beardslee, the author received the following recommendations:

The Chinese elements were overused. The Chinese motifs should be introduced in the Chinese American Culture section, and not in any of the preceding sections. The elements used in a particular section of the guidebook should coordinate conceptually with the content.

On April 7, 1995 the author met with Professor Jack Slutzky to review an intermediate design layout. Professor Slutzky had the following suggestions:

1. **Problem:** The entire book felt too formal and linear.

   **Suggestion:** Professor Slutzky believed that the nature of culture is organic and evolving which the design of the guidebook did not reflect. Professor
Slutzky suggested for the author to design with the audience in mind. The book should be inviting and compel the audience to want to touch it, feel it and use it.

2. **Problem:** The typography on the cover does not imply the richness of the subject matter.
   **Suggestion:** Combine Chinese characters with the English letters on the cover so it implicates the multicultural nature of the subject.

3. **Problem:** The absence of headers would make it difficult for the reader to know where he/she is in the book.
   **Suggestion:** Professor Slutzky suggested starting each section with Chinese calligraphy lightly printed behind the title, and then carrying this treatment throughout that section on the upper left hand corner.

4. **Problem:** There are more negative visual examples than the positive ones.
   **Suggestion:** Professor Slutzky suggested for the author to always start with the positive content and then shift to the negative content.

5. **Problem:** In the thesis exhibition, Professor Slutzky feared that the guidebook would not stand out enough.
   **Suggestion:** Professor suggested the author create a Gestalt of past examples within a poster design to generate curiosity and motivate the exhibition attendees to examine the book.
The author wants to convey the richness and diversity of the subject matter in the design. By combining concepts from the East and the West, she achieved a design that’s rich in texture (through typography and composition) and easy to navigate. More details are written about each section of the design application in the following pages.

Format
The initial layouts of the book were influenced by an ancient Chinese book-binding method – all the pages had decorative borders on the outer edge and were folded in half and bound on the open side by thread. The author wanted to apply this approach while also binding the book with spiral binding for practicality. The book was originally designed with the decorative borders to simulate ancient Chinese books. Later the author thought the borders complicated the space of the book. Therefore, the borders were removed to ensure clear communication and legibility.

Compositional Space
In Chinese paintings, the negative space is as important as the positive space. There is always a delicate balance between the two. Following this principle, the author carefully planned the design of the guidebook with great attention paid to the balance of space. To introduce the audience to this concept of balance, the author intentionally left a great deal of white space throughout the book. The use of negative space was also made evident on the cover of the guidebook.

Font
The typeface chosen for text was Myriad. Headlines and subtitles were set in Rotis. Myriad is a modern san-serif typeface with great legibility. It was designed by Carol Twombly and Robert Slimbach in 1992 and is characterized as humanistic.

The author chose Rotis Semiserif, a face that combined the classic beauty of serif type with the modern cleanliness of san-serif type. This typeface reflected the design of this guidebook – a mixture of the old with the new, a mixture of classic design and contemporary spirit. The Rotis family was designed in 1989 by Otl Aicher for Agfa; his last type design. The Rotis family is unique in that it consists of matching subfamilies: Sans Serif, Semi Sans, Semi Serif, and Serif.

Typography
Starting with the cover, the author set the type vertically to reflect the content of the guidebook. The vertically-oriented type has two implications. First, Chinese characters are conventionally read from top to bottom and from right to left, just the opposite of English. Second, by setting the type vertically, it establishes the mood for the audience; one that contrasts with what they are accustomed to.

The author used the vertical type in the following areas:

1. Table of contents  
2. Divider for each section  
3. Keywords and call-outs
The Use of Chinese Characters

An inconspicuous Chinese character was placed at the bottom left corner of the cover, suggestive of an exploration of Asian culture in the pages that follow. It was also used as an embellishment near the name of the author. The author did not want to overuse Chinese characters in this guidebook, primarily because this book was not designed for an audience that can read them. The author only uses Chinese characters in a few places as visual design elements.

The introduction page sets the tone of the design for the book. The double-page spread communicates diversity with the juxtaposition of serif (Rotis) and san-serif type (Myriad), large and small sizes, and the light and heavy textures created by more and less line spacing. The result is a web of interdependent elements that implies the purpose of the book - to promote the understanding of different cultures and races.

When examined closely, the position of the type on the divider pages coordinates with its original position on the table of contents page and provides subtle continuity throughout the book. In all sections, the opening essays are set with generous line spacing. The main text that follows the opening essay was set with comfortable leading for legibility. The headings for sections and subsections are always placed at the top left corner of the left page of the spread.

The consistency of this placement helps the user navigate easily through the book. Keywords are accentuated with enlarged colored type in lowercase with generous word spacing. These characteristics set keywords apart from the headlines and text. They are placed on the double-page spread to give users an overview of the essay on that page. The placement of keywords also serves to balance the negative space on the page.

OVERALL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The content of the book is outlined as followed:

1) Introduction
2) Culture and A Model of Culture
3) Chinese American Culture
4) Representation of Chinese Americans
5) Sources

For each of the sections, the structure of the layout was kept identical:

- The opening spread starts the section with full-page photo and solid color. There is always a full-page black and white photo on the left and a solid color page on the right with the name of the section.
- The introduction spread follows immediately. This spread provides an overview of the section.
- The content spread continues the section with detailed descriptions of each subsections for the section.
SPECIFIC DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Cover
On the cover, the East is subtly suggested through type set vertically. By setting the type in the way that the audience is not accustomed to, the author hoped to challenge them from early on. The stock used here was distinctive for its subdued colors and random speckles in the paper. The author liked this paper for its imperfect, but rich quality. It had a very human and tactile feel to it. Since the design of the interior pages was very clean, the author felt that the use of this speckled paper for the cover would not distract from the overall appearance of the book. The author purposely selected a subtle color for the cover to create a stark contrast between the navy of the inside front cover and the bright white of the opening page. The cover sets the tone of the book apart and implies that the content of the book is culturally oriented for the audience.

Inside Front Cover
Once opened, the viewer is greeted by the stark contrast of the deep blue inside front cover against the bright white of the text pages. The title includes two keywords that have been sized larger, along with a graphic that combines part of the American flag with a Chinese character. This Chinese character means “Chinese” and is filled in with the stars of an American flag. This composite image conveys that the Chinese American culture is part of the American culture, and that these two are closely intertwined.
Table of Contents

Following the title page is the Table of Contents spread. On the left of the spread is an American flag with a square die cut. The missing square is the first thing one sees on the right spread. This square contains an almond-shaped eye superimposed over an American flag. When examined closely, one can see the colors red and blue, in addition to tiny white stars, all incorporated into this diminutive square. The five sections of the book are listed vertically adjacent to the page number and the square image of the eye. The generous amount of white space was intended by the author to welcome the audience with a simple introduction and a transition into more complex content.

Each section of the book starts with a full-bleed black and white photo on the left side of the spread. Each photo is representative of the section that follows. The right side of the spread uses the same paper stock as the cover, in a lighter weight. The title of the section is placed in the same location as the Table of Contents. With each successive section, the title is placed closer to the right/outer edge of the page. An icon that is symbolic of that section accompanies each title.
Introduction

The introduction spread opens with a photo of an advertising board erected in a small shopping complex in Dekalb County, GA. From the sign one can discern that the name of the shopping complex is “Treasure Village.” This bulletin board is composed of individual signs written in different languages. This insignificant sign outside Atlanta reflects the not so insignificant reality that a prosperous multicultural community can be found in all corners of America. As the Dekalb Chamber of Commerce puts it: “The International Village will provide an opportunity for immigrants and refugees, of various cultures, to successfully live, work, and socialize together.” The author thought this would be a perfect image to use for the opening of this book.

As illustrated on the left, the author created a Yin-Yang symbol superimposed over an American flag for the introduction section. Yin-Yang is a well known Chinese symbol. This symbol represents the ancient Chinese philosophy toward life. The outer circle represents “everything”, while the negative and positive space within the circle represent the interaction of two energies – "yin" (also known as the negative force) and "yang" (the positive force). The Chinese believes that these two energies cannot exist independently, the ideal of life is to strive for the balance of the two forces.

While “yin” would be dark, passive, downward, cold, contracting, and weak, “yang” would be bright, active, upward, hot, expanding, and strong. This symbol represents the Chinese view of balance in life – the “yin” (also known as the negative energy) ends where the “yang” begins. The two constitutes a continual movement of the two energies. The author applies the philosophy of this symbol to the Chinese American culture – the two cultures interlace to become one positive force where an ethnic group can retain its unique identity while embracing and being included in the dominant culture.

Culture

The next section, “Culture and a Model of Culture,” begins with a photo of Chinese food. Even though this section is not specifically related to Chinese culture, food is definitely one of the primary ways by which a culture identifies itself. Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to use this photo as one way to signify culture.

The spread in this section Culture is divided into top and bottom halves. Text runs at the bottom half of the page while the top area is reserved for photos and keywords. Overall the feel is very airy and easy to follow.

Implementation

Final Design: Introduction — opening spread

Final Design: Introduction — introduction spread
Chinese American Culture

The opening spread of "Chinese American Culture" features a photo of two confident and successful Chinese American business persons. They are looking right into the camera with ease and confidence. The author thought this image was a positive and appropriate lead-in for this section. The symbol for this section is a square box with a Chinese character in it. It is angled to be somewhat abstract. The traditional Chinese Chop engraving inspired the two circles running vertically. The Chinese characters for "Culture" are set within these two circles. A name chop in Chinese culture is analogous to a signature in Western culture. From withdrawing money from a bank to legalizing a contract, name chops affix one's credit and promise. In the way that a name chop is unique to an individual, the author used it here to signify the uniqueness of each culture.

The introduction spread of this section follows the compositional design mentioned above – the top portion is reserved for photos and keywords; the bottom half for the main text. The content spread uses a three-column grid on the left hand side. Bodycopy is set in the two rightmost columns, while the leftmost column is left blank.
Implementation

Family Structure

or used for photos. The author reserved a great deal of negative space for this side of the spread because it is used to start the dialogue while the right side of the spread is more detail-oriented. The author applied a two-column grid system for the right spread, the width of each column permitting greater legibility of copy in these columns.

With these structures defined as the basis of the design, the author created layouts for this section that unified and were concurrently dynamic and flexible. Each sub-section is consistent with subtle differences from spread to spread. The use of negative space is as important as the positive space throughout. This section ends with "Racism and Prejudice," a spread that communicates more emotional depth than the spread before it. By use of bleeds on three sides of the spread, and images behind text, this spread signifies the end of the section and leads into the beginning of next chapter.
Final Design: Representation of Chinese Americans – opening spread

Representation of Chinese Americans

The next chapter, “Representation of Chinese Americans,” opens with a photo of a familiar stereotypical image of a Chinese woman from the American entertainment business of the past. The woman portrayed is on her knees, looking away from the camera, with both of her hands supporting a vase. She suggests an obedient and submissive image of an Asian woman. The almond eye icon, initially used in the Table of Contents is employed again in this layout, but this time to effect a contrast between the eye of a confident female and the photo of the subservient woman.

Starting with “The Past to the Present” section, there is a short page inserted between the pages. This short insert is one-third the height of the book. It is printed on sand text stock to set it apart from the text pages. The design of the spread in this section uses large screened-back images and more photos. The author wanted to maintain the design integrity of the double-page spread by placing specific examples on the insert. The introduction text on the left page of the spread opens the dialogue while the information on the insert is more specific and used in certain instances to highlight case studies. Examples of cases studies are Equitable ads in both Chinese and English
versions, Croyden House's Chinese Fried Rice Mix packaging, Celestial Seasoning's Mandarin Orange Spice Tea packaging, and Comic Series Iron Man. Both sides of the insert were used, which allowed more detailed information to be presented.

At the same time, it offered a more dynamic reading experience for the user.

"Misuse of Cultural Elements" follows the previous section with a simpler layout. The width of the column for text decreases and there is no screened-back large image in the background. As the book concludes with the positive "Self-representation" of Chinese Americans, the design reverts to a simple and straightforward layout. The book ends with a poem that speaks the mind of Chinese immigrants upon arriving in the U.S. in the 1930s. The use of this historical material signifies the long journey that Chinese Americans have taken and how theirs lives have improved, beginning with their very first steps on American soil.
USE OF PAPER

Cover
Fox River’s “Confetti” recycled paper was selected for its subdued colors and random speckles. The imperfection of the colored speckles and its unusual tones of colors give “Confetti” a very rich and human quality. The author thought these quality fit the subject matter of the guidebook perfectly. The tan color for the cover was selected to create a stark contrast with the deep blue color of the inside front cover and the bright white of the opening page.

- Name of cover stock: Confetti Recycled Paper, acid free and archival
- Company: Fox River
- Weight: 80 lb. cover
- Color: Tan for the outside cover and Blue for the inside front and back cover

Paper for interior
To contrast with the rich, dark navy blue of the inside front and back covers, the author designed the interior of the book with legibility as the primary consideration. Given that colorful type and visuals are used throughout the guidebook, the author thought a simple bright white paper would be appropriate. The Environment/Wove paper from Neenah exhibited a nice woven smooth texture and enabled one to flip through the pages with ease.

- Name of cover stock: Environment/Wove 25% Cotton/100% Recycled Paper
- Company: Neenah
- Weight: 24 lb. Writing
- Color: White

Size of the book
The final size of the guidebook is 7” wide x 10” high. The author intended for the guidebook to be compact for easy transport. The original planned size of 5.5” x 8” was considered to be too small for the content. Since the pages were to be printed on one side and folded into half, it was important that the printed page be smaller than 17”x11”– the standard ledger (and the largest) size for most color printers. Since the author intended to have bleeds on some pages, the pages were printed with crop-marks on ledger-size paper and then trimmed individually to achieve this effect.

SOFTWARE/HARDWARE
The book was designed on a Macintosh computer Quadra 660AV using the following software applications: QuarkXpress 3.3, Adobe Illustrator 5.5 and Adobe Photoshop 3.0. At the time of production in 1995, UFO, the service bureau chosen for printing the book, used PCs instead of Macs as their primary workstations. Given the incompatibility between PCs and Mac systems, additional steps were required to provide UFO with a useable format. Macs were used to create postscript EPS files.

- Method: Fiery Output on Xerox 5775 Color Laser Copier at 400 dpi
- Location: UFO Systems, Inc. One Tobey Village Office Park, Pittsford, NY 14534 (716) 248-3372
- Media: The postscript files were put on two Syquest Storage disks for UFO.
- Date of output: April 17, 1995
The postscript files were divided into separate sections because the capacity of the SyQuest disk, only 44MB per disk, was insufficient to store all the files in their entirety. In addition, the author created the postscript files with consideration of the paper upon which they were to be printed.

1. **Cover**: print on Fox River Confetti Recycled Paper 80lb. Cover
2. **Dividers**: print on Cross Pointe Fossil 28lb. Script
3. **Main text**: 25 pages of 17”x11” printed on Neenah Environment/Wove 25% Cotton/100% Recycled Paper 24lb. Writing
4. **Back page of the dividers**: 8 pages of 8.5”x11” printed on Environment/Wove 25% Cotton/100% Recycled Paper

Total: 54 pages of 17”x11” at $7.00 per page, 12 pages of 17”x11” at $5.00 per page

**DESIGN OF THE POSTER**

The poster was originally intended to promote the guidebook in the required thesis exhibition. Given the size of the guidebook alone, it would have been difficult to draw attention in a gallery space shared with other thesis projects. Therefore, the author created the poster to generate interest, and motivate exhibition attendees to examine the book more closely. However, the author had a difficult time defining a conceptual approach for this poster should communicate from the outset.

At first, the author wanted to combine the timeline of important events of Chinese American history with the visual examples found. But in attempting to execute this idea, she discovered that it was much more challenging design-wise than she had anticipated. It was extremely difficult to mesh these two visual elements and present them in a cohesive and cogent fashion.

There were many reasons why this design was not feasible. This poster direction entitled: “Beyond Fortune Cookies: Representation of Chinese American in Printed Media”, had too many elements and lacked a focal point. The labels for the years 1880 and 1995 appeared on opposite sides of the composition and had no relevance to the message. The author attempted to convey too much information in this poster, with the end result being a rather confusing and unintelligible design.

The author decided that since her initial concept was not feasible she moved to the next idea. She wanted to create a collage of different elements from the book. Using a fortune cookie as a focal point, she worked to include as many visuals from the book as possible. The author did not even attempt to finalize this idea because it was obvious from the initial sketches, that it was an overly complex and confusing direction.

Finally, with the help of Professor Slutzky and Professor Beardslee, the author defined the primary objectives of the poster: to raise questions and engender curiosity. It should not attempt to convey the contents of the entire book, because the subject matter is explored in detail in the book. The poster should simply stimulate the audiences’ curiosity and ultimately draw their attention to the contents of the book. Once these objectives were defined, it was clear to the
author that this was the correct direction; it allowed the author to design a poster that was more cogent and simple.

The plan was to use visuals from the book and present them in a simple layout with no text. The author created an overall composition of compartments containing images but left the middle compartments blank. The missing piece represented a question, with its answer found in the guidebook. The poster started with the negative past examples and ended with more positive current examples.

Final poster design. 22" x 29." April 1995.
Thesis Exhibition Space Design

The thesis exhibition was held at the Bevier Gallery on the RIT campus. The author requested three wall panels (each at 4' x 8') and one pedestal. The author originally intended to display the book on a pedestal with the poster mounted adjacent to it. Since these two items did not utilize the entire space allotted, the author was able to add six enlarged spreads of the book to put on the walls. The six spreads selected needed to be representative of the entire book. The final selections were "Table of Contents", "Introduction", "Chinese American Culture", "Racism", "Representation of Chinese Americans", and "Representation of Chinese Americans: From the Past to the Present."
AUTHOR'S OBSERVATIONS

Research
The research presented various challenges in terms of time and geography. From beginning to end (from December 1994 to April 1995), this project took nearly half a year to complete. Although not feasible with the time constraints, the author would have liked to have had the opportunity to do the following:

1. Broaden the research to encompass regions of the U.S. outside of the Northeast corridor, and visit institutions and individuals in these areas that could contribute to the project
2. Interview Chinese Americans living in major cities in the United States
3. Interview English-speaking designers living in the United States
4. Gather extensive examples from the past and the present. Document findings in detail.

Contents
More detailed information could be added for subgroups of C.A. community. In addition to additional photographs, more illustrations might provide greater insight. A greater number of visual examples could be added. It would be ideal to develop a timeline of all visuals collected to reflect the progressive change in representation.

Form
Develop the interactive CD-ROM as intended in the original plan. This would allow easy production and distribution. This guidebook could be distributed to designers in advertising agencies, marketing houses, and design studios whose work targets a multicultural audience.

For example, a marketing house that generates direct mailers across the U.S. for the phone company Verizon may need to produce the same mailer in several languages. The original mailer created in English cannot simply be translated for the rest of the targeted groups. Because not only does the language need to be translated, but the economic status and values need to be taken into consideration for a successful direct marketing campaign. This guidebook would be beneficial for everyone involving in such campaigns. Although the book focuses on only one culture in detail, a designer could use it as a general guideline to follow. Ideally the guidebook should include multiethnic sources in the U.S. for the users.
OUTSIDE OBSERVATIONS

During thesis exhibition
The author received casual feedback from fellow graduate students at the exhibition. This feedback was very positive.

Juried Publication
The thesis statement for this study was selected and published in Zed. 2—Real world design: the role of the experimental, a design publication of Virginia Commonwealth University, in 1995. Zed is an interdisciplinary publication that aims to bridge the gap between designer, student and educator and a vehicle for divergent viewpoints. Even though published in the United States, Zed includes essays and features works from around the world. Each issue addresses a specific theme from a variety of perspectives. (http://www.designstudies.com/zed/)

In the second issue of Zed, the role of experimental in the real world was the theme. As editor Kate Salen quoted Jan van Toorn that “experimentation should anticipate innovation.” That it is “...an investment that will force us to select other themes, develop other programs, and other forms of manipulation of the vocabularies.”

This thesis was selected as one of the final four among international student entries. Zed recognizes that this thesis presented an innovative viewpoint in the context of the real world. Zed honors the author’s attempt to provide not only an information tool but also a design solution to promote multicultural understanding in our society.

Questionnaire
A formal questionnaire was not developed at the time of the thesis exhibition. However, the author subsequently developed the following six questions and distributed these questions along with the guidebook for feedback from reviewers.

Please rate the following questions from 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest score.

1. Has this book demonstrated the significance of cultural sensitivity in visual communication to you?
2. Did the application reach its goal as an educational and informational tool?
3. Was the overview of Chinese American culture presented clearly?
4. Is the organization of the content clear?
5. Did the book influence your thinking in any way?
6. Has the book raised your interest in the cultures of other ethnic groups?

Questionnaire Results

Penny Chuang
Senior Art Director, New York City
(1) 5  (2) 4  (3) 5  (4) 5  (5) 5  (6) 5
Wow! Good job! I thought the book was well organized and excellently designed. It brings to light the importance of multicultural sensitivity in design. Not only was it informative, the visual presentation makes the subject matter more thought-provoking and stimulating. I believe, if designers read this book, they would not only learn some new things, but be more conscientious to our multicultural society in their designs.

Jason Vitta
Account Supervisor at an Advertising Agency, New York
(1) 4  (2) 5  (3) 5  (4) 5  (5) 4  (6) 4
This book surprised me with its subject matter. The concept behind this book is something that I wonder about, but I have never seen it organized and presented in such wholeness before. In addition to its thought-provoking content, this book was beautifully executed and very user-friendly.

At my current job as an Account Executive, I manage an account whose computing products hold a very strong presence in the national market. This client is very sensitive when it comes to its target audience. In several of the national print campaigns that we produced for them, the client had specified for the photography to include an ethnically diverse cast. By now, it has become an unofficial rule and everyone involved in creating work for this client knows it by heart.

That’s why I can really appreciate Cultural Sensitivity in visual communication and what it tries to promote. I think this book is not only useful for people in the creative fields. Its topic is relevant to everyone that lives in the new culturally diverse America. Especially in the big cities like New York and Los Angeles, I believe this book would challenge people on the way they think about ethnic groups. And for people who work in the advertising industry, I think everyone from the creative department to the account team can benefit from educating themselves on behalf of their co-workers, clients and target audiences. This book would be a very handy tool to have at work.

Jerry W. Jung
Computer Systems Analyst, New York City
(1) 5  (2) 4  (3) 5  (4) 5  (5) 5  (6) 4
The author has presented her thesis in a visually stunning fashion, seamlessly integrating American and Chinese iconography and conventions, while cogently conveying a message that could not be more timely. At a period in U.S. history, when we appear to be on the precipice of war, I can see no more important example of the kind of conscience that is called for, an appeal to seek commonality, not discord.
From my perspective as a Chinese-American who has experienced racial bias on a first-hand basis, I can fully appreciate the significance of this author's thesis. This work provides a glimmer of hope that the future of this country will be influenced by a citizenry who fully appreciates the power of visual communication to bridge the divide between the ethnicities that define the fabric of this country. Only with heightened sensitivity and greater vigilance, will the images that we deem acceptable in our daily visual communication stream more accurately reflect the constituent cultures of this nation. When we no longer tolerate the insidious stereotyping that has persisted throughout the history of visual communication here in the U.S., as elucidated by the author in her thesis, the subliminal messages that undermine the inherent desire of our society to coexist peacefully will loosen its grip on intolerance.

It was in 1862 when the Red Cross prophet, Henri Dunant, wrote Un Souvenir de Solferino, his account of the Battle of Solferino. A phrase found in that book is as apropos today as it was nearly 150 years ago – “Tutti fratelli,” which means “All are brothers.” “Cultural Sensitivity in Visual Communication” serves to illustrate how the computer mouse that graphic designers hold in their hand has the potential to be as injurious today as the bayonets wielded on the battlefield in Solferino nearly 150 years ago.

The author started this project with the belief that there is a connection between visual communication and the world we live in. She focused on culture and used it as the theme of this project.

However, she did not know what to expect at the beginning of this project. The process and the outcome opened the window to a new world for her. Professor Grebinger enabled her to develop a greater appreciation of social anthropology and the research into this area that followed became the crucial cultural basis for the project. Professor Jack Slutzky challenged her on her design concepts. Professor Beardslee helped her tremendously with presenting the information gathered in a way that the audience could understand it. The author was most grateful that this project gave her the opportunity to work with people who are in other specialties and from whom she gained much insight.

The process could be broken down into three stages – research, writing, and design. Each one presented different challenges, but writing was certainly the most difficult, since English was not the author's native language. However, the author was so intrigued by the topic that these challenges became secondary in the process.

From numerous late nights of reading to visiting prominent figures and institutions, the author confirmed that the subject matter was more than a personally pertinent issue. It was inspiring for her to see the many dedicated people whose strong beliefs make them tireless in their efforts to make a difference in society.

The author realized that she could not have done this project without the help of all the people mentioned above. To her, this undertaking was an incomparable experience, forever coloring the prism through which she views the world.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation</td>
<td>Cultural changes that develop as a result of continuous firsthand contact between cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>An integrated system of meanings, values, and standards of conduct borne by a society and transmitted between generations by socialization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Pluralism</td>
<td>A concept of modern society based on an equilibrium of forces in which independent, non-inclusive social groups exercise a limited measure of democratic control though their access to the major elite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Relativism</td>
<td>The position that the values and standards of cultures differ and deserve respect. Extreme relativism argues that cultures should be judged solely by their own standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emic</td>
<td>Anthropological term. Emic constructs are accounts, descriptions, and analysis expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the native members of the culture whose beliefs and behaviors are being studied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group</td>
<td>An ethnic group or “ethos” consists of individuals who share a distinct culture and are “bound together by ties of cultural homogeneity” that result in a common way of perceiving thinking, feeling, and interacting with reality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnocentrism</td>
<td>Ethnocentrism is based on the assumption that one’s own culture was the center of the universe and that everything should be measured against it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etic</td>
<td>Anthropological term. Etic constructs are accounts, descriptions, and analysis expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the community of scientific observers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural</td>
<td>Designating or pertaining to a society consisting of several or many culturally distinct groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism</td>
<td>The characteristics of a multicultural society; a policy advocating the establishment of a multicultural society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particularity</td>
<td>Distinctive or unique culture trait and pattern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race, biological</td>
<td>Problematic concept; in theory, a abiological discrete group where members share certain distinctive traits inherited from a common ancestor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race, social</td>
<td>A group assumed to have some biological basis but actually perceived and defined in a social context – by a particular culture rather than by scientific criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>Racism is the belief that certain groups of people are innately, biologically, socially, and morally superior to other groups, based on what is attributed to be their racial composition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subcultures</td>
<td>Different cultural symbol-based traditions associated with subgroups in the same complex society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>Something that exist in every culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worldview</td>
<td>A culture's characteristic way of perceiving, interpreting, and explain the world.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BOOKS


**JOURNALS**


**MAGAZINES**

“Inclusion by Design,” *Metropolis*, March/April 1993


**MUSEUM PUBLICATIONS**


**PAMPHLET**

“Orientalism at the movies: How Hollywood images Asian Americans” on March 27 and 28 of 1993 at NYU.

**REFERENCE**


Statistical Records of Chinese Americans, Gale Research Group.