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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
IRVINE

PERCEPTIONS & IDENTITY

The Asian American Experience in the Commercial Dance Industry

THESIS

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in Dance

by

Beverly Jane Ilagan Ramirez Bautista

Thesis Committee:
Professor Jennifer Fisher, PhD, Chair
Associate Professor Chad Michael Hall
Professor Molly Lynch

2021

DEDICATION

to

my parents,

Bienvenido “Ben” Ramirez Bautista & Josefina “Josie” Ilagan Bautista

who, daily, teach me about life,
the value of family,
and my Filipina heritage.

You are my heroes.

– and –

In Loving Memory of my

“Tita” Doris Ilagan Blanco

January 21, 1955 – March 11, 2021

Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through
the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

- Romans 5:5

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

PERCEPTIONS & IDENTITY

The Asian American Experience in the Commercial Dance Industry

by

Beverly Jane Ilagan Ramirez Bautista

Master of Fine Arts in Dance

University of California, Irvine, 2021

Professor Jennifer Fisher, PhD, Chair

This research study investigates the perceptions, identities, and typecasting issues surrounding Asian American commercial dancers in Los Angeles through personal and historical contexts. My own experience as a commercial dancer in Los Angeles has led to questions about typecasting and how it relates to clichés in auditions and acquiring work and employment in the commercial dance industry. Interviews with professional dancers, a dance agent, a casting director, and a manager add perspective. Through a unique process during the COVID-19 global pandemic, I directed and created a short film exploring the need for connection to mixed heritage in the lives of five artists and performers. In this research study, I investigate my role as an Asian American artist, the importance of honoring the past, and the value of creating a future where the next generation finds space to do the same.

INTRODUCTION

My introduction to commercial dance was through my affinity for movie musicals. People on the screen, Aileen Quinn from *Annie* or Rita Moreno from *West Side Story*, didn't look like me, but it didn't seem to matter. I was caught up in dreaming about randomly breaking out into song and dance on the street! I repeated lines aloud in my household, "Till this stump, shines like the top of the Chrysler building!" or sometimes I'd wear my favorite skirt that effortlessly twirled to mimic Anita's solo in "America," the famous rooftop dance scene with the Sharks. This interest quickly blossomed into anything in film and television that involved dance sequences. Even before I had formal dance training, my first dance performance was an invitation to perform at a Filipino fundraiser dinner dance, Tanauan Batangas Organization of Chicago. For several years, I learned Filipino folk dances and the choreographer also copied Hollywood movie musical dance sequences and taught them to the group. This was my first memory of learning dance in a setting where others looked like me. Learning choreography came easy to me and my passion for dance grew into taking formal ballet classes. My parents may have initially considered it to be a hobby, but it wasn't just a hobby for me; I wanted to be a professional dancer. I remember feeling the worry and doubt from my parents as their youngest and only daughter sought to have a career in dance. Coming from a family of successful first-generation immigrants, they wanted me to have stability and a full-time job with benefits. I, too, wanted job stability, but I wanted it in the form of my passion. With much consideration and, finally, the support of my parents. I obtained my bachelor's degree in dance from Ball State University. Now, I had to turn my passion into a career.

I was unsure of my options; I didn't see myself as a ballerina, but perhaps a modern dancer, or maybe a jazz dancer. I didn't see many Asian-looking dancers in the concert dance

world, but that didn't matter to me at the time. It never crossed my mind because I was focused on dancing and catching up. Compared to my undergraduate peers, I started training in dance at a late age; however, my curiosity and aptitude for learning allowed me to progress quickly in new styles, one of them being hip hop choreography. My first workshop with commercial hip hop teachers from Los Angeles was with Lovar Davis Kidd and Kasper K. I didn't feel as though my body was made for ballet and I wasn't interested enough in modern to make it a career, but this workshop reminded me of jazz dance, which I enjoyed. I felt grounded, connected to the music and movement, and I wanted to learn more. The instructors each taught their own individual styles of hip-hop choreography for their classes, and it was fun and different from what I had studied as a dance major. For the first time in dance, I didn't feel like I had to look a certain way to dance. I was free to authentically be myself and it felt natural to show my personality through this dance art form. A fellow classmate at the time casually said to me, "I can see you moving to California." I was stunned and wondered why she said that. Perhaps because she could see me booking commercial dance jobs in Los Angeles with this form of dance? I was born and raised in the Midwest; my immediate family all lived in Chicago. Was this a possibility to move across the country for dance?

The thought appealed to me because I grew up listening to hip hop, R&B, and pop music on the radio; my brothers loved it. I realized I had never danced to this type of music in college dance classes but only heard it at house parties or campus-wide events. Hip hop was attractive to me because of its music videos during the early 2000's. I recorded music videos like Aaliyah's "Are You That Somebody" with choreography by Fatima Robinson or "What A Girl Wants" by Christina Aguilera with choreography by Tina Landon. Similar to my affinity for movie musicals, I wanted to learn all of the dance parts of music videos. My undergraduate dance

experience consisted of weekly classes in ballet, modern, jazz, musical theatre, and tap, but the Chicago hip-hop dance choreography scene drew me closer to what I would know to be as the commercial dance industry.

Dance rehearsals in Chicago focused on learning new choreography styles and preparing for underground hip hop community shows, which wasn't a way to make a living but more of a passionate hobby. In fact, it was only ever about supporting each dance community group and performing at unpaid events around the Chicagoland area--in this way my experience in Chicago did not prepare me for having to have any particular "commercial look." There didn't appear to be any stereotyping because the way I looked in terms of possible typecasting never mattered. The dance communities were diverse and predominantly consisted of first generation Filipino American dancers. Little did I suspect that in Los Angeles my Asian "look" would become so important.

In the Chicago area, I became aware of a place where hip hop classes were offered, called Monsters Dance, formerly known as Monsters of Hip-Hop. It was a "convention," where dancers gather to train over the course of a weekend with one or multiple teachers. The dance classes offered at a convention can be specialized, diversified, or many styles can be offered. Monsters Dance invites A-list choreographers from around the world who mainly work in film, television, tours, commercials, award shows, and music videos, focusing on opportunities for young dancers. Aspiring dancers often attend conventions in order to network with working choreographers in hopes of booking jobs in Los Angeles. The only time I ever thought about my look was when I was deciding on an outfit to wear for an audition class within the convention--what made me stand out? What did I look best in? I never felt that being Asian-looking ever mattered, but I did dye my hair purple and green because I wanted to stand out. I felt confident in

myself and my dance ability. All that mattered was becoming a better dancer--or so I thought. I began training regularly in hip hop.

Rooted in the dance and music forms of the African diaspora, hip hop is an umbrella term that includes many different forms and styles of dance that emerged “in marginalized neighborhoods of New York City in the 1970s,” starting with b-boying or breaking and then expanding into the mainstream and other communities, says hip hop historian Moncell Durden (184-6). Originators of hip hop dance lived in “the Bronx, Fresno and Los Angeles--Watts, Long Beach, and Crenshaw Heights” (Thompson 44), but the Chicago hip hop community I was later exposed to was in the suburbs of Chicago. It consisted mainly of commercialized versions of hip hop that were taught in dance studios, influenced by “the shift from community dancers to studio-trained dancers and the rise of the hip-hop video vixens,” in music videos and stage performances, which Durden characterizes as “not true hip-hop dance” (Durden 189). The Chicago demographic of hip hop dancers included a mix of those who enjoyed performing as a passionate hobby, as well as dancers who were interested in pursuing a career as commercial dancers in Los Angeles. Many of them took opportunities to perform at college competitions, showcases, and conventions.

Monsters Dance produced an annual dance show in Los Angeles and chose dancers from different cities around the nation to audition for it. A cast of 10-15 dancers would rehearse for two weeks in Los Angeles in front of dance agents and working choreographers. In Los Angeles, dancers need an agent to work on their behalf in order to have access to auditions and negotiate contracts for fair pay. I was surprised to find that I was scouted by a top dance agency through the Monsters Dance convention and show. They were impressed with my dance ability, gave me a folder with information about their agency, and gave me their business card to contact them if I

ever moved to Los Angeles. Before long, my dream of moving to the west coast became a reality to pursue a career in the commercial dance industry.

A job in commercial dance in Los Angeles can range anywhere from dancing behind a recording artist on a national tour, starring in a national commercial, dancing in a scene of a television show, or as a backup dancer in a music video. Karen Schupp, author of *Dance Competition Culture and Commercial Dance*, states that “since the term *commercial* refers to the marketing or exchange of a product for profit, *commercial dance* refers to the use of dance in the service of selling a product, with the product ranging from actual merchandise to a celebrity or brand (59). According to Colleen T. Dunagan, I moved to the area just when dance in television advertising became a part of American culture (5). I found right away that my look would include more than my dance skills. Although I had wanted my distinctive purple hair to make me stand out, I was advised quickly that my natural black hair was more effective in booking jobs. I found that looking Asian mattered a great deal when it came to commercial dance job opportunities.

In a decade of working in live and recorded television, commercials, and tours as a professional dancer, I had noticed I was sometimes grouped together with other dancers who looked Asian; sometimes I was cast as a different Asian ethnicity, sometimes made up to look like a “China doll,” and often felt like a “token” Asian-looking person in a small group. Yet, to me, it was all part of working with your look, booking good jobs based on networking relationships. It wasn’t on my mind when I decided to go to graduate school--I had simply started longing for more than what my “look” offered. I did wonder why I hadn’t learned anything about the commercial dance industry in college. How did Rita Moreno get to dance in *West Side Story* or how would I get to be a backup dancer with the recording artist Aaliyah? I

knew I wanted to dig deeper, and I hoped that through pursuing an MFA in dance, I could give the commercial dance industry a voice in its contribution to dance.

I had an interest in the topic of copyright and commercial choreographers when I started my graduate degree, but once the COVID-19 pandemic brought the world to a halt, my Asian-American identity started to matter to me in a new, gripping way. Between March 19th, 2020 and February 28, 2021, 88.6% of reported discrimination cases against people of Asian descent in America were due to verbal harassment or shunning to deliberately avoid Asian Americans (A3PCON). At this time, the media and various politicians in public speeches, on more than one occasion referred to the Coronavirus pandemic or COVID-19 as the China Virus, Kung Flu, Wu Flu, and the China Plague. I was upset to see the results of this rhetoric, that the Asian population was now at risk for being viewed as a monolith. It made me fear for my parents' lives and for my nephew who was adopted from China. It made me think of my entire family's lives being put in danger from a careless set of words being broadcast on television.

Much of my dance experience in Los Angeles has been the role of the only Asian dancer or a part of the collective group of Asian people on a dance job. I was hired for commercial jobs because of the way I looked, and for the first time in my life, I was worried about "looking Asian" just going to the grocery store. I was alert, questioned the way people looked at me, and quickly assumed they would accuse me of giving them the Coronavirus. I was afraid to cough in public; I still am. I immediately began to question and reflect on my identity and experience as a Filipino American commercial dancer. It brought up questions that eventually coalesced into my research questions: What have been the experiences of Asian Americans as they pertain to commercial dance auditions? How have dancers been cast and how has their look affected the outcome of their auditions? Do Asian American dancers perceive limitations in auditions?

My methodology included exploring literature of Asian stereotypes, focusing on concepts of Orientalism and “the model minority myth.” I am informed by stereotypes in the dance world recently called out in *Final Bow for Yellowface*,” in which dance activist Phil Chan says, “We all want to belong: when...that group is always the coolie, the slave, or the butt of the joke--or even the exotic (oriental) other--we internalize the embedded messages about belonging or not” (Chan 6-7).

In order to record more Asian voices in the field of commercial dance, as well as experiences and opinions of those in charge, I conducted a series of 11 interviews with dancers, former dancers, a casting director, a manager, and an agent (see Appendix A & Appendix B for interview questions). The decision to interview these dance professionals was based on their past experience in the commercial dance industry ranging from at least 5 years of experience to over 30 years of experience. People interviewed included those of full Asian heritage, mixed Asian heritage, and mixed Asian and European heritage. The five dancers who were interviewed identified as Asian American and had a minimum of five years of experience auditioning in the dance industry. Interviews took place from October 2020 to February 2021 through Zoom conference calls lasting from 30 minutes up to 1 hour. The group of five interviewees included women and two men, a small group limited by availability during my thesis research period. To further analyze the Asian American experience, I worked with 5 dancers and used guided prompts to create a dance film. The following prompts were given to each dancer: robotic and constructed, pulled in different directions, and what would it feel like if specific parts of your body sighed. My concept was to explore their exposure to Asian American history and have a dialogue about their experience as an Asian person of mixed or full heritage. This related to my research because several of my dancers are interested in pursuing a career in the Los Angeles

commercial dance industry or are interested in teaching dance as a profession. This short documentary dance film explores the Asian American identity, lived experiences, and common misconceptions of first-generation Asian Americans or second-generation Asian Americans. It explores this by using pictures from each dancer's childhood as well as writing and recording a self-manifesto, or declaration of their values and beliefs. This collaborative choreographic process took place from January 2021 to May 2021 in Los Angeles during the COVID-19 global pandemic and concluded with an option to view the thesis film online (see Appendix C).

CHAPTER 1: THE HISTORY OF ASIAN STEREOTYPING

I recall many times being on a production set cringing as I approached the “Hair & Makeup” chair. I would sit down and often think, “I hope they don’t make me look *too* Asian today. At least I brought my own makeup.” By “too Asian” I am referring to the image of a porcelain Chinese doll that lingered in my head when I looked at previous results of makeup on a commercial set. When I searched the internet for images of a Chinese doll, I found white painted faces, usually women, with rosy cheeks and winged eyeliner. I also found makeup tutorial videos of how to create the “Chinese Porcelain doll” look. Oftentimes after I would get my makeup done, I would look in the mirror to find that my cheeks were bright pink, and my skin was a shade lighter than my natural skin tone. I had started to bring my own makeup because I didn’t trust the makeup artists hired for the job. I wanted to be confident on set, so having a backup plan seemed the most beneficial strategy for me.

A related experience in public surprised me when I caught a woman staring at me at a restaurant. I saw her continuously whisper to her significant other and repeatedly smile back at me. She kept staring at me until I nervously smiled back at her, and then she said, “I’m sorry to stare, but you just look like a beautiful Chinese doll.” I was puzzled as to why I was such a *wonder* to this woman. Her comment made me uneasy. I knew she likely meant it as a compliment, but my partner who was with me at that moment was disgusted at the comment because he found it to be degrading to me. Peeling back the layers of her comment, it made me more curious about possible stereotypes attached to her “compliment.” What lies behind other Asian stereotypes?

In this chapter, I draw on Asian American history to explore common stereotypes. Themes that emerged as a focus include orientalism, exoticization, the model minority myth, the

hyphenated identity, tokenism, the perpetual foreigner stereotype, and the current controversy of Yellowface in ballet. As a child, I thought Asian stereotypes were comical and a part of common knowledge in society. It was normal for the kids in school to chant, “*Chinese, Japanese, dirty knees, look at these.*” If it was meant as a joke, then it was okay to laugh—or so I thought. Maybe it was my way of coping with the uncomfortable truth of history I had not learned yet or maybe it was my way of getting out of an awkward conversation. In elementary school, I read only one sentence in a history textbook that referred to the Philippines, and it was about fighting in World War II with the United States. I was proud to see my heritage in an American history book, but I wondered why was it only one sentence? My curiosity about my heritage continued into my formative years in junior high school and high school where I would hear the word “Oriental” being used to describe my ethnicity.

Orientalism

I’ve always wondered why non-Asian people have described Asian people as Oriental. Wasn’t “Oriental” how one would describe a rug, a souvenir from an Asian country, or even the font for a Chinese restaurant--the font that resembles several blades of swords to create the shape of a letter. Cultural critic, Edward Said, analyzes why Oriental was the name Western society gave to the Eastern society. “The choice of using the word ‘Oriental’ designated Asia or the East, geographically, morally, and culturally” (31). He defines Orientalism as “the basic distinction between the East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, etc.” (2). Said quotes “the West [was distinguished] from the Oriental as irrational, depraved, childlike, different whereas the European was rational, virtuous, mature, and normal” (40). In my dance experience, I have been cast in a ballet as the “Asian toy” wearing an Asian conical hat, otherwise known as a rice hat and clothing to depict a generalized version of an East

Asian farmer. I knew my costume was “different.” Looking back at pictures of this costume, I began to see the deep-rooted Othering and dehumanization of Asian culture at large. Othering is defined as “treating people from another group as essentially different from and generally inferior to the group you belong to” (“Othering,” Macmillan). This pattern of “Othering” has been the center of a recent controversy in dance culture through the Final Bow for Yellowface movement [Yellowface.Org], co-founded by Phil Chan, arts administrator and educator, and Georgina Pazcoguin, New York City Ballet soloist. Chan’s recent book, *Final Bow for Yellow Face: Dancing Between Intention and Impact*, discusses the caricatured portrayals of Asians in ballet, especially Balanchine’s *Nutcracker* (Chan 44). Chan’s critique of racist aspects in the second act “Tea” dance led to choreographic changes at the New York City Ballet, becoming the catalyst for a larger conversation about stereotypes and race in ballet companies across the globe (2). This movement holds ballet educators and companies accountable for perpetuating injurious portrayals, asking them to actively commit to eliminating stereotypes of east Asian cultures.

Exoticism

According to Merriam-Webster, exotic is defined as “introduced from another country, not native to the place where found, or mysteriously different or unusual” (“Exotic”). Los Angeles choreographer and teacher, Gigi Torres, spoke to me of her look at commercial dance industry auditions and how it was non-traditional due to her dyed red hair. Her agents at the time did not know how to categorize her when being sent out on auditions due to her unusual look (Torres). Historian and author, Erika Lee, sheds some light on one of the first times an Asian woman was “exoticized” in the U.S. When Afong Moy arrived, the first Chinese woman to arrive in the United States in New York in 1834, she was known as the “beautiful Chinese lady with bound feet” and put on display in an exhibit (Lee 31). Moy’s exhibit was viewed as an

“exotic curiosity,” a wonder to the world but framed as different and inferior in American society (32). I thought to myself, what if my hair was styled differently or my makeup less pronounced-- would the woman at the restaurant have approached me with the same response that she did? I then wondered what other scholars said about stereotypes.

I was curious about the casting of Asian American women in Hollywood and found several references to Anna May Wong, the “premier” Chinese American Hollywood actress of the 1920s spanning a career of over 40 years (Gao Hodges xv). Wong received international recognition for films like *Toll of the Sea* (1922), *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924), *Daughter of the Dragon* (1931), and *Shanghai Express* (1932). Her casting embodied various stereotypes, such as a hypersexualized woman, the self-sacrificing “Oriental” wife, a beautiful but treacherous slave, an exotic murderous dancer, a sly prostitute, or a vengeful daughter. She was cast in “demeaning roles that accentuated a western, often sadistic eroticizing of Chinese women” (209-210) in Hollywood, where she was labeled “Butterfly”, “China Doll”, “Lotus Flower” and “Dragon Lady” (Hodges xvi).

Model Minority Myth

In junior high school, I received the award for “Quietest Talker.” I didn’t have much to say; I wasn’t confident and was slow in establishing my friend group. The two friends that I did make in junior high school were both smart, kind, and happened to be Filipino. We were a specific type. Dr. Rosalind S. Chou, associate professor of sociology, and Joe R. Feagin, American sociologist and social theorist, describe how the model minority myth “was formed in the mid-1960s by white scholars, political leaders, and journalists who developed the model minority myth in order to allege that all Americans of color would achieve the American dream by working as hard and quietly, as Japanese and Chinese Americans supposedly did” (15). My

friends and I were the good kids. We did what we were told and were socialized to not create problems. We were expected to excel academically and be a well-rounded student. In 2013, a study by Sapna Cheryan, social psychologist and professor, and John Oliver Siy, user experience research and behavior scientist, conducted five studies that showed “being the target of a positive stereotype can negatively affect the interpersonal experience of Asian Americans” (Siy et al).

Moving into high school, standardized testing proved to be the most stressful of all challenges for me. When I received my results, I saw the graph that showed what the average score was, and my score results were just above average. My results were respectable, but I wanted to be excellent because I had high standards for myself. For a significant portion of my life, I felt like I had to work harder to be “smart.” I didn’t fit the narrative of the “smart” Asian who was an overachiever. I saw my friends excelling academically, receiving scholarships, and all I was good at was dancing, singing, and acting. The myth of the model minority was one that cast a shadow on individuals who don’t fit into it. The career of an artist is an uncommon career path for anyone, let alone for a Filipina American woman; most people in my family work in the medical field or have 9 to 5 jobs.

The Hyphenated Identity

I identify as a first generation, Filipino American woman—Filipino by heritage and American by experience and nationality, yet experience has taught me that many people only see “Asian.” Perhaps this is why Peter Feng, film scholar and race and ethnicity expert, points out the tension of the term “Asian American” developed in the 1960s. He saw labeling Asian Americans as a monolith to be problematic, since it encompassed a variety of distinct cultures. (Feng 89). Los Angeles dancer, singer, and actor Taeko McCarroll, states her frustrations of being half Japanese and half Irish. Some of McCarroll’s dance credits include American comedy

series *Austin & Ally*, the American musical comedy-drama television series *Glee*, as well as her current role in *Hamilton*, the Broadway musical. In Japan, she is often referred to as “gaijin” which translates to “foreigner” in English, but in the United States, she is often asked if she is half Mexican or Turkish. McCarroll actually changed her stage name from Carroll to McCarroll, which she found helpful in order to dispel the question she is often asked, “What are you?” Phil Chan, Chinese American dancer and activist offers another perspective on the hyphenated identity when he says, “my mixed-race heritage means I have a sense of having more than one set of lenses through which to view the world” and describes how being *both* shapes who you are” (18). Like Chan, McCarroll’s mixed race heritage can be viewed as “both.”

Tokenism

A term I have often heard throughout my life is tokenism, especially during my first year as a commercial dancer in Los Angeles. Tokenism is defined as “the policy or practice of making only a symbolic effort to do a particular thing, by recruiting underrepresented groups to give the appearance of equality” (“Tokenism,” Oxford). The first job I was hired on as a commercial dancer was a *direct booking*, a job hired solely through picture submission without an audition, for Oil of Olay, where I felt I was typecast as the *token*, or only, Asian dancer. Looking back, the fact that I was booked on my look, without anyone seeing me perform, makes me think that could have been the case. The term tokenism can be traced back to the early 1960s when various organizations in the United States, in an effort to be seen as “not racist”, highlighted the success stories of Asian American people. Volumes that profiled Asian “firsts” came out, such as *Citizens of Asian America*, by Cindy I-Fen Cheng, Professor of History and Asian American Studies; it highlighted Sammy Lee, the first Korean American Olympic gold medalist (90), Jade Snow Wong, author of *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, the first nationally acclaimed commercial book

written by a Chinese American (96), as well as Delbert Wong, the nation's first Chinese American judge (105). Cheng acknowledged the significance of being the "first" in a field and its responsibilities of actively working to "mitigate the racial divide." Wong saw the importance of giving back to the Chinese community, writing recommendation letters to aspiring judges (113-114). Even after the social advancements of these highly acclaimed individuals, there was still a continuing struggle of racism in America.

Perpetual Foreigner Stereotype

A 2011 study by Associate Professor Que-Lam Huynh, Professor Thierry Devos, and Professor Laura Smalarz analyzed the *Perpetual Foreigner Stereotype*. This stereotype studied "an individual's sense of belonging to mainstream American culture" and specifically showed that Asian American, African American, and Latinx American participants experienced a "high perceived discrimination, conflicts between ethnic and national identities and a lower sense of belonging to American culture" (Huynh et al 133). Even people born in the U.S. or naturalized citizens experienced negative conflict between ethnic and national identities.

In my experience as a commercial dancer, I would often *direct book*, or get hired to work a job without auditioning. This normally happens in the industry if a choreographer is casting for a certain "look" for a job. In my case, I would arrive on set and realize I was the only Asian dancer or in other cases, I would be in a group with other Asian dancers. One particular job was for an episode of *Shake it Up*, an American sitcom on the Disney channel. The show episode was called, "Made in Japan," and I was a part of a background group of dancers. Even though I wasn't of Japanese descent, I didn't think it was necessary to discuss it with my agents. I didn't question why I was put in that role, but I knew it was part of the bigger picture. I look Asian. I

don't look half Asian. I look unquestionably Asian. Booking this television show reminds me that I have always looked different from others my entire life, which can work for or against me.

CHAPTER 2: THE PERSISTENCE OF TYPECASTING

Studying the history of Asian American stereotypes allowed me to see a variety of ways Asians are Othered, but I realized there was little to no literature connecting these stereotypes to the commercial dance industry in Los Angeles. I knew stereotypes existed within the commercial dance industry, but I was surprised to find through interviews with Asian American dancers that conversations on the topic of stereotypes and typecasting didn't openly occur. Dancers I interviewed sometimes expressed their frustration with casting experiences and sometimes seemed okay with being typecast for roles. They saw it as checking a box, following directions, and executing a job. In order to make a living in the dance industry, performers often chose a job that pays well even if it meant being typecast.

The danger of Asians being viewed as a monolith can start with a casting call that specifies "Asian" but then eliminates performers because they look "too Asian" or "not Asian enough." No one can predict what "look" will support a brand, product, celebrity, company, or production. All the interviewees had very different experiences and each experience varied.

In terms of casting, my interviewees reported that bias has shifted in the past ten years, based on the kinds of descriptions that appear in audition breakdowns. This shift allowed performers of "All Ethnicities" to audition; however, specifying ethnicities in audition breakdowns could sometimes be useful to dancers. Some performers prefer the opportunity to dance at an audition before a cut is made, and some dancers prefer that if casting knows the "type" they want to book, to make the cut at the beginning of an audition. When dancers arrive and notice throughout the audition that a certain ethnic group has been kept, others eliminated, presumably a bias exists that is unspoken to avoid the appearance of bias. Performers can never

be sure why they are cast or rejected and continue to make the best decisions they can in the moment.

The Performer's Dilemma

The commercial dance industry thrives on a person's look, which is often developed and curated with the help of one's agent. Agents normally ask, what do you want to book? The dancer would then communicate a list of jobs they wish to attain during their time pursuing a commercial dance career. In tandem with this question, agents also generally have an idea as to what a dancer can book based on their look and dance background. Agents also consider what other dancers have booked in the past or what jobs are currently available. As a new dancer to the Los Angeles commercial dance industry in 2009, my first meeting with my former dance agent proved to dispel every notion of what I believed the industry to be, because I was asked to dye my purple hair back to black and take new headshots that showed more skin and my body shape. I didn't realize it at the time, but my former agents were encouraging me to follow stereotypical standards of what America views as Asian. This experience was opposite to one told to me by choreographer and dance educator, Gigi Torres, who identifies as a Filipina American woman. Torres's dance credits include performing with Columbian singer and songwriter Maluma and the American girl group the Pussycat Dolls, as well as a Michael Jordan "Let Your Game Speak" Nike Commercial. She had long, dark brown hair when she first started auditioning in the dance industry, and without consulting her agents, she dyed her hair red which made her appear to have a "very edgy look." Her agents told her it would be difficult to send her out on Asian-looking roles because they claimed, "since you're not so Asian, you better make sure that you're edgy [look] and your dance abilities are enough to get you through" (Torres). At this time in the industry, the ideal "Asian look" were the Harajuku back up dancers for recording

artist, Gwen Stefani. Torres recalls attending the closed call audition for Gwen Stefani and quickly realized after scanning the room that casting was looking for Japanese dancers. She saw dancers with straight black hair, winged eyeliner, fair skin color, and heard dancers speaking fluent Japanese to each other. Without the mandate for Torres to state her actual ethnicity, she was left to decide if she should stay or leave. Torres decided to walk out of the audition before it started because she didn't want to pretend to identify as any ethnicity other than Filipino. She felt that casting was looking specifically for a Japanese dancer and didn't feel morally right to audition for this job.

The Performer's Agency

The process of a commercial dance audition generally starts by receiving an "audition breakdown" from an agent or casting website. The audition breakdown contains pertinent details about parts to be cast, but dancers often report they are vague, then find out what the "look" has to be only by watching who is kept after cuts. Figure 1 was a 2010 commercial audition email from a casting website, perhaps something that might not appear today but indicating constraints and stereotypes of the past. The description calls for a "Japanese looking Asian girl, clean, [with a] pure image." I asked myself, what does this look like? Why would a *pure* Japanese looking, teenage Asian girl wear the requested wardrobe, tight pants and tight top? This juxtaposition relates to the Orientalist assumption that Asian women are gentle yet exotic and mysterious (Prasso xiii).

As a Filipina woman, would it be morally and ethically okay for me to audition for this role? Torres recalls another audition where dancers were put into categories and casting believed her to be of Latin descent:

It may be, since I have dark skin that it made me look Latin. When we were in auditions,

they would separate us: blondes here, brunettes here, Asians here, mixed people here, and Latin people here. So, I would always go into the Asian group, but they [casting directors and choreographers] would look at me and ask me to walk over to the Latin group. [As I walked over, I remember thinking to myself] I'm not Latin. I'm not mixed. I'm full Filipino.

Unfortunately, Torres's former agency did not make the effort to know her or to find out what she was interested in booking. She felt she was stereotyped by being sent to burlesque auditions and made to be exotic. Torres felt oversexualized and communicated to her agents to no longer send her on those auditions; however, Torres had to consider booking a certain number of jobs to financially support herself and still be represented by an agency. Is it better to perpetuate stereotypes making a living or wait for the next job with integrity?

Figure 2 was a dance audition for an award show which asked for a "strong Asian look." As opposed to a "weak Asian look," which might resemble mixed heritage, strawberry blond hair and freckles. In terms of typing ethnicities, the features considered as "strongly Asian" might be almond shaped eyes, straight black hair, and fair skin. Perhaps the description indicated in Figure 2 was similar to what dancer and fitness instructor, Ashley Lee, experienced when she was referred to as "extremely Chinese looking." Some of Lee's dance credits include the 66th Primetime Emmy Awards, an Acura TLX commercial, as well as music videos with top recording artists. She said her look worked to her advantage because she booked several commercials for the Chinese and Vietnamese industry. But she was baffled at the description, trying make sense of how others perceived her without success.

Casting breakdown descriptions may indicate a certain degree of potential bias in what casting directors see as "really" Asian, and when they are vague, they may hope to avoid accusations of stereotyping. In October 2020, a controversy arose when a talent agency was more specific in describing the *kind* of Asian they were seeking. They asked for both an adult actor

and the actor playing her child to have eyes that were “almond-shaped” but not “too downturned.” It specified “no monolid,” an eye shape where eyelids do not have a visible crease and a longtime stereotype of Japanese Americans post World War II (Murphy). The agency wrote a public apology acknowledging the casting notice as an “inexcusable oversight” by the company. It highlighted the “larger issue within the entertainment industry” and addressed the harm with over generalizations within the casting process (Kappler).

Audition Time: 12/8/2010 11:50:00 AM
Role Name: Asian girl (teenager)
Run/Usage: see project info below
Rate: \$1,000+20% a day including buyout
Description: Japanese looking Asian girl, clean, pure image...
Wardrobe: casual tight pants and tight top

Figure 1. Commercial audition notice 12/7/2010

They will be looking specifically for a strong Asian look.

Figure 1. Part of dance audition notice 6/21/2016

YOKI

Female 18 to 20 years old, East Asian-China, Japan etc. Fantastic dancer

SUPPORTING

CHARACTER- first year from Tokyo. Short of stature but long of talent. Yoki, still adjusting to the culture shock, says little, despite her mastery of English, somewhat funny.

Figure 2. Dance audition notice 7/22/2017

Professional dancer, Vienna Luu, shared her story of an audition for a major artist when she was not told what the audition was for, only that they were casting for “various projects.” A few of Luu’s dance credits include *Trolls World Tour*, the American computer-animated musical comedy film, an industrial motion capture job for PlayStation, as well as a featured role in a

music video for the American girl group, Danity Kane. At the audition in question, she saw two rounds of dancers being cut, leaving only Asian female dancers, which turned out to be the “look” they wanted. Luu states how this audition could have been an instance where typecasting would have been okay for casting directors to indicate on the audition breakdown, instead of going through the motions of an open call. She states, “It would have been a cool thing to hear that they were looking for primarily Asians, especially for a high-profile artist.” Luu didn’t know how dancers were to be used for this project, but clearly, they only kept Asian dancers, so it would have been helpful for the audition breakdown to state what casting was looking for.

Seasoned actress and working dancer for over 30 years, Cinderella Che, identifies as a Chinese American woman. She has played roles ranging from a mother, to a masseuse, to an Asian Madam in Michael Jackson’s “Smooth Criminal,” as well as dancing in the movie *La La Land*. Che shared her insight about being cast as a Chinese woman, emphasizing that there are many variations within that description. Che believes typecasting to be a good thing because she is confident with what she has to offer as a dancer and actor who happens to be Asian. She spoke of descriptions of roles such as the “Chinese tiger mom” being the equivalent to casting looking for a “blonde, free spirited role.” Lisa Lindholm, vice president of Go 2 Talent agency in Burbank, California echoes that idea “since the commercial dance industry is a business, and it’s a business that is going to stereotype and put people in boxes and categories.” In other words, Che and Lindholm saw descriptions on audition breakdowns as instructions or perhaps guidance for a certain kind of look, with opportunities for the person portraying the role to add their own personal flair. Che seems to have found a healthy balance of respecting her artistry and her personhood.

Che also makes the point that an actor can have some choice or effect change when asked to portray a Chinese stereotype. She auditioned for the part of a Chinese mother in a film and was directed to speak very loudly all the time with a very thick accent. Che didn't like that because it seemed a broad stereotype, so she asked the casting director to ask the writer if this was someone the writer knew or if it was the writer's idea of someone who spoke like that. It turned out the part was based on the writer's Asian mother. She decided to accept the call-back audition, but not fall into all aspects of the stereotype, taking her accent to a slight accent instead. The updated script indicated the character now being "slightly" accented instead of a "heavily" accented.

Casting's Perspective Behind the Scenes

My assumption that Asian Americans are not usually cast in non-stereotyped roles or leading roles was confirmed by Murphy. He recognized often seeing Asians cast as computer hackers on procedural shows, medical technicians, a friend to the lead actress, or even the bitchy sidekick; however, he sees writers today now providing more roles for non-white ethnicities: Indian, African American, and Asian American to name a few. He says as long as network leaders are buying diverse scripts, that is how representation will increase.

On the other hand, Murphy and Lindholm confirmed the language and description for roles and typecasting in America has become more general in audition breakdowns stating, "Please submit all ethnicities for all roles." This blanket, supposedly "inclusive," description gives opportunities for dancers of all ethnicities to be seen in auditions, but it does not offer hope that underused ethnicities will be cast or that stereotyped ethnic roles will change. Lindholm emphasizes that despite evidence to the contrary, auditions calling for Asian types will list

specific ethnicities like Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese, etc. in order to differentiate between cultures.

Eric Emery, principal manager of Emery Entertainment says he has seen a positive shift in diversified representation in Los Angeles. To illustrate previous attitudes, he highlights a story of an instance at an opening night industry party. He wanted to pursue an Indian woman who he was eager to represent but was shut down by former colleagues who claimed, “there is no opportunity for Indian women.” He continued to fight to represent her and ended up convincing his former team to represent her. She was and continues to be a very successful actress in the industry, but Emery admits, “I understand that we may have to convince people and we may have to change some minds.” Although Emery, Lindholm, and Murphy’s thoughtful responses never discussed discrimination in the past regarding Asian Americans, all of them referred to challenging the Asian stereotypes and sending Asian talent out on non-traditional roles.

As I reflected on these interviews with Torres, Lee, Che and industry administrative professionals, I wondered what my cast of thesis dancers would encounter in the commercial dance industry. Regardless of what they choose, they have the ability to use their voice like Cinderella Che, to acknowledge and ask further questions if something doesn’t seem or feel right. The insight of the interviewed dancers also offered inspiration for my thesis documentary dance film. Considering the stereotypes and history of Asian Americans, I found the best way to create a dance film was through the voices of the next generation of dancers.

CHAPTER 3: CREATING AN ASIAN AMERICAN SHORT DOCUMENTARY DANCE FILM DURING THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC

The planning process of my choreographic work to support my written thesis began in December of 2020. It took over five months of planning, rehearsing, filming, and editing, concluding in May of 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been many limitations with my choreographic work, but I was determined to create something that would support my topic of identity and perceptions of Asian Americans. I initially had in mind to create an in-person, interactive dance concert, but I quickly realized that option wasn't available for health and safety reasons. Instead, I created and directed a dance documentary film featuring five undergraduate UC-Irvine dance majors (see Appendix C). I missed the in-person, ephemeral experience of dance, so it was only natural to create a dance film that included conversations with my cast of dancers. Some limitations included more than one dancer not being shown in a scene, filming a dancer at least six feet away, and finding a safe, outdoor area with minimal to no people around the filming location. With these limitations, I decided I could still highlight each dancer's reflection on their heritage and how it influences their journey as a dancer.

Rehearsal Process

My experience as a choreographer has traditionally occurred in person in a studio, using music as inspiration. Listening to music is how I innately build a narrative, create movement, and produce my vision through dance and film. I have either choreographed ahead of time and taught choreography to my dancers, or I have choreographed on the spot with dancers physically in a studio with me. I find the latter process to work best because it is highly collaborative, inspirational, and feels like painting on a blank canvas. Instead, I was challenged to hold my

rehearsals on a remote, Zoom platform, using both individual and group dancer meetings. In past choreographic work, studying the music was an important step of the process, with music becoming my through-line to find a narrative and complete the work. Another influence came from past jobs of dance in film in the commercial dance industry, giving me ideas about capturing movement on film with my unique style and voice. My process in creating dance for film didn't necessarily have to be in one particular order, and in this case, I did the exact opposite and directed the movement of the dancers first. The music was created last as an artistic choice, during the editing process. I used guiding prompts and prior conversations in rehearsals to reflect the mood and quality of the movement that was filmed. Each prompt called for different intentions and I wanted each dancer to emotionally interpret those intentions through the camera in their own authentic way.

Having chosen a cast of dancers with different kinds of Asian ethnicities, I encouraged each dancer to begin or continue their awareness regarding their heritage as it relates to dance. It was important for me to highlight ethnicity as a topic, but equally, to share that they are more than their outward appearance. I chose a documentary style in order to share the rehearsal process of my film and share the lives of dancers who identify as Asian or Asian American. I was interested in hearing the voices of my dancers throughout the film.

The first Zoom rehearsal with the whole cast started with an introduction to share my subject matter, the perceptions and identity of Asian Americans. I asked each dancer about their particular journeys into dance, hoping to reveal how dance connected to their Asian identities. One talked about starting dance late, while several other dancers mentioned they were a part of competitive dance studios. Another dancer shared with me what it was like to be mixed heritage in dance studio of predominantly Asian dancers. This dancer, whose heritage is half Filipino half

white, was considered the white dancer in a group of predominantly Asian dancers, yet had the exact opposite experience in another setting, feeling identified as the Asian dancer in a group of predominantly white dancers. Another dancer felt isolated in their dance classes because of their Asian-looking features, which was their first-time experiencing discrimination based on ethnicity. Another had never experienced any discrimination, implicit bias, or micro-aggressions so far in their young adult life. These conversations eventually resulted in the three prompts below, which were used to inspire improvisation throughout the film:

1. Robotic/constructed
2. Being pulled in different directions
3. What would it feel like if specific parts of your body “sighed”?

The final task I assigned during their last rehearsal for the dancers was to write their own self-manifesto and share it by recording their voice and reading their manifesto aloud. This would be used in the film’s soundtrack.

The three prompts became the foundation of how I guided each dancer through rehearsal improvisations and during their filming days. I didn’t realize it at the time but working with these prompts was also a way for me to process current events, such as increased Anti-Asian rhetoric, and alarming attacks on Asian people. Naming the responses to anti-Asian sentiment through guided improvisational prompts reminded me of coping with potential bias that some Americans were displaying—ignoring it, feeling pulled in different directions, sighing with different parts of the body. I was curious to know how my dancers were processing this weekly, practically daily, news of verbal abuse, physical abuse, even attacks resulting in serious injuries or death. I found

out that several dancers had been following the news, while some only found out through our conversations and rehearsals together.

Filming Process

After four weeks of rehearsal over the Zoom platform, each dancer prepared for an individual film shoot in-person in Los Angeles, California. Due to COVID-19 safety measures, each dancer was required to wear a face mask until the time when they would be filmed. There were also unique filming restrictions according to UC-Irvine rules; for example, if I were to have two dancers in one scene, both dancers would need to be 10 feet apart from each other; or if I filmed a dancer up close, they would need be 6 feet apart from me, and I wore a mask, as well. This was possible by using an enhanced zoom feature on my camera.

Sometimes I wonder what it would have been like if I didn't have these restrictions, because they slightly changed my filming process and the number of dancers I could have in one shot; however, I also made discoveries, especially finding a unique way to highlight each dancer in a creative way. As a director, I decided on the overall aesthetic of the movement, the intention behind the improvisation, and the connection dancers had with the camera. My cast had experience mostly with stage performances, so I found it necessary to guide their eyeline, so that their improvisational intention could be read by the camera.

Each dancer was also asked to film themselves doing two tasks over a span of four weeks. Their first task was to film their reactions to the prompts in their own spaces at home. Their second task was to capture a scene in their everyday life on film. Ideas for this scene could range from interacting with friends or family, to working, reading, or relaxing in their free time, as long as it was a part of their daily routine. The goal was for them to capture this in a very

casual and natural way in order to share more of their personalities through film. On another filming day, each dancer came to be filmed at sunset at a specific alleyway location in Costa Mesa, California. The camera, used to film them, a Mevo ® Start camera paired with a Mevo Camera App, could stand alone and be operated by a phone app, allowing for compliance with COVID-19 restrictions. Away from the general public as well as the director, each dancer could dance freely during their film shoot without a mask. They arrived in separate time frames and the original prompts were used to inspire their dance improvisation. The idea was for each dancer to feel spatially restricted in the alley way as opposed to their final filming location which was spatially open and vast.

Four weeks after their first shoot, they gathered individually for the final scene to be filmed at sunrise and located at the Sepulveda Dam in Van Nuys, California. A hand-held camera, provided through a grant from the Claire Trevor School of the Arts, was used to capture a more cinematic experience of the dancers' movement. Using more close-ups and moving shots of the dancers, it provided an opportunity for myself as a director to explore how I wanted the dancers to be captured individually on film. After seeing and guiding their movement quality in rehearsals, I found several ways for the camera to highlight the robotic and mechanical movement quality by starting close up and zooming the camera out. If I wanted to provide a visual effect of the dancers feeling like they were being pulled in different directions, I asked them to travel and utilize the wide, open space.

Discoveries

Looking back on the video shoots, I wondered how I could better help the dancers transition from remote Zoom rehearsals to outdoor filming locations and dancing for the camera.

I think everyone's energy as a whole needed work in the beginning due to early call time, but overall, the dancers enhanced their performances as the film shoot progressed. In my experience, I've found that in order for the energy of a performer to translate through a camera's lens, they must imagine dancing in a stadium and reaching the people sitting in the highest seats, even if performing soft or sustained movement. If I were to do it again, I would have also communicated my overall shot list more clearly to my dancers. I believe this would have given me a clearer idea of communicating effective shots and coaching the dancers throughout the shoot.

Collaborators

The collaborators and dancers cast in the film were: Karalyn Doolaege, Miriya Lee, Lenard Glenn Malunes, Amanda McCarthy, and Naomi Sagen. In some respects, it seemed that their ages (19-22) might have influenced their responses, some dancers being confident in their responses and some still discovering their voice. It surprised me that a few of them very minimally connected with it, never having explored it or intentionally spoken about their heritage to other people or family members. Being connected to my heritage is something that is innately a part of my life--from cooking or eating Filipino food to hearing my parents speak their native language, Tagalog, to traveling to my homeland, the Philippines. I was curious to ask each dancer about their experience growing up, their exposure to their heritage, and their journey to pursue dance as a career. They offered thoughtful and contemplative responses. The process inspired a few of them to talk to other family members about their specific ethnicities, and one wants to travel to their mother's homeland once it is safer to travel internationally. Another dancer is interested in making cultural connections to their heritage beyond food for the first time. I was inspired by their open attitudes and felt happy they were more curious about their own cultures.

Post-Production

The editing process proved to be the most difficult of all because, although I had provided a shot list for each film shoot, I wasn't married to a particular editing style other than creating a documentary-like beginning and a screen dance ending for the final product. My experience had mainly been performing for the camera, choreographing for the camera, and creating screen dances; however, in this instance, I wanted to challenge myself to combine forms by creating both a documentary and a dance film in order to include dialogue of each dancer's thought process regarding their heritage.

It was important for me to hire an editor during the post-production process because due to time restraints, it would be most beneficial for me to communicate my ideas to a film editor and have them edit my film. The film editor who agreed to take on this task was Brian Salazar, a longtime friend, actor, dancer, and artist who is originally from Chicago, now based in Los Angeles. When I shared the topic of my thesis with him, there were many things that he could relate to as a Filipino-American himself. Brian and I had several meetings before I sent him footage and instructions. In addition to rehearsals, there were recordings of group meetings and each dancer reading their personal manifesto. The documentary portion of the film leaves the impression of a "Work in Progress," which suited the way I wanted the dancers to introduce themselves. The first audio track is a mixture of each dancer's voice and the footage is a mixture of the different close-ups of each dancer. The second audio track was created and mixed by beat maker and producer, Neil Blanco, a fellow artist and first cousin. To see my vision of a documentary come to life, I realized that section would be the most challenging, given the complex task of matching the audio track of the dancers' voices to the footage of their dancing. The audio essentially became the score of the documentary.

The process of directing, creating, and producing this film was difficult for both pandemic and personal reasons, but I was committed to the process. I wanted to explore my Asian American identity during this difficult time and wanted to explore that process with other dancers by recording their voices and dancing bodies. I am grateful for the commitment of my dancers because their encouragement and support inspired me to keep pushing forward with my vision for the dance film. My main goal of the film was for each dancer to share their experiences as an Asian American as well as how their look affected interactions with others growing up. I was surprised to find that some of them now felt inspired to explore their cultural heritage on a deeper level.

CONCLUSION

“Don’t get in your head about what you think they want because *none of it exists*. They [casting] don’t actually know what they want until [you] walk in the room. The truth is, they may have an idea, but you may be exponentially better than what their idea was.”

Eric Emery, Manager at *Emery Entertainment*

This quote from one of my interviewees resonated with me as I reflected on my journey in the commercial dance history in Los Angeles for the past 12 years. Maybe it’s because it’s what I wish I had told my 24-year-old self before I moved from Chicago, Illinois to Los Angeles, California. My curiosity led me to discover through reviewing literature, interviewing professional dancers, interviewing industry administrative professionals, and creating a dance documentary film during COVID-19, that art has the power to encourage awareness and understanding. For a long time, I was ashamed to only vaguely know the history of Asians in America, but when I started my research process, I quickly realized my passion to learn had been there all along.

A profound realization throughout this process was how my artistry thrives through conversation, community, and collaboration. I was surprised to find myself resonating with stereotypes and ideas from literature like the *Perpetual Foreigner Stereotype* or the *Model Minority Myth* and hope to bring these topics to light through future choreographic works. Even through the COVID-19 global pandemic, there was still a way to create art in a safe and unique way with a committed cast of dancers and production team. Conversations about Asian American heritage with my thesis film dancers and reflections of rising Asian American hate reports allowed me to see that it’s urgent to continue this conversation throughout generations. I hope this empowers my cast of dancers to be more curious in how their heritage, even if they don’t fully relate to it now, is related to their artistry.

When I approached Cinderella Che, actress and dancer, with the question, “Do you get asked about ethnicity or origins and do others tend to define you according to your look?” she responded with, “I think they see *me* first—my soul, my being. And if we have time to hangout, then they ask me where I’m from.” I think about her words because it is how I hope to see America and the world at large. It was and still is painful to read devastating news about animosity directed against Asian people and to continually see the hashtag #stopaapihate throughout the media, but it all comes back to hope. This research is about building that hope from foundational knowledge, critical thinking, and curiosity, because, despite the bad, I am committed to acknowledging the good. After all, I’m grateful my parents decided to travel from the Philippines to the United States in 1974 in order to create a new life and build a family. Their decision has given me the opportunity to pursue art and remember the significance of intentionally connecting to my Filipina American heritage.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH COMMERCIAL DANCERS

Have you ever had experience with typecasting?

How do you identify yourself in terms of dance and background?

Is that how people see you in the industry--in terms of casting?

Did you have any role models that looked like you as you came up? Was that important?

If interviewee identifies as a dancer, do you get asked about ethnicity or origins? Do others tend to define you according to your look?

Is being Asian American (or the way they define themselves) something you think about in terms of your success? Are there advantages or disadvantages?

How do you think the way you look affects auditions? In what ways?

All casting agents receive breakdowns, or descriptions, of what type is required for a job, are you aware of what they think you fit into?

Do you think that you receive dance jobs that could have been filled by any dancers or because you fit into an "Asian" type?

Do you get sent for certain jobs because of how you look?

Do you think your look works for you in a positive or negative way?

From your perspective, have you seen changes over time in terms of how you are cast or how others who look Asian are cast?

Do you think of trying to make a difference when it comes to typecasting?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH TALENT REPRESENTATIVES (Dance Agent, Casting Director, & Manager)

Can you tell me more about how a person's talent and/or look factors into them booking a job in the Los Angeles commercial industry?

What are some examples of breakdowns?

When it comes to Asian Americans, how are they typecast from your experience? Do you see them cast in certain or specific roles?

Tell me more about your experience with typecasting.

Does anything frustrate you within this job?

Do breakdowns encompass visible minorities? Are breakdowns allowed to say "Asian types"? Please elaborate.

What do your clients tell you about their experience with typecasting? Do you always tell the talent the same thing?

APPENDIX C

THESIS FILM ARCHIVAL VIDEO ACCESS

To request access to the short documentary screendance, *With Love, Beverly Jane Ilagan Ramirez Bautista*, please contact Beverly Jane Bautista at beverlyjanebautista@gmail.com.