

## Male Social Constructions in the Novel Interior Chinatown by Charles Yu

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**Abstract.** Gender is a social construction through which individuals relate to their social environment. The social construction of gender dictates the masculine and feminine roles deemed appropriate within a society. The study aims to explore how Wu's character in the novel Interior Chinatown and his interactions sheds light on the challenges faced by Asian Americans in navigating their cultural heritage within a predominantly white society. The research method used in this study is qualitative research. Specifically, the study uses descriptive research primarily focusing on describing the characteristics of the main character. In this qualitative research, the main instrument in data collection is humans, namely the researchers. Researchers as instruments can immediately analyze data obtained from written objects, such as books, magazines, diaries, novels, videos, and so on. The research method involves collecting and analyzing data showing the forms of social constructions and the impact on Wu's personality based on Burr's masculinity theory. In the technique for collecting data, the researchers read the novel, then underline and write the dialogue containing the social construction in the novel, and the last collect the data of sentences that have been underlined. For the technique for analyzing data, the researchers classify and categorize the data narrations also dialogue that shows the social construction and its impact on Willis Wu's personality based on Burr's perspective. The results of this study include the forms of social constructions contained in the novel Interior Chinatown consist of two types, namely social construction caused by race and media. Meanwhile, the impact of social constructions on Willis Wu's personality includes two types; frustration and ambition. The researchers conclude that social construction plays a significant role in shaping individuals' lives and opportunities.

**Keywords:** Social Construction, Interior Chinatown, Burr's Masculinity Theory

## Introduction

Gender is a social construction that determines how a person relates to their society. Sexuality and genital inheritance are the main factors that determine gender. Consequently, this creates social roles and behavior patterns that are judged and accepted in society based on one's gender orientation directly or indirectly. Therefore, every society has determined the gender roles and expected social behaviors of the two conventional genders that make up society. Masculinity, on the other hand, has undergone a crisis of models and forms as the society-directed feminism movement emerged (Ebekue, 2019). Furthermore, the roles attached to both females and males, called stereotypes, are known for labeling them based on the acuity of a specific group. It then always results from gender discrimination (Aprilia & Neisya, 2022).

The roles of masculinity and femininity in society are determined by the social construction of gender. Throughout history, women have traditionally been assigned the role of mother and primary caregiver, leaving fathers often marginalized in their role as parents.

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This is exemplified by the difference in rights between fathers and mothers in terms of parenting responsibilities (Amato, 2018).

The traditional roles of men and women are defined to ensure the power of the head of the family. Historically, the head of the family has always been male. In society, men tend to be the head of the family with the highest status; they are strong, brave, and dominating. Leadership, heterosexuality, and authority are demanded from men (Yenti & Neisya, 2020).

Related to the topic of Asian males, they are often considered a good catch because the stereotypes there assume that Asians are well-educated, hardworking, stable, and property or business owners. Masculinities in social constructions refer to the social roles, behaviors, and meanings prescribed for men in any given society at any one time. The above stereotypes are similar to the ones about Asians in the United States. Social constructionism helps view masculinity as a social process that changes depending on a man's interactions and cultural environment. Social constructionists look past biological differences and reproductive anatomy, and instead consider how men are social beings that use symbols and practices to establish themselves as group members (Hagedorn, 2019).

One of the novels that captured this cultural phenomenon is *Interior Chinatown*. The male social construction is a flourishing issue in it. The novel *Interior Chinatown* delves into the experiences and struggles of Asian Americans, particularly focusing on issues of cultural identity and assimilation. Researching this novel allows for an in-depth analysis of the complexities and nuances of the Asian American experience, including topics such as racial stereotypes, cultural expectations, and the search for belonging (Tan, 2020). The study of masculinity and male social constructions has gained significant attention recently as scholars, psychologists, and sociologists aim to understand how these constructs shape men's experiences, behaviors, and identities.

The researchers found several previous studies that used the same issues. Amato (2018) investigated social constructions, entitled *The Social Construction of a Possible Male Gender Bias is Negatively Impacting Fathers in Child Welfare Services: Hammering a Square Peg into a Round Hole*. The result of this study is the social construction of a male gender bias towards fathers may be impacting fathers in CWS (child welfare services). Like "hammering a square peg in a round hole" biases toward fathers create parenting issues and may affect their involvement with their children.

Moreover, Hanna & Gough (2020) investigated social constructions, entitled "The social construction of male infertility: a qualitative questionnaire study of men with a male factor infertility diagnosis". This paper examines how work and finances are managed and negotiated during infertility, including treatment cycles.

In another research, Nur (2021) investigated "Taiwanese American discrimination in Charles Yu's novel *Interior Chinatown*." This study focused on Taiwanese American discrimination in the *Interior Chinatown* novel by Charles Yu. The results of this study are the forms of discrimination against Taiwanese Americans in the novel *Interior Chinatown* consist of two types, namely direct discrimination and indirect discrimination. The causes of Taiwanese American discrimination in the novel *Interior Chinatown* consist of two factors, they are stereotypes and prejudice.

All of the research above shows that the topic of masculinity or male social constructions is very interesting because it shows the complex and ever-evolving nature of gender roles and societal expectations placed on men. The study of masculinity and male social constructions has gained significant attention recently as scholars, psychologists, and sociologists aim to understand how these constructs shape men's experiences, behaviors, and identities. However, there is still not yet research on the novel *Interior Chinatown* by Charles Yu using Burr's theory.

Many literary works raise the issue of masculinity, especially on male social construction. The data of this research is classified based on Burr's (2018) theory that the literature on masculinity as a social construction takes into account the influence of race, media, and pornography in shaping men's performances of masculinity. It highlights the malleable nature of masculinity and how societal norms and expectations interact with individual experiences, leading to diverse expressions of manhood. Understanding

masculinity in this context encourages a more inclusive and nuanced approach, fostering healthier and more authentic notions of manhood that are not confined by harmful stereotypes and limitations.

This research will be helpful to contribute to enriching literary research, especially in the field of male social constructions that are mostly found in literary works. This research is also beneficial for finding the form of Asian guy social constructions, especially in America. The topic of masculinity or male social construction is academically interesting because it allows an exploration of how gender norms are formed, how they impact an individual's well-being, how they intersect with other social categories, and how they can be redefined to promote equality and social change. The study aims to explore how Yu's portrayal of characters and their interactions sheds light on the challenges faced by Asian Americans in navigating their cultural heritage within a predominantly white society.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Social Constructions by Burr**

The core tenets of the social constructivist approach are how to understand and not perceive the world and objects (including people). Events in it necessarily reflect the nature of the world but rather are a product of what the world is like expressed or produced by language. For example, what we perceive as trees, from a social builder's point of view, is essentially a result of how to classify ("flower", "shrub", "weed") are produced through language rather than being a natural consequence of our perceptual capabilities. That is not to suggest that trees do not have various "natural" characteristics that could be identified and charted, but rather that what are deemed to be the defining characteristics of trees are primarily a product of language. This argument is perhaps best exemplified using social rather than naturally occurring phenomena (Burr, 2017).

Despite the vast amount of research on masculinity, this study will focus specifically on the social construction of Asian men and further discuss masculinity from a social constructionist perspective. The literature on masculinity as a social construction will consider how race, media, and pornography shape representations of male masculinity by using social constructionist theory to analyze masculinity and examine how men construct masculinity. Social constructionism sees people as "fluid, fragmented, and changeable groups, distributed and produced through social interactions and relationships" (Burr, 2018).

Social constructionism emerged in social psychology in the 1970s and 1980s, taking up many of the issues raised as part of the earlier "crisis" in social psychology and becoming a critical voice challenging the agenda of mainstream psychology. In particular, it challenged psychology's individualistic, essentialist, and psychic model of the person, replacing it with a radically social account of personhood in which language is key (Burr, 2019).

#### **Masculinity**

One element of emerging men's studies is the idea that masculinity should be visible and promoted as an object of study, rather than treated as an unlabeled category (just as women or gays are labeled categories that cannot be easily ignored or forgotten). One of the main approaches to masculinity is to consider when and why men are in a state of crisis, or a socio-historical moment in the definition of what should or must change. The idea that masculinity changes over time and that certain moments in history are more stressful for men than others is standard in thinking about historicity (Reeser, 2018).

Masculinity can be said to be the ideal traits inherent in men and close to men, such as masculinity, strength, dominance, aggressiveness, rationality, etc. Masculinity is not only formed in men. Masculinity is defined as a gendered practice shaped by social and cultural structures. Social and cultural construction in cultural life is a long process. However, after going through a long process, gender issues are considered God's destiny, biological, and cannot be changed. Thomas Carlyle has an opinion on masculinity, that masculinity is perceived as something independent, strong, and action-oriented, is considered a measure of masculinity, and is synonymous with visual masculine masculinity (Wibowo, 2013).

Masculinity implies a set of values possessed and exhibited mostly by men concerning the opposite gender. These values appear in different dimensions and are used as adjectives to qualify the manly nature in different situations. Masculinity is often attributed to body appearance. Strong muscles and hard physical looks are most times considered masculine. Thus, macho and depictions of raw power are also considered masculine. In effect, the social construction of masculinity about specific body appearance has created a standard for a typical male body which must be macho, muscle, and sturdy in appearance (Ebekue, 2019).

### **Male Social Construction in Asian American Society**

The social constructions of men in Asian and American societies may differ significantly due to cultural, historical, and social factors. Each society views and creates men according to the customs and traditions of that society, so there are differences in how societies create men. Asian societies create men differently from American societies. In Asian societies, masculinity is perceived differently from the hegemony of American masculinity. In other words, Asian societies have created new men who are not male-dominated and do not see masculinity as gendered. Asian societies have created a new type of man based on spiritual power. For example, Asian men feel neglected and attacked when Asian women date different men, such as American or African men. This is a clear example of the challenges of Asian men's pride and masculinity in the workplace. Men must stand up and defend themselves or show their masculinity to Americans (Ivypanda, 2020).

Unlike the Asian people in constructing masculinity, American society constructs a hegemonic masculinity. American masculinity is characterized by pride and power. Defending family, friends, and those in need in society is the ideology of American men. Because of society's expectations of masculinity, young Americans often invest time and money into building muscle, sometimes even considering going into bodybuilding (Force, 2019).

Differentiating male social constructions between Asian and American societies requires a nuanced understanding of cultural, media, and social factors. For example, media representations of masculinity can differ between Asian and American contexts. In Asian media, traditional gender roles and stereotypes may be reinforced, portraying men as strong, authoritative figures. American media, on the other hand, has seen a shift toward more diverse representations of masculinity, with an increasing focus on challenging stereotypes and promoting inclusivity (Kimmel & Aronson, 2016).

### **Materials and Method**

This research uses a descriptive qualitative research method. Descriptive research primarily focuses on describing the characteristics of the research samples. Qualitative research relates to the ideas, perceptions, opinions, or beliefs of the person being studied. This method does not involve numbers or numerical data. It involves words or language pictures, photographs, and observations. The research process involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Neisya et al., 2023).

According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a human social problem. The research belongs to qualitative research because the researchers analyze the data descriptively, and the result is informed in written form. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative methods are divided into five types: phenomenological research, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and narrative research. In this research, the researchers used narrative research so that the researchers can focus on the individual's experience and chronology in more detail.

The research is conducted by using the theory of social constructions by Burr (2018). The data collection methods used in the study are the researchers reading the novel, writing



and underlining the dialogue of the social constructions and the last the researchers collect all the data of sentences or statements that have been underlined. The analysis focuses on the forms of social constructions and their impact on Willis Wu's personality.

For the techniques of analyzing data, the researchers classify the data in the novel that demonstrates social constructions. Then, categorize the data of Willis Wu's personality. The researchers are specifically interested in exploring how social constructions impact the personality of the character Willis Wu. By examining the narration and dialogues in the novel that have been underlined, the researchers aim to categorize the data related to social constructions that have influenced Willis Wu's personality development.

After the data has been classified and categorized based on the theory of social constructions, the researchers intend to explain the meaning behind the sentences or statements implied by the characters in the novel. At the last, the researchers compile the research findings and draw conclusions based on the analysis of the social constructions in the novel Interior Chinatown.

## Results and Discussion

### Results

The results of this study present data obtained from data sources that are adapted to the formulation of the problem and research objectives. The data obtained were analyzed according to the theory used in this study. Then the results of the analysis are presented in descriptions. After these steps, it continued with a discussion of the results of the analysis carried out in the sociology of literature. The results of this study include the forms of social constructions contained in the novel Interior Chinatown by Charles Yu and the impact on Willis Wu's personality in the novel Interior Chinatown by Charles Yu from Burr's perspective. The following research results are presented in the form of descriptions.

### Male Social Construction

The novel Interior Chinatown by Charles Yu is a novel that explores themes of identity, race, and stereotypes through the lens of Asian American experiences. The narrative structure of the novel, which is presented as a screenplay, allows the author to examine various social constructions. Below are some of the forms of the social constructions discussed in this novel: race and media;

### Race Social Constructions

One important aspect of understanding masculinity as a social construction is the intersectional of race. Different racial and ethnic groups may have different expectations and stereotypes of what counts as masculinity. This novel investigates the formation and perpetuation of racial stereotypes about Asian Americans. One example is the idea of the "eternal stranger", where Asians are often perceived as immigrants or outsiders who will never become integrated citizens. The novel challenges this stereotype and shows how it impacts people and their perceptions. Below is the quotation of racial stereotypes found in Charles Yu's novel Interior Chinatown:

*"I know, Will. I know. I wish it didn't have to be like this, but you know how it is. You're an Asian Man. Your story was great, while it lasted, but now it's done. I hope our paths cross again. Maybe somewhere else. And you think: no. It won't be somewhere else. It will be here, again, in Chinatown, next year, the same place. To be yellow in America. A special guest star, forever the guest". (Yu, 2020).*

The quote describes the social constructions occurs caused by race in the social environment. The quote reflects the social construction of racial identity and the experiences of Asian Americans in the United States. Below is the analysis of the social constructions embedded in the quote:

Yellow as a racial identity, the mention of being "yellow" refers to the racial categorization of Asian Americans. Historically, Asians have been portrayed and stereotyped as yellow-skinned, furthering racial concepts of exoticism and otherness. In this case, the term "yellow" refers to a social construct that has been used to define and marginalize Asian Americans.

Being a guest in America, the use of the terms "guest star" and "forever a guest" suggests that Asian Americans are portrayed as foreigners or outsiders who are always present in America. Despite their presence in the country, there is a persistent perception that Asian Americans do not fully belong or are always seen as temporary residents rather than fully integrated members of the community.

Chinatown is a confined space, the mention of Chinatown signifies the confinement and segregation of Asian Americans within specific neighborhoods or enclaves. Chinatown is a confined space, The term "Chinatown" refers to a state where Asian Americans are isolated and insulated in a place. Historically, Chinatown has been a place where Chinese immigrants have settled, facing discrimination and lack of opportunity. The quote implies that the marginalization and limited role given to Asian Americans continue in the social construction of Chinatown.

Yearly repetition, the phrase "next year, same place" suggests the cyclical nature of these social constructions and experiences. It suggests that social dynamics and stereotypes about Asian Americans have remained largely unchanged over the years. This reflects the idea that societal attitudes and perceptions towards Asian Americans can be slow to change and that the same patterns and limitations still exist. Overall, this quote captures the social constructions of Asian Americans' racial identity, alienation, limited roles, and the cyclical nature of their experiences in the United States. It highlights the challenges and limitations imposed by these constructions on the lives and identities of Asian Americans. Below is the second quotation of race social construction found in Charles Yu's novel Interior Chinatown:

*"All five of Young Wu's housemates are called names. They compare names. Chink, of course, and also slope, jap, nip, gook. Towelhead. Some names are specific, others are quite universal in their function and application. But the one that Wu can never quite get over was the original epithet: Chinaman, the one that seems, in a way, the most harmless, being that in a sense it is just a descriptor. China. Man. And yet in that simplicity, in the breadth of its use, it encapsulates so much. This is what you are. Always will be, to me, to us. Not one of us. This other thing." (Yu, 2020).*

The quote describes the social constructions occurs caused by race in the social environment. Wu and his five friends experienced racial stereotyping because they received generalized treatment, which put them in the same category despite their different backgrounds. Wu and five of his friends live in the same house, Nakamoto is from Japan. Kim and Park from Korea, Singh, a Punjabi Sikh. The last one is Allen Chen, who is from China as well as Wu who both come from China. Even though they all come from different countries of residence they are generalized by the surrounding community, Wu and his five friends are called "Chinaman". The social constructions experienced by Wu and his five friends are also classified as racial social construction because it is carried out by insulting based on the race of various countries such as China, Japan, and Korea.

Cultural Authenticity, This novel delves into the social construction of cultural authenticity and the pressure to conform to cultural expectations. It examines the tension between embracing one's heritage and the danger of perpetuating essential notions of Asian culture. The characters in the novel navigate the complexities of authenticity and challenge the notion that there is a single, monolithic Asian experience.

Power Dynamics, Interior Chinatown also explores power dynamics and the social construction of hierarchy within society. It examines how societal structures reinforce certain groups' dominance while marginalizing others. The novel delves into the experiences of

Asian Americans who often find themselves occupying a subordinate position and challenges the underlying power structures that perpetuate these inequalities.

### **Media Social Constructions**

Media also plays an important role in shaping and reinforcing standards of masculinity in society. Certain ideals of masculinity are promoted and perpetuated through various types of media, such as television, movies, advertisements, and the internet. Media representations often emphasize traditional masculine attributes, such as physical strength, aggression, and sexual prowess, while downplaying or ignoring other attributes of masculinity, such as vulnerability or emotional expression. One's perception of what it means to be masculine can be greatly influenced by these representations. These representations can have a significant impact on individual perceptions of what it means to be masculine and can influence their behavior and self-image.

The novel *Interior Chinatown* explores the social construction of Hollywood archetypes and how they shape the representation of Asians in the media. It critiques the limited and often stereotypical roles available to Asian actors, such as the "Generic Asian Man" or "Background Oriental Male." By examining these archetypes, the novel shows the limitations and difficulties that Asian actors face while working in the entertainment industry by investigating these archetypes. Below is an example of media-caused social construction found in Charles Yu's novel *Interior Chinatown*:

*"You have done this before, all of it. Have done your best to become American. Watched the shows, listened to the tapes, and eliminated your accents. Dressed right, did your hair, took golf lessons. Encouraged English at home, even. You did everything that was asked of you and more. Your parents, they work. For the pleasure of strangers, losing themselves in their various guises. Saying the words, hitting the marks, standing near the good light."* (Yu, 2020).

The quote describes the social constructions caused by media. The quote refers to the individual's efforts to become "American" by adopting American culture, language, and appearance. Here are some key aspects of the social construction by media addressed in this novel:

Assimilation is a social construction that involves the process by which individuals or groups adopt the cultural norms and practices of a dominant society. Assimilation and identity, "*Interior Chinatown*" addresses the social construction of identity and the pressure to assimilate. It reflects on the experience of Asian Americans who often find themselves torn between their cultural heritage and the desire to fit into mainstream society. The novel explores the experiences of Asian Americans who often feel torn between their cultural heritage and their desire to fit into mainstream society.

Cultural appropriation, the mention of "watched the shows, listened to the tapes" suggests that the individuals have engaged in consuming American popular culture, which can be seen as a form of cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation involves borrowing or adopting elements from another culture, often by the dominant culture, without understanding or respecting their importance.

### **Forms of Social Constructions Impact Willis Wu's Personality**

#### **Frustration**

Social constructions can have a significant impact on an individual's personality and may contribute to feelings or emotions (Aranguren, 2017). Social constructions refer to the shared beliefs, norms, values, and expectations that are created and upheld by society. These constructions shape how individuals perceive themselves, others, and the world around them, influencing their behavior, attitudes, and self-perception. When individuals internalize societal expectations and strive to conform to them, they can experience frustration if they feel they are not meeting those expectations. For example, societal constructs of gender roles may determine certain behaviors or characteristics expected of a

person. One may feel frustrated, inadequate, or conflicted if the outcome does not match expectations. Below is the quotation showing Wu's frustration:

*"I'm one thing. An Asian Man. And that's all I am. Trust me, it's better to be you than me." "Oh, boo hoo, I'm a poor helpless Asian man. It's so terrible being me." "I have to talk with an accent because no one can process what the hell to do with me. I've got the consciousness of a contemporary American. And the face of a Chinese farmer from five thousand years ago. Asian Man. It's a fact. Look it up. No one likes us." (Yu, 2020).*

The quote reflects a sense of frustration, identity conflict, and the perception of being marginalized or misunderstood based on one's ethnicity and appearance. It conveys a strong emotional impact and highlights the challenges and negative experiences that some individuals may face due to societal stereotypes and biases.

It highlights the impact of these social constructions on the individual's self-perception and Wu's experiences of how it is perceived by others. The impact on one's personality can vary depending on the individual and their experiences. It may lead to feelings of alienation, low self-esteem, or a sense of not belonging. It can also create a desire to avoid one's cultural background or conform to societal standards. These experiences can affect a person's worldview, self-beliefs, and the way they interact with others.

However, it is important to remember that everyone's views and experiences can be very different. While some people may feel the feelings expressed in the quote, others may have different experiences and not feel the same feelings. It is crucial to approach each person's experience with empathy and understanding, recognizing that their feelings and perceptions are valid and should be respected.

Below is the second quotation shows Wu's frustration found in the novel Interior Chinatown:

*"And I just want to say one thing to all of you. The truth is, I am guilty. It's my fault. The question isn't where did the Asian guy disappear to? The question is: why is the Asian guy always dead? Because we don't fit." (Yu, 2020).*

Based on the quotation above, it appears that Wu is experiencing feelings of guilt and frustration due to a recurring pattern of Asian characters being depicted as victims or being marginalized in some way, particularly in media or storytelling. This situation had an impact on Wu's personality, likely resulting in a sense of disillusionment, self-blame, and a heightened awareness of racial stereotypes. Here are a few potential impacts on Wu's personality:

Frustration and disillusionment, the statement shows Wu's disappointment with stories of Asian characters being marginalized, victimized, or even killed repeatedly. This recurring pattern can lead to dissatisfaction within the entertainment industry or society as a whole, confirming that more diverse and authentic representations are needed.

Guilt and self-blame, Wu expresses a sense of personal responsibility by saying, "It's my fault." This suggests the possibility that he is responsible for perpetuating stereotypes or the lack of visibility and representation of Asians in the media. This guilt may contribute to diminished self-esteem or a desire to take action to address the issue.

### **Ambition**

Social constructions can influence the development and expression of ambition in individuals (Benschop et al., 2013). Ambition refers to a strong desire for achievement, success, or the realization of goals. Internal factors, such as personal drive and motivation, and external factors, such as societal expectations, social norms, and cultural values, play an important role in shaping individuals' ambitions.



Social constructions can play an important role in shaping individuals' ambitions by influencing their views of success, the types of goals they aspire to, and the means they think they will take to achieve those goals. Often, society defines and reinforces certain standards of success, such as wealth, power, status, or a particular career path, which individuals can internalize as markers of achievement.

It is important to recognize that social constructions are not the sole determinants of ambition. Personal traits, experiences, and individual agency also play a significant role. However, social constructions can shape individuals' understanding of ambition, influencing their choices, aspirations, and the level of fulfillment they derive from pursuing their goals. Below is the quotation showing Wu's Ambition found in the novel Interior Chinatown:

*"You just don't get it. I don't want to be on your show." "You resent me. For doing better—" "Say it. For doing better than I have. But no, that's not it. It's not about you, Karen. It's about me. About becoming Kung Fu Guy." "Seriously? It's still about that? After all this time?" "What do you mean? Of course, it is. This is the dream. This is what someone like me has available to him. Of course, it's still about that." "There are other things worth pursuing, Willis. The world is out there, and it's big." "Maybe not for me. I'm sorry, okay? I'm sorry I can't let go of this yet." (Yu, 2020).*

Based on the above dialogue, it appears that Willis is deeply focused on a specific goal of becoming a "Kung Fu Guy." This singular pursuit seems to consume him, causing him to prioritize it above other aspects of his life. One impact on Willis's personality is his strong determination and ambition. He views becoming a "Kung Fu Guy" as the ultimate achievement and believes it is the best path available to him. This suggests that he may be highly motivated, driven, and willing to put in the necessary effort to achieve his goal. However, this narrow focus on a single aspiration also suggests that Willis may have difficulty considering alternative paths or being open to other opportunities. Willis seems resistant to the idea that there are other worthwhile pursuits in life, as indicated by his dismissive response to Karen's suggestion that the world is vast and offers more possibilities.

Furthermore, even after a considerable amount of time has passed, Willis' refusal to abandon his dream demonstrates his stubbornness and, perhaps, a fear of letting go of long-held ambitions. In terms of his unwavering commitment, this persistence can be considered a positive trait, but it can also be limiting if it prevents him from seeking other ways to develop and achieve personal fulfillment. In summary, the impact of this quote on Willis' personality shows his earnestness, passion, and strong focus on a specific goal. While these traits can be admirable, they also indicate a potential resistance to alternative paths and a reluctance to consider other aspects of life. Below is the second quotation of Wu's ambition:

*"Ever since I was a boy, I've dreamt of being a Kung Fu Guy. I practiced all those years, dreaming of tomorrow, of the next day, of the day it would come. And then one day, finally, after waiting however many decades for it, after how many nights staring at the ceiling or my poster of Bruce Lee or hearing Sifu's words in my head, I got my shot."(Yu, 2020).*

Based on the above quote, it appears that Willis has had a lifelong dream of becoming a Kung Fu Guy, which suggests a strong passion and dedication to martial arts. The impact on Willis's personality can be seen in the following ways:

Perseverance and determination, Willis's statement indicates that he practiced for many years and waited patiently for his opportunity to fulfill his dream. This reflects his resilience, perseverance, and commitment to his goal. Willis likely developed a strong sense of discipline and work ethic through his continuous practice and dedication. Sense of achievement, the moment when Willis finally got his shot to pursue his dream would have a significant impact on his sense of achievement and fulfillment. This represents the high point of his efforts and vindicates his efforts over the years. With this achievement, he can

become more confident and believe more in the power of his passion. Willis said that he looks up at the ceiling or feels inspired by the words of Bruce Lee and Sifu to show resilience in the face of adversity.

Resilience in the face of challenges, Willis's mention of staring at the ceiling or feeling inspired by Bruce Lee and Sifu's words implies that he faced obstacles and setbacks along the way. However, his persistence and ability to keep dreaming and striving for his goal demonstrate resilience and the ability to overcome challenges.

In summary, from Burr's perspective, social constructions greatly impact Willis Wu's personality in "Interior Chinatown." These constructions confine him to narrow roles and stereotypes, affecting his self-perception, identity, and sense of worth. Burr recognizes the need for Willis to confront these constructions and strive for self-expression and authenticity.

## Discussion

In this novel, the researchers investigate how societal expectations and racial stereotypes shape the individual lives of Asian men who immigrate to America. Stereotypes in general and gender stereotypes, in particular, may be helpful when there is a need to make quick estimates of how unknown individuals are likely to behave or when trying to understand how large groups of people generally differ from each other. However, these very same functions make stereotypes much less helpful in estimating the exact potential or evaluating the defining characteristics of specific individuals. Gender stereotypes exaggerate the perceived implications of categorizing people by their gender and offer an oversimplified view of reality (Ellemers, 2018).

The researchers explored based on Burr's theory (2018), that social constructions have considered how race, media, and pornography shape men by displaying masculinity. However, in the novel Interior Chinatown, there are no pornographic or sexual elements, but only race and media consider the social constructions of Willis Wu. The literature surrounding masculinity as a social construction explores how societal norms, expectations, and beliefs shape the concept of masculinity. It recognizes that masculinity is not an inherent or fixed trait but rather a social construct that varies across cultures and historical periods.

Asian American Masculinity is understudied and underserved regarding their gendered racial socialization, masculine identity formation, and pertinent behavioral health implications. Asian American Masculinity may acquire a diffuse masculine self-concept managing survival in the dominant culture saturated with gendered racist violence, hegemonic masculinity ideals, and Whiteness while striving to fulfill achievement-oriented family values and gender role-based expectations for material and relational success, and maintaining restrictive socio-emotional behavior derived from their ethnic cultures. Asian American Masculinity reported internalizing gendered racist imagery, which fostered masculine identity diffusion, reduced relationship self-efficacy and outcome expectations, and eroded their psychological health (Keum et al., 2023).

Masculinity is seen as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that is shaped by social interactions, power dynamics, and cultural expectations. This perspective recognizes that individuals can construct and represent their gender identity. Men actively participate in social interactions and adopt and internalize certain behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs associated with masculinity. The characters in the novel navigate through various roles, such as "Background Oriental Male" or "Kung Fu Guy," which reflect common portrayals of Asian Americans in media. In Interior Chinatown, Charles Yu also explores how media perpetuates and reinforces racial stereotypes and social constructions. Through the characterizations and experiences of Asian American individuals, Yu sheds light on the impact that media representations can have on shaping societal perceptions.

As an Asian American actor, Willis is constantly confined to stereotypical roles and limited opportunities in Hollywood. This restrictive social structure shaped Willis' self-image and affected his self-confidence. Wu internalized the roles assigned to him, such as "generic Asian man" or "man of oriental background", which led to deep frustration and dissatisfaction with his own identity. The constant reinforcement of these stereotypes eroded Willis' self-confidence and individuality. Wu yearns for recognition beyond these narrow portrayals but

struggles to break free from their grip. This struggle weighs heavily on his personality, leading to feelings of resentment, anger, and even apathy towards his dreams. The social constructions imposed upon him limit not only his professional aspirations but also hinder personal growth and fulfillment.

The impact of social construction on Willis Wu's personality is closely related to his ambition. The social constructions surrounding Asian Americans in Hollywood confined Willis to marginalized and stereotypical roles and prevented him from fulfilling his full potential. Willis' ambition was overshadowed by frustration and disappointment with these social structures, but Willis continued to crave recognition and the opportunity to be more than a one-dimensional or background character. This constant struggle against societal norms shapes his personality, leading to a high and determined spirit even in his moments of resignation.

## Conclusion

One of the conclusions drawn from the novel is that social construction plays a significant role in shaping individuals' lives and opportunities. Willis Wu, a second-generation Asian American, struggles with the limitations imposed by societal expectations and stereotypes. The novel *Interior Chinatown* suggests that while social construction can be confining and limiting, individuals possess the agency to challenge and redefine these constructions by confronting these stereotypes, embracing personal agency, and asserting their narratives. Throughout the novel, the researchers explore the idea of social construction, emphasizing how society constructs roles and expectations for people based on their racial and ethnic backgrounds. The character of Willis Wu's continued struggle to break free from the limiting stereotypes and embrace his authentic identity reflects the broader societal struggle of many Asian Americans.

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