

e-sian: Youth Negotiating Asian in Racialized Online Groups on Facebook

By

Vi T.N. Nguyen

Bachelor of Arts, University of British Columbia, 2000

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the School of Child & Youth Care

Copyright © Vi T.N. Nguyen, 2011
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by
photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

Supervisory Committee

e-sian: Youth Negotiating Asian in Racialized Online Groups on Facebook

by

Vi T.N. Nguyen

Bachelor of Arts, University of British Columbia, 2000

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Daniel G. Scott (School of Child and Youth Care)
Supervisor

Dr. Sandrina de Finney (School of Child and Youth Care)
Departmental Member

Abstract

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Daniel G. Scott, School of Child and Youth Care

Supervisor

Dr. Sandrina de Finney, School of Child and Youth Care

Departmental Member

This study is a qualitative, blended methods, online ethnography that seeks to explore how youth (re)negotiate what it means to be Asian through their participation in online, user-created, racialized groups within the popular social network site Facebook. What are the relationships and social processes between their online and offline interactions that contribute to the construction of a singular or multiple Asian identities? Through face-to-face and online interviews with youth participants in Vancouver, three broad themes emerged around: 1) the negotiation of Asian as a process of negotiating authenticity, 2) the use of humour and jokes as a means of resistance and reproduction of Asian stereotypes and 3) how the performance of one or multiple Asian identities are dependent on dramaturgical concepts of audience and stage. The data from this study highlight the complexity of racialized youth's identity negotiations in an increasingly growing online world and the relevance and need for further research in this specific niche area.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Figures	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Dedication.....	ix
Chapter 1 – Introduction: From There to Here. Journey to Cyberspace.	1
Context of Inquiry.....	1
Objective of Research.....	5
Relevance of Research	6
Navigating the Thesis.....	8
Chapter 2 – Asian Like Them?: Theorizing Race, Ethnicity and Identity.....	14
Introduction	14
Postcolonialism - To Hyphen or Not to Hyphen?.....	15
Race-ing Backwards with Postcolonialism.....	16
Relations of Representations.....	18
Race = Ethnicity?	21
Postcolonial Kaleidoscope	22
Epistemic Violence and Subaltern Voices.....	23
Resistance, Mimicry and Hybridity	25
Orientalism	27
Alternative Lens: Symbolic Interaction.....	28
SI Key Principles.....	29
Dramaturgy.....	31
Summary.....	32
Chapter 3 – Asian Like Who?: A Literature Review Part I.....	35
Introduction	35
Locating Asian across history, time and place	35
Locating Race and Ethnicity in China and Vietnam	45
Taiwanese is not Chinese	48
Vietnam: The Dega People and Kinh Tộc.....	51
Contesting Việt Kiều as Vietnamese.....	54
Locating Asian Youth & the Other Asian Youth	56
Adolescent Ethnic Identity Development.....	57
Racialized Stereotypes and Ethnic Epithets.....	62
Linguistic and Cultural Appropriation.....	65

Segmented Assimilation Theory.....	68
Ethnic Un-recognizability and Hyper-recognizability	72
Summary.....	73
Chapter 4 – Asian Like e-s!@n?: A Literature Review Part II.....	75
Introduction	75
iDentity Online	76
AzN_gurl604: Conceptualizing Race and Ethnicity in Cyberspace.....	78
Ethnic Online Communities.....	82
(re)Imagining Online Diaspora	84
Social Network Sites	88
History and Definition.....	88
“Just Facebook me”: Why online social network sites matter in youth’s lives...	92
Summary.....	97
Chapter 5 – Asian Like What, Where, When & How?: Methodology and Methods	100
Introduction	100
Online Ethnography.....	100
Study Design.....	102
Lurking Around.....	102
Online Relationship-Building.....	105
Participant Recruitment.....	109
Blended Methods – Data Collection & Analysis	112
Data Collection: Method of Instances	113
Data Collection: Interviewing (Online via CMC versus Face-to-Face)	117
Data Organization and Analysis.....	122
Ethical Considerations.....	124
Public versus Private Spaces.....	124
Free and Informed Consent.....	126
Parents/Guardians Information Letter	127
Confidentiality and Anonymity	128
Youth Participants	129
Demographic Information and Self-Identification	129
Facebook Engagement.....	129
Summary.....	130
Chapter 6 – Asian Like Me?: Researcher Reflexivity.....	133
Introduction	133
The racialized researching the racialized.....	133
Insider/Outsider Phenomenon.....	135
Identity Convergence	139
Authenticity: Qualifying my Asian Identity	141
Summary.....	143
Chapter 7 – Asian Like Us: Discussion of Findings	146
Introduction	146

Negotiating Asian = Negotiating Authenticity	147
Humour and Jokes as Resistance and Reproduction	153
Resistance	153
Reproduction	155
Performing Asian on Multiple Stages for Multiple Audiences	158
Summary	167
Chapter 8 – From Here to Where? New Cyber-Journeys	170
Introduction	170
Clicking back to theory	171
Authenticity and Performativity – Click here for the Real Asian	172
Hybrid Community – Click here for Asians in Vancouver	178
Study limitations & potential avenues for further research	180
Implications for Child & Youth Care Practice	183
Summary – Concluding Thoughts	188
References	192
Appendices	207
APPENDIX A: Participant Consent Form	208
APPENDIX B: Parent/Guardian Information Notice	213
APPENDIX C: Letter to Online Group Administrator - Request for permission to post in online group	222
APPENDIX D: Facebook Advertisement/Recruitment	224
APPENDIX E: Potential and Guiding Interview Questions	225

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1: Canada Census, 2006 - Question 19: Is This Person...Mark more than one or specify, if applicable.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Figure 2: USA Census, 2010 - Question 6: What is this person's race? Mark X one or more boxes.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Figure 3: U.K Census 2011 - Question 16: What is your ethnic group?.....</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Figure 4: Youth Participants.....</i>	<i>129</i>

Acknowledgements

To:

My supervisory committee, thank you for your patience and unwavering support throughout this long process. And I mean long. Dr. Sandrina de Finney, your theoretical knowledge and practice-based experience with youth in community have been so rich and deeply valued. Thank you for never giving me the answer(s) but always pushing me to decide and explore what truly resonates for me and my research. Dr. Daniel Scott, your patience, humour and appreciation for complexity have kept me sane. More importantly, you manage to keep me excited about research methods and methodology. Thank you for never giving up on me or my research during (multiple) moments where I was ready to pack up this study and throw it into the cyberspace black hole.

My dearest family and friends, now you know what I've been doing with my weekends and weeknights. A special thank you to my friend H.W for being my unofficial third committee member and providing me with endless amounts of articles and books to read.

My colleagues in my CYC cohort – reading your studies inspired me so!

My work colleagues, past and present. In particular T.M for the support and encouragement to pursue graduate studies in the first place; N.M for shooting sunshine & rainbows at me; C.H² for moments of balance, reflection & introspection. And of course M.G. for a bunch of stuff that is too long to list (I need a separate tangent for this...) – I'm sorry I barred you from my oral defense.

Finally, a thank you to Solomon... for vacuuming my hair off the ground when I've pulled it out amidst frustration; for fixing my formatting nightmares at 1:00am; for appreciating the information super highway as much as I do and for simply being there.

I'm truly blessed.

Dedication

I had a facetious and self-centered moment where I wanted to dedicate this study to myself because I thought I deserved it for all my hard earned work. That moment obviously did not last...

No amount of hard work or this study for that matter would have been possible without the participation from the youth participants I had the pleasure of interviewing and building a relationship with. Thank you: L, K, V & J for taking a risk and accompanying me through this cyber journey. Thanks for reading my online blog ramblings! I dedicate this journey to you.

Chapter 1 – Introduction: From There to Here. Journey to Cyberspace.

Context of Inquiry

My research interest and curiosity began five years ago, when I was a front-line youth worker in Vancouver, British Columbia. More specifically, my official title was *Vietnamese Youth Development Worker* and while my job description defined my responsibility as working primarily with Vietnamese youth and their families, it stated it was not exclusive to this particular community. I loved my work and the people I engaged with. But I also recognized what a peculiar space I occupied as a Vietnamese youth worker employed by a predominantly White social services organization which, while known for delivering exceptional counselling, substance misuse and family preservation services, was not recognized at that time as an organization that had particular strengths working with racialized minority communities. Equally peculiar, was the reality that I was amongst a handful of youth workers in Metro-Vancouver “assigned” to work with ethno-specific communities. Occupying this position as a racialized practitioner working with racialized communities was laden with numerous instances of: a) confusion – when I received a referral from the Ministry for Children and Family Development for a 15 year old girl who just arrived from Burma and was told as a Vietnamese Youth Worker, I was the “closest thing to Burmese” that this social worker could find in regards to a support service; b) frustration – every time the local media would call for my opinion to speak on behalf of the Vietnamese community in Vancouver when there was a story about Vietnamese youth involved in perceived gang activity or

marijuana grow-ops; and c) curiosity – as I was asked by high-school teachers “What is Asian Avenue and VancouverXchange?” and “Why are Asian students so consumed with these websites?” My personal knowledge, curiosity and familiarity with Asian Avenue and VancouverXchange were the initial impetus for my research, but as with all things related to technology and the internet much has changed and in a very short period of time.

While the internet or cyberspace as a subject matter has been extensively researched, theorized and discussed to date (Fernback, 1997; Jones, 1999; Katz, 2002; Nakamura, 2002, 2004, 2008; Turkle, 1995), the scope of my research aims to explore the layers of racialization, race and ethnicity that complicate identity and peer interactions among young internet users. As the quote below describes, there still exists a gap in cyber-culture and internet studies that addresses the experiences of racialized youth in online spaces and more specifically, racialized youth’s experiences and interactions in ethnic-specific or racialized online spaces. Although the concepts of race, ethnicity, identity and racialization will be further unpacked and explored in subsequent chapters, I would like to take this opportunity to define my understanding of racialization as a social process that categorizes individuals or groups according to racial difference.

Once made visible through electronic text, race has been found to be central to the culture of computer-mediated environments and many of the social norms and the ills that exist offline are often reproduced in adult online communities. And while there is increasing availability of data on the racial dynamics of adult online communities, we know

very little about the racial experiences of adolescents' online (Tynes, Reynolds & Greenfield, 2004, p. 668).

The primary motivation for this research stems from my six years of youth work with Asian youth in Vancouver. Through group work in school-settings, gender-specific and culturally based programming, these youth have shared with me vignettes and personal accounts of peer-based interactions in ethno-specific and/or racialized online communities that are nested within complicated discourses of racialization, race, ethnicity and identity. Based on my initial conversations with teachers, and school administrators about the conflicts and school fights that would emerge between Asian students as a result of something that occurred within online communities such as Asian Avenue and VancouverXchange, I intended to explore this concept of racialized, horizontal bullying that occurs between Asian youth both online and offline, as a result of participation on these websites. This was back in 2006 and the more I thought about it, the more I realized I needed to unpack a few of my own assumptions and terminology: What does that word Asian really mean? And how does it have different meanings for different people across time, space and history? How do I come to understand race, ethnicity and racialization? Fast forward a few years and VancouverXchange has gone defunct and Asian Avenue has re-branded itself as an online dating network for Asian-American young professionals.

In the four-year evolution of my research interests, social network sites such as MySpace, Friendster and Facebook grew exponentially in popularity. With youth flocking to these online social networking sites and the decline and demise of online

communities such as Asian Avenue and VancouverXchange that were once highly frequented by Asian youth in Vancouver, I thought my research interest had also evaporated into the black hole of cyberspace. I began to question and doubt my research interest and thought perhaps race and ethnicity were never really problematic issues in online interactions for youth or anybody for that matter. The funny thing about the internet is, as much as something can disappear or mutate, as with the two previously mentioned online communities that I was interested in studying, new possibilities emerged, disguised as user-created groups with titles such as “Asians United” or “Asian Pride”, within online social network sites like MySpace and Facebook – sites that have never branded themselves or been understood by the masses as racialized online communities the way Asian Avenue was previously. I engaged in some informal inquiry and found that these new racialized user-created groups within Facebook, albeit wearing a different mask under a different dot com, were serving a similar function. Race, ethnicity and the online/offline negotiations of what it means to be Asian amongst racialized youth in Vancouver, is still in fact, very much a part of their everyday experiences and interactions.

I realize that any attempt to define who and what constitutes Asian is an intricate discussion that lives within multiple intersections of history, narratives, and cultures, therefore, within the context of this research, I choose to situate my understanding of Asian as individuals who have self-identified ancestral and cultural ties to countries in South, East and Southeast Asia. I recognize that my personal definition of Asian has its limitations and may be inconsistent with other

perceptions and understanding of the same term. My relationship with and understanding of the term Asian for the purpose of recruiting Asian youth for interviews and observations of their interaction in Facebook's online Asian groups may not be the "correct" definition per se; however, it is a reflection of my social location, ontological being, and relationship to the nation-state of Canada and the English language, that have socially and structurally shaped my current understanding of this term. That said, the target population that I engaged with for the purpose of this research are youth who I have identified as Asian, living in Vancouver, British Columbia. According to the 2009 Youth Vital Signs report (www.youthvitalsigns.ca), out of the more than 1700 youth who completed the survey to grade the quality of life in Vancouver, over 30% of youth respondents self-identified as Asian in the demographics section. The debate regarding who is or is not Asian, is a critical issue to explore in my research, therefore, I did not prevent youth from participating in my research if their definition of Asian was not aligned with my own.

Objective of Research

This study is a qualitative, blended methods, online ethnography that seeks to explore how youth (re)negotiate what it means to be Asian through their participation in online, user-created Asian groups within the popular social networking site Facebook. What are the relationships and social processes between their online and offline interactions that contribute to the construction of a singular or multiple Asian identities? I address this question through a conceptual framework drawn from postcolonial theories (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1987; Bhabha,

1994), with additional complementary and contrasting literature informed by the fields of cultural, ethnic and migrant studies and symbolic interaction theory. Questions of racialization and identity are deeply fused within postcolonial theories, which also have significant impact on the study of new forms of media such as online social networking. Although they are incredibly diverse, postcolonial theorists struggle with notions of culture, identity, migration, diaspora, nationalism and transnationalism, with a particular focus on marginalized experiences in colonial and postcolonial contexts (Suwito, 2009). These concepts help track the movement and experiences of diverse Asian communities across national borders and in the context of Canadian history and thus provide a useful lens for interrogating youth's online negotiations of perceived Asian identities. Based on the assertion that postcolonial theories tend to understand identity as a fluid construct that is continuously (re)shaped within new cultural conditions, such as new media, I have employed postcolonial theories as the conceptual backbone of this research. It should be noted that while a framework of postcolonial theory guides the predominant exploration and unpacking of problematic concepts of race, ethnicity, racialization and identity in this research, Erving Goffman's (1959) framework of dramaturgy will serve as one analytical tool to help inform the discussion of how four youth in Vancouver, B.C. negotiate and perform their understanding of an Asian identity in racialized online spaces.

Relevance of Research

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, the Internet as a subject matter has been extensively theorized, researched, discussed and debated amongst many

scholars in the last twenty years. Analysis of race, racialization and ethnicity, have long occupied the spaces of critical race theory, identity theory, linguistic and anthropological studies to name a few. Lisa Nakamura's 1995 article "Race in/for Cyberspace" was regarded as a canonical interpolation of Asians and race studies in cyberspace. This forms one axis of my research and while I am greatly appreciative of the burgeoning field of research that examines race on the internet I struggled with locating research that pulled together the experiences of racialized youth exploring their identity in racialized online spaces. Based on my preliminary 'Googling' in the last few years, studies of youth in relation to the internet are vast and growing; however, they predominantly pertain to issues of cyber-bullying and youth negotiating identities in various online subculture groups ranging from punk music to queer communities. This is not to take away from my search within academic databases which introduced me to many ethnographic studies of racialized adults' online participation in racialized communities or newsgroups but rarely studies that observe the experiences of racialized youth's online participation in racialized online spaces. Studies such as Angela Thomas' (2004) "Digital Literacies of a Cybergirl" or Brian Wilson's (2006) "Ethnography, the Internet and Youth Culture: Strategies for Examining Social Resistance and Online-Offline Relationships" explore identity, racialization and resistance to stereotypes and labels amongst youth by examining personal narratives via online diaries or blogs and visual methods. These studies have been beneficial for me in regards to learning about online ethnography with young people; however, they were not online ethnographic studies with racialized youth.

My research is located within the context of Child and Youth Care studies, touching upon child and youth care principles and competencies of cultural and human diversity and applied human development (Mattingly & Stuart, 2002). As much as this thesis is an attempt to coalesce the subject areas of race and ethnic studies, the internet, identity and youth studies, one of my primary research objectives is to share youth voice, and in particular, the experiences and voices of Asian youth and their everyday experiences both online and offline.

Navigating the Thesis

Chapter 2, “Asian Like Them?: Theorizing Race, Ethnicity and Identity,” operates both as a literature review and introduction to the theoretical frameworks guiding my research. I discuss my choice of postcolonial theories for understanding complex phenomena such as racialization, race and ethnicity as they are produced through the migration of diverse Asian communities in Canada. I also draw upon the field of cultural studies which has some complementary intersections with postcolonial theory. While postcolonialism has been described by some scholars as related to postructuralism, this chapter also includes a review of contrasting structural theories such as symbolic interactionism and draws its differing lens on the matters of race and ethnicity. I introduce my theoretical paradigms early in this thesis, as this chapter lays the foundation for discussions in subsequent chapters that will then unpack the term ‘Asian,’ and relate these theories to the methodological approaches and design of my research.

In Chapter 3, I open the discussion with a title that seeks to ask “Asian Like Who?: A Literature Review Part I.” This title and question are in reference to Rinaldo

Walcott's first book "Black Like Who?" published in 1997. By posing the question Black Like Who?, Walcott explores themes related to Black Canadian experiences with a critical discussion advocating against the essentialization of a Black Canadian identity. In regards to my study, by posing the question Asian Like Who?, I echo Walcott's trepidation of essentialized identities by exploring the term Asian as a historically-mediated postcolonial construct that has been essentialized differently across history and in different national and local contexts. I also tie this chapter back to chapter 2, with a brief literature review of how race and ethnicity have been conceptualized within the history of two Asian nations: China and Vietnam. I felt this would be a critical piece of backgrounder given the four youth participants I interviewed in my research self-identified as either Chinese or Vietnamese, in addition to self-identifying as Asian. I was intrigued to see if there would be a relationship between historical understandings of race and ethnicity in China and Vietnam and whether these histories would have generational and cultural influence on these youth's understanding of how these concepts operate in their lives.

Moving from these two historical traces of race and ethnicity in two national contexts, I examine how Asian is currently defined and understood in three different contemporary Western contexts: Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. Using the census from these three nations as an example, I show that the perception and understanding of Asian as a racialized identity is not consistent, nor should it be, across international boundaries.

Chapter 4, “Asian Like e-s!@n?: A Literature Review Part II,” offers a second literature review that examines how one locates race and ethnicity on the internet given previous misconceptions of the internet as a colorblind utopia. I draw upon the seminal works of researchers who boldly refuted this utopian misconception and discuss the coming of age story of how ethnic online communities (EOC) such as Asian Avenue came into being and popularity, only to now be replaced by new online social networking sites such as Facebook, which offers users the ability to create their own racialized and ethnic online groups. Throughout this chapter, I discuss how symbolic interaction can be an appropriate yet contrasting framework for studies of the internet and online interactions. This discussion takes place in part, as a reflection that postmodern approaches, although popular in the 1990’s, do not provide the only opportunity to interrogate research related to identity on the internet.

In Chapter 5, “Asian Like What, Where and How?: Methodology and Methods,” I present my study design. I describe my rationale for a qualitative approach that utilizes a partial online ethnography as my methodology of choice. I used two different methods to collect my data: the method of instances and interviews with youth participants; this included both face-to-face interviews as well as computer-mediated-conversation (CMC) through online instant messenger. I elaborate on both forms of data collection methods in this chapter as well as a discussion of my approach to data analysis, using a modified version of constant comparison analysis, a technique within grounded theory method. While chapter 5 breaks down the step-by-step design of my study, this chapter also brings to bear

the ethical considerations and complications of conducting research online and research that engages young people. Lastly, while similar to previous chapters that introduced theories and literature reviews, this chapter will introduce readers to the four youth that I had the pleasure of interviewing and learning about their daily lived experiences both online and offline, as self-described Asians.

Chapter 6, “Asian Like Me?: Researcher Reflexivity,” is in reference to a non-fiction account by a White journalist named John Howard Griffin (1961). Griffin writes this non-fiction account as a Black man travelling through racially segregated parts of the United States. I chose to name this chapter after Griffin’s book to raise the questions of researcher authenticity, insider/outsiderness in ethnographic research and the writing of racialized people. Although I pose reflections throughout my thesis, this chapter is a dedicated space of reflexivity, which I believe all researchers need and should engage in. This chapter does continue the previous chapter’s discussion of ethics in relation to internet research; however, I wanted to designate a space to untangle, validate and challenge the emotions, questions and a-ha moments that I had as a racialized researcher, researching a racialized population. Additionally, I share my experience of doing research in my local community of Vancouver where I experienced this phenomena of ‘everyone knows your name’ and how this experience hindered or helped my research.

Chapter 7, “Asian Like Us: Discussion of Findings,” reports and analyzes the major themes and dynamics that I identified during my interviews with youth regarding their construction, (re)negotiation and performance of what it means to be Asian in Vancouver, through their participation in racialized online groups in

Facebook. The findings include dynamics concerning: authenticity regarding meanings and attributes of Asian identity; online jokes and humour as both a mechanism of resistance to and reproduction of Asian stereotypes; performing Asian on multiple stages for multiple audiences; community-building to create spaces of mutual support for experiences of offline discrimination and finally, how the transmission of cultural and familial values factor into youth's negotiation of one or more Asian identities.

Chapter 8, "Conclusion – From Here to Where? New cyber-journeys," is the final chapter of my research journey. I acknowledge that this research is a very modest attempt that if anything, has only scratched the surface of the research landscape that brings together the macro fields of race and ethnic studies, the internet, identity and youth studies under one research roof. In many senses, I regard my research as analogous to the forest and tree metaphor, where I have traversed through very large and broad concepts, while at the same time anchoring these concepts within a microcosm of youth experiences, in very specific online (Facebook groups) and offline (Vancouver) realities. This traversing has resulted in some research limitations and challenges which I recognized, experienced and enjoyed untangling in the final chapter. In addition to these limitations, this final chapter also identifies implications of the findings on Asian youth's online interactions and hopes of informing further research on this topic within the field of Child and Youth Care. The internet and online social interactions are definitely entrenched in young people's everyday lived experiences; therefore, child and youth

care researchers and practitioners should continue to explore these extensions of youth's lives.

At the end of each chapter, I have included excerpts from my online blog which I refer to as *Researcher Blogflection*. I initially developed an online blog at <http://e-sian.blogspot.com>, to host information about my research, the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria and ways to get in touch with the University or my thesis supervisor should there be any need to legitimize my identity as a researcher. The blog started out as an outlet of information where I would direct potential youth participants as a means to learn more about my research interests. I began to use the blog to post reflections and my own personal narratives that were linked to or triggered by my daily research findings – whether it was a discussion thread online, an academic journal I read or the interview I conducted that day. The youth that participated in my research remarked that they enjoyed reading my blogflections because it changed their perception of me from “Vi – the researcher” and someone removed from their everyday lives, to someone whose blog entries of racialized memories and experiences struck a chord with their own realities. For some of the youth participants, reading my blogflections was a critical juncture in their decision to either participate in my research or ignore my request. I wrote quite a few blogflections but decided to extract only one for Chapters 2 through 8 of this thesis.

Chapter 2 – Asian Like Them?: Theorizing Race, Ethnicity and Identity

Introduction

Race and ethnicity are not stable definitions or concepts. However, race and ethnicity are critical concepts to explore in relation to discussions pertaining to identity; another concept that changes and adapts within various social contexts (Twine & Warren, 2000; Weaver, 2001; Spencer, 2006). Race as a concept referring to biologically inherent attributes used to segregate humanity has been challenged and “proved to be little more than a fabulous fiction, a myth of modernity,” (Nayak, 2006, p. 411). One attempt to construct race as a biological truth is racialization, a process that uses marked categories to differentiate humans based on physical characteristics (Spencer, 2006). Racialization has been described as an intimate relationship between colonialism and research (de Finney, 2007). The stark reality is, race and racialization continue to permeate human interaction and therefore, continue to be discussed and researched. How to go about researching something that is as problematic and contested as race is extremely difficult. As Barry Troyna (1995) asserted in his research with children and young people, the process of researching race is “tricky business” (p. 386). In this chapter, I attempt to engage in this “tricky business” by drawing upon postcolonial theories and cultural studies in order to lay a foundation from which to unpack the complexities of race, racialization and ethnicity in relation to identity amongst racialized young people in their online experiences. This tricky business is informed by the readings and

analysis of influential postcolonial thinkers such as Gayatri Spivak (1985), Homi Bhabha (1994), Franz Fanon (1967) and Edward Said (1978).

While I draw heavily on postcolonialism to serve as the theoretical backbone of the majority of the discussion in this research, I also look to the field of cultural studies and the works of Stuart Hall (1990, 1992, 1996) to inform my discussion. I indicated earlier my interest in employing Goffman's (1959) framework of dramaturgy as an analytical tool and given the argument that Goffman's dramaturgy is rooted in symbolic interaction, I decided to include symbolic interaction's conceptualization of race, and ethnicity as it pertains to identity, from a structuralist perspective to acknowledge similarities and divergences between competing theories on matters as problematic and complex as these. Although this chapter positions and introduces postcolonial theory as a strong proponent of fleshing out concepts of race and ethnicity, the subsequent chapter will highlight in further detail, why I believe it is relevant and useful to think of Asian in postcolonial terms.

Postcolonialism - To Hyphen or Not to Hyphen?

It is important to put the terms postcolonial and postcolonialism into historical context. As much as there has been debate regarding the fixed meaning of the term postcolonialism, there has been equal debate regarding the spelling of the term: with a hyphen or in the absence of a hyphen. McLeod (2000) regards the use of a hyphen as denoting "a particular historical period or epoch, like those suggested by phrases such as 'after colonialism,' 'after independence' or 'after the end of Empire;" whereas, the absence of a hyphen invokes an understanding of postcolonialism beyond the confines of historical, time-limited references but rather

as “disparate forms of representations, reading practices and values” which permeate beyond geographic boundaries and colonial rule of both past and present (p. 5). To not impose a hyphen in the term postcolonialism, is to acknowledge that the term itself cannot be contained within neatly, grouped historical periods, but to acknowledge that the term is inextricably nested within complicated historical experiences. For this reason, I choose to reference postcolonialism without the hyphen, throughout the course of this research.

Race-ing Backwards with Postcolonialism

As I began to write this thesis, I debated whether or not I should employ inverted commas whenever I write the word race. Many scholars (Ng, 1993; Hall, 1997; Lee & Lutz, 2005) choose to speak of race in quotations or inverted commas, to convey a sense of on-going struggle in deconstructing the power and significance behind the four letters. According to Spencer (2006), the use of inverted commas to wrap around any word is often employed to indicate that the term is, at best, “part of a dubious fossil record of an inglorious history” (p. 33). That inglorious history refers to a European history of colonization and imperialism, a central focus of postcolonial theory. To extend this definition further, postcolonial theory examines the impact and continuing legacy of European domination and assumed superiority over non-European lands, people and their cultures (McLeod, 2000). I chose not to use the inverted commas around the word race, not for a lack of acknowledging that the struggle to define this word is still on-going but because the on-going struggle to understand the history and power is not exclusive to the term race, but also ethnicity and identity.

Race can be understood as a shifting signifier that means different things to different audiences at various points in history. This conceptual approach to understanding race is consistent with emerging questions seeking to ask if the history of race in one context is applicable to all histories. Modernist views of conservatism permitted the segregation and division of races as a necessary means of maintaining supposed natural boundaries (Rattansi, 1994). According to the modernist, conservative view, race was signified by physical attributes, primarily skin color and distinctive facial features. The maintaining of boundaries was understood as an example of the rules and codes, predicated on a colonial mindset, that there was one superior race over all others. Modernism was preoccupied with rationality, empiricism, and Eurocentric perspectives that led to representations and constructions of an Other, based on quasi-scientific facts (Smith 1999; Spencer, 2006). Otherness came to be normalized and Othering accepted as a legitimate and natural process.

Postcolonial perspectives call for race and processes of racialization to be examined in the context of the interplay between past and present histories, which were absent in modernist thinking. Similar to its theoretical cousin postmodernism, postcolonialism has also been lauded for its recognition of subjective experiences as a valued basis of knowing (Lee & Lutz, 2005; Rattansi, 1994; Spencer, 2006). Of what importance and relevance is subjective experience in the discussion of race and racialization? Given the historical interaction between colonization and imperialism in the social construction of race and racialized hierarchies of groups of people that became entrenched in both consciousness and society as common sense,

there needed to be a process that allowed for these so called “truths” regarding race and racialization to be questioned.

Sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986) describe racialization as “an extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group. Racialization is a historically-specific ideological process” (p. 64). Robert Miles’ (1989) definition expands on Omi and Winant’s discussion of racialization as a social, historical and ideological process by further asserting that racialization occurs in “those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectives...a representational process of defining an Other (p. 75).”

Postcolonialism calls for a cognitive decolonization to challenge those internalized notions of racialized Otherness that have become embedded in our consciousness as misguided truths (Rattansi, 1994; Smith, 1999). The need to decolonize one’s mind is crucial in the understanding of race and racialization as social processes and social constructions, rather than biological or natural attributes located within an un-challenged, un-questioned science of European colonialism and legacy.

Relations of Representations

A key feature of critical postcolonial theory is the analysis of representation and how representation has served, functioned, instilled and reinforced notions and practices of European superiority (McLeod, 2000; Spencer, 2006). Put another way, postcolonialism seeks to understand how representation perpetuates negative

stereotypes of non-European people thus affecting how non-Europeans come to understand their own identity and culture in negative or destructive ways.

Drawing from the field of Cultural Studies and the work of Stuart Hall, race is equally regarded as dependent on social contexts and shifting processes. For Hall (1996), race is understood as a “floating signifier” anchored in social relations. This perspective of race as a shifting and unfinished point of identity asserts that while there may exist some biological references, the non-biological understanding of race takes the form of cultural connectedness and solidarity (Spencer, 2006). However, some scholars argue that before race and racialization, there was the history of representation (Miles, 1989; Hall, 1992). Moscovici (1984) asserts that the history of representation can be understood as a strategy or process of interaction and reaction that developed during migration that called for the need to categorize individuals and groups of people in relation to understanding one’s Self. This representation came to be understood as a rationale for understanding the Self, when placed in relation to or in contrast to an Other. Other, in the context of this thesis, will be discussed in reference to a European history of representation and imperialistic use of scientific and religious principles to categorize and consequently subjugate the Other. European discourses of the Other, predicated on a false science and rationalization for colonization, have produced concepts of orientalism, primitiveness, exoticism, savagery and other forms of subaltern representation that should be understood in relation to the positioning of European “whiteness” as central and superior (Hall, 1992; Said, 1979).

For Stuart Hall, the struggle with the question of representation is not rooted in a lack of or marginal representation of the Other, but rather, a reduction of stereotypes. As discussed earlier, representations of the Other, even if only imagined, was necessary in relation to how the European Self was understood. Even at the level of imagining the Other, Miles (1989) suggests that European explorers already began to develop images of the Other but only in terms of a subjugated Other. Moving from a colonial background to a postcolonial foreground, Hall maintains that the notion of representation continues to view the Other, or in Hall's specific reference, "Black" as an object. Representations of the Other as object conveniently allows for a fetishization and confirmation of negative or false representations that are consumed by both members within communities that have long been objectified, as well as the general society. Rather than suggesting that all forms of representation be eradicated, Hall (1996) suggests a dismantling of power within the notions of representation in two parts: 1) oppressed groups of people have the right and should be given freely and wholly, access to their own representation and 2) to challenge the marginality of oppressed peoples by actively moving oppressed peoples beyond the periphery of stereotypes and into the active centre by countering and replacing negative imagery of one's oppressed group with positive representations.

The discussion of findings in chapter 8 of this thesis will refer back to Hall's dismantling framework to examine how Asian youth gain access to their own representation via their own creation of racialized online communities and groups in Facebook and secondly, whether their participation in these communities serve

to challenge and replace or perpetuate negative representations of Asians. Hall uses the example of Black in Britain as a concept that has been historically represented by negative imagery placing Black people on the margins of British society. By engaging in a relational approach to representation, Black was redefined, politicized and came to signify a common experience of racism and marginalization. Black was furthermore reclaimed by individuals across different communities, histories and ethnic identities beyond reductionist stereotypes that only regarded Black in terms of color and a deviant Other.

It is difficult to speak of racialized discourses without encountering a Eurocentric discourse. Likewise, Hall contends that it is difficult to speak of representation without engaging in that same Eurocentric discourse, which negates subjective experiences and cultural identities, and instead uses homogeneously categorized constructions of Black and Other. Black, like Asian, or any categorized and racialized Other, has been socially, politically and culturally constructed in Eurocentric language and imagination; therefore, cannot be grounded in fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racialized categories (Chow, 1993; Lee & Wong, 2003; Ong, 1999).

Race = Ethnicity?

At this point, I would like to separate the terms race and ethnicity. This need for separation stems from my own experience that race and ethnicity have been used interchangeably in casual everyday conversations and inconsistently in research. Spencer (2006) refers to Popeau (1998) who contends that “the modernist connotation of race and ethnicity sees race either subsumed in ethnicity,

or referred to euphemistically through ethnicity” (p. 177); furthermore, that the term ethnicity is typically used as a “polite and less controversial term for race (p. 166). What Spencer and Popeau have demonstrated is the reality that race and ethnicity do not have fixed meanings and should therefore be understood as socially constructed and historically situated concepts, as opposed to biological truths.

Van den Berghe, as cited by Spencer (2006), situates ethnicity as “socially defined but on the basis of cultural criteria whereas race is “socially defined but on the basis of physical criteria” ([1969, p. 9], 2006). It is important to keep in mind that these distinctions are fluid. Race and ethnicity have come to be used interchangeably and often times conflated. If race, as a product of the racialization process, has become frequently challenged and successfully discredited by many scholars, has ethnicity become the preferred, less controversial term used in place of race? Spencer would agree with this perception, suggesting that:

Ethnicity is generally taken to be a more inclusive and less objectifying concept; indicating the constantly negotiated nature of boundaries between ethnic groups rather than the essentialism implicit in divisions of race. The crossing of ethnic borders and encounters with those of different ethnic background is one of the most significant experiences in the formation of our identities (2006, p. 45).

Postcolonial Kaleidoscope

Given the focus on concepts of representation, identity and history to postcolonial theory, postcolonial theorists such as Franz Fanon, Edward Said and

Gayatri Spivak have also drawn from and been influenced by poststructural thinking and thinkers (McLeod, 2000).

Epistemic Violence and Subaltern Voices

Gayatri Spivak (1987) refers to the notion of epistemic violence in order to tease out the complexities and struggles involved in the processes of decolonizing the mind, an inversion against colonial discourse and practice, in order to reclaim representation. For Spivak, epistemic violence permeates all discourses of the Other through practices of imperialism and colonization, from categorizations and descriptions of the Other as exotic and primitive to scientific processes that perpetuate these myths regarding the exotic and primitive through anthropological studies.

The “violence” that Spivak refers to occurs when the oppressed or the Other is silenced and permission of speech and self-representation is only granted or controlled by the postcolonial intellectuals or the “outside”. The “outside” has often been understood as the territory occupied by the Other and can only be understood in oppositional relation to the center of colonial power (Smith, 1999). For Spivak, the “outside” has been reversed to signify that place of colonial power and the “inside”, as the space of oppressed voices. By doing so, Spivak is able to reclaim representations of the Other, both temporally and spatially. Any dependence from the outside to speak for the oppressed groups on the inside is dangerous for two reasons: first, it enables the outside to continually view the inside or the oppressed, as a homogenous group, therefore devoid of any cultural, ethnic and historical distinctions. Secondly, a dependence on Western or Eurocentric intellectuals and

their discourse only reaffirms the colonial past and valorizes the power from the outside.

Epistemic violence in its simplest form, is allowing one discourse to tame or silence another. For Spivak, racialization and racism continue to occur because postcolonial studies which claim to be dismantling processes of oppression and imperial dominance have relied on racialized colonial discourse as the method of giving voice to oppressed groups. Racialized colonial discourse fails to acknowledge that oppressed groups have their own discourse rooted in their own cultural and ethnic traditions in order to articulate their experience of oppression. Franz Fanon (1986) concludes that the epistemic violence of the Other is both outside and inside as it operates through the internalization of the self-as-other; therefore, presenting challenges to the overall process of decolonizing the mind. Additionally, this questions whether or not the production of a discourse that is completely independent of colonial thought, practices and language that have become entrenched is possible.

Chapter 6, *Asian Like Me?* is fraught with many questions of my role as a researcher, observing and writing about racialized youth. Primarily, I reflect on how my research is either a contributor of epistemic violence or liberates the voices of racialized and subaltern communities. Or perhaps these tensions are bound to co-exist, and if so, then what? How will I grapple with that complexity? Here, I discuss the tensions that exist between my position as a racialized researcher, educated in a Western culture and the population of racialized youth I engage with during the course of this research. One of my research objectives was to provide a space or

avenue for a group of young people to articulate their expressions and understanding of their racialized Asian identity; however, I question whether my good intentions actually reinforce and perpetuate the epistemic violence as I am choosing to research the experiences of Asians, a socially constructed category of people?

Resistance, Mimicry and Hybridity

The reading of Franz Fanon's work has been understood in the following three ways: 1) the quest for Black identity, 2) the struggle against and resistance to colonialism and 3) participation in the process of decolonization (Wyrick, 1998). Fanon's writing in "Black Skin, White Masks" (1967) is regarded as a powerful and pioneering example of psychoanalytical theory; however, it was his 1961 publication "The Wretched of the Earth" which has been lauded as a cornerstone of postcolonial theory.

For Fanon, colonialism is imbued with white racial superiority over non-white peoples, thus creating division and alienation in the self-identity amongst non-white colonized individuals. Colonization manifests under different guises, from the forced adoption of the colonizer's language and customs to acceptance of representational stereotypes which tend to decivilize and essentialize the colonized. The quest for a positive Black identity within the constructions of inferior and essentialized stereotypes of Black as primitive magnifies the struggle towards resistance and decolonization. Fanon's contribution to the resistance against colonialism is his focus on history. For Fanon, the struggle against colonialism is equated with colonized people's "claiming back" of their own history (1961, p. 86).

Cultural resistance and identity reclamation can assume different tactics. For cultural theorist Homi Bhabha, some of these tactics can be understood via concepts of hybridity and mimicry. Academic literature on marginal spaces, both online and offline spaces, often include discussions regarding hybridity (Anzaldua, 1987; Ignacio, 2003; Young, 1995). Hybridity has been described as:

...occurring in postcolonial societies both as a result of conscious movements of cultural suppression, when the colonial power invades to consolidate political and economic control, or when settler-invaders dispose Indigenous peoples and force them to assimilate to new social patterns. It may also occur in later periods when patterns of immigration from metropolitan societies and from other imperial areas of influence continue to produce complex cultural palimpsests with the postcolonial world (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1995, p. 181).

Hybridity, like identity, is not a fixed category and can take different forms. Organic hybridity has been described as a natural occurrence that results when two or more cultures come into contact (Pratt, 1992). The act of intentional hybridity, however, is regarded as anything but organic and if anything, a systematic appropriation of the cultural values and norms of the colonized Other, as one's own (Bakhtin, 1991; Ignacio, 2003). A related but reversed understanding of intentional hybridity is Bhabha's concept of *sly civility*. Sly Civility regards colonized people as occupying positions of resistance against assimilation by intentionally appropriating master narratives, language and cultural norms. The ability to not only mirror the colonial power's culture, but engage in appropriation and mimic colonial culture

and language while simultaneously translating it into one's own is the power of sly civility.

Orientalism

For Bhabha (1994), mimicry and sly civility are indeed subversive responses within hegemonic structures that demand colonial assimilation, thus "hybridity is normal because resistance is unavoidable (Rajan, 1998, p. 482)." Fanon, contrastingly, regards any attempt to engage in mimicking the colonizer's language and culture not as a form of resistance but rather, absorbing a colonial mentality in which the colonized "becomes whiter" (Fanon, 1967, p. 18). Bhabha echoes Fanon in that both recognize the utility of resistance; however, Bhabha's assertion that mimicry and sly civility occupy significance in the work of resistance challenges dichotomies of oppressor/oppressed and colonizer/colonized. Dichotomies such as those aforementioned, make possible the notions of a racialized Other and the subaltern.

For Edward Said, the dichotomy is defined by the West. More specifically, Said uses the terms Occident to refer to the West and representations of the East as the Orient. In his famous 1978 publication "Orientalism," Said shares his analysis of the stereotypes and colonial assumptions that he perceives to be inherent in western representations of the Orient. The Orient, as defined by Said, encapsulates the geographic and cultural boundaries of North African Arab and Middle-Eastern nations and people (1978, p. 53).

Said's perspective suggests that the Orient was conceptualized by the West in order to project everything which the West finds unsettling or threatening to its

superior identity. Said further argues this point with his assertion that orientalism is a western fantasy of the middle-east; one that is informed by and perpetuates Otherness via Western media. McLeod's (2000) postcolonial reading of "Orientalism" builds on Said's argument, suggesting that the West constructs the Middle-East and all-things Oriental, through negative representations that suggests the Orient is "timeless" and devoid of a history until it is given one by the West, and that the Orient is "strange", dysfunctional and irrational in comparison to the West (p. 39). Western depictions of the Orient or the East as irrational, weak and submissive reinforced Western positions of moral and cultural superiority.

Said's writing and analysis of Orientalism is particularly relevant to this study as the term Oriental has, for some, become synonymous with the term Asian. In Chapter 7, I discuss how one of the research participants identifies more with the label Oriental than she does with Asian. It was a fascinating discussion and interview that reinforced for me, the repeated role of representation and identity construction under various colonial and postcolonial discourses of Asian, as well as the instability of identity and shifting definitions of certain terms and language across location and history.

Alternative Lens: Symbolic Interaction

Spencer (2006) writes that we understand race and ethnicity through social meanings, organizational culture and everyday interactions. Given that this analysis holds true to my own research attempts to unpack the complexity of race and ethnicity across time, space and history, I feel it is equally fruitful to unpack these concepts across differing theories. While I have stated that postcolonialism is the

primary theoretical orientation that guides my unpacking of race and ethnicity, my foray into diverging theoretical analyses of race and ethnicity provided some critical and interesting observations. Additionally, symbolic interaction (SI) is useful in its application to this research for reasons that include: SI's historical relationship with ethnographic research to understand everyday human social interaction and the use of SI theory in past research relating to race and ethnicity which range from examining the social structure of Italian slums in the United States (Herman, 1995; White, 1943) to experiences of adopted, racialized children (Hollingsworth, 1999).

SI Key Principles

Herbert Blumer first coined the term symbolic interaction (SI) in 1937 and is considered as one of the influential members building on the work of initial SI theorist George Herbert Mead (Spencer, 2006). Blumer's key principles of SI consist of:

1. The first is the principle of meaning that suggests people act towards objects, which includes people, based on the meanings they choose to give said object.
2. The principle of language, which is regarded as a symbol or a tool, by which meaning is negotiated.
3. The principle of thought as a non-fixed entity because individuals will interpret symbols in different manners (MacKinnon, 2005).

These three principles reiterate that the fundamental underlying premise for symbolic interaction theorists is that humans construct and transmit culture through complex symbols (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1989).

Given that race is at once problematic, contested, and at the same time still employed as a marker of difference in contemporary societies' understanding of participation and citizenship, I believe it is valuable to explore competing theories of race and ethnicity in order to assess strengths and limitations of different perspectives.

Symbolic Interaction has been described as a subjectivist sociology that is concerned with the social actor's perspective as well as the situation in which the collective social action is constructed (Lal, 1995). It is a theory that emphasizes social process over social structure in regards to studying human group life. Based on this notion, SI urges that "any analysis of race and ethnicity should include consideration of contexts—that is, the particular historical and social settings and the particular cultural features of groups—to understand the environment in which collective action is organized and in which experience takes place" (Lal, 1995, p. 423). As mentioned earlier, one of the principles of SI is that of language. For SI, communication via language is pivotal to ongoing group life and group social process as it enables shared understandings to exist between members of a group while transmitting and reproducing these meanings (Lal, 1990; Lal 1995). The meaning of objects such as race and ethnicity, are premised on:

...the basis of the ways in which people are prepared to act toward the object. This in turn reflects as socialization and social interaction.

Previous meanings may be reinforced or emergent meanings may arise on the basis of current and future interaction or on the basis of imagination (Lal, 1995, p. 423).

For symbolic interaction theorists such as Barth (1969) and Jenkins (2003), ethnicity is understood as collective group identification based on cultural differentiation. Tying this back to the second principle of SI is language, as it is additionally understood amongst symbolic interactionists that ethnicity is produced and maintained by communication and language across historical boundaries.

Dramaturgy

Erving Goffman's (1959) seminal work of dramaturgy in regards to social relations, is regarded as one form of SI that views ethnicity as a performative operation that can be dictated by rituals and rules. Goffman extended his theory of dramaturgy in his 1972 publication "Interactional Ritual" (1972) by introducing the concept of "face work." Face work has been used and applied by SI theorists to their understanding of ethnicity. "Face," in its application to ethnicity and ethnic identity, is "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (p. 5). Ethnicity, therefore, is continual negotiation between one's own community against the negative perception of one's community by an external, wider community. Divisions between and within ethnic groupings are affected as a result of external racialization and perceptions of one's community. This process of representation projected by external communities echoes the process of Othering.

Symbolic Interaction has strengths in recognizing individual agency and action based on meanings created in relation with others, however, SI has also been criticized for underscoring the influence of social structures in shaping meaning. Although symbolic interactionists have claimed significant coverage and

contributions to studies of race and ethnicity in the twentieth century (Denzin, 2001), SI has also been critiqued for its over emphasis and focus on the social actor's response to and negotiation of social contexts and under emphasis on social structures of representation and institutions. With this in mind, I feel it would be naïve of this research and myself, to approach any discussion of race and ethnicity and its relation to identity, in the absence of a postcolonial lens.

Summary

This chapter has drawn broadly on postcolonial, symbolic interaction and cultural studies to show the complexity of unpacking race and ethnicity in relation to identity. The aforementioned theories and studies converge on the consensus that there is no biological basis for dividing people into distinctive racialized groups and that the interpretation of race as a floating signifier anchored in social relations. Race is a speech act that is "imbued with meaning and made real in practice" (Denzin, 2001, p.243); furthermore, race, ethnicity and identity result in performance or a set of performative representations shaped by language, gender, media and experience (Miron & Inda, 2000, p. 99). There are however, strong affinities between postcolonial theories that are informed by poststructuralism and symbolic interaction theory in that both seek to explain the (re)production of race, however, their approach towards locating that process differs.

Denzin (2001) contends that interactionists and postcolonialists need one another in complex discussions of race in new media (p. 244). For traditional interaction theorists, racialized subjects are understood and regarded as existing separately from systems of representations; whereas, postcolonial theorists would

argue that race is understood and shaped through representations. Given the complexity of this research and the various domains it touches upon, I have adopted Denzin's assertion that complex, macro theories such as postcolonialism would benefit from an interactionist framework of agency and self-interaction that is compatible with performativity and performance; whereas, symbolic interaction needs a theory that is capable of moving back and forth between representations, language and lived-experience (2001, p. 244).

For these reasons listed above, postcolonialism is both appropriate and the primary theoretical backbone of this research, in conjunction with a symbolic interactionist framework of dramaturgy, which will be used as a tool to help inform findings and contextualize analysis of youth's online experiences and performance of one or multiple Asian identities.

Researcher Blogflection Number 1

Crossing the U.S. border with my brother Paul is always an interesting experience. In my years travelling with him, I can recount more than enough “But you don’t look Vietnamese” comments directed his way by border officials and from both sides of the border might I add. Based on his physical appearance, Paul has been perceived as Colombian, Puerto Rican, Mexican, Filipino and Persian which he has always taken well to and accepts these misidentifications as compliments. The compliments end at the border, when the same perceptions operate along a series of suspicious questions around why a [insert Colombia, Puerto Rican, Persian etc. here] individual holds a passport with a Vietnamese surname? Additional questions ensue and he usually finds himself being asked to pull over to the side for more questions. Needless to say, when I travel with my brother, we both come to expect this and expect to spend some extra time off to the side explaining how Paul is ethnically, Vietnamese and yes, we share the same parents, came from the same womb and so on and so on. It has become both a source of unbelievable frustration and immense entertainment for both of us, especially when Paul acknowledges that his ability to fluently speak, read and write Vietnamese are non-existent so that doesn’t really help him convince others that he is Vietnamese. It doesn’t really help his case in proving that he is, indeed, Paulus Anh Tuan Nguyen, the same guy in this Canadian passport. But that always made me think about how someone would go about proving their ‘Vietnameseness’ to non-Vietnamese folks? That’s part of the frustration, but more than anything, it is the question of who holds the authority on deciding identity and to what extent does my brother need to go in order to prove his identity and to what extent does he need to manage other’s perceptions or assumptions of what they believe his ‘true’ identity to be?

Chapter 3 – Asian Like Who?: A Literature Review Part I

Introduction

This chapter recognizes Asian as a postcolonial, racialized construct (Brah, 1993). Racialization and external systems of representation have located Asian as a homogenous group of people based on perceived similar physical attributes and to some extent, shared cultural practices. This location and understanding of Asian; however, is not consistent across time, space and histories as it depends on which (post)colonial or neo-colonial discourse Asian is situated within. Spatial definitions of Asian refer to the inhabitants occupying nations within specific geographical boundaries that make up the continent of Asia. This chapter acts as a roadmap to locate how Asian has been constituted across history and in present day Census categories in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. Through a literature review, this chapter ties the discussion of race and ethnicity back to Chapter 2, through a discussion that traces how race and ethnicity have been historically shaped in China and Vietnam. This chapter also draws on research that address how processes of migration, acculturation and theories of ethnic identity in relation to youth development are critical layers to unpack in discussions of how young people come to construct and negotiate the meanings of multiple Asian identities.

Locating Asian across history, time and place

It is important to continually re-iterate that discussions that attempt to define Asian, need to first accept this five letter word as a postcolonial construct, a

shifting signifier that serves to both unite and fragment ethnic groups located within this construct (Lee & Wong, 2003). First, I would like to draw on Avtar Brah's (1993) writing in *Cartographies of Diaspora*, which provides a brief overview regarding the multiple constructions and meaning of Asian across different geo-political boundaries. Brah writes that in North America, the term Asian usually refers to people from the geographic locations of East and Southeast Asia which are composed of countries such as China, Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines, to name a few. In the United Kingdom, Asian is understood in the context of South Asia where India, Bangladesh and Pakistan compose the general geography. For Australia, Asian refers to the category of Central Asians which is equated with the geographic area known in the North American context as the Middle East – a geography that North Americans perceive as a primarily, but not exclusively, Arab community.

At times, there is incongruence between a Nation's social construction of categories as identities versus people's self-identifications. I am reminded of Stuart Hall's call to reclaim the process of construction in the term ethnicity by avoiding ready-made labels (1996). Spencer, however, is cautious in his view that ethnicity and race are often "conflated, whether in popular culture, official government documents or in our everyday social interactions with one another" (2006, p.47).

I now expand on Brah's examples of Asian in its different social and geo-political mutations and Spencer's analysis of how official government documents such as the census, participate in constructing variable categories of Asian which differ across geo-political boundaries. I have extracted the ethnicity and racial

categories from the Canadian 2006 census (Figure 1), USA 2000 census (Figure 2) and the United Kingdom's current 2011 census (Figure 3) to remind myself and readers, of the intrinsic difficulties that postcolonial theorists call caution to, in regards to the process of categorization. In chapter 2, I referred to the, at times, interchangeable use of ethnicity and race. Applied to the analysis of the three censuses below, there is overlap and similarity in the categories but the questions that are posed in each census, urging citizens to identify and select their ethnic and racial identity are quite different, as are the identity options and categories that are available to select from.

Figure 1: Canada Census, 2006 - Question 19: Is This Person...Mark more than one or specify, if applicable

White
Chinese
South Asian (*e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.*)
 Black
Filipino
 Latin American
Southeast Asian (*e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Malaysian, Laotian, etc.*)
 Arab
West Asian (*e.g., Iranian, Afghan, etc.*)
Korean
Japanese
 Other — Specify

(Statistics Canada, 2006).

Figure 2: USA Census, 2010 - Question 6: What is this person's race? Mark X one or more boxes.

White
Black, African Am., or Negro
American Indian or Alaska Native — *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe*
Asian Indian
Chinese
Filipino
Japanese
Korean
Vietnamese
Other Asian — *Print race, for example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on.*
Native Hawaiian
Guamanian or Chamorro
Samoan
Other Pacific Islander — *Print race, for example, Fijian, Tongan and so on.*
Some other race — *Print race.*

(U.S Census Bureau, 2010).

Figure 3: U.K Census 2011 - Question 16: What is your ethnic group?

A – White
 English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
 Irish
 Gypsy or Irish Traveller
 Any other White background, write in

B – Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups
 White and Black Caribbean
 White and Black African
White and Asian
 Any other mixed/multiple background, write in

C – Asian/Asian British
Indian
Pakistani
Bangladeshi
Chinese
 Any other Asian background, write in

D – Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
 African
 Caribbean
 Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, write in

E – Other Ethnic Group
 Arab
 Any other ethnic group, write in

(U.K. National Statistics – England and Wales, 2011).

In Canada's 2006 census, question 17 asks:

What were the ethnic or cultural origins of this person's ancestors? An ancestor is usually more distant than a grandparent. For example, Canadian, English, French, Chinese, Italian, German, Scottish, East Indian, Irish, Cree, Mi'kmaq (Micmac), Métis, Inuit (Eskimo), Ukrainian, Dutch, Filipino, Polish, Portuguese, Jewish, Greek, Jamaican, Vietnamese, Lebanese, Chilean, Salvadorian, Somali, etc. Specify as

many origins as applicable using capital letters (Statistics Canada, 2006).

It should be noted that question 17 was preceded by the following statement: “The census has collected information on the ancestral origins of the population for over 100 years to capture the composition of Canada's diverse population” (Statistics Canada, 2006). In this open-ended question, individuals are encouraged to reflect on their “ethnic and cultural origins”. If there was any confusion regarding ethnic or cultural origins, examples are provided. Subsequently, question 19 in Figure 1 is vague in that it does not explicitly refer to these categories as ethnic or cultural origins, nor does it employ the term race. While it may be vague, question 19 does serve a purpose as seen in the accompanying description: “This information is collected to support programs that promote equal opportunity for everyone to share in the social, cultural and economic life of Canada” (Statistics Canada, 2006). In examining Figure 1, it is interesting to see that South Asian, Southeast Asian and West Asian are listed but Asian is not listed as a stand-alone category. Equally interesting is the decision to separate Chinese, Filipino, Korean and Japanese as distinct categories while Vietnamese, Cambodian, Malaysian and Laotian are subsumed under the Southeast Asian category. Referring back to question 17 of the Canadian census, Vietnamese is provided as an example of an ethnic and cultural origin, alongside Chinese, however, in question 19, Vietnamese is defined by the geography of Southeast Asia whereas Chinese, Japanese, Filipino are not categorized by spatial geography.

Contrastingly, the United States 2010 census (Figure 2) explicitly uses the term race in question 6. The options for racial categories that the U.S. census provides can be perceived as predominantly listing ethnicity categories as opposed to racial categories, depending on which social construction of race and ethnicity one is adopting. The similarity between the American and Canadian census is the fact that there is no solo category for Asian; rather, the U.S. census has chosen to provide Asian Indian as an option, however, without any reference or examples of who is considered Asian Indian. As someone who lives and has grown up most her life in Canada, I do not have a point of reference for who or what constitutes an Asian Indian so this is new to me. It speaks to my experience of having my own identity and understanding of Asian shaped by Canadian policy and discourse, which differs from that of the United States.

Secondly, under the category of Other Asian in the U.S. census, the examples provided include Laotian, Cambodian and Pakistani. Compared against the Canadian census, Laotian and Cambodian are considered Southeast Asian and Pakistani is defined by Canada as belonging under the South Asian category. Additionally, the U.S. categories of Chinese, Filipino, Japanese and Korean are listed as distinctive and stand-alone options and not under an assumed racialized umbrella; however, it should be noted that in the United States, Vietnamese is also not captured under a broad category as it is in Canada. Finally, in regards to the U.S. census, it should be noted that preceding question 6 is question 5 which directs citizens towards the following comment: "NOTE: Please answer BOTH Question 5 about Hispanic origin and Question 6 about race. For this census, Hispanic origins

are not races. Is this person of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?" (U.S Census Bureau, 2010). It is a fascinating to see how and when race is constructed and for what purpose? What is the social process and particularly, who is involved in the decision-making process to decide which groups of people will be defined by this term race and who will not be defined by the same term?

The United Kingdom (Figure 3) seeks to know one's "ethnic group" as evident in question 16 of their current 2011 census (Office for National Statistics – England and Wales, 2010). The U.K census is unique from the Canadian and American version, in that it breaks ethnic groups into five broad categories (A to E) and within those five broad categories are micro categories to further narrow one's ethnic identity. I find category "C – Asian/Asian British" and the use of the back-slash symbol that distinguishes Asian from Asian British interesting, though I am left perplexed as to the meaning behind the use of this back-slash symbol. The sub categories beneath Asian/Asian British, with the exception of Chinese, are consistent with Avtar Brah's earlier description of Britain's construction of Asian as primarily consisting of individuals from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

While the Canadian and American census allow individuals to select more than one 'ethnic and cultural origin' or race box to denote mixed ancestry, the U.K. census provides its citizens with the option of selecting from one of three pre-defined, mixed sub-categories under section B. I find it problematic that there are assumptions made regarding the "mixing" so to speak, of individuals who are viewed primarily in White and Black or White and Asian binaries. There is the option to allow individuals to write in their "other mixed/multiple background" if

they are unable to locate themselves within one of two pre-defined White/Black or White/Asian options.

Another differentiator of the U.K. census is the use of the term “background,” which is listed as the last option under categories A through D. I refer back to my reflection in chapter 2 that the terms race and ethnicity have been used interchangeably in some contexts but am reminded that “background” has been another term that wavers in and out of informal conversations and various official documents that I have encountered in my own experience. On the matter of using the term “background” in discourses pertaining to race and ethnicity, Spencer shares the following:

The term “background” could be argued to indicate the subject’s loss of continuity, perhaps as a member of one of many diaspora communities. A “background” might be an expression of an imagined community, a constant reminder that one has been separated from one’s past – or that the past is constantly being reshaped by the present (2006, p. 48).

My purpose for examining these three different censuses is to show the disparities and non-fixed nature of the term Asian in these three contemporary Western contexts and furthermore, to remind readers of the dubious nature of devising socially constructed categories to organize people. Postcolonialism would urge us to reconsider terms such as Asian or Other Asian as social constructions of the English language that may have some level of context or meaning for Cambodian or Laotian individuals living in the United States; however, these same terms would

be empty categories without meaning or context for those living in Cambodia and Laos and where English is not the dominant language. Symbolic Interactions' principle of thought as a non-fixed entity, reminds us that Chinese can be understood in multiple ways: as a language spoken, a cultural practice, or a geographic location. Based on this principle, an individual can claim a Southeast Asian ethnic or cultural identity in the Canadian census, but also select an additional category such as Chinese, if they interpret the symbol of Chinese as a language that they can speak or the geographic location where they have lived for most of their life.

I wanted to show the disparities and non-consensus, so to speak, of how Asian is differently constructed and understood across social and geo-political boundaries. These disparities exemplify the constant and continual process of reconstructing identities that are not always aligned with one's self-perception or understanding of who one is. As much as there are disparities, my postcolonial observation did note two similarities that cut across all three government censuses: first, the consistent use of White and Black as all-encompassing categories in which readers are to assume some knowledge of what White and Black language and culture are, despite the fact that these are the only two categories which directly reference phenotypical features. Second, I want to call attention to the consistent placing of White as the first category in a menu of potential other identities, within all three censuses. From a postcolonial perspective, this automatic placement of White first, serves to reaffirm colonial histories that value and place White as the centre of power. From a symbolic interaction perspective, White can be symbolically

understood as the highest point of the hierarchy; a hierarchy in which racialized people must navigate their path downwards, often times to the category of Other in order to locate their identity in Canada, the United States or the United Kingdom.

Locating Race and Ethnicity in China and Vietnam

In the previous section, I embarked on locating Asian across three contemporary Western contexts to explore the inconsistent and conflicting nature in which government documents shape or define one's ethnic and racial identity. In this following section of the literature review, I would like to locate how the concepts of race and ethnicity have been historically constructed in two Asian nations: China and Vietnam. I feel it is necessary to explore multiple histories and constructions of race and ethnicity in non-European contexts and how this intersects with discussions of identity, nationalism and cultural practices.

China: Race, Ethnicity and Minzu

For some individuals, there is never a reason, quite possibly in their entire life experience, to question their ethnic or national identity. For others, questioning exists because the possibilities of ethnic and national identities are multiple, ambiguous and/or contested. In the case of China, it is believed that there are an estimated fifty-six *minzu*, or nationalities as translated in English, that forge the common notion of a Chinese identity (Brown, 1996; Dikötter, 1994; Harrell, 1996). The fifty-six *minzu* have been and continue to be comprised of a Han majority and fifty-five officially recognized ethnic minorities, including Koreans, Tibetans and Russians. Because of their history as a majority, the Han have always been in a position that easily and readily identifies them with the Chinese nation and vice

versa. The successful opposition and resistance of European imperialism gave birth to a sovereign China, where Chinese patriotism and nationalism became the foundations of what defined “Chineseness” and who was or was not Chinese (Shih, 2002). Given that the Han were the majority ethnic group, as well as leaders within the formation of a Chinese national identity, any form of non-Han disloyalty was construed as disloyalty to the nation of China. It has been argued that this perceived threat of disloyalty gave rise to the notion of minority groups in China and shaped the history of how these minority groups were categorized and treated within the discourse and development of a dominant *zhonghua minzu*: Chinese nationality.

Groups, whether ethnic or nations, are not fixed in rigid membership or identity. Conflict, negotiations, geographical and political definitions as well as the group’s very existence help to shape and continually re-shape group identity. In line with this concept, Harrell (1996) suggests that the malleability and manipulability of ethnic and national identities exists when any government or leader convinces a group of their historical and cultural attachment to the nation; furthermore, insinuating that this attachment is a proud and glorious one. Scholars have described nation-building and the construction of a Chinese identity in Chinese history as sinicization: “a process of acculturation in which a non-Chinese group adopts elements of the Chinese culture with which it is in contact” (Shepherd, 1993, p. 521). To be *sinicized* is to become Chinese. This is a debatable concept, given that Chinese history consists of at least fifty-six known ethnicities, each transmitting their own unique cultural practices and linguistic markers. Was it possible that the dominant Han Chinese culture absorbed cultural aspects of the other fifty-five

ethnic minorities thus producing this concept of “Chineseness” or Chinese identity? Or is there some inherently distinctive standard of “Chineseness” and Chinese identity that only a process of sinicization can produce?

I move now from the discussion of ethnicity in China’s history to a questing seeking to understand how China has participated in the social construction of race and/or engage in a process of racialization. Narratives of race in the pre and postcolonial European contexts construct race as rooted in natural and biological entities that differentiated groups of people. Additionally, there were assumptions that these primordial differences defined the imagined or real beliefs of superiority and inferiority between groups of humans. Chinese history was not immune to these beliefs of inherent biological or natural markers of human difference, as evident in the following quotation by Frank Dikötter, a Chinese historian:

Myths of origins, ideologies of blood, and conceptions of racial hierarchy and narratives of biological descent have indeed formed a central part in the cultural construction of identity in China. The discursive invention of racial identities has become particularly important since the rise of nationalism movements in the late 19th century, but primordial sense of belonging based on blood remain as salient in contemporary China as they are in Europe and in the United States (1994, p. 404).

Compounding this quote, is the earlier mention of sinicization as a process used to engage outsiders in adopting all aspects of Chinese life, beliefs and customs. Oppositional accounts exist regarding whether or not the social constructions of

race and the process of racialization was evident in Chinese history prior to contact with European culture. It has been argued that race is not a Chinese concept but one introduced by European culture; therefore, race, racialization and racism can only take place in the European societies (Stafford, 1993). This is additionally bolstered by Dikötter's research in "The Discourse of Race in Modern China", in which he writes that the adoption of Eurocentric notions of race and racialized differentiation as scientific data began to emerge during the early half of the 20th century of Chinese society. These quasi-scientific Eurocentric notions of genetically transmitted racial characteristics began to shape Chinese perceptions of the "yellow" and "white" race as superior to the "brown" and "black" race (Dikötter, 1993, p. 70).

Prior to the adoption of a European science regarding race and racialization, 17th century China referred to invaders of the Mongolian conquest and Manchu invasion as beasts and barbarians (Dikötter, 1993). It should be noted, nevertheless, that these prejudicial descriptions of the Mongols and Manchurians were rooted in a bias against perceived non-Chinese cultural practices as opposed to relying on any belief of a biological pre-disposition that the Mongolians and Manchurians were inferior. This point of history suggests that the Chinese did in fact engage in a process of cultural differentiation and that it was not until contact with Europeans, that Chinese society began to engage in a similar process of racialization that was based on biological differentiation.

Taiwanese is not Chinese

It has been discussed earlier that nation-building via ethnic identity can and does consist of physical markers and traits, but whether or not these traits can be

accurately understood as race and the role race plays in the formation of a Chinese identity is debatable. Any understanding of Chinese terminologies describing nationalism, ethnicity, race and racialization is complicated by the transmutation in translation from the understanding of race in the European context (Dikötter, 1993; Feuchtwang, 1993). As Stafford (1993) implores, any attempt to equate terms such as *renzhong* and *zhongzu* with Eurocentric discourse of breed and race is thus perpetuating an epistemic violence as it imposes Eurocentric values on Chinese cultural constructs. The issue of a Chinese versus Taiwanese ethnic and national identity provides a basis of exploring the cultural conflict and history of migration and displacement that is independent of Westernized notions of race and biologically warranted differences.

Historically, Taiwan's Aboriginal peoples have been categorized according to their own classification of linguistic differentiation rather than an imposed Chinese method of classification. Taiwanese Aborigine linguistics have been linked to Polynesian and Malay languages and classified by linguists as belonging to the Austronesian family of languages. The two primary distinctions used to categorize Taiwan Aborigines within Chinese culture were: *shufan*, used to describe Aborigines as those whom the Han Chinese considered civilized or sinicized and *shengfan*, referring to groups of Aborigines who were viewed as "raw," resisting and beyond Chinese government control (Brown, 1996, p. 219).

Melissa J. Brown's (1996) research with 20th century descendants of Plains Aborigines in south-west China showed that this group of individuals self-identified as Hokkien Chinese or Taiwanese, as an ethnic identity. Their Taiwanese self-

identification and self-representations suggest that ethnicity is partly defined by physical characteristics through descriptions of Taiwanese hair and facial features. Unfortunately, Brown noted that modern day terminology used by these descendants to refer to their Aborigine ancestors continues to equate Aboriginal peoples to “savages” (p. 40). This example alludes to the undercurrents of Chinese colonization of the Taiwan Aboriginal peoples through sinicization by redefining the Taiwan Aboriginal ethnic identity within a Chinese history.

A contentious relationship between Taiwanese and Chinese identity exists because Taiwanese identity and self-representation is only made possible in relation to and in contrast against mainlanders in China (Ren, 1996). The originality of Aboriginal peoples is no less than authentic, but also generates a mythology, itself a myth. Because the Aboriginal people had lived on Taiwan before the arrival of the Chinese, it is the Aboriginal myths, as a point of departure, that authentically and effectively demystify the history of Taiwan. To locate Taiwan in the mythic origin of its history creates a possibility for the formation of its own identity (1996, p. 84). Narrative poems incorporating Aborigine myths and voice devised a dichotomy of an “us” (Taiwanese) versus “them” (Chinese) relationship between the two cultures, as Aborigine narratives set Taiwan apart from China (Ren, 1996).

Western perceptions and understanding of Taiwan history and culture has been complicated by a certain inability to disentangle Taiwan from an over-arching Chinese milieu. Evidence of this complication occurred between 1949 to roughly 1970, as American anthropologists were denied access by the Chinese Communist government, to study Chinese culture. Instead, the study of Chinese culture was

conducted in Taiwan resulting in a global dissemination of Taiwanese culture and history as synonymous with that of the Chinese (Ren, 1996). This misrepresentation of Taiwanese and Chinese as being one in the same, parallels and exacerbates existing perceptions of Asian as a socially constructed, homogenous category of people within Western societies. This process negates the voices and experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse ethnic communities who strive to assert their distinctive identity amidst Western representations and stereotypes of Asian.

Vietnam: The Dega People and Kinh Tộc,

The previous discussions of the struggle for ethnic identity and inter-cultural conflict as experienced by the Taiwanese Indigenous people within the colonial context of China and parallel the history of the Indigenous people in Vietnam. Vietnam, although never occupying the category of an emerging world power like China, was also not impervious to the desires of nation-building and national identity. Vietnam recognizes that it is a nation consisting of fifty-four *dân tộc thiểu số* (ethnic minorities); however, slightly less than the fifty-six *minzu* ethnicities in China. The term *dân tộc* refers to interchanging meanings of nation and ethnicity, and is believed to be crucial to the understanding of postcolonial Vietnamese policies towards the numerous ethnic minorities living within its borders. As in China, the construction and understanding of ethnic minorities in Vietnam has relied on a juxtaposition of minority groups such as the Dega, in relation to the dominant ethnic group, the *dân tộc Kinh*. The *Kinh* ethnicity is the primary

prevailing ethnic group from which Western understanding and perception of Vietnam and Vietnamese identity is derived.

Vietnam's socio-political transition from a colonized state to civil unrest and finally to a centralized system of communist governance has been turbulent for the Vietnamese people. The transition has been equally painful for the Dega, an Indigenous minority living in the central highlands of Vietnam who are also known to Westerners as the Montagnards or "people of the mountains" (Fish, 2004, p. 78). Although Vietnam claims the ideological identity of a democratic state, it also exerts persecution and punitive laws specifically directed at the Dega as an ethnic minority in Vietnam are anything but democratic.

The Dega ethnic identity is comprised of at least five linguistically distinctive groups of the Rhadé, Jarai, Bahnar, Hre and Kho who have co-existed in the territories long before Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam became nations (Fish, 2004). It is ironic then, that their displacement during the Vietnam war caused them to seek refugee status within the borders of communities in which they were the original and primary settlers. Vietnam's pursuit of territorial power began in the 15th century when they migrated towards the south, coming into contact with and eventually seizing power from the Khmer and Cham. The Vietnamese term *moi*, was used to refer to the ethnic Khmer and Cham people as "barbarians" or "savages" (Keyes, 1984, p. 66).

The Dega people developed a relationship with the Khmer and Cham prior to the 18th century and incorporated aspects of the Khmer and Cham culture into Dega practices. Because of this cultural exchange and relationship between the Dega with

the Khmer and Cham, the Vietnamese applied the same labels of *moi* which is equivalent to describing the Dega people as barbarians. The plight of the Dega people as an Indigenous minority in Vietnam, consequently, deepened during the French colonization and occupancy of Vietnam. The French colonial rule of Indochina produced a double-consciousness within Vietnamese people; where the Vietnamese were contending with their own sense of ethnic identity, as well as a new representation of identity forged by the French colonizers. If the Vietnamese people were experiencing a double-consciousness (Dubois, 1903) in their negotiation of identity and representation, their ethnic minority counter-parts the Dega, were experiencing a triple-consciousness that defined Dega identity only in relation and representation to the Vietnamese majority and the French colonizers.

By 1895, the French began implementing policies of pacification that would serve to impose their domination on the Dega peoples via ceremonies that required the Dega leaders to pledge their loyalty to France, as a means of legitimating French authority (Keyes, 1984: 178). These superfluous ceremonies continued from 1895 up until 1955 by both Bảo Đại, the last emperor of Vietnam who was often regarded as a puppet of the French government, and the first president of the Republic of Vietnam, Ngô Đình Diệm. The continuation of these ceremonies only served to symbolize and construct the Dega people as subordinate and inferior to not only the French, but also to the Vietnamese. President Ngô Đình Diệm claimed that his maintenance of this ceremonial process was in fact, a gesture to accord respect to the Dega people, calling for an incorporation of Dega cultural practices and ritualistic elements into the Vietnamese consciousness. Regrettably, this gesture of

cultural integration resurrected notions of the Dega as *moi* or savages, devoid of any 'real' traditions and therefore undeserving of any respect (Keyes, 1984; Jamieson, 1995).

Currently, the Vietnamese government continues to subject the Dega minority to policies that are deemed as a violation of human rights by some observers. These policies include a nation-wide family planning policy aimed at all citizens of Vietnam; however, the policy of fining families who have more than two children are specifically geared towards the Dega people, thus controlling the reproduction and cultural transmission of the Dega culture. There have also been alleged reports of forced abortion and national objectives to coercively sterilize target groups of women such as Dega women, justified by the need for population control (Fish, 2004). The Dega have official recognition of ethnic minority status as well as preservation of their various languages under the Vietnamese government; nevertheless, severe levels of surveillance over religious practices and population control policies specifically targeting the Dega indicate that these state-imposed policies, veiled under the notion "for the greater good of the nation" will eventually lead to the eradication of the Dega people as an ethnic minority group in Vietnam.

Contesting Việt Kiều as Vietnamese

Việt Kiều is a term that emerged in the 1980's to categorize Vietnamese people who have migrated and settled outside of Vietnam's geographical borders. The term *Việt Kiều* in its earliest incarnation, referred to communities of overseas Vietnamese people, primarily those who settled in Thailand during the 18th century (Keyes, 2002). Although Vietnamese people have been migrating and settling in

France, Cambodia and Laos for extended periods of time, the most prominent and by far, the largest number of *Việt Kiều* are those who fled during the Vietnam war to Canada, the United States and Australia. This mass migration of Vietnamese people fleeing as “boat people” has become synonymous with the *Việt Kiều* identity.

The conditions in which many *Việt Kiều* left Vietnam was a result of their opposition to the Vietnamese government’s communist ideologies. The relationship between the *Việt Kiều* and Vietnamese government varies between indifference, cordiality to overt hostility (Keyes, 2001; Keyes, 2002). The indifference and hostility that *Việt Kiều* exhibit towards the current Vietnamese government and the tumultuous past have driven many *Việt Kiều* to reject the notion that their primary identity is neither in relation to their former homeland nor originating from the Kinh majority. Many *Việt Kiều* who have settled in Western countries opt for a hyphenated identity of Vietnamese-American or Vietnamese-Canadian, that is, consciously choosing the identity of an ethnic minority in a new country and severing ties to their status as part of the Kinh majority under the new socialist-republic of Vietnam (Keyes, 2002; Lieberman, 2003).

The hostility that some *Việt Kiều* continue to hold towards the current Vietnamese socialist government has contributed to the fragmentation of *Việt Kiều* communities and their relationships amongst one another. This fragmentation is compounded by many factors; although, the polarity between *Việt Kiều* cultural, linguistic and familial relations with Vietnam versus continued criticism and

mistrust of the Vietnamese government creates additional friction and further complicates the current inter-cultural conflict amongst Vietnamese people globally.

Locating Asian Youth & the Other Asian Youth

This literature review has thus far examined how Asian is constituted across current and different national censuses. Additionally, the previous section of this chapter also traced the history of race and racialization within China and Vietnam, which revealed that national identity and cultural practices were dominant in the construction of difference and used to categorize groups of people. Given that youth are the primary population or demographic with which this research is concerned, the next section of this chapter's literature review assumes a child and youth care lens that draws on studies of ethnic identity development, migration and acculturation processes amongst young people. I will discuss and draw examples from three particular studies: two ethnographic studies involving Asian-American youth's constructions and understanding of Asian identities, and one study examining ethnic identity negotiations amongst Hong Kong youth in Canada. These three studies help inform the subsequent section of this chapter and will serve as critical and interesting foreshadowing of the data analysis chapter. Theories of ethnic identity development in minority youth will be introduced in order to examine the multiple stereotypes that are either negatively or positively internalized by Asian youth.

Adolescent Ethnic Identity Development

There is a vast array of scholarship dedicated to researching and understanding ethnic identity (Phinney et. al, 2001; Yeh & Huang, 1996). Earlier perspectives, such as that of Maldonado's (1975), regarded ethnic identity as "central to the development of the personal identity of minority group members" (p. 621). Despite the extensive conceptual research and writing related to ethnic identity, scholars such as Phinney (2001) remind us of the need and relevance of focusing attention to ethnic identity development models that are concerned with how adolescents learn and attribute their ethnic identity label. Secondly, research pertaining to ethnic identity development amongst youth, stress that minority youth in particular, should be treated as a distinctive group, apart from general theories of adolescent or youth identity development. For the purpose of this section, I briefly explore Phinney's (1989) summation of ethnic identity development amongst minority youth through her four-step model.

Race and ethnicity can have certain significance in shaping self-identity, though, independently, race and ethnicity are malleable social constructions as previously explored. Phinney (1989, 2001) utilizes much of Erikson's (1986) theory of ego identity development, in conjunction with James Marcia's (1980) operationalization of ego identity to begin her analysis of the primary stages of ethnic identity development in adolescence. The first stage has been described as a *diffuse identity*, where adolescents are pre-contemplative or unaware of an ethnic identity. Ethnic identity as a process of exploration is absent at this first stage, as well as a commitment to exploring possible identities. In this initial level, Marcia

contends that any commitment to an ethnic identity is based purely on parental or care giver values. Developmental research affirms Marcia's rationale, noting that any form of adolescent individual identity is largely shaped by parents or primary care givers (Rogoff, 2003). Parental and family influences on youth's ethnic and racial identity is evident in interview data with youth participants in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

Asian youth in North America have been regarded as a minority group (Chang & Kwan, 2009; Costigan, Su & Hua, 2009), although this perception varies and is debatable in the context of one North American city to another. Regardless of whether or not they are Canadian or American born, immigrants or refugees, these youth fall into a racialized category of ethnic minorities, or put another way, removed from the dominant, majority or White culture. This domination over minority groups can perpetuate an acceptance of White North American cultural practices, perspectives and values that may be incongruous to one's own group values. This conflict between cultural practices and values often leads minority groups to negatively internalize the practices, and values of their own group. Youth with a foreclosed ethnic identity have invested little or no energy in exploring the meaning of their ethnicity; however, feelings about their own group can either be negatively or positive internalized, depending on their socialization process (Cross, 1978; Phinney, 2001). Other models of ethnic identity development (Atkinson, Morten & Sue, 1983) have described facets of the foreclosed stage as a *conformity stage*, stating that individuals exhibit an "unequivocal preference for dominant cultural values over those of their own culture" (p. 35).

This conformity stage and foreclosed ethnic identity is evident in the 2003 study by Tsang, Irving, Alaggia, Chau and Benjamin, of Hong Kong-Canadian immigrant adolescents, known as “satellite children.” The term “satellite children,” also known as “parachute kids” first emerged in the late 1980’s to describe children who were primarily from Hong Kong or Taiwan, living in Canada while their parents return to their home country to continue pursuing economic opportunities. Fourteen of the 68 respondents in this 2003 study displayed a foreclosed ethnic identity, as illustrated in the quote below:

I don’t want to be Chinese. I am a Canadian. When I was young, the kids said bad things about my race. I don’t like it...I choose not to be [Chinese]. I don’t like my parents. My classmate called me names. There were racist comments...My father always asks me why I can’t act like Chinese again...I don’t want to be Chinese...I tried to avoid Chinese so I set myself apart from them. Every day I told myself I am not Chinese...Most people at the school know that I don’t want to be Chinese (p. 374-375).

While the quote above is indicative of negatively internalized perceptions of Chinese people based on this youth’s challenging accounts as a new immigrant, Angela Rey’s (2007) research asserts that American-born Asian youth, despite exhibiting a form of ethnic pride, are more likely to fall prey to racialized discourses that shape mainstream perceptions of Asians, therefore distancing themselves from their Asian peers. In this sense, regardless of whether the foreclosed ethnic identity is a positive or negative one, racialized minority youth must negotiate their ethnic

identity in relation to a national identity or citizenship in North America, while managing racialized perceptions of Asians as a homogenous group.

Developmental theories (Maldonado, 1975; Erikson, 1986; Phinney, 1989) suggest that youth enter a natural period of inquiry and exploration. With regards to ethnic identity development, Phinney describes the third stage as a *moratorium* period, exemplified by a desire to understand the meaning and implications attributed to the ethnicity or ethnic identity that one has absorbed from parents and care-givers. Phinney suggests that confusion about one's ethnicity is to be expected, as adolescents begin to seek answers from family and group members about the history relating to their ethnicity. It is often expressed that youth begin to form awareness around the prejudices and biases that exist towards their ethnic identity. The prejudice and discrimination in the moratorium stage, speaks to the imbalance of power and effects of colonialism imposed upon ethnic minorities by White European groups.

The last stage of Phinney's ethnic development model predicts that adolescents will ultimately acquire an *achieved* ethnic identity that is only possible once evidence of an exploration or moratorium period has been reached. For Phinney, an achieved ethnic identity presupposes that ethnic identity is fixed, positive and congruent with other aspects of one's overall self-identity. While Phinney's (1989) four-stage model offers a valuable framework that can be applied to understanding ethnic development amongst minority youth, it is a rather linear model, one that does not account for the fluidity and malleability of identity as a process. Further questions include how this model would account for immigrant

youth who may have achieved a specific ethnic identity that places them as a majority in their homeland, but are now required to re-negotiate this achieved ethnic identity within a new country where they are the minority?

My questions and need for clarification around certain points in Phinney's four-stage ethnic identity development model are aligned with Tsang et. al's (2003) argument that ethnic identity developmental theories, albeit focused on understanding the racialized minority's perspective, take place within the boundaries of Eurocentric assumptions. These assumptions include the suggestion that ethnicity only exists among non-White European people; consequently, White is taken as the norm against which other groups are measured (McLoyd, 1991; Tsang et. al., 2003). This observation evokes the underlying mechanisms of Othering which Fine (1994) defines as a process whereby a dominant group defines into existence an inferior group; of how Westernized notions of the self can only be understood in relation or contrast to an Other. In the work of ethnic identity development, Tsang et. al. (2003) make a crucial point, asserting that:

...in nation states dominated by a majority ethnic group, ethnic identity and citizenship are often not differentiated among that dominant group. White Caucasian people in North America often do not find it necessary to refer to their ethnic identity and may take labels such as Canadian and American as adequate descriptions of both ethnic identity and citizenship (p. 364).

In the previous section of this chapter, I discussed how "Chineseness" does not necessarily integrate ethnic and national identities as one, specifically in the

case of Hong Kong and Taiwanese identities that resist the umbrella term of Chinese which is mostly made up of the Han ethnicity. With this in mind, Tsang et. al. (2003) urge that ethnic identity development among Asian minority youth cannot be understood as a linear continuum, but rather a dynamic and social process where youth are simultaneously interacting, socializing and negotiating between their culture of origin and their new culture. Youth, as a unique population, are transient and will therefore “transgress ethnic boundaries” (Reyes, 2007, p. 92) by crossing into languages and cultural practices of other groups, thus creating what Stuart Hall (1998) describes as new ethnicities.

Racialized Stereotypes and Ethnic Epithets

Stereotypes and stereotyping are not specific to any one given culture. They are a social condition that is practiced and re-produced by individuals, groups, media and political ideology that allege a variety of generalizations directed at concepts of ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, religion and so forth. There may be debate over whether or not any stereotypes depict a genuinely positive image of a targeted group, or whether or not stereotyping can be constructive and devoid of damaging repercussions. Another question of contention seeks to understand whether or not stereotypes and stereotyping can be justified as a matter of group membership. Put differently, *who* has the right to instigate or perpetuate *which* stereotype, if any?

Based on my previous research regarding the history of race and ethnicity in China and Vietnam, it was evident that both nations shared a common history of applying stereotypes such as “barbarian” or “savage” towards their Indigenous

people or those who did not share the same cultural practices. When I think about my own experience of being constructed as an Asian person living in North America, I can conjure up a plethora of Asian stereotypes that have been directed my way. Perhaps the most widely held stereotype of Asians in North America, is that of the “model minority,” a term originating in the 1940’s depicting Asians in America as a successful example of ethnic assimilation, in comparison to other racialized groups such as African-Americans, Latinos and Native Americans (Reyes, 2007).

As discussed earlier, ethnicity and ethnic identity are not fixed properties attached to any one given individual or group, but rather achieved through social interaction and processes. Likewise, the identity of Asians in North America as a homogenous group is a postcolonial product shaped by historical and political processes and not a result of shared cultural ties between diverse Asian ethnic groups (Chow, 1993; Omi & Winant, 1994; Reyes, 2007). The diversity between and amongst Asian ethnic groups, based on their own histories of competing imperialism, ethnocentrism and Othering, further complicates the notion of a unified Asian-American or Asian-Canadian identity. Perceptions of racial homogeneity amongst diverse ethnic groups invite ethnic epithets to be applied to all members designated within a particular racial group.

To outsiders, the obliviousness or lack of awareness towards ethnic diversity and deep-rooted histories and differences within any racialized group, be it Blacks, Latinos or Asians, makes it difficult for outsiders to understand why certain groups are compelled to dis-identify with their racialized label. These examples render experiences such as inter-ethnic conflict or intra-racial racism, non-issues amongst

outsiders. For minority youth, to distance themselves from negatively racialized stereotypes and epithets directed at their ethnic group, is to engage in a process of dis-identification (Lee, 1996; Pyke & Dang, 2003). While some youth deflect ethnic epithets in order to dis-identify or differentiate themselves from their group, others will re-appropriate those very same epithets and stereotypes in order to negotiate inclusion within a group. As Reyes (2007) proposed, stereotypes and ethnic epithets can be understood as “an oppositional binary where stereotyping is either an oppressive practice to resist or a pan-ethnic resource to celebrate” (p. 109).

The “model minority” stereotype of Asians as quiet, hard-working people may invoke images of passivity which one may wish to dis-identify with or resist; however, the image of a hard-working citizen may work in favour of Asians when seeking employment opportunities. One can re-draw ethnic boundaries by applying ethnic-specific stereotypes to oneself in order to broaden group membership. By this extension, I will refer to Reyes’ (2007) example of a Vietnamese youth who celebrated and welcomed the ethnic epithet directed at him which assumed he was Chinese and knew martial arts. From this example, the Vietnamese youth shared that although he was neither Chinese or knew martial arts, he felt the Chinese identity that was imposed upon him, served as a function to include him within the category of Asian, a category he often felt alienated from due to his Vietnamese ethnicity. According to Reyes, stereotype extension or recontextualizing a stereotype to maximally apply to oneself, re-produces a pan-Asian identity in which previously invisible or marginalized groups can now claim membership. It appears then, that for some minorities, it is permissible to accept stereotypes or participate

in self-stereotyping when there is a desirable outcome or positive resource associated with this process.

Youth experiment with stereotypes of Self and Other in their process of identity development. That said, appropriating and re-appropriating stereotypes are a few of the ways in which youth develop and emphasize a sense of their Asian or Asian North American identity against the backdrop of multiple complex and diverse linguistic, ethnic and racialized communities (Reyes, 2007). Youth, like any other social or cultural group, engage in a process of consensus building around racialized and ethnic stereotypes that can be self-internalized or applied towards their co-ethnic peers. This practice of self-stereotyping and co-ethnic stereotyping amongst youth does agree with Lee (2003) and Reyes' (2007) conclusion that minority youth, as in the case of Asian youth, find it acceptable to stereotype their own ethnicity or race based on consensus that a person of a specific ethnic or racial group has esoteric knowledge of that culture or group and therefore, is unable to oppress his or her own people, as evident in the following quote:

...yeah, my friends and I always joke around about how us Viets are so crazy, always fighting and shit...it's because we're use to fighting y'know, like the war and stuff...but fuck that if some racist Whitey try to call me Bruce Lee or whatever (Reyes, 2004, p. 43-44).

Linguistic and Cultural Appropriation

I highlighted examples from research with Asian-American youth that viewed ethnic membership as an acceptable means of re-appropriating racialized stereotypes regarding their own ethnic group, but how does that differ from Asian-

American youth's appropriation of an African-American culture and identity? In the previous chapter of this thesis, my analysis of how Chinese and Vietnamese cultures construct categories of difference, or rationales for Othering, the theme of linguistic and language distinctions constantly emerged and re-emerged. I would like to linger on the theme of language and linguistics for a brief moment by drawing on Reye's (2002; 2004; 2007) theoretical combination of linguistic anthropology with discourse analysis in her research. Reyes shows how Asian youth's participation in the racialization, stereotyping, and appropriation of African-American slang, are critical in their process of developing their sense of an Asian identity within North American boundaries.

Reyes employs the term "dual indexicality," originated by Jane Hill in relation to the study of "Mock Spanish" (Reyes, 2007, p. 53), to explain how appropriation of another group's cultural slang manifests a desirable or positive identity for the appropriator or borrower, while simultaneously denigrating the identity of the originator or borrowee. An example of how dual indexicality operates can be found in Reye's (2007) discussions with youth in which one female claimed that she appropriates African-American slang when she wants to feel "Black and scary" (2007, p. 74). Following the rules of dual indexicality, by appropriating and racializing African-American slang, she (the appropriator/borrower) has assumed a stereotype that portrays herself as strong or tough; however, the consequence of her appropriation also serves to perpetuate the stereotype of Blacks or African-Americans (in this case, the originator/borrowee) as a violent group to be feared.

Additionally, in Reye's (2007) research with Southeast Asian American youth, she recognized an affinity that these youth had towards appropriating African-American culture and slang such as "aight" (all right) and "na mean?" (know what I mean?) into their everyday vernacular; however, it was the reasons *why* Southeast Asian youth chose to appropriate African-American slang in the first place, as opposed to other ethnic or racialized slang that peaked my curiosity. To further understand the role that stereotypes and stereotyping play in the formation of Asian youth's ethnic identity development, I turn to Reye's (2007, p. 103) conception of a "triple indexicality." Triple indexicality, builds on the previous structure of dual indexicality to reflect positively on the borrower and negatively on the borrowee. Reyes argues that the third index allows for a construction of cross-cultural alliances between Asian-American and African-American youth, or an alliance between two marginalized and racialized groups.

One of the most commonly held stereotypes of Asian men, in Western contexts, is that of a nerdy, passive, feminized individual. Reyes cites examples from studies of Korean and Japanese American males who relied on a triple indexicality that reproduced stereotypes of hyper-heterosexual African-American masculinity by appropriating terms such as "booty," used to objectify female bodies (2007, p. 75) and therefore denounce the feminine stereotype applied to Asian males. In Reye's study, Asian youth appropriated terms such as "whitey" to resist White, European-American's domination and counter the negative stereotypes of Asian males as passive. Finally, Asian youth engaged in attempts to establish allegiance with African-American peers through mutual and shared experiences of

discrimination as racialized minorities. Although Reyes cites examples of Korean and Japanese American youth who appropriated African-American slang in her study, it is the Southeast Asian refugee youth from Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia who primarily identified their racial and socioeconomic struggles with that of the African-American community. For many of these Southeast Asian youth, assuming the label of the “Other Asian” seemed more authentic, as opposed to the Asian-American or Asian label, which in their experience, only represents the history and experiences of the Chinese, Korean, and Japanese ethnic groups in American history.

Segmented Assimilation Theory

The fact that certain Asian youth, primarily those who came to North America as refugees, would readily identify with the African-American community, based on shared experiences of poverty and discrimination, echoes the theory of segmented assimilation model proposed by Portes and Zhou (1993). Segmented assimilation theory assumes that newcomer youth identity, irrespective of immigrant or refugee status, develops along three trajectories, or patterns of assimilation and acculturation.

The first trajectory is *acculturation and parallel integration* where individuals seek to fit into and adapt within the mainstream or dominant community either through successful parallel integration or through a means of shedding the previous ethnic identity; thereby, shedding the stereotypes that are associated with that ethnic identity. This pattern of adaptation echoes Pyke and Dang’s (2003) concept of *intra-ethnic othering* and offers a conceptual lens to examine how internalizing

negative stereotypes ascribed to one's ethnic group can result in a wider intra-racial racism amongst ethnic groups.

The second pattern coined *assimilation into the underclass* shows how youth who struggle with acculturation, are often isolated and find themselves entrenched in poverty. Assimilation into the underclass is usually the result of discrimination and marginalization that gives rise to an oppositional culture (Zhou, 1997) amongst minority youth who feel excluded from the mainstream culture. The majority of Southeast Asian youth participants in Reyes' (2007) research were refugees who fell within this pattern of acculturation through their appropriation of African-American slang, thus indicating that language plays a defining role in the patterns of assimilation and acculturation. Finally, the third trajectory of *rapid economic advancement* predicts that deliberate preservation of community and cultural values are means to maintaining strong ethnic group solidarity amongst young people. In this sense, ethnic groups sometimes remain insular and are therefore viewed as threats to the dominant society because they cannot be assimilated. Asians have occupied a precarious place in North American society, having been described as distinct from any other racial group because they are regarded as the "model minority" emphasizing high educational attainment and hard work ethics as Asian characteristics that are both simultaneously admired and resented by the dominant culture (Kim, 1999; Pyke & Dang, 2003).

Segmented assimilation theory is relevant and pivotal in a discussion of ethnic and racial identity development amongst racialized youth, particularly Asian youth, because it speaks to the experience of newcomer or immigrant youth's

identity negotiations. However, like any other theory, there are limitations or discrepancies that exist in its conceptualization and application. First, segmented assimilation theory presupposes that only newcomer identities are faced with the challenge of acculturation and assimilation.

It can be argued that Canadian or American born racialized, minority youth, although lacking the official immigrant or refugee status, may also experience these three trajectories of assimilation and acculturation by virtue of institutionalized racism and discrimination that views them as Other, or to borrow from Tuan's (1998) description of Asians in North America as "forever foreigners." Reyes' (2007) examples of second generation and Southeast Asian refugee youth who appropriated African-American slang as an example of assimilation into the impoverished "underclass" of American society holds true in this case. Segmented assimilation theory, however, cannot be applied to Lee's (1996) ethnographic interviews with American-born Asian youth who, as she surmised, "co-opted aspects of Black urban youth culture in their efforts to avoid being cast as Asian nerds" (p. 109). Previous to Lee's 1996 ethnography with Asian-American students, a study (Centri, 1993) pertaining specifically to Vietnamese youth's consciousness of an urban identity also showed evidence of Vietnamese youth appropriating African-American urban slang and a "Black style of dressing," all the while denigrating and perpetuating stereotypes of African-Americans as "criminals, lazy and deviants" (p. 97).

For Lee (1996), the third trajectory of segmented assimilation as rapid economic advancement via group solidarity is validated by her discussions with

Korean youth who described the Korean community in America as an elaborate network of business, religious, and social organizations dedicated to supporting Korean connections. In this sense, the Korean community does indeed subscribe to the model of rapid economic advancement as a means of acculturation. This example is further bolstered by Korean youth's description of their fashion sense as being "preppy, like the White kids," and perceptions of being middle class because they live and shop in suburban malls, as opposed to shopping in "cheap and tacky Chinatown" stores like their Vietnamese and Cambodian peers (p. 303). Based on these findings, is it safe to suggest that, in the case of some newcomer Asian identities such as Koreans, assimilation can occur along multiple trajectories, as opposed to just one? That is to suggest that Korean youth in Lee's (1996) study achieve acculturation via both parallel integration, as well as rapid economic advancement?

In their development of segmented assimilation theory, Portes and Zhou (1993) appear to suggest that newcomer youth begin their journey at one of the three trajectories and stay within that specified trajectory or pattern during the entire course of their assimilation or acculturation process. Without any discussion of youth moving between trajectories, weaving in and out of various assimilation patterns based on social interaction and experience, segmented assimilation theory would be incongruent with notions of ethnic identity as a shifting and evolving process, but rather than a fixed entity.

Ethnic Un-recognizability and Hyper-recognizability

It is important to continually re-iterate Asian as a postcolonial, racialized construct (Brah, 1993) and that this identity serves to both unite and fragment the ethnic groups located within its construct. Fragmentation within the Asian North American context appears to occur internally, where Asian ethnic groups either fight for exclusion or distinction from the Asian umbrella term, while some marginalized ethnic groups fight to be included into the collective Asian identity. Contrastingly, external fragmentation occurs in situations where government, bureaucracy and media impose the racialized Asian label upon these different ethnic groups. An example of this internal and external fragmentation can be found in the responses from Southeast Asian youth in Reye's (2007) study who rejected the Asian label because they believed the Asian identity, as perceived in America, excluded their history as refugees and socioeconomic status, thus leading some Southeast Asian youth to seek refuge and preference in the label as the "Other Asian" (2007, p. 4). From these youth's perspectives, Chinese, Korean and Japanese ethnicities possess a "hyper-recognizability" within American social constructions of who or what constitutes Asian; whereas, Vietnamese, Laos, and Cambodian ethnicities (the Other Asians) constitute an anomaly or "ethnic-unrecognizability" under the Asian umbrella.

Reye's (2007) introduction of the concepts "ethnic un-recognizability" and hyper-recognizability" are valuable and useful in exploring how and why some Asian youth come to resent and resist the term Asian as a reductionist and all-encompassing identity imposed upon them by North American society. These two

concepts, in addition to acculturation, appropriation and internalized stereotypes help inform the discussion of ethnic identity development amongst Asian youth.

Summary

I titled this chapter “Asian Like Who?” which seeks to unpack social constructions of the term Asian by examining federal government censuses, cultural, national and political histories, and theories of youth development. This chapter fused the previous chapter’s theoretical orientations that situate Asian as a postcolonial term that is both contested and fluid across various boundaries. Second, I hoped that by tracing the history of race, ethnicity and cultural differentiation in China and Vietnam, this would provide some continuity and basis for understanding how historical constructions can have present-day influences on Asian youth’s perceptions of their Asian identity. The intention of this chapter is not to offer resolution to the question of who is Asian; rather, the intention is to provide a strengthened foundation in which the subsequent chapters can enter into analysis and discussion regarding how Asian youth construct, reconstruct, repurpose and renegotiate one or multiple Asian identities.

Researcher Blogflection Number 2

I used to work at a youth centre in Vancouver and on one of those evenings in December 2006, the police came into the centre. Without going into the details of the situation that led to the police confronting a youth in the centre, I want to share my own bizarre interaction with one of the four police men. In the usual questioning process, I was asked for my name and my role at the centre. When I pronounced my last name to the police officer, he corrected me and said: "you mean *na-goo-yen*, that's how you say it." I laughed but in my most dead-serious voice let him know I was pretty darn confident in the correct pronunciation of my own last name. In the same vein, I also enjoy being directed to pronounce my first name as Vi, as in rhymes with Fly, because that is the "correct" English pronunciation of my name. I hate being told how to pronounce my OWN name. Geez...

Chapter 4 – Asian Like e-s!@n?: A Literature Review Part II

Introduction

...quite contrary to the early belief that cyberspace offers a way to escape gender, race, and class as conditions of social interaction, recent critics suggest that online discourse is woven of stereotypical cultural narratives that reinstall precisely those conditions (Punday, 2000, p. 199).

The internet has been described as the greatest technological revolution with implications for major changes in how individuals and communities interact with one another. The internet connects people from around the globe in what can be described as an electronic society, with multiple extraordinary opportunities for communication that did not previously exist. Despite the many positive contributions of the internet there is also a growing concern regarding the numerous challenges and contradictions that become entangled in any discussion involving the Internet and its infinite landscape. The internet has simplified access to information, moreover, simplifying our access to one another through blogs, social networking sites and the reality that we can Google anyone or anything (Hamelink, 2000). The internet is either the most restrictive or democratic medium that exists (Warschauer, 2000) and definitely fraught with contradictions. This chapter examines the openness, restrictions and complexities of the internet. More specifically, it explores additional complexities of race and ethnicity in cyberspace and the role of online communities in shaping individual and collective identities.

iDentity Online

As the internet continues to grow and change, so have the descriptions and conversations about the internet. Throughout this study, I use and refer to the online/offline binary and prefer these terms over the virtual/in real life (IRL) binary. Virtual implies that the internet is a space all too separate from the social situations and conditions of the offline environment. Wynn and Katz heed us not to understand or accept the internet as virtual as it implies “a world unto itself” (2004, p. 309). The internet has become a highly relevant entity in our everyday lives; however, it is an extension of our offline lives, not a replacement or separate life. The use of the virtual/IRL binary, especially in today’s online social networking world, would distort our understanding of the relevance of the internet and youth’s online social interactions; thereby, underestimating the significance of researching online communities (Fernback, 2007).

Sherry Turkle’s 1995 seminal publication “Life on Screen” was extremely influential and continues to be applied towards understanding the concept of identity and identity construction in an online age. Heavily guided by postmodernism, Turkle observed online activity as a “relinquishing of the physical body and to regard virtual identity as a unitary phenomena in isolation from real life” (Turkle, 1995, p.29). Turkle’s analysis kept good company amongst early to mid-1990’s scholarship that predominantly adopted postmodern views of identity as virtual disembodiment and facilitated fragmentation of identity (Bukathman, 1993; Kolko, Nakamura & Rodman, 2000). Postmodern accounts of life on-screen,

to borrow from Turkle, are applicable in relation to the virtual/IRL binary; however, life on screen and online has changed in the last fifteen years.

Critical debate of Turkle's postmodern conception of identity online rests mainly on the type of life on screen or online she researched, which at the time, were primarily multi-user domains (MUD) known for online role playing (Robinson, 2007; Turkle, 1995). MUD role playing was extremely popular amongst White, college-educated and technologically adept males in the early 1990's and while participation in MUD has decreased significantly, technologically proficient internet users have increased and diversified across gender, age and racial demographics. The internet has changed and so has its user-ship. The following quote is representative of identity online, in relation to the current state of online interaction, especially in light of the growing popularity and usage of social networking sites:

I find that in creating online selves, users do not seek to transcend the most fundamental aspects of their offline selves. Rather, users bring into being bodies, personals, and personalities framed according to the same categories that exist in the offline world (Robinson, 2007, p. 94).

Symbolic Interaction agrees with postmodernism that identity is fluid; however, an SI approach to online identity is one that is informed by reflexive construction of one's identity in relation to the offline social world. For Symbolic Interactionists such as Mead (1934), this reflexivity is the individual's experience of identity and is both directly and indirectly related to their interaction with members

of a similar social group. From Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical framework, identity is a dramatic production and interaction that produces multiple selves for multiple performances. In contrast to postmodern views of the self and identity, Goffman's dramaturgy would argue that the production of a singular self, can be performed on multiple stages; thus, identity can indeed be performed on offline or online stages and vice versa.

AzN_gurl604: Conceptualizing Race and Ethnicity in Cyberspace

Chapter 2 and 3 of this thesis provided a literature review which sought to question notions of race as a biological trait rather than a social construction. The literature review challenged that if race was to be understood as something real and rooted in nature, there would not be so much variation across time, space and history, and as such, would be no variation in the construction of Asian. However, I do not want to negate the reality that racialization and racial categories do not have real implications and that race indeed permeates people's everyday lives, and for some, this occurs more often than not. Consequently, race is just as significant and problematic online, as it is offline, again, for some more than others. Building on the notion that our online lives are extensions of our offline lives, we then bring to our online interactions the knowledge, experiences, and values we have formed offline. Additionally, because our online and offline experiences are not mutually exclusive, we also bring back to our offline environment, everything we have learned, read, typed or clicked via our online journeys.

It is relatively safe to say there were no academic studies on race in cyberspace and its effects on community and individuals, twenty years ago. The

literature and research pertaining to the internet in the early to mid-1990's centered on computer-mediated-conversations (CMC), disembodied identity, and fantasy role-playing through multi-user domains (Kolko, Nakamura & Rodman, 2000; Mitra, 2008). William Gibson's (1984) reference to cyberspace as a "consensual hallucination" reminds me of postcolonial theorist Kwame Appiah's (1996) discussion of race as an "illusion." Kolko, Nakamura and Rodman (2000) refer to cyberspace as a hallucination and their acknowledgment of race as an illusion reaffirms that both are social constructions of culture rather than stable facts of biology—in the case of race, or technology— in the case of cyberspace.

Lanita Jacob-Huey's 2002 paper titled "...BTW, How do YOU Wear Your Hair? Identity, Knowledge and Authority in an Electronic Speech Community" is one of the few early works that examined how users make a claim of racial identity in text-only online environments. If one were to assume Turkle's (1997) postmodern approach to the disembodied online self, we would reach the same conclusion that online, the body is invisible and free to assume any new identity it chooses. Scholars who reject this notion of an invisible online body assert that the process of marking and being marked, as in all representational media, are still significant internet practices as users bring their assumptions and discursive patterns regarding race and racialization online (Kang, 2003; Kolko, Nakamura & Rodman, 2000; Murthy, 2008). Kang (2003) further reminds us that just because race is not signalled through visual cues online, it does not mean race ceases to matter.

Race still matters online, as does representation. Kolko (2000) writes:

The crafting of a virtual identity is important because your representation in cyberspace will guide others' interactions with you. In text-based worlds, this means how you describe yourself – language choices – are of central importance (p.215).

From a cultural studies perspective, the interpretation of any text is necessary, which calls for an examination of the relationships among people, places, practices and things; a process that is critical for internet research (Sterne, 1999). Cultural studies does not take any object as given, but rather made (Hall, 1998). The subsequent section introduces ethnic online communities (EOC) and online diaspora as examples of why race and ethnicity do matter on the internet and equally important, how racial and ethnic representations are made online.

Cybertyping and Menu-Driven Identities

The internet has long been regarded as a colorblind utopia, previously based on the concept of an invisible online body. As the discipline of internet studies began to grow, many academics came to the conclusion that the internet was not a neutral space where individuals and groups relinquished power, but rather, a site that reinforced hierarchies of power (Jones, 1999; Murthy, 2008; Sharf, 1999). Studies regarding how race, ethnicity and racial representation are operationalized online help to further challenge the long-standing belief that the internet would bring about the realization of an electronic global village that would be color-blind and therefore, devoid of racism.

Lisa Nakamura's 2002 publication "Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity and Identity on the Internet" is considered ground-breaking research that examines how our

offline constructions of race, ethnicity and identity continue to be shaped and reshaped every time we log on. Nakamura introduces the term “cybertypes”, to describe the distinctive ways that the internet “affirms, disseminates and commodifies images of race and racism” (2002, p. 3). Her analysis of *cybertypes* and *cybertyping* have been critical in my research and understanding of the ways in which the internet and technology regulate ideological constructs such as race and ethnicity and how the online re-production of these constructs may become internalized or challenged by Asian youth who participate in online communities, particularly racialized online communities or groups.

Nakamura (2002) contends that individuals still encounter experiences of being stereotyped, racialized and represented as an Other online. She has coined this function as one of being *cybertyped* and in the quote that follows, further explains its functionality:

The study of racial cybertypes brings together the cultural layer and the computer layer; that is to say, cybertyping is the process by which computer/human interfaces, the dynamics and economics of access, and the means by which users are able to express themselves online interacts with the ‘cultural layer’ or ideologies regarding race that they bring with them into cyberspace (2002, p. 3).

For Nakamura and subsequent academics such as Rachel C. Lee and Sau-ling Cynthia Wong (2003), who refer to this area of research as “postcolonial cyber-racial studies” (p. xv), cybertypes are the images of race that surface when the anxieties and desires of privileged Western internet users are scripted into a textual

environment that is in constant flux (Nakamura, 2002). This statement parallels Rey Chow's (1993) observation that images of racialized Others have become necessary symptoms of the postcolonial condition, even online. Although Chow was not speaking in a cyber-racial context, her assertion that "the production of the native is in part the production of our postcolonial modernity," (p. 30) is a good reminder that the internet is rooted in Western technology and the English language (Nakamura, 2000).

Another form of cybertyping that Nakamura refers to are online communities or groups that focus on promoting ethnic and racial identity by forcing essentialized categories of race and ethnicity upon users via the clickable box. For Nakamura (2003), these "menu-driven identities" present as problematic when users are essentially forced to select a race or ethnicity that has been pre-defined for users (p. 12). Menu-driven identities are equally more contentious when the user's self-presentation and representation are not aligned within one of the clickable boxes. This contentious experience is described by Nakamura as "identities that do not appear on the menu are essentially foreclosed on and erased" (2002, p. 102). I now discuss this concept of menu-driven identities in relation to ethnic online communities (EOC) below.

Ethnic Online Communities

Ethnic Online Communities (EOC) were seemingly designed with the good intention of establishing a social network for groups or communities of individuals of various ethnicities, who are perceived as belonging to broad, geopolitical and racialized categories such as those of Hispanic, African or Asian identities. It is

believed that EOCs such as AsianAvenue.com, experienced a boom in online membership and activity during the mid to late 1990's because traditional web programming ignored user-ship amongst racialized minorities, leading to what Nakamura perceived to be "disenfranchised netizens" (1999, p. 56).

In his essay "Ethnic Online Communities: Between Profit and Purpose," Steve McLaine (2003) seeks to understand the motives behind the creation and continuation of community websites for racialized minorities. He asks questions about whether the priorities of the masterminds behind these communities are based on financial gain or empowerment and what effects this has on the community members. Ethnic online communities may or may not be progressive. EOCs were created in response to a reality: that certain groups do in fact feel marginalized and oppressed based on their race or ethnicity both online and offline. The intent behind the creation of EOC was to unify the voices of the marginalized and allow these groups to feel proud of their common heritage, struggles and culture. The internet was their outlet to do so. McLaine provides a useful and informative account for the emergence of EOC as a business venture for the Community Connect company; however, I find his definition of ethnicity in EOC problematic to my own understanding of ethnicity. In his discussion of Community Connects three EOC sites: AsianAvenue.com, BlackPlanet.com and MiGente.com, McLaine constantly refers to the broad racialized categories of Asian, Black and Hispanic as ethnicities or ethnic groups.

The understanding of Asian is defined by physical geography according to Community Connect. Asian identity, on the Asian Avenue website, is driven by a

clickable menu of countries that make up or surround the continent of Asia.

Contrastingly, Community Connect did not provide a similar menu for their Black Planet users or members. Black, is marked by phenotypical features such as skin color and no such menu exists asking Black Planet users to refer to any cultural roots in the Caribbean or African countries. Finally, Hispanic or Latino/Latina identity is grounded in language by naming this particular racialized online community MiGente which means “my people” in Spanish.

At the height of their success in the late 1990’s, Community Connects three sites Asian Avenue, Black Planet and MiGente were definitely online forces that successfully marketed a common ancestry or cultural identification that resonated with online users (Young, 2008). During this time, EOC’s were considered a new and empowering online tool that served a critical purpose: to create an online diaspora of experiences and voices that were previously not represented in online communications.

(re)Imagining Online Diaspora

In the current context of 2011, the internet has produced new tools in the form of social network sites or the concept of social media via Facebook and Twitter that can be argued as new online sites or tools of empowerment and connection for diaspora communities. Kim-An Lieberman (2003), in her essay “Virtually Vietnamese,” describes the internet and online racialized spaces as critical sites of empowerment that contribute to the necessary condition of “imagination” that exists in diaspora communities (p. 74). For Lieberman, racialized diaspora communities rely on the internet and online spaces in order to imagine one

another's lives and lived experiences, due to geographic distance. The internet helped to shape a new form of diaspora, which traditionally has been constructed as a history of dispersal, myths, memories and alienation in a new host country (James, 1990).

In the case of the Vietnamese boat people, Lieberman writes that their common history is one of dispersal and separation. Sometimes online spaces serve as a function to unite scattered diasporic voices and experiences by imagining each other's realities as Vietnamese people scattered across the globe. Other times, participation in online communities such as Vietnamese Boat People Connection on boatpeople.com, shift the diasporic framework towards one that prioritizes the process of a collective, imagined origin (memories and myths of Vietnam) rather than producing an imagined community of currently dispersed Vietnamese boat people (Lieberman, 2003, p. 76). From a postcolonial perspective, the ability to re-imagine one's diasporic community or history through online spaces is critical in that it reaffirms the internet and its various social network functions, as tools that allow communities to take control of the act of imagining, as opposed to being the object of another's imagination. Monica T.D. Truong (1997) further solidifies this notion of imagining or re-imagining one's history and origin through her analysis that Vietnam, as a self-defined country did not exist in the consciousness of many in the western world; but rather, Vietnam "signified a war, an era, a landmark in American historical and social consciousness" (1997, p. 32). In this sense, the availability of online social networking sites dedicated to the experience of Vietnamese boat people and their participation in such online communities, enables

Vietnamese expatriates to become writers and documenters of their own collective, imagined identity; an identity marked by their collective memory and experience of cultural identity, not war. For Edward Said (1978), the ability to imagine and re-imagine geography, history and memory, helps individuals and communities to intensify their sense of self.

The increased accessibility of the internet has contributed to this intensified sense of self and one that has empowered traditionally marginalized communities to locate and establish their voice through online mediums. While the internet has become a critical forum to galvanize and unite diasporic voices, in the case of the Vietnamese boat people, the creation of any diaspora community, whether online or offline, is not immune to complications. Lieberman (2003) suggests that these complications, in an online era, are fused with the complexity of language and labels. For example, how do online sites that claim to unite voices of Vietnamese refugees and Southeast Asians invite or exclude others in membership and participation? To whom does the term or label refugee apply? Who is considered of or not of the Southeast Asian community? These questions are complicated and inter-tangled with the notion of online gate-keeping that exist in any online community or user group. The internet offers freedom to groups and communities to express themselves in their own, authentic voice. At the same time, the porous boundaries of the internet allows for a freedom of communication and interactivity that no other previous media technology has been able to do before. This boundless freedom can also exacerbate a level of instability that previous forms of technology were restricted by. In relation to the latter point, postcolonial cyber-racial scholars

(Lieberman, 2003; Nakamura, 2000; Lee & Wong, 2003) are highly critical of the easy facilitation of misrepresentation in the online world.

To be critical of misrepresentation and essentialist approaches in the online world, is to address one of Lieberman's primary concerns regarding the notion of agency. How much agency and influence do diaspora communities have in shaping the discourse about their history and experiences beyond their ethnic or racialized online communities? The question of agency and authenticity are both important and will resurface later in this thesis during the analysis of interview data with youth who participate in racialized Facebook user groups and their perception of their own agency in perpetuating or challenging racialized stereotypes. Ethnic online communities and racialized online groups experience competing drivers of an internal and external audience. On the one hand, these online groups exist as a means to document a cultural history or shared experience, but more so, to allow users to be the authors of their own life experiences or history. The collective history, memory and experiences are shared by the users in the group – the internal audience. From a community organizing and advocacy perspective, some online groups feel the need to move beyond their internal audience to reach an external audience in order to elicit awareness and change. For Lieberman, the question of agency amongst online diaspora communities is relevant and related to discussions of ethnic and racial identity, both online and offline.

Social Network Sites

History and Definition

The terms social media, social networks and networking have been fused into our everyday vernacular. Whether or not there is agreement regarding what these terms mean or whether individuals use these online tools for similar goals is a debatable issue. The terms social networking and social networks, in particular, have been used interchangeably. Throughout this thesis, I use the term online social *network* over *networking*, as per boyd and Ellison's (2007) argument that networking emphasizes relationship initiation, often between strangers online, although, it is not the primary practice of many online sites, nor is it what differentiates them from other forms of computer-mediated communication (p. 1). In this section, I would like to take a brief opportunity to reflect on the rapid growth of online social network sites over the last decade. Social network sites are online spaces that allow individuals, groups and communities to either establish new relationships or maintain current relationships with others in their social networks. A social network can occupy many dimensions, ranging from romantic relationships, to peer, familial and professional relationships. While the notion of social networks or the relationships and bonds between people have existed long before the creation of the internet one of the key distinguishing elements of online social network versus traditional offline social networks is the public display of these social connections or relationships (Donath & boyd, 2004).

The emergence and rapid popularity of online social network sites such as MySpace, Friendster and Facebook in the early 2000's are different from the initial

wave of online communities such as the multi-user domains that Turkle (1997) researched, in that they allow for both maintenance of existing social ties in addition to the formation of new social connections. Scholars who studied early forms of computer-mediated communication and online communities drew conclusions that individuals who interact within online spaces would only connect with those outside their offline and pre-existing social networks; moreover, that online relationships would be organized around shared interests rather than shared local geography (Wellman et al., 1996). Online social networks definitely have the ability to create new social connection and relationships between those separated by distance and geography; however, current trends in online community research are moving towards a consensus that online social network sites present opportunities for individuals with pre-existing relationships in an offline context to extend their interaction with one another through a different medium (boyd, 2007; Ellison, Steinfeld & Lampe, 2007).

Locating the original online social network can also be a matter of debate, depending on which definition one employs. For the purpose of this research and in keeping with boyd and Ellison's definition of online social networks, then the "first recognizable social network" is SixDegrees.com which launched in 1997 (boyd & Ellison, 2007). According to boyd and Ellison (2007), SixDegrees.com promoted itself as a tool to help people connect with one another but more so, it was the first site to combine the features of a public profile, a friends list and the ability to peruse other's friends list. The failure of SixDegrees.com was in part due to bad timing. While the internet became quite popular in the mid to late 1990's, the concept of a

social network had not necessarily latched on; therefore, an individual could register on SixDegrees.com but not be able to grow their online social network because their offline relationships with other friends, colleagues and so forth, remained offline and users were disinterested in meeting online strangers (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Secondly, in comparison to current online social networks such as Facebook that offer users online tools to organize and invite others to social functions and share current events, SixDegrees.com did not offer users much beyond the profile creation and ability to peruse others' social networks.

The aforementioned ethnic online communities or racialized online spaces such as Asian Avenue, Black Planet and MiGente; although not social network sites as per boyd and Ellison's definition, did serve a social network purpose that one would see today in Facebook; however, these three sites were never able to garner the extreme popularity that cuts across age and geo-political demographics as Facebook does today. boyd (2008) surmises that although there are numerous social network sites operating online, participation tends to be organized along cultural and linguistic patterns. This observation definitely applies to sites such as Asian Avenue or online communities such as the Vietnamese diaspora of refugees discussed earlier; however, these examples are specific to online communities that were constructed with the intention of bringing together those who shared a common cultural experience. Contrastingly, there are online social network sites such as Orkut and Cyworld who have not explicitly branded themselves as social network sites for specific ethnic, racial or cultural communities but have managed to attract members of specific nation-states and thus grown to be perceived as

ethnic or racialized online spaces. Orkut is popular amongst individuals in Brazil and India; however, members do not participate and communicate with one another across ethnic, cultural and nation-state boundaries (boyd, 2008; Mitra, 2009). Put another way, the Brazilians will only network with other Brazilians and Indians with other Indians.

Cyworld began its foray into online social networks in 1999 with the intention of reaching a global market; however, were unsuccessful in Europe and North America and as of today, have a large membership base amongst those living in Korea, China and Vietnam (Park, 2008). Cyworld, similar to Orkut, is an online social network site that sees its members interacting and connecting within siloed ethnic communities, to a degree where the owners of Cyworld programmed separate online domains at the request of their online users, to segregate the Chinese from the Koreans (boyd, 2008). boyd's (2008) ethnographic research of youth's participation in online social network sites over the last seven years, concludes that even amongst online social network sites such as My Space, Friendster and Facebook where there is a strong North American culture, there still remains "an intense division along race and age lines" (p. 123). Her observation is such that:

While cultural forces clearly segment participation, there are many structural similarities across the sites. Fundamentally, social network sites are a category of community sites that have profiles, friends and comments (boyd, 2008, p. 123).

Online sites that are marketed towards specific ethnic communities, professions or age groups are targeting niche demographics more so than a general user audience. Facebook began its launch into the online social network community with the goal of attracting a very specific niche audience. Facebook was launched in early 2004 as a Harvard-only social network site where users had to have a Harvard.edu e-mail address in order to participate in the online community (Cassidy, 2006). Beginning in September 2005, Facebook expanded to include high school students, corporate networks, and eventually crossed over international boundaries and multiple social demographics (boyd & Ellison, 2007).

While social network sites have grown exponentially in their popularity and there is a perception that feels like almost everyone is participating in at least one social network site, it is challenging to locate reliable data regarding how many people actually use these sites (comScore, 2007). A site such as Facebook indicates that they have over 600 million registered users; however, users are able to create multiple accounts within most, if not all social network sites, so this undoubtedly skews the data. Still it remains that Facebook has grown to become a phenomenon and while it has been successful in appealing to a broad population of users across multiple age, gender and cultural demographics, the next section discusses the particular appeal Facebook has amongst youth.

“Just Facebook me”: Why online social network sites matter in youth’s lives

Online social network sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Friendster experienced an immense surge in user-ship amongst youth in 2006 and became an entrenched and everyday part of young people’s lives (boyd, 2008). What is it about

online social network sites such as those listed above, that draw young people in and why, with the abundance of choice in various social network sites, did Facebook emerge as the prevailing top dog of social network sites? What is it about online interaction within Facebook that is unique or different from offline, face-to-face interactions? The goal of this section of the thesis is to address some of these questions and explore the attraction and implications for youth identities in online social network sites.

In this section, I primarily discuss dana boyd's 2008 research titled "Why Youth ♥ Social Networking Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life," to examine how and why social networking sites such as Facebook have come to play such an integral part in youth's social interactions. Although boyd's research centered on a two year qualitative study of MySpace and the role it played in the lives of teenagers, she clearly articulates the differences between online versus offline social interaction, and why the former, via social network sites, appeals to young people in a way that face-to-face interactions are limited. Her conclusion is that online social network sites offer young people four options that are not readily available in offline or face-to-face interaction and these are: persistence, searchability, replicability and invisible audiences (boyd, 2008, p. 120). These four concepts will be discussed in depth in Chapter 7 as I apply boyd's observations to my own analysis of the data I gathered from interviews with youth participants. According to boyd, these four factors within online social network sites, combined with the ability for young people to "hang out online for an uninterrupted amount of

time”, allows young people to negotiate their public life via cultural cues and make sense of their own identity and status (2008, p. 120).

The growing attraction of online social network sites such as Facebook amongst youth can arguably be tied to the notion that youth need avenues to create and recreate both private and public spaces that are youth-specific. There are perceptions that private and controlled youth spaces are on the rise. Examples of these spaces include after-school programming and youth or community centres that while operating in what appears to be a public space (a school, a community recreation centre), are in fact controlled spaces as they offer structured programming and activities. They are not spaces where one can simply hang out for long periods of time without engaging in structured activities. Similarly, many young people live at home with parents and guardians. This is equivalent to a private space and often one that is controlled or supervised by adults. Online social network sites offer the promise and flexibility of private, public and controlled spaces, all within one website. A website or online social network site such as Facebook, is in some ways, a public domain. It is a space for teenagers, college students and adults; a space where multiple generations can converge and interact.

Facebook is a public space with private components: a user can choose to engage in a conversation with another user through the instant chat option or by sending another user a private message to their Facebook message centre. Finally, sites such as Facebook have many controlled features. The requirement to create a user login name and password in order to participate as a member on Facebook immediately presents Facebook as both a private and controlled space.

Opportunities to create user groups within Facebook further sets boundaries of a controlled space within a public space. Administrators of user groups act as gatekeepers and make decisions on group membership, have the ability to monitor discussion postings and remove comments that are deemed inappropriate or not aligned with the user-groups' beliefs, mission or purpose. Within a site such as Facebook, youth are presented with the opportunity to engage in this surveillance and ultimately control the interactive space, in contrast to their experiences in the classroom, at home or even the shopping mall, where they operate under surveillance from teachers, parents or the shopping mall's security guards.

Although there are numerous online social network sites that currently exist, many of these sites offer a similar set of self-presentation and identity tools, the most popular and consistent being the "profile" tool. In an offline world, self-presentation and identity production are conveyed through how we dress, speak and with whom we speak or engage in conversation. Choices in our clothing and how we speak, convey to a certain degree or make visible, other dimensions of our life including our hobbies or socio-economic status. From a developmental perspective, youth, primarily in the teenage years, transition from their parents to their peers as the source of influence that shapes their identity negotiations (Erikson, 1986; Rogoff 2003). The teenage years have been described as a liminal space between childhood and adulthood; therefore, teenagers develop a fluid sense of identity or identities that meander between being a child and a young adult. This fluidity exists as young people negotiate and measure their self-perception against the barometer of how they are perceived by their peers, thus engaging in different

performances and incorporating feedback from their peers on these multiple performances (boyd, 2006). Feedback and acceptance from peers is a critical component in youth's socialization process.

In an online world, the ability to create and control one's profile page contributes to this experimentation with multiple or different performances. Profile pages allow users to provide the basic information: name, age and gender. Every social network site allows users to upload a profile picture or image. Whether a user chooses to provide true information or a real photo of themselves on their profile page is entirely up to the user. Most online social network sites provide a space in every user's profile for others to write comments. On Friendster, this space was known as "testimonials" and on MySpace, simply known as the "comments" section. Many other sites may refer to this option as the "guestbook." On Facebook, this space is known as "the wall." The Facebook wall on a user's main profile page, allows others to post their textual comments in response to a user's own textual commentaries, photos or postings of any sort. The wall is that feedback mechanism that young people use to either provide text-based feedback to other peers on their performance or to solicit text-based feedback regarding their own performance. Regardless of whether you refer to it as a wall, guestbook, comments section or testimonials, these text-based comments or textual postings in response to a photo or an idea, play a critical and extremely relevant role in shaping youth's perceptions of themselves and others.

As boyd (2006) succinctly points out, in online social network sites that are largely driven by textual communication, comments act as a rich form of "cultural

currency” (p. 6). While this notion of youth seeking validation from peers via textual comments posted to their online profile in reaction to a photo, comment or idea may initially appear as nothing more than a popularity contest, it is in fact an important reminder of the ways in which young people are seeking status, negotiating their location within social hierarchies and gaining or losing power. For young people who occupy an identity of privilege, status and power offline, they may choose to recreate and reaffirm this identity online. For young people whose offline lives are imbued with experiences of marginalization and a lack of power, online social networking sites can serve to either reinforce those experiences of marginalization or offer the potential to engage in different online performances and creation of new identities.

Summary

There has been a burgeoning of research pertaining to race, racism, ethnicity and identity in online spaces; however, there is limited data that is specific to youth’s negotiations of their racial or ethnic identity in racialized online spaces. I began this chapter with a recognition that the internet has simplified our access to information and access to one another, via mechanisms such as e-mail, blogs and online social networks. Identity negotiation, peer-based relationships and validation and the struggle for autonomy are not radically new issues within the landscape of youth studies. Much has been written and researched about youth identity, peer relationships and autonomy and are understood as critical but normal junctures in youth’s social and emotional development. This chapter acknowledges that youth today are experiencing the same identity negotiations as their

predecessors; however, they are doing so amidst a rapidly growing technological world. Youth have new communication and technology tools at their disposal in which to explore their identity, sense of belonging and friendships and furthermore, have multiple ways in which they can seek feedback and validation from peers. Whether or not one regards the internet, and its various communication and social networking tools as a positive or a negative, one needs to accept that the internet and different modes of telecommunication are here to stay.

Researcher Blogflection Number 3

When I was a frontline youth worker, I had some pretty strict boundaries in place to separate my work life from my personal life. This boundary setting applied to who I would interact with or be “friends” with in online social networks. When Friendster was at its height of popularity, I was quite an active participant on the site. I created a profile page, had a network of friends and acquaintances online who wrote “testimonials” about me on my profile page and so forth. I also uploaded photos here and there but I wouldn’t say I was super engaged on Friendster. Many of the youth I use to work with would send me requests to be friends on Friendster and for a short while in the beginning, I would ignore their request thinking it would be easier to feign ignorance but then I decided that was lame and decided to explain to them in person my reasons for needing to separate my work life from my personal life. It was always received well and the youth I worked with always understood; although, a few times they would wonder and be curious if my reasons for not being online friends was because I was hiding my crazy party photos or what not. That was hardly the case – I wish I could say I am that “interesting” online but everything I post is rather tame or at least that’s what I tell myself. Anyhow, once I left the field of youth work, one of the first things some of the youth asked me was “now can we be Facebook friends?” At this point, Friendster had been replaced by Facebook. I thought about it for a while and decided that it would now be ok, given I don’t work directly with some of these young people anymore. Still, there was something that would linger in my mind around that need for some maintained separation and I decided as much as it would be fine to be Facebook friends, I decided to give the former youth I worked with, access to my limited Facebook profile which means limited access to some of my photos, web links, what others wrote on my Facebook wall... I go back and forth on this decision every now and then and wonder to myself if I’m being too severe and paranoid because I truly don’t have anything to hide...or do I? Participation on Facebook, Friendster and all those other online social networks has really made me think about the concept of audience. At the end of the day, I suppose there are pieces of my identity that I am more comfortable sharing with a certain and smaller online audience and parts of my identity that I feel safe in sharing more broadly with a wider audience.

Chapter 5 – Asian Like What, Where, When & How?: Methodology and Methods

Introduction

As discussed at the opening of this thesis, the primary methodology of this study is an online ethnography. I present the design of my research in this chapter and discuss my reasons for selecting a qualitative, blended-methods approach. Specific qualitative research methods such as interviewing, grounded theory method and the method of instances are discussed and described in detail. Additionally, this chapter provides an overview to the challenges and ethical questions that had to be considered prior to and during the process of this research with youth participants. The last segment of this chapter includes an introduction to the four youth who participated in my research and graciously allowed me to interview them regarding their participation in certain user-created, racialized online groups on Facebook.

Online Ethnography

Jan Fernback (2007) suggests that qualitative methods are suitable for exploring the process of human meaning construction and social interaction. Qualitative research attempts to “understand the mechanism of social processes, and to comprehend and explain why both actors and processes are as they are” (Vindich & Lyman, 1994, p. 23). I have chosen to employ online ethnography to inform and guide my research. It is partial because while I do conduct the majority

of my data collection through online observation and interviews, a portion of my study is conducted via face-to-face or offline interviews, which I will later discuss.

Traditional ethnography has been regarded as a form of story-telling that is able to successfully convey social stories that draw the audience into the daily lives of social actors (Thomsen, Straubhaar & Bolyard, 1998; White, 1993). As shown in chapter 4, internet usage and more specifically, participation in online social network sites have become engrained in the daily lives of many. The internet as a form of technology, produces a new landscape where stories unfold; moreover, internet technology functions as a tool to capture and share these stories in a new and expeditious manner.

Online ethnography has flourished, and while it has grown in popularity as a methodological approach, its popularity as a subject matter is debated and questioned for its research validity and ethics (Eysenbach, 2001; Jones, 1999; Murthy, 2008). As a constantly evolving research methodology, certain facets of online ethnography mirror those of its traditional offline cousin, as both require the researcher to become well versed and immersed in the culture and environment that is being observed or studied. Unlike traditional anthropological ethnography, however, McConnell (2000) cites that any research in computer mediated environments is bound to be exploratory as the field is still in its infancy in comparison with other methodological approaches.

So the question remains, what *is* online ethnography? According to Eysenbach (2001), online ethnography can take place in three contexts: 1) as *passive analysis* which can take place in newsgroups and online communities where the

researcher assumes a lurking position and does not directly participate in online group discussion; 2) as *active analysis* that takes place when a researcher chooses to participate in communications with other participants; and 3) when the researcher chooses to *identify themselves and declare* their role as a participant or observer, in order to recruit or engage potential participants as informants. Bainbridge (2000), similarly, views data collection in online ethnography as either “observation ethnography” or “informant ethnography” (p. 57). The former is consistent with Eysenbach’s passive analysis approach, wherein the researcher assumes an unobtrusive position of analyzing online community discussions without any interaction with participants and without participants’ knowledge or consent. Bainbridge, on the other hand, combines both of Eysenbach’s active analysis and researcher identification steps into one strategy of *informant ethnography* that can be summed up as interaction with participants through focused discussions where the researcher will either begin discussion threads to start a back and forth dialogue with participants or approach participants to act as informants, usually via interviews. My approach to this research is consistent with Bainbridge’s informant ethnography; however, I do acknowledge that I engaged in passive analysis in parts of this research and will discuss my variable approaches in subsequent sections.

Study Design

Lurking Around

For the purpose of my research, I engaged in both participant-observation or passive analysis in my role as a lurker as well as informant ethnography, via interviews with youth participants. Lurking is a form of observation used in online

ethnography that involves a process of visiting interactive sites in online spaces, such as message boards or online forums, and reading the posts or threads submitted by other users without actually participating in the online textual dialogue (Mann & Stewart, 2000). I discuss the details of my lurking process below.

Upon receiving ethics approval from the University of Victoria for my research proposal in January 2010, I almost immediately began to selectively lurk in racialized online groups on Facebook. I use the term lurk selectively because truth be told, I was lurking in numerous online communities ranging from Asian Avenue, Yellowworld, Rice Bowl Journals, MySpace, and Black Planet, in addition to various user-created, racialized online groups long before I began my graduate studies. It has always been a personal interest and curiosity of mine and lurking is a common process that many of us engage in as we 'surf the internet.' My initial research interests began with the intention to study youth's interaction within the online sites previously mentioned; however, as my frontline work experience and relationships with young people in Vancouver evolved, so did the online sites I intended to study. I shifted my attention from these previous online sites to user-created racialized online groups within Facebook, as per the trend I was noticing amongst the young people I was working with back in 2007. Once I made the decision to formally enter into the role of a researcher as a graduate student, I began the process of obtaining ethics approval for my research and engaged in what I call, sanctioned lurking as a form of ethnographic research.

The year and a half ethics review process for my proposed research is an entire story in and of itself that centered largely around a back and forth debate

regarding my role as a lurker in user-created online groups. I was of the position that any online community or group that declared itself to be public, meaning your participation to enter the group did not require approved access by the group's administrator, was indeed open for anyone to 'hang out' or lurk in. The University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) disagreed and required that I seek permission from online group administrators in order to lurk and additionally, that I needed to declare my role as lurking researcher. While I agreed wholeheartedly with the HREB's position that I should contact online group administrators for those Facebook user-groups or communities that were gated, meaning participation or viewing of the discussion threads required the approval of the group administrator, I did not agree that I would have to take the same approach with online groups that declared themselves public. After some debate, the HREB agreed with my position to lurk in public, user-created online groups but required me to seek permission from Facebook group administrators before I post any advertisements, even in the public groups, to solicit interview participants. I was happy to oblige with this requirement.

I lurked in various Facebook online groups between late January through to the middle of March, 2010. I would spend an average of one to two hours a day in these groups to read through "wall postings," which are basically a public bulletin board in Facebook. Additionally, I also perused the discussion threads within each Facebook group and paid particular attention to threads where users discussed race and ethnicity. I was lurking for very specific information. A search using Facebook's own search engine yielded over one thousand user-created groups if I simply

entered the word Asian. I was able to narrow this search down by geography by selecting Vancouver; however, the results still produced slightly over one hundred user-created groups. By eliminating user-created Asian groups that were categorized as restaurants, local business or celebrity fan pages, I then began to lurk within a cluster of fifty-eight Facebook groups that presumably, fit my research purpose. It was relatively straight forward to move through lurking within these fifty-eight groups, as some groups were created but not active, meaning there were no discussion posts and in some cases, no members or users other than the group administrator who initially created the Facebook group. I was also looking specifically for user-created groups in Facebook that had a large contingent of Vancouver high-school members which ultimately narrowed the process down to eleven online groups. I proceeded to approach the group administrators of these eleven groups for permission to post, recruit and gather data for my study.

The lurking method in online ethnography allowed me to, at a distance, review current and archived discussion threads in various Facebook groups, in order to see what theme(s) emerged in regards to how youth assumed or challenged what it meant to be Asian and the online inclusionary and exclusionary practices within these online Facebook groups.

Online Relationship-Building

In traditional ethnography, the ethnographer is required to observe and essentially learn the group's discourse, interactions, patterns and the means by which knowledge within this group is transmitted, produced or reproduced. Thomsen, Straubhaar & Bolyard (1998) suggest that in order to achieve the

aforementioned, an ethnographer must establish the authority to write from the insider's perspective. I struggle with this notion of establishing some form of authority and question whether it is authority or authenticity that was required throughout the course of this research and in particular, when it came time to recruit and interview youth. I approached this research with hope that the insights I have been privy to, such as slang, terminology, and social codes, which I have absorbed through my years as a frontline youth worker, working with Asian youth and my own ontological location as a racialized individual would lend me some degree of credibility in my online and offline interactions with youth in this study. I explore the nuances and tensions of my position as a racialized researcher conducting research on racialized populations in Chapter 6: Asian Like Me?.

After the broad lurking phase which narrowed my search of user-created Facebook Asian groups that are popular with Vancouver youth from hundreds, to fifty-eight and eventually down to the eleven groups, the next step was to contact group administrators. I sent a Facebook message to the administrators of all eleven online groups to introduce myself and describe the intent of my research. For a copy of this introduction letter, please see Appendix C. It should be noted that all eleven Facebook groups self-identified as a public group where participation or membership within the group did not require approval from the group administrator.

The introduction letter to the group administrator served two purposes: first, to present a case for this study and establish my role as a legitimate researcher by providing the name of my educational institution and ways to verify my researcher

identity by contacting either the University or my thesis supervisor. The second purpose, which I perceive to be the salient goal of sending an introduction message, was to establish a positive relationship, via permission-seeking, with the group administrator; a relationship that I knew I would come to rely on very quickly. I recognize that within these user-created groups in Facebook, the group administrator acts as the 'authority' and a gatekeeper who ultimately, has the power to deny or grant me access to their group members. Despite all these groups being public, the group administrator is the person or user who originally created the group and has the authority to make these groups private or permission-only, at the click of their computer mouse.

My rationale for wanting to build a relationship with the group administrator was not to have the administrator speak on behalf of the group in regards to how the term Asian is qualified; however, I recognized that the administrators of these user groups know the online group better than I would as an outside researcher and to have the administrator as my ally would further legitimize my role amongst the group's members. In this sense, the group administrators were a good starting point in terms of sharing with me group norms and some were extremely helpful in making suggestions as to how I may go about recruiting potential members for interviews, a key dimension in ethnographic research (Eysenbach, 2001). In my experience as a youth worker, relationship-building has always been the cornerstone in my practice of engaging youth in any meaningful activity. When applied to this research, the relationship-building process began with group

administrators, who in the case of all eleven groups I contacted, were also youth themselves ranging in age from 16 to 22.

In addition to the initial Facebook message that I sent to the online group administrators, my relationship-building approach relied on my willingness to share facets of my 'non-researcher' life. I debated for a long time whether or not to create a new Facebook profile that would be my researcher alter-ego profile. I decided not to go this route when I placed myself in the position of the group administrators I would be seeking permission from. My alter-ego Facebook profile would not have any friends listed, likely no photos or information about myself other than research-related information. I believed by using my existing Facebook profile to message these online group administrators, I could prove my legitimacy as a 'real' person with a social network of her own as opposed to a generic researcher profile with no social network that might be perceived as questionable. Additionally, I also included a link to the blog I created: <http://e-sian.blogspot.com>. The purpose of my research blog was to host information regarding my research, explain how to get in touch with me, the University or my thesis supervisor. I also posted all my letters of consent and parent/guardian information letters to the blog space for potential youth participants and group administrators to peruse prior to making a decision about participating in this research. In many ways, my blog kept me accountable to those young people who agreed to participate in my research.

I sent a message to six administrators of the eleven Facebook groups. It should be noted that two individuals administered multiple, separate groups so I chose to reference all of those online group names in my e-mail to these

administrators. I chose to contact the group administrators of all eleven groups because my gut told me I would be lucky if even one administrator allowed me to post recruitment material in their Facebook group. I did not operate on the assumption that young people would be jumping at the opportunity to participate in any academic research; therefore, my goal was to establish a trusting and working relationship with at least one group administrator who could help champion my research in their roles as both the group administrator and an insider, participant of the Facebook group. Of all the messages I sent using Facebook's private messenger option, one administrator declined with a simple and frank "no thanks" message. Four administrators never responded and two group administrators, after asking me a series of questions back and forth via Facebook messaging, agreed and allowed me to post a notice about my research to their members and recruit potential group members for one-to-one interviews. Both group administrators who granted me permission to post recruitment material were male, one was 17 years old and one was 19 years old at the time, and both requested that I not use the real Facebook online group name in my research or any screen capture images. I obliged; therefore, throughout this study, both groups will be referred to as Racialized Online Group 1 or 2, or simply ROG 1 or ROG 2. Information about both group's composition and number of participants or members will be further discussed under "Mixed Methods – Data Collection."

Participant Recruitment

With permission from both group administrators of ROG 1 and 2, I posted a short recruitment blurb, approximately 200 words, on each group's Facebook wall.

A copy of this recruitment blurb is available in Appendix D. I posted my recruitment blurb in both ROG on March 16th, 2010. As the primary investigator, I was the only person responsible for recruiting youth participants for my study. My goal was to recruit 4 to 5 youth for a one-to-one interview with myself, that would take place either in person (face-to-face) or via electronic instant messaging mechanisms such as MSN or Yahoo messenger, if that was their preference.

When I submitted my ethics proposal, I explored recruiting youth to act as research participants, in two respects: online via a posting in the Facebook group and offline, via an advertisement posted in a Vancouver youth centre where Asian youth often frequented. Similar to my earlier stated anxiety regarding not being granted permission by any of the Facebook ROG administrators, I was also worried that I would not be successful in engaging youth in these ROG to participate in an interview. In particular, I thought this would prove to be most challenging in the case of inviting online youth to meet me offline for a face-to-face interview. For this reason, I proposed recruitment via the youth centre where I have existing relationships with youth workers and staff who could verify my researcher status and provide a physical space such as a meeting room at the youth centre, where I could conduct my face-to-face interviews.

I regarded posting a recruitment blurb within these online groups as somewhat passive; therefore, I also actively sought out potential youth within these Facebook groups to interview. The time that I spent lurking in-depth within these two online groups allowed me to identify youth who frequently posted or interacted with peers in discussion board topics pertaining to constructions and negotiations

of Asian identities. Based on their frequency and the relevance of their posts to the scope of my research, I contacted some of these youth directly via Facebook messaging, to invite them to participate in an interview. The parameters that I used to recruit youth participants for interviews included:

- Youth between the ages of 14 to 18. For youth in this age category, I was only required to seek their consent to participate and permission from their parent/guardian was not necessary.
- Youth who self-identified as Asian. I did not want to assume that their participation and membership in these ROG automatically equated with self-identification as someone who is Asian
- Youth could be either male or female and of any sexual orientation.
- Youth who were currently attending high-school, in order to explore whether or not their offline school experiences contribute to or shape their online negotiations of what it means to be Asian.
- Youth living in the Metro-Vancouver area. Due to my own limited accessibility as a researcher, I could only conduct face-to-face interviews with youth who live within this geographic area.
- Youth who are able to and comfortable with communicating in either English or Vietnamese. Again, due to my limited ability to only converse in English or Vietnamese, participants were only given these two language options.

I was completely surprised when the first four youth I messaged through Facebook all agreed to participate; furthermore, three of the four youth chose to meet me in person for an interview. The one youth who agreed to be interviewed

via MSN instant messenger changed his mind on very short notice without any reason other than he was not interested anymore. I respected his wishes and was able to recruit the 17 year old administrator of one of the two online groups, to become my fourth youth participant. Having been able to recruit four youth for interviews, I decided to forgo the offline recruitment tactic of posting an advertisement in the youth centre or relying on youth workers to facilitate introductions between myself and potential youth to interview.

Blended Methods – Data Collection & Analysis

According to Silverman (2005), if a researcher treats social reality as constructed in different ways within different contexts, then that researcher cannot rely upon a singular process to describe multiple, complex phenomena. I view this research as an exploration of how complex phenomena such as race, ethnicity and identity are constructed and socially mediated within the complex terrain of the internet. I used three methods to collect and organize my data which I believe were complementary and built off one another in order to help me collect rich and complex ethnographic data both online and offline. My data collection and analysis took place across three trajectories: 1) through the tactic of observation ethnography, particularly lurking and the use of the method of instances and 2) informant ethnography by using two different interviewing approaches and finally 3) a constant comparison of interview data between different youth participants in order to group and analyze data.

The integration of two or more data collections methods (Brewer & Hunter, 2006) can be compatible. According to some online ethnographers, the use of an

“eclectic approach can minimize limitations by revealing the different dimensions of a phenomenon, which can enrich understandings of the multi-faceted, complex nature of the social world” (Moran-Ellis, Alexander, Cronin, Dickinson, Fielding, Slaney, & Thomas, 2006, p. 47). Looking at complex phenomena from different viewpoints and reaching the same or similar conclusions by analyzing two or more different types of data can also serve to strengthen credibility of research findings (Marsh, 2000).

Data Collection: Method of Instances

It has been argued that socially constructed meanings of race and racialization are acquired and shared through everyday conversation and where identities are interactionally formed (Tynes, Reynolds and Greenfield, 2004; Van Dijk, 1992 & Mama, 1995). The method of instances is interested in analyzing the social processes that give meaning to an utterance and its possible meanings within a social context (Denzin, 1998; Ignacio, 2000; Jones, 1999). It is a method that is informed by theoretical orientations of cultural studies and symbolic interaction. The method of instances within ethnography can be used as a tool to collect and code data, as well as a tool to analyze data. I chose to use the method of instances as a tool to collect, group and analyze broad themes across numerous textual postings, as opposed to analyzing one specific textual conversation or thread. The broad themes and patterns gathered during my lurking phase helped to inform my interview questions with subsequent youth participants.

The method of instances has been strongly linked to studies of Conversation Analysis (CA) whether the conversations take place in a face-to-face format or

through computer mediated conversation that includes e-mail, online textual postings in discussion groups, and instant messaging, to name a few examples (Denzin, 1999). Scholars such as Psathas (1995), employ the method of instances as an analytic strategy within CA studies in order to examine how a particular utterance within the conversation elicits responses towards that utterance (p. 32). Bakhtin's (1986) definition of CA further suggests that each utterance is located within a context and can act as a *rejoinder* to another utterance (p. 18). The method of instances recognizes each instance as being contained within a context; a context wherein the members or participants understand and respond to that instance (Psathas, 1995).

For Denzin (1999), the method of instances can be a useful analytic approach to study texts, particularly cybertalk and cybernarratives. Cybernarratives are grounded in everyday lives of the author or writers; it is the politics of everyday life intersecting with technology (Denzin, 1999, p. 108). According to Denzin (1999, p. 109), textual conversations that take place in online mediums such as discussion boards or forums tend to unfold in the following manner:

1. An issue or topic is posed and discussion, conversation or exchanges of ideas ensue. Exchanges follow the previous comments, eliciting a response structure and woven into what is known as a thread.
2. Over any given amount of time, the threads are further developed resulting in the online life of a particular group's conversation.

3. A reader's entry into any online discussion board or forum is shaped by what the reader reads or sees on the screen. It should be noted that particular responses within a thread may have been deleted; therefore, readers should not assume they are ever reading the full or complete discussion.
4. The public "face" of any online discussion board or forum can change over time. This point is in reference to how online discussions can and will change as new members participate in the conversation threads.

The focus of my study is not conversation analysis or cybernarratives; however, I am interested in the textual "instances" and "utterances" that occur between youth as they negotiate what it means to be Asian within two Facebook racialized online groups. In this sense, I used a modified version of Denzin's method of instances, adapted by Emily Noelle Ignacio (2000) that is more macro and seeks to find patterns across online textual threads in order to understand collectivity and consensus that emerges within online interaction and discussion groups. Ignacio's (2000) approach to the method of instances required me to:

1. group and code the instances of any form of online textual threads
2. analyze the instances to tease out the primary negotiations and debates in regards to an Asian identity
3. analyze the texts with multiple lenses that are informed by postcolonial, cultural studies and symbolic interaction perspectives.

The themes and patterns that emerged from these online texts, derived from the method of instances, helped me generate additional questions that I later used in my one-to-one interviews with youth participants.

In her research where she lurked within online Filipino discussion groups, Ignacio (2000) used the method of instances to group and code particular online instances or utterances pertaining to Filipino identity by the group members. The authors of these postings were not aware that their posts were being used to inform her research. Ignacio argued that their privacy was not violated as their online screen names were changed; however, she did quote their postings in verbatim, which has been argued by some critics of online ethnography (Bromseth, 2003; Gajjala, 2002; Markham, 2007) as unethical. To quote in verbatim without the permission of the text's writer or author compromises the anonymity of research subjects given the ability to use search engines such as Google to locate verbatim online textual postings.

Unlike Ignacio, I employed the method of instances as a means of grouping instances and utterances that I encountered in my lurking of textual postings. The grouping and coding of these utterances produced a series of repeated themes. These themes helped me refine my interview questions and in some cases, help identify new interview questions but I have not quoted in verbatim any particular textual posting within any of the Facebook groups where I lurked. What I discovered using the method of instances during my lurking phase, is that utterances in relation to racialized stereotypes or epithets of Asians tend to elicit additional utterances. Additional observations include the relevance and significance of who utters what

and whether or not the writer or author of that particular utterance or instance is accepted by the online group as someone who is indeed Asian as opposed to those who are either labeled wannabes or white-washed Asians. I incorporated these themes into my interview questions with youth participants to understand when, why and with who they will engage in a particular online group discussion about what it means to be Asian.

Data Collection: Interviewing (Online via CMC versus Face-to-Face)

In face-to-face interactions, race, as a social construction based primarily, but not exclusively on phenotypical features, is visually explicit and to a certain extent, so is age. In the online world, race and other factors such as ethnicity, age and gender are either made verbally explicit via text or visually explicit via photographs. Regardless of either textual or visual symbols that aim to convey and establish race or ethnicity in online interactions through computer mediated communications (CMC), there are still conundrums related to the validity and authenticity of the author of those texts and images. My intention to offer an offline, face-to-face option for interviews was a means to validate the data I lurked upon and ensure that authentic youth voice was represented in my research. I gave youth the option to decide between an online interview via instant messenger options of either MSN or Yahoo chat messenger, or a face-to-face interview in an accessible location. I felt it necessary to empower and provide youth with the choice in how they choose to be an informant or participant with someone who is essentially, a stranger. I also wanted youth to feel safe so as much as I had personal hopes to conduct at least one of my interviews in person, I recognized that a young person may not feel safe

meeting with an adult who is a stranger, only to have this stranger pose all types of questions about their daily and personal online social interactions. Based on perceptions of safety or lack thereof, I did enter this data collection process with the assumption that all my interviews with youth would take place through online instant messenger options; however, that was not the case.

Face-to-face or in-person interviewing is described by Neuman (1994) as “a social relationship ... a short-term, secondary social interaction between two strangers with the explicit purpose of one person obtaining specific information from the other” (p. 246). Interviewing is a key form of data collection in qualitative research where the researcher acts as an instrument of the research method (Chen & Hinton, 1999). It is a highly personal process where meaning is created as a result of the interaction of relationship between the researcher and the interview participant. The advantage of using ethnographic interviewing methods in qualitative research provides the researcher with flexibility in data gathering and ability to delve deeper into a particular area of interest or concern that may arise during the interview. Depending on the scope of the research and the distance between researchers and participants and depending on the number of participants involved in a study, face-to-face interviewing can become expensive due to travel and equipment costs and time consuming, as researchers need to transcribe each interview conducted (Kvale, 1996; Neuman, 1994).

Online interviewing has strengths and limitations. The internet provides an online landscape which is not bound by temporal and spatial restrictions where researchers can interact with participants in ways which may be difficult in an

offline or face-to-face environment. The internet extends our ability to interface with groups or individuals who may otherwise be difficult to reach via conventional offline research approaches (Coomber, 1997) and those who are geographically beyond our reach. Online interviewing, using a variety of tools enabled by the internet aims to facilitate and replicate some characteristics of traditional face-to-face interviewing such as: attempts to capture spontaneity and ability to be conducted in real-time (Chen & Hinton, 1999).

The work that has been published in regards to computer mediated conversations has mainly been concerned with asynchronous or non-real time exchanges usually conducted via email or a listserv facility (Gaiser, 1997; Ward, 1999). However, it is not a real time facility if respondents can post their reply at any time and as such, the facilitator cannot play an active role in moderating the interview. The level of group interaction is reduced and the sense of immediacy removed. It has been suggested that in online mediums there is a tendency to be more open with others, often complete strangers, than in real world communication (Nguyen & Alexander, 1996). It seems that individuals appear to enjoy relating narratives to those they have never met and probably never will meet. The appeal is strong to “tell one's tale to others, to many, many others” (Poster, 1995, p.90). Poster (1995) goes on to suggest that the lack of visual clues plays an important role in encouraging candid interchanges because:

Without visual clues about gender, age, ethnicity and social status conversations open up in directions which otherwise might be avoided. Participants in these virtual communities often express

themselves with little inhibition and dialogues flourish and develop quickly (p.90).

Berg (2007) further argues that:

As technology advances, methods used in qualitative research must strive to keep up - or at least seek ways to take advantage of these technological advancements because such environments provide the researcher and respondent an experience similar to face-to-face interaction insofar as they provide a mechanism for a back-and-forth exchange of questions and answers in what is almost real time (p. 112).

Therefore, due to the advantages set out below, the principal study used MSN Instant Messenger (IM) as the specific communication tool for online interviewing. IM is an electronic online communication system that combines the facilities of a telephone - synchronous conversations, and "turbo charged email, producing a written record of the conversation in rapid real-time chat at lightning speed" (Flynn, 2004, p. 8). Additional benefits of IM include its ability to act as a faster, more conversational way of communicating than email, and has archiving capabilities that save and store conversations (Flynn, 2004). IM is inexpensive (free to download in most cases), convenient and attractive for those who dislike or find opinion expression difficult during face-to-face interviews and discussions (Gunter, 2002; Ho & McLeod, 2008). With IM, there is no need for time consuming transcription and is relatively easy in terms of setting up mutually acceptable interview dates and times between the researcher and the participant. Finally, IM can generate reflective

and descriptive data as areas of uncertainty can be picked upon and respondents have the ability to instantly reflect on their last response by reading what is exactly in front of their computer screen (James, 2006; Morgan & Symon, 2004). This section explains the strengths of online interviewing via instant messenger. Now, I would like to look at reasons for also providing the face-to-face interview option.

My desire for conducting at least one, face-to-face interview with youth participants is closely tied to my ontological and social location as a former frontline youth worker. This richness of spoken words, the sound of voices, gestures, and even the smell of another individual is severely limited in the realm of online ethnography; however, I believe having the ability to compare and contrast face-to-face discussions with youth participants alongside a collection and analysis of their Facebook textual postings regarding issues of race, ethnicity and identity would yield valuable insights.

I conducted a total of four semi-structured interviews: one with each of the four youth participants. Of these four interviews, the three face-to-face interviews lasted approximately 1.5 hours, whereas the one online interview took place over the course of two separate days, but lasted approximately 1.5 hours each time. Semi-structured, open-ended interviewing is described by Herman-Kinney and Vershaeve (2003) as a flexible, qualitative technique that requires the researcher to prepare a list of prearranged questions; however, it still allows the researcher the opportunity to probe for additional information or ask new questions that may emerge as a result of the research participant's response. According to Patton (1990), this form of interviewing, in addition to allowing for researcher flexibility,

provides an increased comparability of responses, simplicity of data analysis and strong data reliability.

Data Organization and Analysis

According to Creswell (2003), the primary objective of analyzing data is to uncover common and recurring themes and patterns within the data collected. The first step in my data analysis process began with the transcribing of all three face-to-face interviews. According to Kvale (1996), the transcription of interview data as structured text allows the researcher to become intimately entwined with the data; thereby, facilitating deeper analysis. For the one interview that was conducted via online instant messenger, the interview data was downloaded directly from the “conversation history” option provided by MSN messenger. In this instance, I was able to save time by not having to transcribe the data but spent time reading and re-reading the data from the online interview to re-familiarize myself with the discussion that took place.

The thematic organization of interview data with all four youth participants were guided by the principles of grounded theory method (GMT) developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967); however, I cannot say my analysis of data followed a strictly GMT path. Grounded theory method has been argued to be closely associated with symbolic interaction, due to a similar emphasis placed on meaning and action in contexts where social interaction occurs (Kendall, 1999; Pearese & Kanyangale, 2009). Both GTM and SI emphasize the actor’s perspectives of reality in the interpretation of that reality (Goulding, 1999).

One of these principle approaches of GMT, is that of “constant comparison analysis” which involves taking one interview or statement and comparing and contrasting it with those that are similar and/or different, in order to develop conceptualizations of the possible relations between various pieces of data. Some researchers prefer and use the term “coding” when referring to constant comparative analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). I used the constant comparison analysis approach in the following ways: first, I read through my entire set of transcribed interview data; secondly, I divided the interview data into smaller sections which were relevant and meaningful for me and assigned a “code” or descriptive label to each section (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 21). Finally, after all the data from the transcribed interviews were coded, the codes were bundled along similar and recurring patterns or themes. A total of three broad themes or recurring patterns were gleaned from the data analysis process and are discussed in depth in Chapter 7.

While I did employ specific techniques of comparing and coding the interview data in order to derive themes, my approach to analyzing the data cannot be solely characterized by GMT’s constant comparison analysis and differs in the sense that I did not engage youth participants after the coding process, to seek their input and feedback on the themes I developed as a result of the comparing and contrasting of the interview data. Additionally, I acknowledge that constant comparison analysis was originally developed to analyze data collected over a series of interviews, in order to engage in theoretical sampling. It should be noted that constant comparison analysis has been modified to be used to analyze data collected

in one round of interviews (Boeije, 2002; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007); recognizing, however, that the interviews are conducted in a similar fashion. Given that my data collection method is a mixed approach in which I conducted three face-to-face interviews and one online interview, I acknowledge that I was comparing and contrasting interview data collected across two different mediums.

Ethical Considerations

The internet is a site where ethnographies are produced; where history is constructed and contested; and where “speakers-as-writers” share those life stories and experiences as personal narratives via text (Denzin, 1995). How these personal narratives and texts are understood is determined by the approach an ethnographer takes. Online ethnography has its own impact in regards to the richness of data that is both restricted and boundless. The following section attempts to unpack the ethically ambiguous nature of online research as it pertains to this project. I draw upon Goffman’s framework discussed in Chapter 2 to help unpack these ambiguities and provide additional examples of how other researchers wrestle with ethical dilemmas in their work, as it relates to conducting online research.

Public versus Private Spaces

The issue of fuzzy boundaries regarding whether online research, such as those that take place in a chat room or user group bulletin board, are public or private spaces, can have various ethical implications for online ethnography. My approach to the online component of this research is informed by Goffman’s (1974) framework of social interaction which I have applied to understanding the

interactions and discussions within the online Facebook groups I frequented.

Goffman (1974) is interested in the social rituals of interactions; rituals that are informed by speech, behaviour and utterances. In online research, speech and online behaviour take shape through text and the exchange of text-based interactions amongst users.

Cavanagh (1999) writes that the problematic notion of text in online spaces, once broken down to anatomized units can help inform this discussion of private versus public spaces. If I were to treat the text in these Facebook groups as purely text (for example, to quote without permission), the ethical debate and consideration would be in regards to how researchers use, consume or borrow the intellectual property of others. In this instance, my position is one where I believe I cannot legitimately or freely quote or use the text of a writer/author in the online user group, despite that text existing in what I perceive to be a public chat room or bulletin board. For the purpose of my research, I am not quoting direct, textual postings from any users or members in these Facebook groups. I am more interested in understanding how these texts contribute to or shape youth's negotiation of Asian identity.

Participation as a lurker in these Facebook groups, where I observed and read, but did not respond to any discussion threads, is similar to Goffman's analysis of divorcing the speech, in this case the textual posts, from the subjectivity of the individual or author of the texts. Rather than focus on the speech or individual textual postings, I focused on the interactive ritual between youth who post or write these online groups. From my perspective, my role as a lurker observing the

interactional ritual or utterances and instances amongst youth in the Facebook groups is parallel with traditional ethnographic approaches of researchers who occupy public spaces in order to observe the social interactions of others. Observing, studying and researching public social interaction have been legitimate research approaches that do not require consent, as long as the focus has been on the patterns of interaction rather than the acts of specific individuals or in this case, quoting in verbatim any specific text posted by Facebook online users.

Free and Informed Consent

As discussed earlier under recruitment, all four of youth participants were essentially recruited online. Regardless of whether or not youth chose to participate in an interview online via instant messenger or face-to-face, I let youth know that they would have to agree and give consent to be interviewed before we could proceed. For the three youth who agreed to a face-to-face interview, I e-mailed them a copy of the consent letter for their own participation and the notice of information for their parent's before-hand. I asked youth to please show the letter to their parents and indicated that if after reading the letter, they would still like to proceed with the face-to-face interview, I will still need them to sign a copy once we meet and before the first interview question can even be asked. For the one youth who wished to be interviewed via MSN instant messenger, I also sent him a copy of both letters ahead of time. Given that we would not be meeting in person, I asked him to reply via e-mail to indicate whether or not he agreed to proceed with being interviewed or if he would like to withdraw. By sending confirmation via email of his interest and agreement to be a participant, the e-mail implies that the youth has

given consent. I chose to provide this e-mail option for the online interview because it helped to eliminate what may be perceived as a barrier by youth if they are asked to print out a consent form, sign it and mail it back to myself the researcher. The extra step of heading to the post office and needing to purchase a stamp may be regarded as a barrier to participation.

All participants were given a detailed explanation of their rights as research participants. Before the start of the interviews, I explained the consent form to each youth participant to ensure that they fully understood the scope of their participation and allowed them to ask any questions about their participation, stressing that they have the right to withdraw their participation at any time, without any consequence.

Parents/Guardians Information Letter

According to the HREB, if any youth under the age of 14 participate in this research, permission from a parent or guardian is required via a signed consent form. For youth ages 14 and over, their parent/guardian should be informed but consent is not be required. Although my intention for the purpose of this study was to only interview youth in the age range between 14 to 18, I prepared myself for the possibility that a youth under the age of 14 may be interested in participating; therefore, I also prepared a parent/guardian consent form in the event that this should take place. As it turns out, all four of the youth participants I interviewed were over the age of 14.

All four youth were all asked to inform their parent or guardian of their participation in this research. The information letter for parents and guardians

provided information regarding the objectives of the research, when and where the interviews would take place and how to get in touch with the researcher if necessary. A copy of the parent/guardian information letter is provided in Appendix B.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

I gave youth participants the option of using whichever name or pseudonym they preferred throughout the duration of my interaction with them and during interviews. I did not make the assumption that the name youth used for their Facebook profile was their real or legal name, nor did I feel it mattered. What was of greater significance to me was what name youth were comfortable using to refer to themselves. I reiterated to youth participants that I would ultimately give them an entirely different pseudonym when writing my thesis. Finally, given that I was the only researcher involved, I was able to guarantee my own confidentiality and the limits of that confidentiality.

Prior to conducting the face-to-face interviews with three of the four youth, I explained via e-mail that due to the nature of an in-person interview, there would be no anonymity. Secondly, while I was able to guarantee my own commitment to confidentiality within the scope of my research by using pseudonyms, I did have a duty to report any disclosure of harm (to oneself or to others). Limits of confidentiality and duty to report applied to both the face-to-face and online interviews. For the youth who I interviewed online, I explained that while anonymity was maintained, as even I would not be able to validate or confirm his gender, race, and ethnicity and would be operating on an assumption of his identity

based on what he chooses to share with me. For the youth I interviewed online, I indicated that privacy could not be completely guaranteed in the event he was chatting with me on a public or shared computer. I stressed the need for him to guard his own privacy if he was using a public or shared computer.

Youth Participants

Demographic Information and Self-Identification

Of the four youth I interviewed, three were female and one was male. All four youth were currently attending high-school in Vancouver at the time. The table below provides a dashboard of their demographic information that pertains to age, grade and gender. It also includes how youth chose to self-identify or describe their ethnicity. Youth participants will be referred to by the pseudonyms which I have provided throughout the remainder of this study. I have also changed the name of the Facebook racialized online groups of which all four youth are active members, as requested by the group administrator and the University's HREB.

Figure 4: Youth Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Grade	Gender	Membership in ROG 1 or 2	Self-described ethnicity:
Linh	15	10	Female	ROG 1	Vietnamese
Vicki	15	10	Female	ROG 1	Chinese and Vietnamese
Krystal	17	11	Female	ROG 1 and 2	Chinese
Johnny	17	12	Male	ROG 1 and 2. Administrator for ROG 1.	Vietnamese

Facebook Engagement

In addition to the demographic information provided above, I also asked each youth participant about their level of engagement and participation in online

network communities such as Facebook and queried each about other favourite or frequented online communities, in particular, those sites or communities that allow them to express or negotiate their sense of an Asian identity. All four youth shared that logging into Facebook is a part of their daily routine. Some spend more time on Facebook than others, but all four indicated that their day either begins or ends with some level of participation with peers on Facebook. The average length of membership between these four youth on Facebook is approximately four years. I find this interesting, particularly with Linh and Vicki as it indicates their interaction on Facebook began at age eleven. This is a curious fact as it relates to the previous chapter's discussion tracing the history and rise in popularity of Facebook as a social networking site that originated in American university campuses.

I also asked each youth about their length of participation in either of the Facebook racialized online groups 1 or 2 (ROG). As the creator and group administrator of ROG 1, Johnny has the lengthiest level of membership at four years on both. Both Linh and Vicki joined ROG 1 when they entered high-school in grade eight, and have continued to be participants in the ROG 1's discussion threads for two years. Krystal had been a member of ROG 1 for less than one year when I interviewed her. She became aware of ROG 1 through her two-year membership and participation in ROG 2, which seemingly is more popular amongst younger high-school students.

Summary

The four youth participants who I had the pleasure of interviewing and interacting with are the crux of this research. Without their participation, this entire

study would not be possible or credible. The process of designing a blended methods study and one that seeks to engage and interview young people has proven to be very challenging and full of twists and turns each way. I have learned that engaging in a partially online ethnographic study does not necessarily translate into a research process that is only partially complicated. The experience of obtaining ethics approval for this research and the ethical considerations discussed in this chapter only scratch the surface of the tensions I wrestled and negotiated with myself, in regards to this research. I came to the conclusion that online research is messy, for lack of a better description, but online research with young people is both extremely messy but extremely worthwhile.

Researcher Blogflection Number 4

I've been working with a group of youth in Metro-Vancouver on a project called Youth Vital Signs, which is essentially a youth public opinion and research project that aims to get young people involved in grading Vancouver – sorta like a report card, except this time young people are handing out the grades as opposed to being graded! When we first embarked on this project together, the youth leadership council developed a draft of the survey that would ask youth to grade Vancouver across 12 subject areas; such as the environment, arts & culture, education etc. We tested the draft survey through a number of focus groups with diverse youth populations, ranging from street-entrenched youth, to immigrant and refugee youth and gay and lesbian youth. It wasn't so much the 12 subject areas that we were seeking youth's feedback during the focus group but more the demographic questions that asked youth to select identity categories of gender, sexuality and ethnicity. Additionally, we asked youth to share their lived-experiences by identifying whether or not they were a young person in care of the government or identify as a young person with a disability. This experience was such an important reminder for me that anytime you engage in research and are developing the questions to a survey, an interview or clickable boxes for demographic questions, you enter into this process with some assumptions and preconceived notions of what certain terms mean for you but may not hold the same meaning for participants of your research. Reading the responses from youth in the focus groups really help to reinforce this. Many youth wanted "Canadian" to be listed as an option under the question regarding ethnic identity. Now, I had issues with this and would disagree that Canadian is more a National identity, one of citizenship rather than an ethnic identity, which for me, is in relation to cultural practices. What I had to remind myself at the end of the day is, my role as a staff person on this Youth Vital Signs project, is not to sway or convince young people to adopt my terminology and definition but to be curious about how our life experiences and personal social location shape our understanding of certain words or concepts. Anyhow, if you have a chance to check out the final results at www.youthvitalsigns.ca, you will notice that over half of the youth who took the survey (and there were over 1700 youth who took the survey!), selected Canadian as their ethnic identity.

Chapter 6 – Asian Like Me?: Researcher Reflexivity

Introduction

One critical matter in methodological approaches to racialized research is the question of who has access to certain groups; however, the more important but less examined question is one that seeks to understand whose questions get raised for investigation (Duster, 2000, p. xxi). This chapter combines many of the researcher blogflection moments I captured throughout the course of this research. Instead of extrapolating all my blogflection journal entries into one chapter that would read more as a stream of consciousness, I ground these reflections, thoughts and feelings within the postcolonial theories and constructs that have guided the majority of this research, in an attempt to make sense of my researcher reflexivity and experience.

The racialized researching the racialized

In this study, I was interested in exploring the troubling assumptions that racialized subalterns are in a better position to understand racial discrimination, are not capable of participating in acts of racism and automatically identify with similar racialized groups (Twine & Warren, 2000). These assumptions can extend into qualitative research practices, where assumptions are made that racialized researchers studying racialized communities are automatically granted insider status. Twine (2000) argues that in qualitative research, particularly those studies which employ interviewing methods, the race of the interviewer has an effect on research participants or respondents. Whether or not shared racial identity produces a negative or positive effect on the research outcome varies from one

research project to another. It has been more helpful for my own researcher reflexivity to consider both sides of this argument. Closeness of identity, in particular, racial identity has been perceived by some researchers as an advantage in regards to more effective and genuine communication between the researcher and the research participants (Rhodes, 1994). This methodological approach has been described by Zinn (1979) as “racial matching” (p. 211) and emerged as a recognition that Black research subjects in the United States had a natural distrust of White researchers and would therefore never share their true everyday life experiences amidst that sense of distrust. The primary limitation of the racial matching model, assumes that race will dominate and negate all other dimensions of difference or affinity between the researcher and research participants, which may not always be the case.

I am the first to admit that there are times where I am extremely critical of research conducted by academics on specific populations of which the researcher has no affinity, relation or membership within that population. This includes research conducted by heterosexual researchers on gay, lesbian and transgendered communities; research about homeless youth when the researcher themselves do not have any lived experience in relation to homelessness and finally, research conducted on racialized communities by White researchers. My criticism is based on commonly held assumptions and the generalizations that researchers with outsider status have no business in researching communities of which they do not hold any membership or affinity. As I proceeded to interview youth in this research, it occurred to me that not all the youth in this research occupied or shared my social

location as a racialized individual. I found myself trapped in the same assumptions that I was trying hard to resist, that racialized researchers' access to racialized research subjects is a methodological given. Denzin (1989) is cautious of the danger in taking one's social location for granted during interviews. The subsequent discussions in this chapter flesh out the additional conundrums I experienced as a racialized researcher, studying racialized communities.

Insider/Outsider Phenomenon

Throughout this research, I have occupied roles as both an insider and an outsider. When I initially declared my position as a researcher within these Facebook groups by posting a message on the group's "wall," I established my role as an outsider with no relational ties to any of the group's members other than having permission from the group's administrator to post my research information. Also, throughout my lurking phase of reading through group discussion threads and postings, I was also very much an outsider but more specifically, I assumed the role of a detached researcher (O'Connor & Madge, 2001) as I never directly responded to any postings or threads within a group. My sense of detachment was not always necessarily desirable or easy to attain, particularly in situations where I was tempted to respond to a series of threads which I perceived to be racist and derogatory. It was difficult to remain neutral and resist the urge to post a response to a number of these threads.

As I shared my research with friends, family and colleagues, there was an inherent assumption that I, as an Asian researcher, would have a relatively straightforward recruiting and interviewing process, devoid of any problematic

racial hiccups with the Asian youth participants. While I did not approach the interviews with the assumption that this would be a simple, problematic-free experience, I acknowledge that I did have a degree of confidence that the combination of my racialized identity and experience working with racialized Asian youth for a number of years would position me as a partial insider, relative to a researcher who has never worked directly with racialized youth. During the course of the interviews with all four youth, I was reminded that the complexity of being a researcher who is both on the inside and outside, in addition to the negotiation and contestation of the word Asian, framed my interviews with youth in several ways.

I recognized that I needed to be aware of how I entered into interviews with my own set of previously constructed identity labels. As I lurked online in Facebook to find potential youth to interview, I used self-referential or pre-existing language used by many group members such as those who self-identified as having “Asian-Pride”, “Asians4Realz” or used abbreviated versions of Asian such as AzN. Kathleen Blee (2000) cautions that as much as a researcher may enter a group with his or her own identity labels for the group being researched, becoming familiar with the intricate rhetorical preferences of how group members choose to self-identify is critical. Knowing the correct insider codes for each group helped establish myself as someone credible, shared a similar life experience and also, legitimized me as someone who is local. The latter is important because I noticed similar Facebook groups by Asian youth in Toronto would reference different identity labels than Asian youth in Vancouver. One of these identity labels being the term “nammer,”

which references someone who is Vietnamese. I will speak to these terms in detail in the subsequent chapter on discussion of my findings.

While my familiarity with online group rhetoric and slang, combined with the marker of my Vietnamese surname and physical appearance denoted to youth participants that I was an insider, there were negotiations during the interviews that made it evident I was an outsider. Given youth's assumptions of my racial and ethnic identity, they had distinct assumptions about my ethnic and racial allegiance. I found this to be more intense with the male youth I interviewed over online instant messaging in contrast to the three female youth who I interviewed via face-to-face interviews. This was particularly evident when the subject matter of South Asians or those who have cultural and historical origins in India came up. The male youth participant Johnny, in multiple instances, sought confirmation that I agreed with his view that "they are not like us." Similar decisions to be explicit with youth participants about the ideological and experiential differences that separated me from the youth, such as my preference to not use the derogatory term "gook" to refer to anyone Vietnamese, would at times cause moments of silence or tension during the interviews.

Disagreement between the youth and me would result in moments where I believe both parties felt a degree of outsidership. Additional layers of interaction that reminded both youth and myself of my outsider role came across as we touched on immigrant and refugee experiences. All four youth participants were born in Canada. Although they acknowledge their parents experience in Canada as immigrants, they did not self-identify as immigrants, in contrast to my own

experience and social location as someone who readily identifies with the immigrant and refugee labels. Finally, there was also a generational gap of approximately 12 to 15 years between myself and the youth participants. I consider myself as having quite a strong pulse on new online social networks but as the interviews unfolded and youth shared with me their other sites of online interaction, I was reminded that I am very much an outsider to the social networks and online activity of youth in this age range. To put it bluntly, I was completely out of the online loop.

In establishing my relationship with the four youth participants, I do admit relying heavily to a certain degree, on the expression on my own identity as a racialized person, as an individual who also self-identifies as Asian and someone who is also an active participant on Facebook. Paccagnella (1997) suggests that in the context of online communities, especially those that are user-created, a “stranger wanting to do academic research is seen as an unwelcome arbitrary intrusion (p. 9).” Applied to this particular study, my role as an Asian researcher positions me as both an insider and an outsider. Perceptions of insiderness can be a result of positive relationships or rapport built between a researcher and participants. Smith (1996) argues that the degree and depth in which a researcher is regarded as an insider by research subjects, is further strengthened by a perception of “shared universe of meaning” whereby research subjects freely share other life experiences as it relates to the research or interview questions (p. 64).

In the case of my particular research, youth shared additional experiences of perceived discrimination by teachers and other peers. The shared experience

between myself and the youth participants was one of growing up amidst two cultures and the ability to balance our Canadian identity while maintaining traditional cultural customs and practices. This notion of shared experience as it relates to constructions of insider status is further discussed by Smith (1996) as a sense of “perceived relevance” (p. 66) that can contribute to the success of an interview. All four youth participants were active participants within the two Facebook racialized online groups. Within these online groups, youth engaged in debating, posting and commenting on discussion threads that were in relation to contestations and negotiations of one or multiple Asian identities. At the time of my interviews with these youth, the research topic was highly relevant for all four youth because of offline experiences they had in school. These shared experiences between the youth participants and I, all helped to contribute to the creation of a high level of reciprocity and discussion.

Identity Convergence

As mentioned earlier, I was rather stunned that I encountered limited obstacles in recruiting youth to participate in interviews, especially face-to-face interviews. I found out very quickly that by posting my real name in both Facebook groups and providing a link to my blog, youth were quickly able to verify my identity; in some cases with their peers, and in other cases, by entering my name into a Google search. Verifying and validating my realness, for lack of a better word, with their peers is something I had not anticipated. In this section, it is what I refer to as the convergence of my online researcher identity with my offline youth worker identity.

Vancouver, as metropolitan as it may be, is still somewhat a small city. This combined with the number of years that I spent doing frontline youth work and outreach with many Asian youth, put me in a peculiar position. Three of the four youth participants shared that they thought my name was familiar, that they remember seeing my name in program or event brochures. Additionally, many had friends or classmates who participated in certain after-school programs or youth groups that I previously facilitated or lead in my youth worker role. I remember two of the youth participants asked me if I ever worked at a specific youth centre and listed off names of their friends who had participated in some of the youth programs I used to run. Testimonials from their peers or friends who I had previously worked with, provided me with an endorsement and legitimization with youth participants that I never anticipated.

I was happy that the recruitment process was quick and that some youth participants actually choose the face-to-face interview option; however, I was also concerned if this convergence of my online and offline identities represented a power over relationship. In my proposal to HREB, I indicated that I did not anticipate coming across any youth I formerly worked with and if that coincidence did occur, I believed it would not compromise my research as I did not work directly in the field anymore. This was a different scenario in which I was not prepared for: youth who I had never met or worked with, but who are acquainted with some of the youth I use to work directly with. I contacted the HREB about this situation and received notice that this was not an issue and I was able to proceed with the interviews as planned.

Authenticity: Qualifying my Asian Identity

Throughout the duration of this research, I have asked myself what the term Asian signifies for me personally. I reflected on the census examples and how I have checked the little box that I feel best represents my identity, even if the options offered to me are not aligned with my own understanding of who I am. I reflected on how I have responded when I have been asked “What are you?” or “What’s your background?” My responses have typically been: I am Vietnamese or I was born in Vietnam but I’ve grown up most of my life in Canada. When I take a survey, I usually check the box next to the category Asian or better yet, Southeast Asian if it’s even an option. In preparation for my interviews with the youth participants, I assumed I would have to at some point, qualify or prove my Asian identity in order to somehow legitimize myself in the eyes of these four youth. This process reminded me that identity is truly complex. Any attempt I was about to make to affirm my Asian identity, presupposes that there is universal agreement on an Asian identity, how to measure it and who truly has it.

Weaver (2001) writes that identification is based on recognition of a common origin or shared characteristics with another individual or group, ultimately leading to a sense of solidarity and allegiance. Identity and identification also exist through difference in relationship with others. Authenticity plays a significant role in conversations of identity. For Hall (1997), negotiating authenticity in relation to identity, is a negotiation of power and exclusion. Hall writes that some individuals must be excluded from a particular identity in order for that identity to be meaningful (1997, p. 3). I pondered whether explicitly sharing

how I understood Asian identity would somehow exclude these youth participants from the same identity if their understanding was not aligned with my own? Or in the reverse, would these youth dismiss my claim of an Asian identity if it did not align with their sense of an Asian identity? For Reyes (2007), authenticity is the process in which people actively construct an identity based on notions of sameness and credibility. I was definitely seeking some level of affirmation and credibility in these four young people's eyes but was quite confused about how I would go about obtaining that credibility without having to resort to or assume reductionist and stereotypical constructions of Asians in North America.

My personal Facebook profile, to some extent, helped facilitate my authentic Asian identity amongst a few of the youth I interviewed. It included photos and images of myself that enabled youth to authenticate my Asian identity based on my phenotypical features. As one youth remarked during the course of our interaction: "you totally look Asian." Other instances that reaffirmed my Asian identity for youth, include observations that many of my friends in my Facebook social network were Asian based on my friend's surnames and that some of the information I provided in my profile such as personal interests, somehow gave way to my Asian identity. Although I was not always successful in teasing out what these peculiarities were, some examples shared with me by the youth I interviewed included references to the food I enjoyed eating and my own membership in other Facebook groups that were seemingly popular amongst other Asians.

Beyond the question of authenticity, what this process affirmed for me is the level of investigation that these youth engaged in, in order to seek information about

my perceived Asian or non-Asian identity. Aside from the information that youth were able to glean from my Facebook profile in order to determine the credibility of my Asian identity, I believe the majority of this credibility was achieved during my interviews with youth and in particular, every time the topic of negative racial stereotypes of Asians emerged. I felt youth would test me by throwing out certain derogatory terms, often followed by a question that would gauge whether or not I had even heard of these terms. In instances where I shared I was familiar with certain terms and was able to reflect on specific accounts in which those stereotypes or derogatory terms were directed my way, I believed I gain some additional level of credibility because they were now able to directly relate to my experiences. These shared experiences of being racialized, of being on the receiving end of racist and discriminatory comments translate into that notion of sameness that Reyes (2007) referred to. For those youth who knew of me through their friends, my credibility and authenticity was contingent on their friend's perceptions and affirmation of my identity; something I had no control over but somehow seemed to work out in my favour in the end.

Summary

To some degree, and as much as I hate to admit it, I did operate on the assumption that some level of insider status, in my case, a racialized researcher engaging racialized youth in interviews, would somehow give this research more credibility. I have learned through the course of this research, to question constructions of community or group boundaries by asking who and what constitute membership within a group or community. Like white-on-white

qualitative research (Gallagher, 2000), racialized-on-racialized research is equally nuanced, where insider status and authenticity are ideals that a researcher strives to earn and not automatically granted. Sometimes shared identity and life experience with research participants works in the researcher's favour. In other instances, the research process itself may be regarded as an act of betrayal against one's community.

Researcher Blogflection Number 5

I've been reading through the transcript of the interviews that I've had with some of the youth for my research project and it's triggered some memories for me... one of those memories being my first trip (ever) back to Vietnam in 2006. The initial purpose of my trip was to complete a practicum volunteer experience for my graduate program. I kept an online journal the entire time I was in Vietnam. I've gone back to read those entries and decided I want to share one entry in particular as some of the emotions I experienced (about identity, multiple identities, authenticity, what it means to be Vietnamese living in Canada) during my visit to Vietnam are creeping back up for me as I wrap up this research project.

Original posted date: Feb. 21st, 2006 | 09:11 pm

Journal entry titled: The Man

I walked to my practicum today and it took me 40 minutes. The actual walk itself would probably only take 15 minutes but crossing any intersection in Vietnam is a bit of a "heart attack waiting to happen" event and takes about a good 5-7 minutes to cross. Maybe I'm exaggerating, but like I wrote in an earlier post, nobody yields to pedestrians here in Vietnam. In fact, cyclists and motorists will often honk and swear at pedestrians for being in their way EVEN IF the pedestrian has the right of way.

There is a gigantic photo hanging in front of my office window where I'm doing my practicum. It is the image of "Bac Ho" aka "Uncle Ho" aka Ho Chi Minh, aka the man who had a vision to reunite north and south Vietnam aka the man whose troops and army defeated the almighty Americans and drove the French elsewhere. More ironies in life emerged as I looked at the gigantic cloth photo of Uncle Ho draped over and covering 2 stories of this building, and realized to myself, I am working in an office, in a country and with people who idolize this man...this man whose ideology and principles led to the mass exodus of Vietnamese people fleeing by boat, these very ideologies that forced my father into concentration camp for 4 years, these ideologies that dictated to my mother what she will and will not teach her grade 12 students, these very ideologies that millions of Vietnamese people such as my parents fought so hard against and finally realized their only option was to leave their homeland, in order to preserve their sense of freedom.

And here I am, remembering what some of my Vietnamese colleagues in Vancouver said to me before I left: "you will be working with the enemy, they're all communists you know?" Like I said, life is full of ironies and madness my friends. I don't want to get into any of this in my blog but I have never thought of these youth I'm working with here in Vietnam as anything more than wonderful young people who, like their peers anywhere in the world, are looking for a voice and an opportunity to better their lives. My parents have both been extremely supportive of this experience and harbour no bizarre feelings of betrayal or hatred. I wonder how it is some Vietnamese ex-pats are still furious and disillusioned while others, such as my parents who I think have had their fair share of trauma during the war, are able to let go and move on. Is it about resiliency? Is it about the ability to forgive but not forget? Or are they in happy denial?

Chapter 7 – Asian Like Us: Discussion of Findings

Introduction

This chapter discusses the three broad themes that emerged for me during the course of the interviews with the youth participants. These themes include: 1) the negotiation of Asian as a process of negotiating authenticity, 2) youth participant's use of humour and jokes as a means of resistance against racialized Asian stereotypes; however not recognizing that this process also served to reproduce and reinforce certain stereotypes, and finally, 3) how the performance of one or multiple Asian identities were dependent on the notion of audience, and stage.

As described in Chapter 5, this study employed the use of semi-structured interviews to engage youth participants in discussions regarding their negotiation of what it means to be Asian, via their participation in Asian racialized online Facebook groups. The aforementioned themes that emerged are a result of ethnographic interview data in response to a set of interview questions I developed during my thesis proposal. Additional questions were informed by my lurking process, using the method of instances to gather themes across textual postings in various Facebook racialized online groups. The interview questions will be cited and referred to under each of the themes discussed. I place the pseudonym of each youth after their direct quote or response, as well as an indication of online or offline, to remind readers of the medium or context in which the interview took place. It should be noted that the responses from Johnny's online interview were

downloaded in verbatim directly from MSN messenger, therefore I did not edit spelling or grammar in Johnny's responses.

Throughout this chapter, I try to ground the discussion within the theoretical backbones of this thesis while employing Goffman's analytical approach of dramaturgy that regards identity negotiations as performances.

Negotiating Asian = Negotiating Authenticity

As stated in Chapter 1, one of the primary objectives of this research seeks to explore how youth (re)negotiate what it means to be Asian through their participation in online, user-created Asian groups within Facebook. In order to explore this negotiation of the meaning of Asian and Asian identities, I asked each of the four youth participants the following questions:

- *What do you think or believe it means to be Asian?*
- *Which ethnic groups do you consider to be Asian and why?*
- *As a member in either ROG1 or ROG2, which have been created specifically for "Asians only," do you believe there are any ethnic groups or individuals who should not be participating or represented in these Facebook groups? Put another way, are there specific ethnic groups that you feel or believe should not be considered Asian and therefore should not be granted membership within these Facebook ROG 1 or ROG 2?*

The responses to these questions from the four youth participants were similar in some senses and different in others. The constant theme that emerged in relation to how one goes about negotiating what it means to be Asian is dependent

on the negotiation of authenticity. I was cautious to not suggest in my interviews with youth that there is only one Asian identity. I observed that there was not necessarily consensus amongst the youth participants about what it means to be Asian as much as there were some similarities, as well as differences, however I did get the distinct impression they were searching for a singular Asian identity. Secondly, the concept of authenticity is extremely subjective as much as there might be shared assumptions regarding authenticity. Below are the responses from the youth participants when asked about what it means to be Asian:

Being Asian is like being really proud of who you are and your ancestors. It's because we honour our ancestors and family and it's just a part of our culture to know where we come from. (Vicki, offline)

I don't know... when I think of Asians and like what it means, I can't help but think of China. [laughs] You know what I mean? Like I picture China and people who look like me and just having a lot of family and relatives. Being Asian means coming from really big families where you live with ah-poh¹ and ah-goong² and your 7 or 8 aunts and uncles in one house. (Krystal, offline)

Well, being Asian means you're not Caucasian. Is that what you're asking me? So yeah, like being Chinese, Viet, Japanese, like in the Asia area. Um, us Asians have black hair, um, yeah, um that's about it. I can't really explain it. I just know. (Linh, offline)

Ok so being Asian, well according to my parents, means not being a C-sian or B-sian. LOL.³ Did you ever get that from your parents? Like my parents are always like, you're an A-sian so why do you have a C or a B on your report card because that's not the Asian way and like I have to study harder. So yeah, for me being Asian means being really smart and if you're like me and you're not like a straight A student then

¹ Cantonese term for maternal grand-mother

² Cantonese term for maternal grand-father

³ In computer-mediated-conversations such as Instant Messenger chat, the acronym LOL is used when you want to express that you are "laughing out loud."

yeah, being Asian just means being under a lot of pressure to like have to try to be the best. (Johnny, online)

Authenticity itself is not an objective category, rather authenticity is the construction of symbolic boundaries as a means of differentiation between one's authenticity from others (Williams & Copes, 2005). I noticed the youth participants in my study constructed and used symbolic boundaries to negotiate what it means to be Asian, differently from one another. Both Krystal and Linh referenced physical, geographic boundaries in addition to symbolic boundaries. For Krystal and Linh, negotiations of Asian are also dependent on negotiations of ties to a physical location, whether it is China or the continent of Asia. The common denominator amongst the youth in this study in their negotiation of what it means to be Asian, centres on their mention of family; whether they be references to family values, practices or family members. References to family, in particular, parents and intergenerational relationships constantly emerged in these discussions of how youth negotiate what it means to be Asian. Parental influence and the transmission of political and cultural history, experiences of immigration and citizenship, come together to shape youth's understanding of what it means or not means to be Asian in Canada.

When asked about which ethnic groups youth perceive to be a part of or not part of the umbrella term Asian, the youth participants on the most part shared very similar views which identified specific ethnic groups which they believe belong under the term Asian:

Oh ok, like Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Thai, umm. I think that's it. I don't think I'm missing anything big. That would be all. (Vicki, offline)

People from China, Vietnam, Japan, Korea... I'm really bad with my geography but yeah. Those are the first groups that I think of right away. (Linh, offline)

Well I always think of Chinese people first because there's so many of them. Then it rolls onto Korean, Vietnamese, Filipino people and yeah, those are the top ones. (Krystal, offline)

When I think of who's Asian, I think of the usual, ya know?... like Viets, Chinese, Koreans, Japs, Flips⁴, Cambodians, Thai. Yeah the usual people from Asia. (Johnny, online)

All four youth participants attend high-schools in Vancouver where the ethnic make-up of the student population primarily consists of Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese and Korean students. According to the 2006 Canadian Census, over 60% of youth belong to groups that were traditionally considered “visible minorities,” with more than 80% of these youth identified as coming from Asia and the Middle East regions. The first language for more than a third of Vancouver youth, according to the 2006 census, was Chinese although not specifically broken down to Mandarin, Cantonese or other Chinese dialects. Chinese, as an ethnic group, has been listed and identified by all four youth as a consistent group of individuals who should be considered Asian.

Linh and Johnny both suggest that Asians are those individuals who come from the continent of Asia; however, when they provided examples of specific Asian ethnic groups, I noticed they did not reference South Asians from Pakistan, India,

⁴ The term “Flip” is used to refer to Filipino individuals; although, I am unclear about whether or not this is a derogatory or racist term. I also find that “Flip” is a colloquial term that is more commonly used by youth in Metro-Vancouver to refer to Filipino individuals or communities. When I lurked in American-based or Toronto-based online Asian groups, the term Flip was never used in reference to Filipinos.

and Bangladesh. Out of curiosity and as part of my reflection back to Chapter 3's literature review of how the term Asian is understood differently across various geo-political boundaries, I asked Linh and Johnny why they would not consider those from the India, Pakistan and Bangladesh as Asians, after all, those countries are located within the continent of Asia? Below is part of the transcribed conversation I had separately with Linh and Johnny on this matter, when I probed deeper on the concept of Asians being from the continent of Asia:

Conversation with Linh

Vi – This isn't meant to be a test, but I'm curious about your thoughts about people from India and Pakistan? Those countries are part of the Asian continent but you don't think of them as Asians. How come?

Linh – yeah but not completely. I mean, they're pretty close to those Asian countries but like, umm, if they have black hair then I would say sorta but like they're not the first ones I think of. I don't know, they just look different and you know, like we don't share that much in common right?

Vi – What are those commonalities?

Linh – Just what we eat and how we look. They don't really share that stuff in common with the rest of us Asians.

Vi – So if you don't think of them as Asians, can I ask what or how you refer to them as a group of people?

Linh – Like their race? Um, I just call them Indo-Canadians. I know some people at school just call them brown but I don't know if that's right? Sounds kinda mean right?

Conversation with Johnny

Vi – Ok what do you mean by the "usual people from Asia?" You listed off a couple of examples like Chinese and Filipino but wanted to know why you didn't mention folks from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh? Those countries make up Asia too don't they? So...

Johnny – So you're asking me why they're not Asian to me?

Vi – Yes, well I'm definitely curious...

Johnny – I don't know. It's just I don't even think they want to be thought of as Asian right?

Vi – What do you mean?

Johnny – Like the guys that I go to school with and stuff who are Punjabi, like they would never call themselves Asian.

Vi – So what do they refer to themselves as?

Johnny – East Indians, Indo-Canadians or whatever. Like if I said to them hey man do you want to join the asian clubs they'll be like wtf.⁵ And like they eat different stuff y'know I can't be all like oh hey, you wanna go eat pho or bubble tea with me?

Both Linh and Johnny referenced phenotypical features or similarities of physical appearance that shape their understanding of who is or is not Asian. In Johnny's case, he made additional references to the types of food eaten, food that he distinctly perceives to be "Asian foods" such as Pho, which is Vietnamese beef noodle soup and bubble tea, a sweet tapioca drink and dessert that has Taiwanese origins. Finally, I found it interesting that both Linh and Johnny referred to individuals from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh as Indo-Canadians and believed their peers from these ethnic groups would also self-identify as Indo-Canadians. At no point in my conversations with Linh and Johnny, did either of them self-identify as Asian-Canadian, Chinese-Canadian or Vietnamese-Canadian, unless asked about their specific ethnic identity. However, it should be noted that Linh shared with me she would sometimes describe herself as Oriental and did not see this as a problematic label.

⁵ WTF is an acronym for What The Fuck, typically used to indicate confusion or outrage.

Humour and Jokes as Resistance and Reproduction

The use of and references to racialized Asian jokes or stereotypes were resounding throughout my lurking phase and continued to resurface during the interviews with youth participants. When I posed the question to my youth participants asking them to share why they participate and interact in these Facebook racialized online groups, the responses unanimously centered on two things: 1) because it's fun and 2) because people "get what I'm saying", meaning their peers in these online groups understand and identify with similar life experiences. Many of these shared life experiences comprise of a form of humour or shared jokes that (re)produce essentialized Asian identities. Youth participants find solidarity in these racialized online groups to both challenge and contest these essentialized identities but in some instances, participate in the reproduction and transmission of these stereotypes and essentialized identities. I was intrigued when youth found it necessary to resist certain essentialized images and stereotypes of Asians and when it was deemed appropriate to participate in the reproduction of those very same essentialized images and stereotypes.

Resistance

I first joined ROG1 just as a joke and because I was bored. All my friends were on it so I thought why not. I don't really join clubs at school or anything like that because I don't know, it's like I don't fit in that much or fit with what I'm interested in but at least with ROG1, everyone gets what I'm talking about like if I say "oh my math teacher is a jerk because he thinks I should be good at math just cause I'm Asian." (Vicki, offline)

Expectations from teachers that Asian students should excel in certain subjects such as math and science were quite common. Vicki's comment above resonates with

Johnny's earlier statement that to be Asian means to not have B's or C's in your report card, which is an expectation from parents. While youth expressed there is nothing terribly humorous about not doing well academically, they find humour and consolation amongst their Asian peers in these Facebook groups because they can get together and commiserate on how they have "let the Asian race down" (Johnny, online) by not living up to the model minority stereotype.

Both Johnny and Linh self-identified as Vietnamese. Being that I also self-identified as Vietnamese at some point during my interviews with both of them, this was somehow perceived as an invitation to engage in a discussion about numerous jokes, including those that are explicitly offensive and those that are more nuanced or subtle, about Vietnamese people and culture. Johnny and Linh shared that it is important to resist these stereotypes when they are directed at you by "White" people but agreed that in online groups such as ROG 1 or ROG 2, these racialized jokes and stereotypes are somehow sanctioned because they were told by Asians or "Viets" and therefore makes the jokes less offensive:

Some guy started a thread in my online group about how Viets will mess you up if you mess with their weed! LOL!!! (Johnny, online)

Additionally, one can resort to a checklist of actions or life experiences in order to assess one's Vietnameseness or Asianess:

There's this whole list online that you can go to in different Facebook groups that are like "you know you're Viet when..." or "you know you're Asian when..." Did you ever go to those? You read some of the stuff and if it happened to you then it proves you're Viet or whatever. Ok, so for the Viet one, like did your crazy mom ever hit you with chopsticks or a feather duster? It's so funny because like the white kids talk about how their parents ground them if they come home late,

but like for most of my Asian friends, we just get chased by the feather duster broom.” (Linh, offline)

I found the statement by Johnny regarding the correlation between Vietnamese individuals and marijuana grow operations to be interesting in that he referenced it as something he found to be humorous and funny. I asked Johnny how he felt about the media reporting on stories of marijuana grow-ups and linking that primarily to the Vietnamese community in Metro-Vancouver? His response was this:

It’s so freakin annoying that people always talk smack about you when you’re Viet you know? Like I know just cuz I’m Viet and I sometimes drive my dad’s car to school, I know all the white kids are like shiet, I bet he bought that with his weed money and stuff. (Johnny, online)

Linh and Johnny both entered into a process where their understanding and negotiation of what it meant to be Vietnamese or Asian, was understood in relation to and defined against another group, in this case it was those who were White. In Ignacio’s research (2003), the definition of Filipino identity amongst online group members was defined and understood in contrast to other Asian ethnic groups such as the Chinese, Japanese and Koreans. According to Ignacio (2003), the use of racialized and racist jokes amongst members in racialized online groups serves to “foster pain and debate while simultaneously fostering a sense of community or identity” (p. 162).

Reproduction

A sense of community and the sharing of jokes and humour about essentialized Asian identities with members or users who share your experience of being stereotyped and essentialized are a few of the “positives” that youth shared

about their reasons for participating in these online groups. When asked about the negative side of participating in these online groups, it was shared that sometimes the jokes can go too far and result in heated debates amongst users. Examples of jokes about Asian people that teeter on the edge of offensive and hurtful, versus funny include:

One of my friends was writing stuff on one of the Facebook groups saying such and such is a such a Flipin' slut and then it started all this smack talk about how Filipino girls are so slutty and yeah it got out of hand because then the Filipino girls were all posting stuff on the wall like Viet girls are the biggest sluts. I don't know, I just know the group administrator later like, shut the group down because I heard all the Filipino kids left the group and yeah there was like hardly any members left. It was actually kinda sad. I don't know, being half Vietnamese, I was kinda hurt by some of the stuff people wrote about Vietnamese girls. (Vicki, offline)

Youth participants often joined a Facebook racialized online group because their friends joined, because they are friends with the online group administrator or because they initially found some of the jokes posted to be funny until it becomes repetitive or the derogatory jokes are personally aimed at them:

Well this one time someone posted on the ROG 2 that Chinese girls at my school were all gold diggers and you shouldn't date them cause they're so materialistic and yeah. The person who posted this on the ROG 2 was friends with the guy I was dating and she posted this up like the day after we broke up. So yeah, people knew me and him broke up and then just started to continue the thread and write all this stuff about Chinese people about how we're so cheap, we're the worst of the Asians because we take advantage of other Asians even though we're all so rich because we're from Hong Kong and stuff. I don't even know if half that stuff people wrote was totally about me but it just felt like it you know? Because of the timing of the break up and everything that was posted about Chinese girlfriends after that. (Krystal, offline)

Subsequently, even jokes that were perceived as hilarious at one point, can become stale, offensive and annoying:

A lot of my friends speak perfect English like me. Like we speak better English than we do Chinese or Vietnamese but then they log into the Facebook groups and type all this weird stuff like me no English. Or like even when they write on my wall to try and make plans to hang out, they're like getting so F.O.B with their hey what you do tonight or I wanna have so many fun ok? It's always kinda funny at first but then it just kinda gets lame when you do it over and over and people start to think maybe you really are a F.O.B. (Vicki, offline)

Jokes, in the form of racist epithets can serve to reinforce and reproduce reductionist stereotypes of Asians. In Vicki's statement above, she referenced the desire to distance herself from the label F.O.B (fresh off the boat). For other youth participants like Johnny, his reproduction of certain Asian stereotypes was somewhat parallel to a process that allowed him to re-purpose and re-claim these essentialized Asian identities:

I post on my buddies' wall stuff like wassup chink and he'll write back nothing you little nammer. LOL!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! And yeah, that's fine with us because like we can say that to each other because he's Chinese and I'm Viet right? But like if a white dude or like a brown guy writes that in my group, then I'll like delete their comment or kick them out of the group. Like it's not cool to think that just cuz we say that stuff to each other means you its ok for you to call us that too. Or like when I make jokes about eating rice everyday but then someone else just thinks its ok to make fun of me eatin rice cuz I'm azn ykow? (Johnny, online)

Jokes can be understood as a form of authentication, related to the previous theme. What I have observed from the textual threads and discussions in these Facebook groups and in my interviews with youth are how jokes are deployed or consumed. The ability to understand the jokes posted in the online group's discussions establishes membership within the Asian community. Many of these jokes reference daily food practices, historical events and racialized stereotypes such as the "you know you're Asian when...." list. The use of jokes signifies the need

for membership and the need for boundary-making. Those who do not “get” the jokes are regarded as being outside the boundaries of what the group perceives to be a collective Asian identity; however, the next section explores the possibility of multiple Asian identities that exist and are accepted or contested by youth.

Performing Asian on Multiple Stages for Multiple Audiences

Youth create and consume meaning about their Asian identity through their social interaction with their peers. This social interaction can take place offline through their school environment or online through their social network interaction. Based on my interviews with the youth participants in this study, I came to recognize that despite at times insisting there is only a singular Asian identity, what the four youth participants were in fact sharing suggested that there are likely multiple Asian identities of which they themselves move in and out of and in-between. Youth’s ideas and discussions about what it means to be Asian are informed by both their offline interactions, whether with parents, family members, teachers in a classroom settings and peer relationships, as well as, their online interactions via their Facebook group forums. I acknowledged earlier my position that online and offline environments are not mutually exclusive; therefore, it appeared to me that how youth negotiate or understood Asian identity depended on the audience (parents, teachers or peers) they were interacting with and the stage (online or offline) in which identity was performed. Goffman (1959) regards identity as a dramatic production and interaction that produces multiple selves for multiple performances (p. 22).

I asked all four youth participants the following questions to gauge whether the difference in stage, either online or offline, had any bearing on how they presented or negotiated their own sense of what it means to be Asian:

- *Do you use a different online screen name when you participate on either ROG 1 or ROG 2? Is it important to let people know what your race or ethnicity is based on your screen name?*

Well on Facebook most people just use their real name because then it's easier for people to find you and friend you. But yah back when VancouverXchange was really popular it really helped to identify yourself. For my friends who had Viet or whatever in their screen names, I don't think they were trying to be in your face about it but they were just trying to find people to identify with you know? Like I did the same thing. I put Viet in my screen name even though you know, I'm just half. (Vicki, offline)

When I was on VancouverXchange like everyone had AZN in their screen name and that way it was just easier to tell who was Asian or not. But then on our Facebook groups like ROG 1, I mean seriously, if you joined ROG 1 then it's kinda obvious that you're Asian. (Linh, offline)

If you're a member in ROG 1 or 2 then you're obviously Asian and you know you have a lot of pride about being Asian so its kinda pointless to have Asian-something in your screen name right? I mean that would be like over doing it but I think it's cool when people want to like share what kind of Asian they are you know? Like for me, I always get that I look Korean even though you know I'm Chinese so when people message me or comment on my photos that I look so Korean, I respond in Chinese. (Krystal, offline)

When I was younger yah for sure. Everyone had AZN or Viet something in their screen name. I don't think there's anything wrong with that but that was more for places like Xanga⁶ and

⁶ Xanga is an online journal or blogging site, where users have control over who can subscribe to their journal posts and read or comment or it can be strictly private.

vancouverxchange like I don't do that now on facebook cuz then no one can facebook friend you cuz they can't find you. On facebook cuz everyone's using their real name and stuff then you just know like who's viet or chinese so it just makes it easier. (Johnny, online)

As discussed in Chapter 4, identity presentation on social network sites such as Facebook occur primarily through user profiles. Goffman's dramaturgical analysis of "front stage" and "back stage" identity performance as it applies to user profiles and the decision to announce one's racial or ethnic identity in online screen names is unpacked here. Goffman refers to front stage as the public performance or what an individual wants to publicly present about their identity. In contrast, Goffman's back stage is that of a private performance, reserved for similar group members. What I understood from youth participant's responses is that their Facebook profile, through photos and use of their family surname, produces an automatic public performance that conveys their Asian identity. Additional Asian identity information may be conveyed through private Facebook messages or textual conversation via the discussion threads within each racialized online group. This is the back stage performance and one where jokes and humour, as means of performance, play out via Facebook wall postings and online group discussion threads.

I was intrigued by many different points made by each of the youth in the quotes above. First, I was surprised that having three little letters of AZN in your online screen name was directly equated with occupying an authentic or genuine Asian identity; that youth would take that at face value in accepting another individual as being authentically Asian. Secondly, the comments made by Linh and

Krystal presupposes that anyone joining the Facebook groups ROG 1 and 2 “must be Asian” otherwise why would they seek membership in these two racialized online groups? This comment assumes that if another individual performs on the same backstage as you, in that they are members in the same racialized online group for Asians only, then there is no need to check, question or interrogate their identity or authenticity? I find this both interesting and peculiar as the next question demonstrates that both ROG 1 and 2 do consist of members or users who are White and Indo-Canadian, and by these four youth participant’s account, “not Asian.”

My second question to gauge multiple performances of Asian on two different stages, either online or offline, was framed in the following manner:

- *Does your interaction on these Facebook ROG 1 or 2 have any effect on how you interact with your peers offline?*

You know how I said people always call each other out on stuff but only do it online like write smack about other people? Yeah well sometimes it gets out of control. Like I read something someone wrote on the wall for ROG 1 about that guy is so cocky because all nammers are cocky and I just kinda ignore it but then I hear later that a fight happened after-school between those two guys. Sometimes that stuff gets out of hand and I don’t know, it kinda freaks me out because yeah, like people write that stuff all the time but then I guess sometimes people go too far so I just know to avoid certain people when they post that kind of stuff on Facebook. (Vicki, offline)

Most of my friends are like you’re way more talkative on the facebook group and online chat and stuff. It’s cuz I made this group (ROG 1) so I feel like its kinda mine and yah. Like people tell me I always look pissed at school but that’s cuz they think all viet guys are gangsters!! LOL!!!! But then on ROG 1 I’m like way more chatty and friendly cuz sometimes I have to get the group going right? But really I’m the type of person where I don’t care and I’ll tell you to your face if you try to

crash into my group (ROG 1) just cuz you like think you're Asian just cuz you hang out with all Asians. (Johnny, online)

It's just easier to say some stuff and stand up for some things when I'm on ROG 2 than you know, at school. On ROG 2 its mostly Asians but there are some white and Punjabi people. Sometimes they comment on the photos about Asian girls in our school and write really sexual things like how Asian girls are so shy and passive so you know... and like for me I'm just more comfortable calling them out on it by writing a comment back at what they wrote. But then I see those guys at school and I just roll my eyes. I mean I wouldn't go up to them and say quit being so effing racist but yah, I just don't. (Krystal, offline)

It's kinda lame but seriously at school most of the time we spend lunch time or whatever just laughing at stuff that people wrote on ROG 1. It's so funny because we were messaging each other online talking about some of those you know you're Asian when comments and then we see each other at school the next day and my friends and I are still talking about it. It's just what we do so for me I think how I interact with my friends and people at school on ROG 1 is the same as how I interact with them like when I see them at school. (Linh, offline)

Goffman regards the self as having the ability to manage its interaction strategically and performing in a methodical manner in order to project an image in which other interactants will find authentic or credible (1959, p. 39). Through performances, whether online or offline, the self strives to convey identity that is consistent with the expectations formed by an audience, situation or stage that frames the interaction. In this question, the audience referred to are other peers, with whom youth interact online through these ROGs and how this translates into their offline school environments. The subsequent section and question examines audience in the form of parents and teachers, and how this shapes youth's online interactions with peers and thus shapes their negotiation of what it means to be Asian based on their offline interactions with parents, family members and teachers.

I gleaned from Linh's comment, that her online and offline interactions are fused and intertwined; that her online interactions extend into her offline interactions at school with peers and vice versa. Youth definitely have an awareness of how they interact and present themselves to their peers and how this self-presentation may change depending on the online or offline stage. Johnny indicates that he presents as more reserved and less friendly offline or in his school environment. Johnny shares that he is presenting what others assume of him as a Vietnamese male, citing a stereotype that Vietnamese males are all gang members. He counters this stereotype through his online identity where he believes he is perceived as friendly and approachable. At the same time, it is interesting that Johnny re-asserts a sense of aggression and bravado when he talks about his role as the group administrator for ROG 1 and how he acts as the gate-keeper and decision-maker regarding Asian group membership and identity. Johnny's online performance as gate-keeper for his online group reinforces an identity or perception of young Asian males as thugs; moreover, it reproduces or conveys an identity about Asian males that is consistent with the expectations formed by his non-Asian peer audience.

Both Vicki and Krystal's offline performances with their peers at school are shaped by their online interactions. Both girls share their offline performance in regards to racist and sexist remarks made online about other Asian peers as one of avoidance. In Krystal's case, she shared a different level of comfort to address, challenge and resist sexist and racialized comments made about Asian females; however, did not feel equally comfortable challenging these male peers when she

passed by them in the school hallways. In this instance, Krystal is resisting and confronting the sexualized and racialized stereotypes directed towards Asian women but is only able to do so online, through the Facebook group. Krystal performs an assertive online Asian identity that counters the essentialized notions of Asian women as passive or submissive. Membership within the Facebook racialized online groups appears to either give some youth a sense of solidarity and confidence to challenge certain Asian stereotypes and for others, these online groups create a space where problematic offline performances get reproduced, albeit on a different stage.

While youth may perform different Asian identities with their peer audience on two different stages, their performance with family and teachers appear to take place primarily offline, yet it is interesting to see how interaction with parents and teachers shape their sense of their Asian identity which is then performed online. As observed earlier, how youth define one or multiple Asian identities was partially dependent on or informed by family and in particular, parental perceptions. When presented with the following question, youth often referred to perceptions of parents and teachers that have come to shape their own understanding of Asian identities and how they in turn perform or re-perform these actions and images via an offline stage, to an audience of parents and teachers:

- *Do your family members' and teacher's perceptions of certain Asian ethnic groups have an effect on how you perceive or interact with your Asian peers?*

I have to say my mom judges people a lot. She doesn't mind that I have different friends and it's not like she won't allow me to be friends with

non-Chinese people but she gets really worried about my Vietnamese friends having a bad influence on me. (Krystal, offline)

When I probed deeper with Krystal, she shared that because there were a number of fights at school which Vietnamese students were involved in, her mother was worried she would be caught up in the same circle of school violence. Furthermore, Krystal shared that because the Vietnamese community in Vancouver is frequently referred to as being involved in marijuana grow-ops, her mother's sense of uneasiness regarding her Vietnamese friends and their family members increases. Krystal further shared:

I know it's crazy and me and my mom have gotten into lots of fights over this but after hearing it for so long, sometimes I kinda wonder if it's true. Like I look at some of the photos Viet kids post on Facebook with all their expensive bags and I kinda wonder, well yah, where did you get that money from?

Parental perceptions of other Asian ethnic groups or racialized groups in general include:

My mom's Vietnamese and my dad's Chinese. My mom doesn't really have an opinion about this stuff but my dad is pretty anti-Japanese because of some of the history between China and Japan that affected his parents' generation. Sometimes he gets a little freaky like when he tells me he'll never allow me to drive a Japanese car. [laughs] Don't you think that's kind of slightly crazy? (Vicki, offline)

Of course I'm proud to be Asian. It's like the best race to be because people don't think of you as lazy like natives. Yah it sucks way more if you're like brown too because then everyone thinks you blow up stuff right? LOL ah terrorist. My parents are always like work hard cuz it's the asian way and then no one can talk shit about you... yah, asians are no 1! Put other races to shame. LOL (Johnny, online)

Linh shares that just like there are different types of Asians, there are also different types of Vietnamese. In this sense, she cites that "more westernized

Vietnamese youth” do not hang out with the “F.O.B Vietnamese youth” either offline or online. Linh further shares that teachers may label one group of youth

Vietnamese when in fact, they may not be:

We have this buddy program at our school to show the kids in the ESL program around. I volunteered for one of the programs but the girl that I was supposed to be a buddy for didn't speak any English or Vietnamese. She didn't even look Vietnamese to me, more like Thai or Cambodian but my teacher said she was Viet so I just went along with it.

It turns out the girl who Linh was to be a buddy for, was in fact Jirai or Dega, an ethnic minority group in Vietnam, as discussed in Chapter 3. Linh has very limited knowledge about the Dega people and their history in Vietnam and has never heard about their history from either her teachers or parents. Linh's example is interesting because she did not question her teacher's assertion that the Dega student is Vietnamese and would be a good cultural match with Linh. Teachers are an authority figure in many young people's lives and in this case, Linh's teacher was a White adult whom she did not feel comfortable in challenging, so when her teacher tells her another student is in fact Vietnamese, Linh rolled with the punches so to speak and assumed her teacher would have more authority to authenticate Vietnamese identity than she did.

For Goffman, the goal of performance is to reaffirm a community or group's shared perceptions. When youth's perceptions of their own Asian identity or that of their peers do not align with the perceptions of their parents or teachers, they rarely challenge these incongruent perceptions. Rather, youth either try to perform the identity that they believe their parents or teachers expect to see and believe to be

true and in turn perform a different identity through their online interactions with peers. Among all four youth interviewed, there was an overwhelming sense that the expectations and perceptions of academic excellence by parents and teachers, shaped their sense of what it means to be Asian. To not live up to this academic excellence also somehow subtracted or removed a portion of their sense of being Asian. As referenced by Johnny earlier, Asian identity does not allow for any B's or C's in one's report card. All four youth try to perform and achieve this dimension of excellence as part of their identity negotiation; however, they use the Facebook groups and online social interactions with their peers as a means to challenge, subvert and in some cases, relinquish some aspects of their Asian identity.

Summary

The data that resulted from my interviews with youth participants was a constant reminder that while online social network sites such as Facebook presumes each individual user has a single identity through the creation of individualized profile pages, this fixity is tenuous and difficult to pinpoint when users are representing themselves in multiple ways and in front of multiple audiences. As youth are negotiating what it means to be Asian, they are consciously evaluating the positive and negative aspects of Asian identity that have either been forced upon them via stereotypes or those aspects in which they themselves are reproducing and transmitting through their online and offline social interactions. Under Goffman's dramaturgical analysis, when Asian youth create and participate in these online racialized groups, the group is both the emergent product of social interaction in which the group acts as both the subject and object of interaction.

Their negotiation and performance of a singular or multiple Asian identities does not exist in isolation and is dependent on their interaction with an audience, whether online or offline.

Researcher Blogflection Number 6

Back in 2007 there was the case of a 13 year old boy named Chris Peoung who passed away as a result of being stabbed by another boy only two years older than him. The case was unprecedented in Vancouver because of how young everyone was who was involved. I had this chapter in my thesis where I wrote about how small Vancouver really is, despite the perception that we're such a metropolitan and cosmopolitan city. The reason I bring up how small Vancouver is, is because shortly after Chris' death, I met a number of his friends as I was doing my youth work outreach. Two of them in particular were present when Chris was stabbed. Listening to them share this memory and experience with me was a critical juncture in both my professional and academic career. There was a lot for me to learn and process from these discussions with Chris' friends. More so, it lead me a set of forum discussions and threads on VancouverXchange in which friends came online to mourn, grieve, remember and pay homage to their good friend Chris. What I did not expect to see were online discussion threads that dated back before the actual stabbing incident where a lot of threats and verbal assaults were made by various groupings of Asian youth against other groups of Asian youth. There was so much anger and hostility directed towards and between different groups using many of those racialized terms that I don't feel like repeating or re-typing here. It's nothing that was ever covered in any of the news reports but Chris's friends openly shared in many instances that the "fight" began online and escalated offline. I asked what it was about, what was the source of the online fight? A part of me really wished it wasn't true because it just sounded so ridiculous and such a waste of a young person's life but anecdotally, these youth shared that all it took was for one individual to post "dirty nammer" about another youth in reference to "dirty chink" online and from there it snowballed and escalated offline to result in a major tragedy for two families and number of youth were left wondering how it got so out of hand.

Chapter 8 – From Here to Where? New Cyber-Journeys

Introduction

Admittedly, the initial draft of my thesis prospectus a few years ago was a bit of a hodgepodge. I wanted to research, study and write about everything that was important and interesting to me: identity, race, racism, ethnicity, online bullying, online social networks, feminism, immigration, refugee displacement, body politics, youth engagement and frontline youth work. With some guidance from my thesis supervisor and much self-reflection, I was able to narrow the focus of my research question and at the same time continue to examine and explore many of the concepts above that are relevant to my own lived experience. I began this research journey with a desire to develop some type of analytical model that would help inform and re-conceptualize racialized and ethnic identity in online racialized spaces. I am amused by the lofty ambition I once had for an M.A. thesis but at the same time, I have developed a deep appreciation for what I have learned as a result of this research process. Even after these seven chapters, I do not have the definitive answer for who is or is not Asian, nor am I by any means the authority on what it means to be Asian both online and offline as a result of this study. What I have come to be sure of, is that this thesis has provided me with a space to critically explore how youth negotiate their sense of what it means to be Asian via their participation in online user-created racialized groups on Facebook. Sometimes the ability to explore and not come out the other end with all the “right” answers is just as critical and relevant. This concluding chapter provides a summary of my

learnings and reflections as a result of my research exploration and journey in and out of cyberspace, while accompanied and guided by theory, theorists and youth participants.

Clicking back to theory

Online players who elect to describe themselves in racial terms, as Asian, African, Latino, or other members of oppressed and marginalized minorities, are often seen as engaging in a form of hostile performance, since they introduce what many consider a real life 'divisive issue' into the phantasmatic world of cybernetic textual interaction. (Nakamura, 1995, p. 190)

The topic of race in cyberspace has evolved dramatically within the last decade, shaped largely by academic discourse that called for the need to frame racialized people's relationship with technology. Moreover, scholars such as Lisa Nakamura (2001, 2002, 2008), Linta Varghese (2004) and Emily Noelle Ignacio (2003, 2007) have been particularly interested in framing the impact of internet usage and interaction on racialized adult's sense of self and identity. Similarly, much has been researched and written about children and youth's interaction with the internet and the constantly new, emerging and changing online social media platforms. dana boyd (2008) is amongst a group of scholars leading research that examines the relevant and important role online interactions such as Facebook play in young people's lives. Additionally, while there is no shortage of ethnographic studies that explore various online youth subcultures and groups, such as youth straightedge punk culture, online groups that foster sense of belonging for queer or

disabled youth, there is very little that exists in regards to racialized youth's negotiation of identity as a result of participation in racialized-specific online groups.

The literature reviews in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis suggest that identity is in part, a social and geo-political construct. The internet has irrevocably changed this and made those social and geo-political boundaries more porous than ever. Theoretical debates over essentialist concepts of a singular and fixed identity; identity as virtual disembodiment and identity performed in reaction to different audiences or stages have been critical to this research and discussion. My thesis has been a modest attempt to observe, explore and think through how youth negotiate racialized and ethnic identity in a way that is meaningful to them, amidst the tricky terrain of the internet. The notion that the internet is a color-blind utopia in which online interaction is regarded as inherently equitable and liberating has been challenged by many scholars and the findings from my research would agree.

Authenticity and Performativity – [Click here for the Real Asian](#)

Racialized identity has often been defined from a non-racialized perspective; therefore, the critical questions regarding authenticity still remain: Who decides who is a racialized person? And in this case who gets to decide who is Asian? I have concluded that there is no straightforward, clean answer nor should there be. The journey to locate a singular Asian identity is messy and rather impossible. It was evident that the youth in my study would disagree with me, despite their inability to articulate or agree on what it means to be Asian. I regard their participation and membership in these Facebook racialized online groups as attempts to explore and

perform, or “try out” multiple Asian identities, while at times suggesting there is only one form of Asian identity.

The youth in this study made evident their exploration and performance of multiple Asian identities online as they discussed how their online participation facilitated their ability to be confident and challenge commonly held stereotypes; to either assert their Asian ethnicity as Chinese or Vietnamese; to perform and play out what it means to be Asian in Vancouver, or to participate in a broader Asian community. Youth were able to provide concrete examples of how and when their online participation facilitated their different Asian identities or face to use Goffman’s terminology, that were not consistent with the Asian face they presented or performed offline in schools for teachers or at home with family members. Although the interview data demonstrated youth’s abilities to perform multiple Asian identities, my perception is that these four youth believed in a singular Asian identity and their participation online was one attempt as part of their journey to surface and locate a singular Asian identity. I base this conclusion largely on the implicit, subtle and nuanced way in which these four youth interacted with me.

In Chapter 2, I acknowledged language as one of the key principles of symbolic interaction theory, which regards language and communication as pivotal to group life as it fosters transmission of shared meanings and understanding. Youth participants often, if not always, responded to my questions by using the term “we” or “us” to imply a sense of one unified Asian identity, in contrast to non-Asians who are described as “them.” Youth’s references to “us” and “we” implied a sense of shared understanding or meaning regarding a collective, singular Asian identity in

which they assumed I was either aware of or agreed with. These youth regarded and included me in their group as they used the terms “we” and “us” and often sought my affirmation in a collectively understood Asian identity which is somehow unique or different than all other groups. This need for affirmation often came in the form of a statement and question such as “we don’t share that much in common with them, right?” or “they’re just different from us Asians, don’t you think?” I have thought that it was possible these youth did not necessarily believe in a singular Asian identity, but perhaps how I framed my interview questions led them to believe there was only one singular and mutually agreed-upon Asian identity in which I had the answer to because I was the researcher.

Chapter 7 shows how the use of jokes and humour are used as a means of resistance and reproduction; furthermore, the ability to understand the root of where a joke stems from appeared to be rooted in shared-lived experiences. Youth participants often indicated finding comfort in these online groups because their Asian peers “get it,” implying their peers understand this shared sense of a singular Asian identity as a result of similar shared life experience. Experience is related to authenticity; moreover, shared or common experience further validates a sense of authenticity.

Finally, I conclude from the interview data with youth participants that there was an implied sense of a singular Asian identity in which all four youth believed they occupied. This was the most evident during the discussions regarding whether or not youth have in the past or currently use an online screen handle that includes the words Asian or AZN. All four youth asserted that participation and membership

within these Facebook Asian groups automatically presuppose an authentic, singular Asian identity. Youth stressed how participation in these groups is an “obvious” indicator that one occupies this singular Asian identity that is premised on shared life experiences. Access and membership into any of these online groups implies access and membership within a singular Asian identity; however, once these youth enter the online groups, they begin to perform or explore their multiple Asian identities by: emphasizing their specific ethnicity, by participating in online discussions that deny or negate other ethnic peers as not being Asian enough or being the wrong type of Asian, as in the case of newcomer Asian peers who are described as FOB or fresh off the boat.

Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha have shown that culture and identity are not static and are constantly being negotiated; therefore, defining and locating a true or singular Asian identity is difficult, problematic and not necessary from my perspective. What has been interesting and exciting for me as a researcher, has been the opportunity to observe how these youth negotiated and performed the meaning of multiple Asian identities, despite my perceptions of implied assertions made by all four youth that there is a singular Asian identity and this singular identity can be measured using one of many online “You know you’re Asian when...” checklists.

As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, authenticity is dependent on both the social context of the subject being evaluated and well as the meaning one conveys on the subject based on one’s personal experiences. While authenticity has been argued to be a social construct, the discourse of authenticity is persistent and

persuasive (Marwick, 2005). Goffman's framework of dramaturgy suggests that authenticity is performed and constructed through symbolic boundaries as a means of differentiation from the inauthentic. Put another way, authenticity is understood in opposition to perceptions of what is deemed inauthentic.

This authentic versus inauthentic negotiation was evident in responses from some of the youth in my study when I asked them to share whether or not they believed individuals from the South Asian diaspora of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan were considered Asian. According to the United Kingdom census, these individuals would be considered Asians and for some, nothing is more authentic than official government documents. However, for the youth participants in this study, the symbolic boundaries and markers of phenotypical features and geography relegated individuals from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh as non-Asians. What was equally interesting for me was how the youth in this study also framed other Asian ethnic peers as inauthentic or non-Asians based on symbolic boundaries and markers of cultural practices. In this sense, authentic Asian identity was assessed against a checklist of cultural characteristics or practices found in one of the many "You know you're Asian when..." online checklists.

One can argue that these lists essentialize behaviour and perpetuate negative images or stereotypes of Asians, yet for some of the youth I interviewed, disagreement with or inability to identify with the majority of these listed characteristics results in a peer or classmate being defined as white-washed or "not Asian enough." Postcolonial theory would regard this as a process of Othering or constructions of an Other. Additionally, labeling Asian peers as white-washed is

consistent with the notion of a “colonial mentality” where the absence of cultural norms and integration of “foreign” norms is perceived as occupying false consciousness or selling out on one’s true culture and/or identity (Fanon, 1967; Espiritu, 1994).

Ignacio (2003) writes that online essentialized behaviour amongst racialized individuals is an attempt to create a sense of online community and belonging, especially amongst racialized diasporic communities. As much as the youth participants in this study welcomed and referenced certain essentialized behaviours and images as evidence of a unique or authentic Asian identity, they also made evident that if taken out of context and if initiated by someone who is White or non-Asian, these essentialized references would be considered inauthentic, offensive and racist.

In Chapter 3 of this thesis, I drew upon studies that showed why some outsiders find it difficult to understand why certain groups are insistent on dis-identifying with their racialized label, thereby not recognizing the complicated realities and histories of inter-ethnic conflict or intra-racial racism among seemingly homogenous groups. In her research titled “Indigenous Identity. What is it and who really has it?” Hilary Weaver (2001) asserts that perhaps the harshest arbiters of Indigenous identity are Indigenous people themselves. Internalized oppression as a result of colonization and government policies have been cited as a few of the reasons why there are divisions amongst Indigenous communities, pitting Indigenous people against one another. As much as these online groups have created a sense of community for some Asian youth who rally together to challenge

and resist negative racialized stereotypes, the online groups also enable processes of internalized oppression that allow youth to accuse one another of not being “Asian enough” based on differences in political, cultural or religious views as transmitted by parents and other family members.

Hybrid Community – Click here for Asians in Vancouver

User-created racialized online groups within Facebook are not a consistent or simplified phenomenon with defined or fixed boundaries; rather they are complex and at times contradictory terrain in which seemingly homogenous populations of youth socialize and interact with one another. I use the terms seemingly homogenous because one can enter into one of these racialized online groups, operating on the assumption that because everyone “looks Asian” in their Facebook profile photos, this is not to say that every member occupies the same position and understanding of what it means to be Asian. Identity in certain instances, can only be confirmed by others who share that identity (Rose, 1994).

My interviews with youth indicate that some youth initially create or join these Facebook groups out of boredom or because their friends were members. Once inside the Facebook groups, their participation is more complex and layered beyond the “I was just bored” rationale, although none of the youth I interviewed ever described their online participation as complex and layered. In their attempts to find allies with shared racialized experiences, they participate in the creation of online communities that are simultaneously inclusive and exclusive; that are both supportive and reflect shared pride in ethnic and cultural values but at times reinforce racialized stereotypes and other forms of oppression. Similar to offline

communities such as schools, sports teams or workplace environments, online communities construct and negotiate insider and outsider status and membership.

D.B. Whittle (1997) defines an online community as one in which we choose to create and build, not simply ones we choose to participate in. Throughout the course of this thesis, I have refrained from referring to these Facebook user-created online groups as communities. I was hesitant to refer to these online groups as “real” communities because I did not initially regard the online interaction between group members as “real” interaction when I was a lurker. Essentially, I was an outsider who came and went as I pleased, not having to respond to or start any discussion threads. I also came to realize that because online groups did not have physical boundaries such as streets, borders, or the four walls of a classroom, office, church, or coffee house, I failed to consider these online groups as a form of community in the traditional sense that I have come to understand community. It was not until I began to interact with the youth participants through the interviews or reading their responses to my blogflection posts that I began to understand how the Facebook groups were indeed a community, and how I have become a part of that community through my research. Online communities perform the same function as offline communities in so far as transmission of social values and norms.

Early symbolic interaction theorists defined a community as primarily place-based social interaction with shared symbols and transmission of symbolic meaning (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969). In Chapter 6, I reflected on the convergence of my graduate student identity with my professional identity as a former youth worker in Vancouver. The combination of this identity convergence in addition to the fact that

my research, although primarily taking place in an online context, was at the same time very place-based as I only interviewed youth living and attending high-schools in Vancouver. According to Goodsell and Williamson (2008), what I have in fact researched and observed, is that of a hybrid community: the point of intersection where an online group is primarily comprised of members who are anchored within a specific offline, place-based community. This notion of a hybrid community is important to keep in mind, as it emphasizes the multiple stages of online/offline in which youth experience, (re)negotiate and perform their identities.

Study limitations & potential avenues for further research

I will be the first to admit that this study drew heavily on studies of Asian-American youth's negotiation of their ethnic and racial identity. A friend of mine often shared and reminded me that his experience of being Black in the United States or the United Kingdom is different than his experience of being Black in Canada. I have lived in Vancouver, Canada my entire life since leaving Vietnam with my parents at the age of three. I have never lived in the United States, Australia or any European countries; therefore, I did not initially understand what my friend was referring to. I have on the most part, only ever experienced being Vietnamese and Asian in a Canadian context. Many of the studies I referenced in this thesis are rooted in negotiations of an Asian-American identity and what it means to be Asian in the United States. Asian-American discourse often employ the term "pan Asian-American identity" which I did not immediately understand or readily identify with, especially as an Asian-Canadian. Secondly, Asian-Americans, in negotiating their heterogeneity and distinct histories between other Asian national groups, have a

much more visible and active presence on the internet through various online communities in comparison to Asian-Canadians. For example, I recognize that the experience of Vietnamese people in relation to the historical and geo-political forces of the United States cannot be seamlessly applied to the experience of Vietnamese people in Canada. Although I believe I did not conflate or generalize the experiences of Asian youth in Vancouver with that of all Asian-American youth as one in the same, there are some relevant parallels and shared experiences.

I indicated earlier that I felt this thesis was a modest attempt to coalesce complex subject matter such as race and ethnicity, identity, the internet, youth voice and online ethnography under one study. It would be interesting and valuable to see this study replicated in order to compare, contrast and verify data and findings or select a portion of this study such as the ethical considerations of online ethnography with racialized youth to further refine and explore. While I refer to this thesis as a modest exploration, I am aware that this research could be perceived as overly ambitious. I recall Denzin's (2001) assertion that discussions of complex phenomena such as race and new forms of technological media need to call upon multiple conceptual frameworks and blended methods, which this study attempted to achieve. Some of the overly ambitious limitations are a result of my own curiosity and desire to lurk online for extended periods of time and attempts to keep up with the rapidly changing landscape of online research and ethnography. The more I read, learned and researched, the more it appeared that methodological and theoretical possibilities were endless and infinite, like the internet itself. It was

difficult at times to curb my enthusiasm as I was drawn into the online vortex of endless possibilities.

The original objective of this qualitative study via online ethnography was to explore how youth (re)negotiate what it means to be Asian through their online participation in user-created Facebook Asian groups. I was interested in examining the relationship and social processes between youth's online and offline interactions with peers, family members and teachers to understand how these interactions help inform their constructions and understanding of one or multiple Asian identities. The data from youth's interviews provide an extensive menu of additional research questions and the need for further research. The issue of aggression and violence in relation to youth's identity negotiations was present. On the internet, words are deeds and the ability for violence to escalate from an online chat group or forum to an offline after-school fight were referenced. This online-offline escalation of violence where written text and insult have the ability to transform into a stabbing that results in death is a reality for today's youth population

There are endless numbers of online sites to research. Through this journey and in my interviews with the four youth, I was introduced to a number of interesting and disturbing sites. On the note of disturbing, I was introduced to a site called The Dirty (www.thedirty.com) from the three girls I interviewed. The Dirty came up as we talked about their perceptions of how Asian girls and women are racialized and sexualized in online spaces. Although The Dirty is not a racialized online space or community, it uses "tags" or labels that organize individuals under specific searchable categories. I learned from my female youth participants and by

visiting The Dirty myself, that Asian females are often tagged under the category “Noodle Nation.” The Dirty is self-described as a real life or reality blog and encourages readers to “submit dirt” about ordinary citizens, including sexually provocative or sexualized photos of others, mainly females, including photos of minors. I spent an extraordinary amount of time lurking on The Dirty and being horrified and outraged at what I was viewing. As much as I was horrified, I kept thinking there is such a critical need for further research that explores how racialized girls’ sense of self and identity are impacted when they have been labelled with such sexually and racially derogatory categories by their peers, who submit their photos and real names without their permission. Unfortunately, the potential avenues for further research as it pertains to youth’s online interactions are as plentiful and infinite as the number of websites that serve a similar function to The Dirty.

Implications for Child & Youth Care Practice

Historically, the context of child and youth care work was understood as taking place in residential settings such as group homes. Today, child and youth care as a profession and practice has extended beyond group home and treatment settings and into various other contexts such as schools, community centres, and in child protection roles within provincial government ministries. At its core, the child and youth care field works with children and youth throughout their life span. Youth workers build relationships with young people by meeting them where they are at. That said, the physical context of youth work has changed; the space in which practitioners facilitate and build relationships with youth have changed. Cyberspace

or the internet and online spaces are considered by many young people as a valid and legitimate space in which they can “hang out uninterrupted.” While we consider traditional spaces such as residential settings, the classroom, and even our offices as spaces in which we can build relationships with youth, we also need to recognize that those life spaces for today’s young people have extended, to include the internet and we need to integrate this into our practice. This can be very scary and threatening for some because the internet is in some respects, an endless abyss that is ever changing.

Technology, the internet and online social network sites are not going away. Youth are learning how to use technology, online mediums and new forms of social media as tools for identity negotiation and as potential stages in which to experiment and perform one or multiple identities. The internet has become an entrenched extension of everyday life contrary to previous postmodern views which regarded internet interaction as either divorced from or a replacement for everyday life. Child and youth care practitioners have always strived to meet young people where they are at, and although this used to be in reference to developmental and cognitive stages, it is equally important to meet them where they are at in relation to their everyday life experiences, which may or may not include online interactions.

From a practice perspective, and speaking from past personal frontline experience of working with a large contingency of Asian youth in Vancouver, I believe deeply in the need for further research in this area that can inform youth work practice. In Chapter 1, I set the context of inquiry for this research by sharing the experience I had of receiving a referral from the Ministry of Children and Family

Development to work with a young Burmese girl because I was the “closest thing to Burmese” in so far as youth workers in Vancouver went. Although this was the reality of the landscape of youth work approximately seven years ago, not much has changed since then.

Youth workers from specific cultural and ethnic backgrounds working in community and non-profit organizations are extremely rare. This is not an assumption, this is a fact. The City of Vancouver currently funds the position of one Vietnamese youth worker, based out of Broadway Youth Resource Centre, a grassroots non-profit cooperative of eleven community organizations and one Latin American youth worker based out of Britannia Community Centre. While the ratio of one Vietnamese youth worker to the number of Vietnamese youth in Vancouver is already quite daunting, this position also gets called upon to work with and support multiple other Asian youth caseloads as the resources and supports are almost non-existent. I remember my conversations with the Latin American youth worker and our shared similar frustrations. The youth worker may be Colombian but would have referrals for youth from El Salvador, Mexico and Guatemala. As a Colombian youth worker, he understands cultural practices of and has personal lived experience of political instability within Colombia but shared that other than having the ability to speak Spanish, did not have the same cultural and political context of what youth from other parts of Latin America experienced.

Immigrant Services Society of B.C., which is western Canada’s largest settlement organization, has a number of youth workers who support and provide peer facilitation skills to multicultural immigrant and refugee youth, not necessarily

youth of any specific ethno-cultural group. Within the Vancouver School Board (VSB) system, there are a number of multicultural liaison workers, who again, although may have the capacity to speak a certain language, are not tasked with the responsibility of supporting ethno-specific groups of students. Additionally, the VSB also employs Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) who have the ability to speak Chinese (Cantonese & Mandarin), Filipino, Punjabi, Khmer, Korean, Spanish and Vietnamese; however, a SWIS worker's primary responsibility is to provide professional settlement services to immigrant and refugee youth and their families. The four youth in my study would never encounter working with a SWIS worker given none of them are recent immigrants or refugees as they were all born and raised in Vancouver. I bring up the examples of multicultural liaison and SWIS workers to show that from a practice-perspective these workers are mandated to support students in navigating the school system. These positions are very much school-focused and in some respects, to support parent and guardian's ability to navigate the new school system in their new country.

While a large part of young people's daily lives and social interactions take place within the school system, the training and support for teachers, support workers such as multicultural liaison and SWIS workers to navigate the complexity of young people's daily online experiences are severely limited. School is but only one offline stage where identity negotiation and peer interaction occurs. In my previous Researcher Blogflection Number 6, I discussed the stabbing and death of thirteen year old Chris Peoung, who had not even entered high-school yet at the time of his death. The boy who stabbed Chris was a grade nine Vietnamese student

attending a Vancouver high-school. All the young people who were present in the parking lot on this fateful day, who participated in and/or were aware of the alleged online activities that escalated and led to this offline tragic event, were students attending schools in Vancouver. As much as I and other community-based youth workers began to meet and discuss this back and forth between youth's online and offline experiences, many of us recognized that school administrators, teachers and multicultural liaison workers had virtually no knowledge of many of these online groups and communities that their students would frequent.

I cite all these examples of various youth work contexts or positions within the Vancouver education system and community-based organizations that work with various ethnic groups of students to show that despite having school professionals who have multiple linguistic capacities, there are only a handful of youth workers or professionals in Vancouver who share in young people's complex lived experiences of being racialized, of migration, diaspora and multiple identities. Added to this already complex juggling of multiple experiences and identities is the online interface, which many adult professionals are either unaware of or simply not up to speed on in regards to young people's online interactions.

This research has resonated with me personally because to one extent, I share insider experience with my youth participants and the young people I use to work with because I was able to relate with the struggle between competing identities: my Asian identity, my Vietnamese identity and my Canadian identity. As mentioned earlier, having grown up most of my life in Canada since the age of three, I have performed my own array of faces to different audiences on various front and

back stages, so to speak. In many instances, when the youth participants ended their responses with “you know what I mean right?” I would nod my head in agreement or type “yup” in the case of the online interview. As much as I was able to relate and understand where youth were coming from when they shared various family and school anecdotes, there were also a number of differences and divergent views between myself and the youth participants which I discussed in Chapter 6 as part of my researcher reflexivity. These differences are part of the complexity of this ethnography, and not necessarily negative according to Nesbitt’s (2006) observation that:

Ethnographic research dispels any lingering assumptions of homogeneity. The data may reveal stark contradictions within the group, and will certainly show more subtly nuanced variation in individuals’ attitudes and practices and in how they articulate these (p. 141-142).

Summary – Concluding Thoughts

For the last four years, friends and colleagues would ask me what I was researching and what my thesis topic was about. I would often respond “Facebook, youth, identity...you know, stuff like that.” It was my attempt to make my research sound mundane, vague or severely theoretical during moments, days, and weeks where I did not have the energy to share the complexity of what I was exploring or discovered through my data. Unfortunately, I was never successful because it always seemed to peak people’s curiosity to want to hear and learn more. This was a good thing – I am not complaining! It is my sincerest hope that this thesis has

proved some relevance and need to further explore racialized youth's identity negotiations in online racialized spaces. I believe it is a very specific niche research area that has limited data and research. The intersections between postcolonial theory, youth development and online identity studies have confirmed my initial gut reaction that this would be a complex, multi-layered ethnographic study. I hope someone reads this study and is excited about the potential and vast opportunities for further research and discussion. Finally, whether this discussion continues in the form of additional academic research or takes place online via a Facebook group discussion thread, or a series of twitter feeds, I can only hope that the discussion will somehow just continue.

Researcher Blogflection Number 7

I noticed some of you joined the Facebook group “Not Too Asian,” as did I. I’m also assuming that you joined because you read and obviously reacted to the Maclean article “Too Asian” or again, unless you joined another Facebook group because you were bored? Ok, so many things about that article annoyed and angered me and I’d like to share a few of those reflections or rather rants, with you:

1. Did you notice the picture on the front cover of the magazine when they had this as the feature story? It was of two Asian boys. Whether or not they are Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese... I’m not sure. What I am sure of is the Republic of China flag in the background. Of course I went to this place of “oh, so those two boys must be Chinese then.” I thought about what one of the participants in my interviews said to me when I asked her what Asian means to her and she said something along the lines of “I just think of China.” I guess MacLean’s magazine thinks Asian also equals China.
2. The entire article made Asian university students sound like nothing more than a group of drones who study, study harder, repeat and rewind. It was everything I loathed about this whole “model minority” stereotype that Asians are the most diligent, hard-working, passive, and non-complaining of all the racialized minorities. What’s funny to me is the article only referenced hard-working, over-achieving Chinese university students. I would consider myself Asian and yes, I identify with that label so it was funny for me to read this article and then not be able to identify or relate whatsoever to Maclean’s definition of who is Asian.
3. I don’t know if I’m more offended by this article or the online comments to this article by other readers. I obviously can’t verify who’s who that wrote these comments but on the most part, they seem to either be self-proclaimed Asians who logged onto the Maclean’s website to post their shame and embarrassment for being Asian and being perceived by the magazine as a no-fun bunch of drones. Then there are the comments from those who seem to use the term Asian and immigrants interchangeably. I particularly enjoyed the comments that directed all the Asians at UBC to “go back to China.” My husband and I both attended UBC many moons ago and if someone had told either one of us to go back to China, well that would have been impossible and problematic for a couple of reasons: I’m Vietnamese so obviously that doesn’t make any sense to me and as husband likes to

point out, he was born and raised his entire life in Vancouver. He always remarks that there is no China for him to go back to!

Speaking of my husband, he wrote a very eloquent rebuttal and e-mailed it off to MacLean's. Let me know if you want a copy of his more eloquent rant. What's funny is a MacLean's staffer sent him a response via e-mail simply letting him know his response was too long-winded and they would consider reading and posting something that was about 300 words as opposed to the 1500 words or so that he wrote. I told him to stop being a stereotypical over-achieving Asian!

References

- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/La Frontera. The new Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (1995). (Eds.). *The Post-colonial studies reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Atkinson, D., Morten, G., & Sue, D. (1983). *Counselling American Minorities*. Dubuque, IA: Wm.C.Brown.
- Bainbridge, W. S. 2000. Religious ethnography on the World Wide Web: Religion and the social order. *Religion on the Internet*, 8, 55-80.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). Four essays by M. M. Bakhtin. In M. Holquist (Ed.), *The dialogic imagination* (pp. 15-39). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Barth, F. (1969). Ethnic groups and boundaries. In F. Barth (Ed.), *Process and forms in social life: Selected essays* (pp. 198-227). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Berg, B. L. (2007). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality*. New York: Doubleday.
- Benedikt, M. (1991). Cyberspace: some proposals. In M. Benedikt (Ed.), *Cyberspace: First steps* (pp.119-224). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London & New York: Routledge
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Brah, A. (1996). *Cartographies of diaspora: Contesting identities*. London: Routledge.
- Brewer, J. & Hunter, A. (2006). *Foundations of multimethod research synthesizing styles*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Bromseth, J. (2003). Ethical and methodological challenges in research on net-mediated communication. In M. Thorseth, (Ed.), *Applied ethics in internet research* (pp. 67-85). New York: Routledge.
- Brown, M.J. (1996). On becoming Chinese. In M.J. Brown, (Ed.), *Negotiating*

- ethnicities in China and Taiwan* (pp. 11-36). Berkeley, CA: The Regents of the University of California.
- Boeije, H. (2002). A purposeful approach to the constant comparative method in the analysis of qualitative interviews. *Quality and Quantity*, 36, 391-409.
- boyd, d. m., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1). Retrieved on December 21, 2009, from:
<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html>
- boyd, d.m. (2008). Why youth ♥ social network sites: The role of networked publics in teenage social life. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Youth, identity and digital media*, (pp.119-141). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bukatman, S. (1993). *Terminal identity: The virtual subject in postmodern science fiction*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Cassidy, J. (2006, May 15). Me media. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved June 19, 2010, from:
http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/05/15/060515fa_fact_cassidy
- Cavanagh, A. (1999). Behaviour in public? Ethics in online ethnography. *Research Methodology Online*, 6. Retrieved on April 18, 2009, from:
http://www.cybersociology.com/files/6_2_ethicsinonlineethnog.html
- Centri, C. (1993). *Model minority stereotypes and the acceptance of inner city urban Culture: The identity formation of Vietnamese high school students*. Paper presented at the American Education Studies Association conference, Chicago.
- Chang, T., & Kwan, Kwan, K.K. (2009). Asian American racial and ethnic identity. In N. Tewari & A.N. Alvarez (Eds.), *Asian American Psychology: Current Perspectives* (pp. 113-133). New York: Routledge
- Chen, P. & Hinton, S.M. (1999). Real-time interviewing using the World Wide Web. *Sociological Research Online* 4(3). Retrieved November 22, 2009, from:
<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/4/3/chen.html>
- Chow, R. (1993). *Writing diaspora: Tactics of intervention in contemporary cultural studies*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Coomber, R. (1997). Using the internet for survey research. *Sociological Research Online*, 2(2). Retrieved on November 8, 2010, from:
<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/2/2/2.html>

- comScore. (2007). *Social networking goes global*. Retrieved January 9, 2011, from: <http://www.comscore.com/press/release.asp?press=1555>
- Costigan, C., Su, T.F. & Hua, J.M. (2009). Ethnic identity among Chinese Canadian youth: A review of the Canadian literature. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 50(4), 261-272.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cross, W. (1978). The Thomas and Cross models of psychological nigrescence: A literature review. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 4, 13-31.
- de Finney, S. (2007). *It's About Us: Racialized minority girls transformative engagement in feminist participatory action research*. Victoria, BC: University of Victoria.
- Denzin, N. K. (1989). *Interpretive interactionism*. Newbury Park, CA : Sage.
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.) (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. (1999). Cybertalk and the method of instances. In S. Jones, (Ed.), *Doing internet research: Critical issues and methods for examining the net*, (pp. 107-126). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N. K. (2001). Symbolic interactionism, poststructuralism, and the racial subject. *Symbolic Interaction*, 24(2), 243-249.
- Dikötter, F. (1994). Racial identities in China: Context and meaning. *The China Quarterly*, 138, 404-412.
- Donath, J. (1999). Identity and deception in the virtual community. In M.A. Smith & P. Kollock (Eds.), *Communities in cyberspace* (pp.29-59). New York, Routledge.
- Donath, J., & boyd, d. (2004). Public displays of connection. *BT Technology Journal*, 22(4), 71-82.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. (1903). *The Souls of Black folk*. Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co.
- Ellison, N.B., Steinfield, C. & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook Friends: Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12(4), 448-461.
- Erikson, E.H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton

- Eysenbach, G. & Till, J.E. (2001). Ethical issues in qualitative research on internet communities. *British Medical Journal*, 323, 1103-1115.
- Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skin, white masks*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fernback, J. (2007). Beyond the diluted community concept: a symbolic interactionism perspective on online social relations. *New Media & Society*, 9(1), 49-69.
- Feuchtwang, S. (1993). The Chinese race-nation. *Anthropology Today*, 9(1), 14-25.
- Fine, M. (1994). Working the hyphens: Reinventing self and other in qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y. Lincoln, (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 70-82). London: Sage.
- Fish, E. (2004). A cross to bear: The plight of the Dega in Vietnam. *Harvard International Review*, Winter, 140-161.
- Flynn, N. (2004). *Instant messaging rules: a business guide to managing policies, security, and legal issues for safe IM communication*. Saranac Lake, NY: Amacom.
- Gaiser, T. (1997). Conducting online focus groups: A methodological discussion. *Social Science Computer Review*, 15(2), 135-44.
- Gajjala, R. (2010). Placing South Asian digital diasporas in second life. In R.T. Halualani & T.K. Nakayama (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of critical intercultural communication* (pp. 183-201). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Gay, G. (1978). Ethnic identity in early adolescence: Some implications for instructional reform. *Educational Leadership*, 35, 649-655.
- Gibson, W. (1984). *Neuromancer*. New York: Ace Books.
- Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The Discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Behaviour in public places: Notes on the social organization of gatherings*. New York: Free Press MacMillan.

- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. New York: Prentice Hall Inc.
- Goffman, E. (1978). *Relations in public*. New York: Basic Books.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *Strategic interaction*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Press.
- Goffman, E. (1972). *Interactional ritual*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Goodsell, T.L. & Williamson, O. (2008). The case of the brick huggers: The practice of an online community. *City & Community*, 7(3), 251-271.
- Goulding, C. (1998). Consumer research, interpretive paradigms and methodological ambiguities. *European Journal of Marketing*, 33 (9/10), 859-873.
- Griffin, J.H. (1961). *Black like me*. Atlanta: Signet Books.
- Gunter, B. (2002). Online versus offline research: implications for evaluating digital media. *Aslib Proceedings*, 54(4), 229-239.
- Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: community, culture, difference* (pp. 222-237). London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Hall, S. (1992). New ethnicities. In J. Donald & A. Rattansi, (Eds.), *Race, Culture, Difference* (pp. 252-59). London: Sage.
- Hall, S. (1996). Introduction: Who needs 'identity'? In S. Hall & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp.1-17). London: Sage.
- Hamelink, C.J. (2000). *The Ethics of Cyberspace*. London: Sage.
- Hamm, J. V. (2001). Barriers and bridges to positive cross-ethnic relations: African-American and white parent socialization beliefs and practices. *Youth & Society*, 33(1), 62-98.
- Harrell, S. (1996). Introduction. In M.J. Brown (Ed.), *Negotiating ethnicities in China and Taiwan* (pp. 1-10). Berkeley, CA: The Regents of the University of California.
- Herman-Kinney, N. J., & Verschaeve, J. M. (2003). Methods of symbolic interactionism. In L. T. Reynolds & N. J. Herman-Kinney (Eds.), *Handbook of symbolic interactionism* (pp. 57-77). Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Hine, C. (2000). *Virtual ethnography*. London: Sage.

- Hinchcliffe, V., & Gavin, H. (2009). Social and virtual networks: Evaluating synchronous online interviewing using instant messenger. *The Qualitative Report*, 14(2), 318-340.
- Ho, D. Y. F. (1995). Internalized culture, culturocentrism, and transcendence. *Counseling Psychologist*, 23(1), 4-24.
- Ho, S. S., & McLeod, D. M. (2008). Social-psychological influences on opinion expression in face-to-face and computer mediated communication. *Communication Research*, 3(2), 190-207.
- Hollingsworth, L.D. (1999). Symbolic interactionism, African American families, and the transracial adoption controversy. *Social Work*, 44(5), 443-453.
- Ignacio, E.N. (2000). Ain't I a Filipino (woman)?: An analysis of authorship/authority through the construction of 'Filipina' on the net. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 41, 551-572.
- Ignacio, E.N. (2003). Laughter in the rain. In R.C. Lee & C.S. Wong, (Eds.), *AsianAmerica.Net: Ethnicity, nationalism and cyberspace* (pp. 160-176). New York: Routledge.
- Jacobs-Huey, L. (2002). BTW: How do you wear your hair? *From the Kitchen to the Parlor*, 17(1), 1-18.
- James, A. (1990). In their own voices: African women talk. London: Currey & Heinemann.
- James, N. (2006). Credibility, authenticity and voice: dilemmas in online interviewing. *Qualitative Research*, 6(3), 403-420.
- Jamieson, N.L. (1995). *Understanding Vietnam*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Jenkins, R. (2003). Rethinking ethnicity: Identity, categorization, and power. In J. Stone & Dennis, R. (Eds.), *Race and ethnicity: Comparative and theoretical approaches* (pp. 170-183). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Kendall, L. (1999). Recontextualising "cyberspace": methodological considerations for online research. In S. Jones, (Ed.), *Doing internet research: Critical issues and methods for examining the net*, (pp. 57-74). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jones, S. (Ed.). (1999). *Doing internet research: Critical issues and methods for examining the net*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Keyes, C.F. (1984). Tribal ethnicity and the state in Vietnam. *American Ethnologist*,

11(1), 176-182.

- Keyes, C.F. (2002). The peoples of Asia: Science and politics in the classification of ethnic groups in Thailand, China and Vietnam. *Journal of Asian Studies*, 61(4), 1163-1203.
- Khanlou, N. (2005). Cultural identity as part of youth's self-concept in multicultural settings. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 3(2), 1-14.
- Kim, C. J. (1999). The racial triangulation of Asian Americans. *Politics & Society*, 27, 105-138.
- Kolko, B.E., Nakamura, L. & G.B. Rodman (Eds.) (2000). *Race in cyberspace*. New York: Routledge.
- Kwame A.A. (1996). Race, culture and identity: Misunderstood connections. In A.A. Kwame & A. Gutmann, (Eds.), *Color conscious: The political morality of race* (pp. 1-9). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lal, B.B. (1990). *The romance of culture in an urban civilization*. New York: Routledge.
- Lal, B.B. (1995). Symbolic interaction theories: Theories of ethnicity. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 38(3), 421-441.
- Lee, J. & Lutz Sutton, J. (2005). *Situating "race" and racisms in space, time, and theory. Critical essays for activists and scholars*. Montreal, QC: McGill-Queens University Press.
- Lee, S. (1996). *Unraveling the "model minority" stereotype: Listening to Asian American youth*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Lieberman, K. (2003). Virtually Vietnamese. In R.C. Lee & C.S. Wong, (Eds.), *AsianAmerica.Net: Ethnicity, nationalism and cyberspace* (pp. 40-68). New York: Routledge.
- Leech, N. L., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2007). An array of qualitative data analysis tools: A call for data analysis triangulation. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 22(4), 557-584.
- MacKinnon, G. (2005). Symbolic interactionism: A lens for judging the social constructivist potential of learner-centered chemistry software. *International Journal of Technology in Teaching and Learning*, 1(2), 89-102.

- Maldonado, D., Jr. (1975). Ethnic self-identity and self-understanding. *Social Casework*, 56, 618-622.
- Mama, A. (1995). *Beyond the masks: Race, gender and subjectivity*. London: Routledge.
- Mann, C. & Stewart, F. (2000). *Internet communication and qualitative research: A handbook for researching online*. London: Sage.
- Marcia, J. (1980). Identity in adolescence. In J. Adelson (Ed.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology* (pp. 159–187). New York: Wiley.
- Markham, A.N. (2007). *The methods, politics, and ethics of representation in online ethnography*. Retrieved on December 18, 2010 from: http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/21147_Chapter_8.pdf
- Marsh, G. W. (1990). Refining an emergent life-style change through matrix analysis. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 12(3), 41-52.
- Mattingly, M.A. & Stuart, C. (2002). North American certification project (NACP) competencies for professional and child & youth work practitioner. *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work*, 17, 16-49.
- Marwick, A.E. (2005). *Selling your self: Online identity in the age of a commodified internet*. (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Washington). Retrieved on August 29, 2010, from: http://tiara.org/papers/amarwick_sellingyoursel mathesis.doc
- McConnell, D. (2000). *Implementing computer supported collaborative learning*. London: Kogan Page.
- McLaine, S. (2003). Ethnic online communities: Between profit and purpose. In M. McCaughey & M. Ayers (Eds.), *Cyberactivism: Online activism in theory and practice* (pp. 233-254). New York: Routledge.
- McLeod, J. (2002). *Beginning postcolonialism*. Oxford: Routledge.
- McLoyd, V.C. (1991). What is the study of African-American children the study of? In R.J. Jones (Ed.), *Black Psychology*, (pp.419-440). Berkeley, CA: Cobb & Henry.
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self & society from the standpoint of a social behaviorist*. C. W. Morris (Ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Miles, R. (1989). *Racism*. London: Routledge

- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis (2nd edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Miron, L.F & Inda, J.X. (2000). Race as a kind of speech act. *Cultural Studies: A Research Annual*, 5, 210-227.
- Mitra, A. (1997). Virtual commonality: Looking for India on the internet. In S. Jones (Ed.). *Virtual culture: Identity and communication in cybersociety* (pp.55-79). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mitra, A. (2001). Marginal voices in cyberspace. *New Media & Society*, 3(1), 29-48.
- Mitra, A. & Watts, E. (2002). Theorizing cyberspace: the idea of voice applied to the internet discourse. *New Media & Society*, 4(4), 479-498.
- Mitra, A., (2008). Using blogs to create cybernetic space. *Convergence*, 14(4), 457-452.
- Moran-Ellis, J., Alexander, V. D., Cronin, A., Dickinson, M., Fielding J., Sleney, J., & Thomas, H. (2006). Triangulation and integration: Processes, claims, and implications. *Qualitative Research*, 6(1), 45-59.
- Morgan, S. J., Symon, G. (2004). Electronic interviews in organisational research. In C. Cassell, & G. Symon (Eds.), *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research* (pp. 23-33). London: Sage
- Moscovici, S. (1984). On social representation. In J.P. Forgas (Ed.), *Social cognition: Perspectives on everyday understanding* (pp. 129-38). London: Academic Press.
- Murthy, D. (2008). Digital ethnography: An examination of the use of technologies for Social Research. *Sociology*, 42(5), 837 – 855.
- Nakamura, L. (1995). Race in/for cyberspace: Identity tourism and racial passing on the internet. In V.J. Vitanza, (Ed.), *Cyberreader* (pp.442-453). Needham Heights, MA: Lauson Inc.
- Nakamura, L. (2002). *Cybertypes: Race, ethnicity and identity on the internet*. New York: Routledge.
- Nakamura, L. (2008). *Digitizing race: Visual cultures of the internet*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Nayak, A. (2006). After race: ethnography, race and post-race theory. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29(3), 411–30.

- Neuman, W.L. (1994). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Nguyen, D.T. & Alexander, J. (1996). The coming of cyberspace time and the end of polity. In R. Shields (Ed.), *Cultures of internet: Virtual spaces, real histories, living bodies*, (pp.20-46). London: Sage.
- Ong, A. (1999). *Flexible citizenship: The cultural logics of transnationality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Omi, M. and Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s*. New York: Routledge.
- Pacagnella, L. (1997). Getting the seat of your pants dirty: Strategies for ethnographic research on virtual communities. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 3(1). Retrieved on December 28, 2010, from <http://ascusc.org/jcmc/vol3/issue1/paccagnella.html>
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pearse, N., and Kanyangale, M. (2009). Researching organizational culture using the grounded theory method. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 7(1), 67-74.
- Phinney, J.S. (1989). Stages of ethnic identity development in minority adolescents. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 9(1/2), 34-49.
- Phinney, J.S., Horenczyk, G., Liebkind, & K., Vedder, P. (2001). Ethnic identity, immigration and well-being: An interactional perspective. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(3), 493-510.
- Popeau, J. (1998). Race/ethnicity. In C. Jenks (Ed.), *Core sociological dichotomies* (pp. 166-193). London: Sage.
- Portes, A. & Zhou, M. (1993). Interminority affairs in the U.S.: Pluralism at the crossroads. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530, 74-96.
- Poster, M. (1995). Postmodern virtualities. In Fetherstone, M. & Burrows, R. (Eds.), *Cyberspace/cyberbodies/cyberpunk: Cultures of technological embodiment*, (pp. 54-83). London: Sage.
- Pratt, M.L. (1992). *Imperial eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*. New York: Routledge.

- Psathas, G. (1995). *Conversation analysis: The study of talk-in-interaction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Punday, D. (2000). The narrative construction of cyberspace: Reading Neuromancer. *Reading Cyberspace Debates*, 62(2), 194-213.
- Pyke, K., & Tran, D. (2003). "FOB" and "whitewashed": Identity and internalized racism among second generation Asian-Americans. *Qualitative Sociology*, 26(2), 147-172.
- Rajan, G. & Mohanram, R. (Eds.) (1995). *Postcolonial discourse and changing contexts: Theory and criticism*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Rattansi, A. (1994). Modern racisms, racialised identities. In A. Rattansi & S. Westwood (Eds.). *Racism, modernity and identity* (pp. 34-57). Cambridge, MA: Polity.
- Ren, H. (1996). Taiwan and the impossibility of the Chinese. In M.J. Brown (Ed.), *Negotiating ethnicities in China and Taiwan* (pp. 75-97). Berkeley, CA: The Regents of the University of California.
- Reyes, A. (2002). Are you losing your culture?: Poetics, indexicality and Asian American identity. *Discourse Studies*, 4, 183-199.
- Reyes, A. (2004). Asian American stereotypes as circulating resource. *Pragmatics*, 14, 73-192.
- Reyes, A. (2007). *Language, identity, and stereotypes among Southeast Asian-American youth: The other Asian*. New Jersey, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.
- Robinson, L. (2007). The cyberself: the self-ing project goes online, symbolic interaction in the digital age. *New Media & Society*, 9(1), 93-110
- Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rosenbloom, S. R., & Way, N. (2004). Experiences of discrimination among African-American, Asian-American, and Latino adolescents in an urban high school. *Youth & Society*, 35(4), 420-451.
- Ryan, G.W. & Bernard, H.R. (2000). Data management and analysis methods. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 769-802). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Sharf, B.F. (1999). Beyond Netiquette: The ethics of doing naturalistic discourse research on the internet. In S.G. Jones, (Ed.), *Doing internet research: Critical issues and methods for examining the net*, (pp. 107-126). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Shepherd, J.R. (1993). *Statecraft and political economy on the Taiwan frontier: 1600-1800*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Shih, C. (2002). *Negotiating ethnicity in China: Citizenship as a response to the state*. New York: Routledge.
- Silver, D. & Massanari, A. (2006). *Critical cyberculture studies*. New York: New York University Press.
- Silverman, D. (Ed.). (2005). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook (2nd Edition)*. London: Sage Publications.
- Smith, A.D. (2000). Theories of nationalism: alternative models of nation formation. In M. Leifer (Ed.), *Asian nationalism* (pp.1-20). London: Routledge.
- Spencer, S. (2006). *Race and ethnicity: Culture, identity and representation*. London: Routledge.
- Spivak, G.C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In G. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and interpretation of culture* (pp. 271-313). Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Spivak, G.C. (1985). Three women's texts and a critique of imperialism. *Critical Inquiry*, 12, 253-289.
- Statistics Canada. (2006). *Census of Canada*. Retrieved on December 18, 2011, from <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm>
- Sterne, J. (1999) Thinking the internet: Cultural studies versus the millennium. In S. Jones (Ed.), *Doing internet research. Critical issues and methods for examining the net* (pp. 257-87). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Suwito, K.A. (2009). *Narrative on Facebook: Questioning the agency of the postcolonial subjects*. Utrecht, Netherlands: Utrecht University.
- Thomas, A. (2004). Digital literacies of the cybergirl. *E-Learning*, 1(3), 358-382.
- Thomsen, S. R., Straubhaar, J. D., & Bolyard, D. M. (1998). Ethnomethodology and

- the study of online communities: exploring the cyber streets. *Information Research*, 4(1), 1-20.
- Troyna, B. (1993). *Racism and education: Research perspectives*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.
- Truong, M. T. D. (1997). Vietnamese American literature. In K. K. Cheung (Ed.), *An interethnic companion to Asian American literature* (pp. 219-246). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Tsang, A. K. T., Irving, H., Alaggia, R., Chau, S. B. Y., & Benjamin, M. (2003). Negotiating ethnic identity in Canada: The case of the "satellite children". *Youth and Society*, 34(3), 359-384.
- Tuan, M. (1998). *Forever foreigners or honorary whites? The Asian ethnic experience today*. New Jersey, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Turkle, S. (1995). *Life on screen: Identity in the age of the internet*. New York: A Phoenix Paperback.
- Twine, F.W. & Warren, J.W. (Eds.). (2000). *Racing research. Researching race. Methodological dilemmas in critical race studies*. New York: New York University Press.
- Tynes, B., Reynolds, L., & Greenfield, P. (2004). Adolescence, race and ethnicity on the internet: A comparison of discourse in monitored vs. unmonitored chat rooms. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 25, 667 – 684.
- U.K. National Statistics. (2011). *2011 Census*. Retrieved on March 28, 2011, from <http://2011.census.gov.uk>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *Explore the form*. Retrieved on January 3, 2011, from: <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/about/interactive-form.php>
- Van Dijk, T.A. (1992). Discourse and the denial of racism. *Discourse & Society*, 3(1), 87-118.
- Varghese, L. (2003). Will the real Indian woman Log-On? Diaspora, gender, and comportment. In R.C. Lee & C.S. Wong, (Eds.), *AsianAmerica.Net: Ethnicity, nationalism and cyberspace* (pp. 40-68). New York: Routledge.
- Vindich, A.J. & Lyman, S.M. (1994). Now and forever: portraits of qualitative research in Korea. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 18(3), 355 – 377.
- Walcott, R. (1997). *Black Like Who?* Toronto, ON: Insomniac Press.

- Ward, K.J. (1999). The cyber-ethnographic (re)construction of two feminist online communities. *Sociological Research Online*, 4(1). Retrieved on November 8, 2010, from <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/4/1/ward.html>
- Warschauer, M. (2000). The changing global economy and the future of English teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34, 511-535.
- Weaver, H.N. (2001). Indigenous identity: What is it and who really has it? *The American Indian Quarterly*, 25(2), 240-255.
- Wellman, B., Salaff, J., Dimitrova, D., Garton, L., Gulia, M., & Haythornthwaite, C. (1996). Computer networks as social networks: Collaborative work, Telework and virtual community. *Annual Review Social*, 22, 213-238.
- White, J. (1993). *Identity & control. A structural theory of social action*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Whittle, D.B. (1997). *Cyberspace: The human dimension*. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company.
- Whyte, W.F. (1943). *Street corner society. The social structure of an Italian slum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Williams, J.P. & Copes, H. (2005). "How Edge Are You?" Constructing authentic identities and subcultural boundaries in a straightedge internet forum. *Symbolic Interaction*, 28(1), 67-89.
- Wilson, B. (2006). Ethnography, the internet and youth culture: Strategies for examining social resistance and online-offline relationships. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 29(1), 307-328
- Wynn, E. & Katz, J. (1997). Hyperbole over cyberspace: Self-presentation & social boundaries in internet home pages and discourse. *The Information Society*, 13(4), 297-328.
- Yeh, C. J., & Huang, K. (1996). The collectivistic nature of ethnic identity development among Asian-American college students. *Adolescence*, 31, 645-661.
- Young, P. (2008). Cyworld is my world: Korean adult experiences in an online community for learning. *International Journal Web Based Communities*, 4(1), 33-51.
- Youth Vital Signs. (2009). Retrieved on March 28, 2011, from:

<http://www.youthvitalsigns.ca>

- Zhou, M. (1997). Coming of age at the turn of the 21st century: a demographic profile of Asian American Youth. In J. Lee & M. Zhou (Eds.), *Asian American youth: Culture, identity and ethnicity* (pp.33-50). New York: Routledge.
- Zinn, M. B. (1979). Field research in minority communities: Ethical, methodological, and political observations by an insider. *Social Problems*, 27, 209–19.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Participant Consent Form

University of Victoria
Department of Human and Social Development
School Of Child and Youth Care

Participant Consent Form

Research Title: **e-sian: Youth Negotiating Asian in Racialized Online Groups on Facebook**

Introduction:

You are invited to participate in a study entitled **e-sian: Youth Negotiating Asian in Racialized Online Groups on Facebook** that is being conducted by **Vi Nguyen**.

Vi Nguyen is a Graduate Student in the department of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by email: vinguyen@uvic.ca

As a Graduate student, I (Vi Nguyen) am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Masters of Arts. It is being conducted under the supervision of **Dr. Daniel G. Scott**. You may contact my supervisor at 1-250-472-4770 at any time if you have concerns or questions.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to explore and learn from Asian youth in high-school, their interactions on ethnic or racialized online groups on sites such as Facebook. Essentially, I am interested in understanding what you consider to be Asian identity and how these online sites and forums help youth decide who is or is not Asian.

Importance of this Research

This research is important because while many of us do not like to be labeled or have others assume or tell us what our ethnic and racial identities should be. Based on my experience of being a youth worker and working in many Vancouver high-schools, I learned that these misrepresentations, assumptions and labels can lead to fights that break out between different groups of Asian youth. I would like to use this research as an opportunity for Asian youth to share those experiences, whether they are your own or something you have witnessed and share what you feel are

some of the issues that relate to race, racism, and ethnicity over the internet and how this plays out at school for you and your friends.

Participant Selection

If you have been invited as an “online participant” for an instant messaging interview:

You are being asked to participate in this study because I notice that you have posted many comments or threads that are related to what it means to be Asian and why the need for ‘Asian-only’ spaces in online forums is important. You are also invited to take part in this research because based on the information you have shared through your online membership profile, I am assuming that you are a high-school youth between 13 to 18 and that you are Asian.

If you have been invited as “offline participant” for an in-person interview:

You are participating in this study because you may have found out about my research topic from a poster you saw at your youth centre, from friends or youth workers at the centre, or perhaps you were in one of the presentations I made at the youth centre about my research and heard my request to seek out youth who would be interested in taking part in this study.

For the purpose of my research, I am defining Asian as people who have an ancestry from Japan, China, Vietnam, Korea, Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos... I am open to being challenged and welcome you to participate based on what YOU believe, define or assume it means to be Asian.

What is involved?

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a one-to-one interview with myself either in person or over MSN or Yahoo messenger. This interview will only take place once and is anticipated to last between 1 to 1.5 hours.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you because it will take place during your free time, which may be a weekend or an early evening. If you are willing to meet me in person for this interview, it will take place at Broadway Youth Resource Centre and I can provide you with bus fare or reimburse you with a bus ticket.

Risks

The anticipated risks in this research are minimal. I will be asking you to share your experiences in ethnic online communities and how this shapes your own understanding of your racial or ethnic identity. Some of the questions I am interested in asking will involve a discussion about racism and/or your experience of racism. This may or may not bring up some upsetting thoughts or emotions for you, depending on what you have experienced online in these groups. If you

continue to feel upset after the interview, I can make recommendations for some counsellors whom you can connect with for additional support.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include having a voice to share what you and why you feel there are some tensions between different groups of Asian youth, how the internet and these ethnic online spaces either make it better or worse. Your participation in this research project is valuable. It will contribute to a growing body of research that examines how ethnic and racial identities are constructed by youth in online spaces.

Compensation

I recognize that your time is important and value your willingness to participate. Unfortunately, I do not have the ability to give you money or prizes for participating; however, I can provide you with bus tickets to get to the interview or I can pay you back for the bus fare. If you are participating via MSN or Yahoo messenger, I also do not have the ability to provide you with any monetary gifts or bus tickets but please know that I do appreciate you lending your voice to this research.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be deleted and I will not use it in my research.

I plan on using a tape recorder to record the **in-person interview** so that I can transcribe it later. Even if I recorded something you said, I will not use it in my research if you choose to quit at any time. If you are participating via MSN or Yahoo messenger, the interview will be automatically recorded by the messenger system; however, if you choose to quit at any time, I will delete the messenger conversation and not use any part of it in my research.

I will still reimburse you for bus fare even if you decide to leave before the in-person interview begins or if you choose to leave at any point during the interview. If you choose to not participate at any time during the MSN or Yahoo messenger interview, I can delete your contact information from my messenger list immediately if you so wish.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity, I will never use your real name, or the school you attend, anywhere in my research. I will also not use your online screen name that you use in the online forums or any information that may identify you. I will however, only refer to your age and gender in my research.

You will be anonymous throughout my research paper and I will refer to you by a pseudonym (or fake name).

Online participants: Since you and I are not meeting face to face and this entire interview is conducted over instant messaging, I will have to trust that what you tell me about your age, gender and ethnicity are true. In this sense, you have anonymity.

In person/Offline participants: Given that you and I will meet face to face for the interview, I will know your identity and you will know mine so your participation will not be anonymous to myself as the researcher. I will take the following steps mentioned above, to ensure your anonymity in my research to others who will be reading.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of what you share with me, whether you are participating online through instant messaging or in person, will be stored by password-protected computer files, protected USB memory stick and the tape recorder and transcription of our discussion will be placed in a locked drawer. Only I will have access to this information and these files.

Anything that you share with me will be kept confidential, meaning I will not share it with anyone except in the following situations:

- if you share with me that you are being abused/harmed in any way or intend to harm someone else or harm yourself, I have a duty to report it.

Dissemination of Results

My research paper or thesis as we call it, will be presented as part of my graduation requirements during a 'defense' process. I will present it to about 3-4 other people during the defense. I have also had interest from youth workers and people who work for the Vancouver School Board, who would like to read my research after it is done. Again, no real names will be used and I will not identify what school you attend.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be erased electronically, meaning I permanently delete the electric files, about 1 year after I complete my paper. Before it gets erased, I will still store it in a safe and secure area.

Additional Information For You:

I have created a blog at this site: www.e-sian.blogspot.com

This blog site will host this exact same information about my research in case you ever want to go back to read about it or share it with your parents and friends. I will

provide my own reflections on this post about my experience as a researcher and things I have learned along this process. I will not post any confidential information about you on this blog, nor will I use any of your quotes or information that you have shared from your own forum postings or the interview with me.

Please note that there is a comments box which you can post comments in; however, your comments will only be read by myself. I have disabled the public reading function of the comments section.

APPENDIX B: Parent/Guardian Information Notice

University of Victoria
Department of Human and Social Development
School Of Child and Youth Care

Parent/Guardian Information

Research Title: ***e-sian: Youth Negotiating Asian in Racialized Online Groups on Facebook***

Introduction:

Your son or daughter has been invited to participate in a study entitled ***e-sian: Youth Negotiating Asian in Racialized Online Groups on Facebook*** that is being conducted by **Vi Nguyen**. Participation in this study includes a one-to-one, in person interview with only myself as the researcher. The interview will take place at a youth centre located at 691 E. Broadway Street in Vancouver, British Columbia. The interview is anticipated to last between 1 to 1.5 hours; however, I am asking your son or daughter to set aside two hours total as the maximum time.

Vi Nguyen is a Graduate Student in the department of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by email: vinguyen@uvic.ca

The information below details the purpose and methodology of this research which your child will be participating in. It is also the exact same information your child has received, and has been asked to give their consent to, if they choose to participate. **Their participation in this research is 100% voluntary and they can choose to withdraw at any time.**

I encourage you to contact myself or my thesis supervisor Dr. Daniel Scott (his information is below) at any time if you have questions or concerns. I would be more than happy to provide you with more information to speak to any concerns you may have. Below is the exact same information your child has received, as well, a consent form that they have been asked to sign prior to participating in the research.

For the potential participant:

As a Graduate student, I (Vi Nguyen) am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Masters of Arts. It is being conducted under the

supervision of **Dr. Daniel G. Scott**. You may contact my supervisor at 1-250-472-4770 at any time if you have concerns or questions.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to explore and learn from Asian youth in high-school, their interactions on ethnic or racialized online groups on sites such as Facebook. Essentially, I am interested in understanding what you consider to be Asian identity and how these online sites and forums help youth decide who is or is not Asian.

Importance of this Research

This research is important because while many of us do not like to be labeled or have others assume or tell us what our ethnic and racial identities should be. Based on my experience of being a youth worker and working in many Vancouver high-schools, I learned that these misrepresentations, assumptions and labels can lead to fights that break out between different groups of Asian youth. I would like to use this research as an opportunity for Asian youth to share those experiences, whether they are your own or something you have witnessed and share what you feel are some of the issues that relate to race, racism, and ethnicity over the internet and how this plays out at school for you and your friends.

Participants Selection

If you have been invited as an “online participant” for an instant messaging interview:

You are being asked to participate in this study because I notice that you have posted many comments or threads that are related to what it means to be Asian and why the need for ‘Asian-only’ spaces in online forums is important. You are also invited to take part in this research because based on the information you have shared through your online membership profile, I am assuming that you are a high-school youth between 13 to 18 and that you are Asian.

If you have been invited as “offline participant” for an in-person interview:

You are participating in this study because you may have found out about my research topic from a poster you saw at your youth centre, from friends or youth workers at the centre, or perhaps you were in one of the presentations I made at the youth centre about my research and heard my request to seek out youth who would be interested in taking part in this study.

For the purpose of my research, I am defining Asian as people who have an ancestry from Japan, China, Vietnam, Korea, Phillipines, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos... I am open to being challenged and welcome you to participate based on what YOU believe, define or assume it means to be Asian.

What is involved?

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a one-to-one interview with myself either in person or over MSN or Yahoo messenger. This interview will only take place once and is anticipated to last between 1 to 1.5 hours.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you because it will take place during your free time, which may be a weekend or an early evening. If you are willing to meet me in person for this interview, it will take place at Broadway Youth Resource Centre and I can provide you with bus fare or reimburse you with a bus ticket.

Risks

The anticipated risks in this research are minimal. I will be asking you to share your experiences in ethnic online communities and how this shapes your own understanding of your racial or ethnic identity. Some of the questions I am interested in asking will involve a discussion about racism and/or your experience of racisms. This may or may not bring up some upsetting thoughts or emotions for you, depending on what you have experienced online in these groups. If you continue to feel upset after the interview, I can make recommendations for some counsellors whom you can connect with for additional support.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include having a voice to share what you and why you feel there are some tensions between different groups of Asian youth, how the internet and these ethnic online spaces either make it better or worse. Your participation in this research project is valuable. It will contribute to a growing body of research that examines how ethnic and racial identities are constructed by youth in online spaces.

Compensation

I recognize that your time is important and value your willingness to participate. Unfortunately, I do not have the ability to give you money or prizes for participating; however, I can provide you with bus tickets to get to the interview or I can pay you back for the bus fare. If you are participating via MSN or Yahoo messenger, I also do not have the ability to provide you with any monetary gifts or bus tickets but please know that I do appreciate you lending your voice to this research.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be deleted and I will not use it in my research.

I plan on using a tape recorder to record the **in-person interview** so that I can transcribe it later. Even if I recorded something you said, I will not use it in my

research if you choose to quit at any time. If you are participating via MSN or Yahoo messenger, the interview will be automatically recorded by the messenger system; however, if you choose to quit at any time, I will delete the messenger conversation and not use any part of it in my research.

I will still reimburse you for bus fare even if you decide to leave before the in-person interview begins or if you choose to leave at any point during the interview. If you choose to not participate at any time during the MSN or Yahoo messenger interview, I can delete your contact information from my messenger list immediately if you so wish.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity, I will never use your real name, or the school you attend, anywhere in my research. I will also not use your online screen name that you use in the online forums or any information that may identify you. I will however, only refer to your age and gender in my research.

You will be anonymous throughout my research paper and I will refer to you by a pseudonym (or fake name).

Online participants: Since you and I are not meeting face to face and this entire interview is conducted over instant messaging, I will have to trust that what you tell me about your age, gender and ethnicity are true. In this sense, you have anonymity.

In person/Offline participants: Given that you and I will meet face to face for the interview, I will know your identity and you will know mine so your participation will not be anonymous to myself as the researcher. I will take the following steps mentioned above, to ensure your anonymity in my research to others who will be reading.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of what you share with me, whether you are participating online through instant messaging or in person, will be stored by password-protected computer files, protected USB memory stick and the tape recorder and transcription of our discussion will be placed in a locked drawer. Only I will have access to this information and these files.

Anything that you share with me will be kept confidential, meaning I will not share it with anyone except in the following situations:

- if you share with me that you are being abused/harmed in any way or intend to harm someone else or harm yourself, I have a duty to report it.

Dissemination of Results

My research paper or thesis as we call it, will be presented as part of my graduation requirements during a 'defense' process. I will present it to about 3-4 other people during the defense. I have also had interest from youth workers and people who work for the Vancouver School Board, who would like to read my research after it is done. Again, no real names will be used and I will not identify what school you attend.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be erased electronically, meaning I permanently delete the electric files, about 1 year after I complete my paper. Before it gets erased, I will still store it in a safe and secure area.

Additional Information For You:

I have created a blog at this site: www.e-sian.blogspot.com. This blog site will host this exact same information about my research in case you ever want to go back to read about it or share it with your parents and friends. I will provide my own reflections on this post about my experience as a researcher and things I have learned along this process. I will not post any confidential information about you on this blog, nor will I use any of your quotes or information that you have shared from your own forum postings or the interview with me.

Please note that there is a comments box which you can post comments in; however, your comments will only be read by myself. I have disabled the public reading function of the comments section.

Contacts

If you would like to verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Again, you can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Daniel Scott at 250-472-4770 or email him at dgscott@uvic.ca

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Thank you for taking the time to read this through and thank you for participating in my research. Your voice and experience is important and I value your time and participation in helping me make my research happen!

ONLINE INTERVIEWS – CONSENT FORM.

If you are participant in the online interview through instant messaging, I would like to ask you to please send me an email at vinguyen@uvic.ca that includes a brief paragraph to let me know that you have read through this form, understand your participation in this research and that you give your consent to participate. Your email response will provide the consent that is equivalent to signing a consent form and will be required prior to the instant messaging interview.

OFFLINE / IN PERSON INTERVIEWS – CONSENT FORM.

Your Signature and/or Signed Consent is required before participating in the interview. You can either print this out, sign it and return it to me when we meet at the interview or you can sign it when we meet, before the interview begins, as I will have extra copies printed out.

_____ (please PRINT your name here)

_____ (signature)

_____ (date you signed this)

If there is anything else you would like to share with me or comments, please feel free to use the space below:

Contacts

If you would like to verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Again, you can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Daniel Scott at 250-472-4770 or email him at dgscott@uvic.ca

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Thank you for taking the time to read this through and thank you for participating in my research. Your voice and experience is important and I value your time and participation in helping me make my research happen!

ONLINE INTERVIEWS – IMPLIED CONSENT FORM.

If you are participant in the online interview through instant messaging, I would like to ask you to please send me an email at vinguyen@uvic.ca that includes a brief paragraph to let me know that you have read through this form, understand your participation in this research and that you give your consent to participate. Your email response will provide the consent that is equivalent to signing a consent form and will be required prior to the instant messaging interview.

OFFLINE / IN PERSON INTERVIEWS – CONSENT FORM.

Your Signature and/or Signed Consent is required before participating in the interview. You can either print this out, sign it and return it to me when we meet at the interview or you can sign it when we meet, before the interview begins, as I will have extra copies printed out.

_____ (please PRINT your name here)

_____ (signature)

_____ (date you signed this)

If there is anything else you would like to share with me or comments, please feel free to use the space below:

APPENDIX C: Letter to Online Group Administrator - Request for permission to post in online group

**University of Victoria
Department of Human and Social Development
School Of Child and Youth Care**

***Letter to Online Group Administrator -
Request for permission to post in online
group***

Research Title: *e-sian*: Youth Negotiating Asian in Racialized Online Groups on Facebook

Dear _____ [insert group administrator's name]

My name is **Vi Nguyen** and I am a graduate student from the University of Victoria and I am doing some research that is interested in exploring and learning from Asian youth in high-school, their interactions in ethnic or racialized online groups on sites such as Facebook. Essentially, I am interested in understanding what you consider to be Asian identity and how these online sites and forums help youth decide who is or is not Asian.

Although the postings from your group and group members can be publicly viewed by non-members like myself, I would like to become a member of your group for the following reasons: 1) to be able to advertise within your group because I need potential research participants to interview and 2) to be able to let your group members know of my presence as I will be reading their posts and am interested in collecting some themes amongst their discussion of what it means to be Asian in these groups.

Please know that I will not be quoting in verbatim (word for word) any textual posts from any of your users without their permission. As mentioned earlier, I will be primarily collecting broad themes that emerge from the textual postings; however, if there is posting from one of your members/users which I would like to quote, I will seek individual permission from that user in order to quote them in my research. If they decline, I will not quote their posting. In a similar vein, I would like to inform you that I may ask any users who agree to the one-to-one interview with myself, to use any quotes that may emerge from that interview. Additionally, I will provide them with a written copy to see how I intend to incorporate that quote into my research, to ensure that I have not taken their quote out of context.

As the group administrator, I also value any insight or recommendations you may have about the best way to approach my research within your group. I am not asking you to speak on their behalf, but perhaps you have some suggestions regarding the type of language to use or not use, if you think members would be offended or interested in my research and so forth.

I've also created a blog that shares a little more information about myself as a grad student, some of my past work as a youth worker and ways to get in touch with me, my University or my thesis supervisor in case you want to verify that my research is legitimate. My blog is: www.e-sian.blogspot.com

I look forward to hearing from you. I would be happy to discuss any concerns that you may have.

Thank you for your consideration,

Vi

APPENDIX D: Facebook Advertisement/Recruitment

University of Victoria
Department of Human and Social Development
School Of Child and Youth Care

Facebook Advertisement/Recruitment Blurb

Research Title: *e-sian*: Youth Negotiating Asian in Racialized Online Groups on Facebook

Hi everyone,

I am a graduate student from the University of Victoria and I am doing some research that is interested in exploring how Asian youth negotiate race, ethnicity and what it means to be Asian in user-created online such as this one.

I would like to declare myself and let you know what I'm up to because I will be 'lurking' (a research term and method) on these forums and reading through any posts and threads that will inform my research. Just a heads up that I may be using some of your posts or threads because it is public information, in my research but I will not use your screen name anywhere in my research. When I say I will be using your posts or threads, please know that I am searching for and gathering themes amongst what is written or shared in these groups. I will not, at any point, use any direct quotes of your postings without your permission.

If you're interested in learning more about my research, please visit my blog at www.e-sian.blogspot.com, drop me an email or instant message.

Thanks,

Vi

APPENDIX E: Potential and Guiding Interview Questions

University of Victoria
Department of Human and Social Development
School Of Child and Youth Care

Potential and Guiding Interview Questions

Research Title: **e-sian: Youth Negotiating Asian in Racialized Online Groups on Facebook**

1. What do you think or believe it means to be Asian?
2. Which ethnic groups do you consider to be Asian and why?
3. As a member in one of these Facebook Asian groups which have been created specifically for “Asians only,” do you believe there are any ethnic groups or individuals who should not be participating or represented in these Facebook groups? Put another way, are there specific ethnic groups that you feel or believe should not be considered Asian and therefore should not be granted membership within these Facebook groups?
4. Do you use a different online screen name when you participate on either ROG 1 or ROG 2? Is it important to let people know what your race or ethnicity is based on your screen name?
5. Does your interaction on these Facebook ROG 1 or 2 have any effect on how you interact with your peers offline?
6. Do your family members’ and teacher’s perceptions of certain Asian ethnic groups have an effect on how you perceive or interact with your Asian peers?
7. What are some of your other favorite online spaces or groups to participate in?
8. Why do you participate or interact in these ethnic online communities or join ethnic-specific groups on sites such as Facebook? How does your participation in these Asian-only online communities or groups make you feel?
9. What are some of the things that Asian youth discuss in these sites/groups?
10. In your opinion, are these user groups or online sites important for Asian youth? Why or Why not?
11. What are some of the positives and negatives of participating in these groups and sites?

12. Is there any one or any groups that you feel should not be participating or represented in these sites? Put another way, ethnic groups that you feel/believe are not considered Asian?
13. Does being a boy or girl affect the way you interact or the way you are treated in these sites?
14. Does your interaction in these sites or groups have any effect on how you interact with your peers offline, such as at school?
15. What are your perceptions of certain Asian ethnic groups? Do these perceptions hold true when you are interacting with your peers from other Asian ethnic groups, either online or offline?