

# UC Berkeley

## Asian American Research Journal

### Title

Multiethnic Asian American Identities in Asian American Spaces

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7gk958vq>

### Journal

Asian American Research Journal , 1(1)

### Author

Loo, Yi-Shen

### Publication Date

2021

### DOI

10.5070/RJ41153669

### Copyright Information

Copyright 2021 by the author(s). All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author(s) for any necessary permissions. Learn more at <https://escholarship.org/terms>

Peer reviewed

## Multiethnic Asian American Identities in Asian American Spaces

*Yi-Shen Loo*

### **Introduction**

Asian Americans in the United States have historically been placed in positions in which they are racialized in accordance with the political atmosphere of the time. They have been viewed as both “perpetual foreigners” and “model minorities” and continue to be racialized and scapegoated.<sup>1</sup> The perpetuation of the model minority discourse minimizes problems that are present within Asian American communities by promoting the idea that Asian Americans are successful and therefore do not require help.<sup>2</sup> In particular, the model minority supports a misconception that Asian Americans are monolithic.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Bettina Hsieh points to this in “Asian Americans, Education, and the Fight for Justice w/ Dr. Hsieh”, noting that East Asians are usually the “face” of Asian Americans, while groups such as South and Southeast Asian Americans are invisibilized.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Asian Americans are often erased from discourses about race in the United States, which are most prevalently regarded as a black and white binary.<sup>5</sup> Thus, within the erasure of Asian Americans from the histories and spaces in the United States, there is also erasure within the Asian American community of numerous groups of people.

One such group is multiethnic Asian Americans. In using this term, I refer to those who identify as having multiple Asian ethnic backgrounds, distinct from “multiracial”, or those who identify as having multiple racial backgrounds. This is not to exclude the experiences of multiracial Asian Americans, but rather to explore this subgroup of people within the Asian

American community to allow for a broader understanding of the complexity of the “Asian American” label. Furthermore, I aim to be intentional in the way I frame myself and the participants in this research as not, for example, “Japanese/Singaporean”, but “Japanese and Singaporean” in order to highlight that the multiethnic experience is not one of “splitting” or being “half” of a self. I hope to delve into the question of how multiethnic Asian Americans navigate their identity in Asian American spaces and explore how, if at all, language has an effect on this journey. I chose to explore this topic of multiethnic Asian Americans due to my position as a second generation Japanese and Chinese-Singaporean Asian American and hope to find a sense of grounding in this work.

I further frame this research through an understanding of the anti-miscegenation laws of the United States that were put in place following the arrival of Asian American immigrants to “prevent the growth of a population deemed unassimilable”.<sup>6</sup> These laws, in addition to the Page Act of 1875, perpetuated the idea of “racial purity” and stunted the growth of multiethnic and multiracial families.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the history of multiracial and multiethnic Asian Americans in the United States is deeply rooted in histories of oppression.

I would also like to consider the intersectionality of identity in my research to highlight both the institutional construction of identity as well as the individual experiences that shape identity.<sup>8</sup> In discussing multiethnic Asian American experiences, I wish to acknowledge the uniqueness of the individual experience by taking into consideration not just race and ethnicity, but factors such as gender, and exploring how these are interconnected.

Finally, I hope to frame this work in a way that brings affirmation to multiethnic Asian American identities. Historically, the navigation of multiethnic and multiracial identities is assumed to be difficult or confusing.<sup>9</sup> This notion can be exemplified through the idea of “dual

personality”, which implies that Asian American people must feel either “one or the other”,<sup>10</sup> that is, “Asian” or “American”, rather than their identity being a framework of intersectionalities. I propose that the idea of “dual personalities” can be extended to multiracial and multiethnic people, as both experiences are lived in marginalized spaces. I hope to move away from this discourse and instead explore the spaces in which multiethnic Asian Americans feel validated in their identities.

### **Literature Review**

Much of the literature centering multiracial and multiethnic people focuses on the black and white experience, particularly on the impact that the “one-drop” rule, or the idea that “one drop” of racial minority heritage makes one non-white<sup>11</sup>, has on one’s identity. Presently, there are very limited studies on multiethnic Asian Americans; however, examining the experiences of multiracial Asian Americans can reflect on the experiences of multiethnic Asian Americans. In the present paper, I extrapolate from these studies and use them to inform my research while further grounding my understanding of this topic through a closer look at the current demographic changes of multiracial Asian Americans in the United States.

Jennifer Lee and Frank D. Bean’s chapter in *Asian American Youth: Culture, Identity and Ethnicity* entitled “Intermarriage and Multiracial Identification: The Asian American Experience and Implications for Changing Color Lines” is one such article that focuses on the population of multiracial Asian Americans. The 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* case in which the Supreme Court declared anti-miscegenation laws to be unconstitutional has been fundamental in the rise of interracial marriages in the United States today.<sup>12</sup> *Asian American Society: An Encyclopedia* highlights the rate of Asian American outmarriages by pointing to United States 2010 census data: “Japanese Americans have seen such a drastic increase in outmarriage rates that, by 2020, the majority of Japanese Americans will be multi- rather than monoethnic”.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, *Asian American Research Journal. Issue 1, Volume 1 2021*

according to Jennifer Lee and Frank D. Bean, almost a quarter of Asians and Latinos marry people of other races, mostly white, as indicated from 2003 IPUMS data.<sup>14</sup> This demonstrates not only the importance of census and data collection for the Asian American community, but the need for further research on multiethnic and multiracial Asian Americans as the community continues to experience major changes in its demographics.

In their chapter, Jennifer Lee and Frank D. Bean seek to examine the changing demographics of the Asian American population through the lens of several different perspectives, such as geography, census data, and the multiracial movement that allowed people to identify with multiple races on the census beginning in 2000. Lee and Bean note that 35% of Asian Americans could be multiracial by the year 2050,<sup>15</sup> with California leading as the state with the most multiracial people in the United States.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, they indicate that Asians and Latinos in the United States are more likely to intermarry and “claim a multiracial identification”.<sup>17</sup> Significantly, Lee and Bean pose questions about the effect that these changing racial groups will have on the racialization of minority groups in the U.S. The authors also use the example that “the Chinese in Mississippi changed their status from almost black to almost white”<sup>18</sup> to showcase the fluidity of the racialization of Asian Americans that has taken place throughout history. These notions of fluid racialization are further complicated when considered in relation to those with multiracial identities. This work highlights the changing demographics of the United States and the importance of acknowledging multiracial identities that do not fall within the black and white binary. Thus, this work can contribute to my research in its framing of the growth of the multiracial Asian American population within the context of anti-miscegenation laws. The history of anti-miscegenation laws is deeply intertwined with multiethnic partnerships due to the distinct ways in which different ethnic and racial groups have

been racialized in the United States. However, because Lee and Bean's work focuses on multiracial Asian Americans and does not refer to the experiences of multiethnic Asian Americans, in my research, I hope to contribute to the literature by centering it around the aforementioned population.

Data and geographic statistics of multiracial and multiethnic experiences can be further explored through a deeper understanding of the personal experience of these individuals. In *Undercover Asian: Multiracial Asian Americans in Visual Culture*, Leilani Nishime explores the way in which actor Keanu Reeves and other multiracial Asian Americans have been portrayed as monoracial or erased of their multiracial identity in visual settings such as movies or television shows, describing these portrayals as “productive of racial meaning”.<sup>19</sup> In the preface to this book, entitled “Why Are You? Multiracial Asian Americans and the Question of Visibility”, Nishime points to how Keanu Reeves was asked to change his name to “K.C.” at the start of his career, which would have had the effect of Reeves “passing” as white.<sup>20</sup> She delves past simply celebrating multiracial bodies or criticizing the ways in which they are exoticized; instead, she explores how multiracial identities can open the doors to deeper conversations about race and how we perceive others through racialized visual features. Furthermore, Nishime examines the particular spaces in which Reeves is portrayed as multiracial or monoracial, noting that “the primary issue is not whether Reeves is “really” Asian or white or even multiracial, but under what circumstances he is visible (or not visible) as multiracial Asian American—and why.”<sup>21</sup> Nishime's work has a critical connection to my research because of this examination of the settings in which multiracial Asian Americans are made to be visible or invisible. In addition, as Nishime highlights the visual body as the main factor in how multiracial individuals are

racialized, I hope to explore the impact of physical identifiers and names as racial signifiers and explore these notions within the navigation of multiethnic Asian American experiences.

Lastly, in my research, I reviewed Crystal Abidin's chapter in the book *Mixed Race Identities in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands* entitled "'Just Asian'? Inscribing East Asian 'Mixed Race' in Australia", in which Abidin centers on the experiences of multiethnic East Asian Australian individuals. In this study, Abidin uses the term "mixed race" to refer to participants with "mixed East Asian backgrounds". Abidin points to the way in which race is often categorized by phenotypic features, and this creates difficulty for multiethnic East Asians in "expressing their heritage to others".<sup>22</sup> Abidin conducted interviews with seven self-identifying mixed race East Asian men and women who have lived in Australia in order to document their experiences and examine the ways in which mixed race East Asians engage with their identities in different spaces. These interviews highlight the ways in which mixed race East Asians in Australia have been marginalized. For example, one interviewee stated that his friends 'jokingly' say that his "mixed-race made him *super Asian*".<sup>23</sup>

Abidin also specifies that the interviewees in this study were all fair-skinned. This indicates that skin color has a significant impact on the way multiethnic people are perceived as well as treated. Another key factor in the experiences of multiethnic people are their names, as indicated by a Japanese and Singaporean interviewee, who noted that it was his last name that "signposted [his] racial identity"<sup>24</sup> and was often perceived to be fully Japanese by others. From this article, it can be understood that several factors, including names and phenotypic features, must be taken into account when considering the multiethnic Asian experience. Thus, it is critical to my research in its presentation of how multiethnic East Asians in Australia have been racialized and how they navigate their identities.

## **Methodology**

My interest in the topic of multiethnic Asian Americans began due to my self-identification as a second generation Japanese and Chinese-Singaporean Asian American. I identify as such and use a hyphen between “Chinese” and “Singaporean” due to my paternal grandfather immigrating from China to Singapore at a young age. Despite having a Chinese first and last name, I speak only English and Japanese, and because of this, I often feel that others perceive me to be “not Chinese enough”. Similarly, because my name is Chinese, I sometimes feel “not Japanese enough” in Japanese spaces. Because of the nature of my relationship to the topic, my research process and analysis were driven by a personal interest in searching for what spaces allow other multiethnic Asian Americans to feel grounded and validated in their identity. Furthermore, I chose to focus on Asian American spaces in my topic because of the distinct way in which I feel that others categorize me into different ethnic identities when I am in, for example, Chinese American spaces, as opposed to Japanese American spaces.

I use an interview-based approach to exploring the ways in which multiethnic Asian Americans navigate their identities. I chose this method due to the personal nature of the topic and the specificity of the group, and I also believed that it was critical for me to hear the participants’ stories and present a space where they could talk about their identities openly. In order to find participants for my research, I used a snowball sampling method. I asked friends if they knew individuals who self-identified as multiethnic Asian Americans and reached out to them through text message. Thus, I had a mutual friend with each participant, although we had never met before the interview.

The main problem that I encountered in gathering my data was the inability to meet with people face-to-face due to geographic distance as well as the current circumstances of the global



pandemic. The interviews were thus conducted over video calls, and because of this, I made an effort to keep the interviews around 30 minutes so that the participants would not have to spend a long time looking at a screen. However, the internet connection was sometimes poor, and in one of the interviews, I experienced a lag between myself and the participant.

Another issue that arose from being unable to meet with participants in person was not being able to see their body language or see their facial expressions as they would naturally be face-to-face. I attempted to make all participants feel as comfortable as possible prior to the interviews by explaining the circumstances around my paper as well as asking if they had any questions for me; however, it was challenging to gauge their levels of comfortability due to the interview being online.

Forming my questions for the interviews was also challenging. I tried to base them around the feelings of being left out or having to prove my “racial membership” that I have personally experienced in my life. I also made an effort towards framing the questions so that they would not be skewed in a negative way, or to imply in any way that the multiethnic experience inherently involves problems that need to be “solved”. Thus, my personal tie to the research topic created difficulties in forming the interview questions, as it was challenging to separate my experiences from remaining neutral as a researcher.

### **Data Collection and Findings**

I conducted interviews with three participants, each about 30 minutes in length. The interviews were conducted over Zoom video calls online and used a semi-restrictive open-ended interview format, in which I used questions that I formed but sometimes asked additional questions as follow-ups to the participants’ answers. Participant 1 is a high school junior and identifies as a 16 year old second generation Korean and Vietnamese American female. Her

parents are 1.5 generation immigrants from Korea and Vietnam, and she grew up in Massachusetts but now resides in California. Participant 2 is a junior in college and identifies as a 21 year old second generation Chinese and Indonesian American female. Her mother is Chinese while her father is Indonesian, and she has a conversational fluency in Indonesian. Participant 3 is a first year graduate student and identifies as a Chinese and Indian American female.

The first prominent finding that I recognized in my interviews was that all participants discussed their phenotypic features and/or names as being critical in how they are perceived by others. Participant 2 stated that despite her multiethnic background, because of the color of her skin, she is most often perceived to be Filipino by others. Furthermore, because she has an Indonesian last name, she often does not feel accepted in Chinese spaces. Likewise, Participant 3 expressed that she is most often perceived to be Indian due to the color of her skin, as well as her Indian name, and not Chinese. Participant 1 stated that others often perceive her to be Japanese or Chinese because “those are the two countries that everyone knows”.

Secondly, family and relatives played a large part in the participant’s feelings of both inclusion and exclusion. In particular, Participant 1 highlighted the way in which she felt that she has to act “more Vietnamese” while visiting Vietnamese relatives, changing her behavior to be “more polite” and “obedient”. For her, this involves a conscious effort to, for example, “not speak unless spoken to directly”. She explained that these behaviors were in order to “make [her] mom look better for her family”. Thus, when she is in spaces with her relatives, Participant 1 feels that she has to “prove” her identity or act in a way that she feels is not true to herself.

For Participant 2, family and close childhood friends help her to feel validated in her identity. She stated, “they understand that you can still be Chinese and Indonesian and not be

pale; you don't have to look a certain way". In college, she joined a Southeast Asian club as well as a Chinese club, however, in both, she felt that she did not belong. She noted that the Southeast Asian club primarily focused on Vietnamese traditions and events, causing her to feel neglected. She also stated that she felt isolated in the Chinese club because she is "darker in skin color, and a lot of Chinese people are paler", adding that others in the club "seemed confused" about why she joined the club. She admitted, "I stopped going to them because I feel so different," and hopes to join an Indonesian club next semester that will provide a space of belonging for her.

Participant 3 expressed that when she visits family in Malaysia, she feels out of place because her relatives are more fair-skinned. She stated, "I think I grew up seeing only Chinese people as fair-skinned with certain characteristics that made me think I'm not really Chinese." Furthermore, her dual ethnicities exist in separate spheres, as each side of her extended family limits their discussions to only their respective culture. Thus, she feels that she "can't exist as one person in these communities" and that very few people view her as "fully Chindian". Consequently, she believes that she might be able to find more understanding amongst individuals who have multiethnic backgrounds rather than with monoethnic Chinese or Indian individuals.

Language was something that all participants wished that they could be more immersed in. Each participant expressed that they hoped to be able to speak both languages that their parents speak. For Participant 1, this would be Korean and Vietnamese, for Participant 2, Cantonese, and for Participant 3, Kannada and Mandarin. Participant 1 and 2 both want to learn how to speak those languages in order to be able to communicate with their extended relatives. Notably, Participant 3 expressed that it was crucial for her that she learned the language of both of her parents rather than only one, because she felt that otherwise she would not be able to pick

“one or the other”. She also expressed that she would feel uncomfortable with only being able to speak Kannada or Mandarin with one of her parents because it would isolate her other parent.

Participants 2 and 3 also noted a change in the ways they self-identified over time. Participant 2 used to associate more with being Indonesian due to speaking Indonesian at home, but recently began to identify more equally as Chinese and Indonesian. This change came about due to having a significant other who is Chinese, and through them, “getting more in touch” with her Chinese side and learning more about her maternal family background. Similarly, Participant 3 used to identify more with being Indian due to her skin color but has started to become more comfortable identifying as multiethnic in recent years. For Participant 3, this was due to her increased awareness of individuals who identified as multiethnic in their online profiles and realizing that “it’s not just about how you look”. She expressed that she has struggled with this realization as she became aware that by previously seeing herself as not Chinese due to her skin color, she was categorizing herself into these stereotypes. However, she continues to navigate her identity through unlearning these fixed notions of race.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

What I found through these interviews differed from my original research question because language did not seem to play a large role in how the participants in my research navigate their multiethnic Asian American identities. While I have struggled with my identity due to my only speaking my mother’s native language, Japanese, and not being able to communicate in Mandarin with my paternal relatives, two of my participants spoke neither one of their parent’s respective native languages, while one participant spoke conversationally in Indonesian, her father’s native language. Although all participants expressed a desire to learn both of their parent’s native languages, within their nuclear families, English is the language

spoken in the household; therefore, language is not a primary concern in navigating their identities. However, in regard to their extended families, language barriers did seem to be a factor in causing all participants to feel excluded and “not whole”. Thus, further research is needed in closely examining the role that language plays in excluding or including multiethnic Asian Americans across varying spaces.

I was surprised to find that Participants 2 and 3 both noted a change in the ways in which they self-identified over time, with both recently growing more comfortable with their multiethnic identities than they were previously. This could possibly be because in K-12 education, there are not many spaces that are accepting of multiethnic or multiracial identities. In my experience in the K-12 public school system, multiethnic and multiracial identities were largely excluded from discussions about race or identity. It was not until I entered college that I began to consider what it meant for me to be a multiethnic Asian American and the ways in which multiethnic and multiracial voices are often silenced. I think that this reveals a need for more inclusion in existing curricula and literature for multiethnic and multiracial individuals, especially as the racial and ethnic demographics of the United States continue to change.

Another factor in navigating multiethnic Asian American identities seems to be the feeling of marginalization in certain spaces where their identities are not fully recognized. This is apparent in the exclusion that the participants in my research noted that they felt when meeting with extended relatives, for example, or being in spaces that focus only on a certain culture’s traditions, as observed from Participant 2’s experience in being in a Southeast Asian club in school. Participant 3 noted, “the space I can see myself being accepted in isn’t half Chinese half Indian, but a seamless blend of both, but I don’t know really what that would entail.” Thus, I believe that it is critical to consider what spaces validate multiethnic and multiracial identities

and how to ensure that those spaces can continue to serve and affirm the population. In this way, the participants in my research provided me with new insights on the ways in which multiethnic Asian American identities are experienced in a multitude of Asian American spaces.

Something that was consistent with my expectations was that all participants described an inconsistency between the way they self-identify and the way that others perceive them. Most often, others presume that they are of monoethnic backgrounds or have a certain ethnicity based solely on factors such as the color of their skin or their name. This has been consistent throughout my life as well, as people often tell me that they couldn't "figure out what kind of Asian" I am, or that they would have never thought I am Japanese due to the color of my skin. In particular, Participant 1 stating that people often assume she is Japanese or Chinese because "those are the two countries that everyone knows" speaks to the myth that Asian Americans are monolithic. Thus, multiethnic individuals are often assumed to be monoethnic based on racial signifiers such as names and phenotypic features, and this experience is intertwined with the marginalization that Asian Americans face when they are reduced to the myths that the model minority discourse perpetuates.

An issue that I faced in conducting the interviews was that my interview questions felt unconnected. I made an effort in forming my interview questions to cover a broad range of ways in which one may navigate their identity, however, I felt that the participants often felt thrown off by the lack of a transition into the different topics. Despite this, I tried to bring participants back to previous answers that they gave to make connections between their thoughts in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the ways in which they navigate their identities. The participants might have benefitted from an interview format in which the topic was narrower, or the questions were less structured.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined the ways in which multiethnic Asian Americans navigate their identities in Asian American spaces, with a particular focus on the role that language might play in this journey. I interviewed three multiethnic Asian American females and asked them questions about their experiences in finding a sense of belonging in various spaces. Language did not seem to be a main factor in the participants' feelings of inclusion or exclusion in Asian American spaces. Rather, the way that multiethnic Asian Americans are perceived in ways that diminish their wholeness seems to have the greatest influence on the ways in which these individuals feel marginalized in Asian American spaces. An interesting finding that I drew from these interviews is that multiethnic Asian Americans may experience changes in the ways in which they self-identify as they grow older and find more spaces in which they feel accepted. However, this observation requires further research because two participants noted that they experienced this change, while one participant responded that the ways in which she identified has thus far remained consistent throughout her life.

If I were to conduct this research again, I would make changes to either my interview questions in making them more narrowly focused on the role of language or Asian American spaces. Furthermore, I would also consider finding participants who, for example, were all undergraduate college students. With that population, I could then examine the ways in which multiethnic Asian Americans navigate their identities in Asian American spaces on college campuses. However, given the specificity of the population, this could pose difficulties. Something that might also be considered in this research is geography and the effect that that might have on navigating one's identity. One of the participants in this study has previously lived in Massachusetts, where she noted that she had very limited interactions with other Asian Americans. Another factor that might be taken into account is age; the participants in my study

ranged from 16 to 21 years of age, which could have an effect on the way that they navigate a multiethnic Asian American experience. For example, an older multiethnic Asian American could have experienced more spaces in which they feel validated in their identity. In addition, the participants all identified as second generation multiethnic Asian Americans and had immigrant parents. It would be interesting to explore how the experiences of third or fourth generation multiethnic Asian Americans differ from those of second generation individuals. Lastly, this study was conducted with only female-identifying participants, and the ways in which other gender identities intersect with an Asian American multiethnic identity could provide new insights for this research. Thus, the intersection between geography, age, generational positionality, gender, and identity in relation to the multiethnic Asian American experience requires further examination.

These findings demonstrate that the multiethnic Asian American experience is one that cannot be confined to a one-dimensional analysis but requires a breadth of lenses in order to capture how one might navigate this identity. Multiethnic Asian Americans face marginalization not only from other communities, but within the Asian American community. The scarcity of existing research on multiethnic Asian Americans highlights the erasure of this subgroup of Asian Americans, and as noted previously, there is a need for further research on the settings in which multiethnic Asian American identities are validated. I hope that this study provides a space to both consider and pose new questions about the multiethnic Asian American experience.



Notes

1. Jennifer Ng, Yoon Pak, and Xavier Hernandez, "Beyond the Perpetual Foreigner and Model Minority Stereotypes: A Critical Examination of How Asian Americans Are Framed." In *Contemporary Asian America (third Edition): A Multidisciplinary Reader*, edited by Min Zhou and Ocampo Anthony C., 576-99. NYU Press, 2016. Accessed November 25, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt18040wj.33>, 576.
2. Samuel D. Museus and Peter N. Kiang, "Deconstructing the Model Minority Myth and How It Contributes to the Invisible Minority Reality in Higher Education Research." *New Directions for Institutional Research* 2009, no. 142 (Summer 2009): 5-15, doi:10.1002/ir.292, 10.
3. Museus and Kiang, "Deconstructing", 7.
4. All of the Above, "Asian Americans, Education, and the Fight for Justice w/ Dr. Hsieh - All of the Above Episode 53", YouTube Video, 1:13:47. August 8, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYfcMsAcP8Y>.
5. Mary Yu Danico, ed, *Asian American Society: An Encyclopedia*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2014. Accessed November 24, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central, xxvii.
6. Danico, *Asian American Society*, 49.
7. Danico, *Asian American Society*, 691.
8. Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics [1989]." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 139–67. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429500480-5>, 140.
9. Jordan Soliz, Sierra Cronan, Gretchen Bergquist, Audra K. Nuru, and Christine E. Rittenour, "Perceived Benefits and Challenges of a Multiethnic-Racial Identity: Insight From Adults With Mixed Heritage." *Identity* 17, no. 4 (October 2017): 267–81. doi:10.1080/15283488.2017.1379907, 268.
10. Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Hsu Wong, "Preface to the First Edition." In *Aiiieeee!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers*, edited by Chin Frank, Chan Jeffery Paul, Inada Lawson Fusao, and Wong Shawn, by Fickle Tara, XXV-XXVIII. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019. Accessed November 25, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvr339x8.4>, xxvi.
11. Charles A. Gallagher, "In-between racial status, mobility, and the promise of assimilation Irish, Italians yesterday, Latinos and Asians today." In *Multiracial Americans and Social Class : The Influence of Social Class on Racial Identity*, edited by Kathleen Odell Korgen, 10-21. Taylor & Francis Group, 2010. Accessed November 25, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central, 13.

12. Danico, *Asian American Society*, 690.

13. Danico, *Asian American Society*, 694.

14. Jennifer Lee and Frank D. Bean, "Intermarriage and Multiracial Identification: The Asian American Experience and Implications for Changing Color Lines." In *Asian American Youth: Culture, Identity and Ethnicity*, edited by Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou, 51-63. Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004. Accessed November 25, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central, 52.

15. Lee and Bean, "Intermarriage and Multiracial Identification", 51.

16. Lee and Bean, "Intermarriage and Multiracial Identification", 58.

17. Lee and Bean, "Intermarriage and Multiracial Identification", 61.

18. Lee and Bean, "Intermarriage and Multiracial Identification", 57.

19. Leilani Nishime, "Preface: Why Are You? Multiracial Asian Americans and the Question of Visibility." In *Undercover Asian: Multiracial Asian Americans in Visual Culture*, Xi-Xxii. University of Illinois Press, 2014. Accessed December 8, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt3fh42v.4>, xv.

20. Nishime, "Preface: Why Are You?", xi.

21. Nishime, "Preface: Why Are You?", xv.

22. Crystal Abidin, "'Just Asian'? Inscribing East Asian 'Mixed Race' in Australia". In *Mixed Race Identities in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands*, edited by Farida Fozdar and Kirsten McGavin, 84-95. New York: Routledge, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315559391>, 84.

23. Abidin, "'Just Asian'?", 89.

24. Ibid.

## Bibliography

Abidin, Crystal. “‘Just Asian’? Inscribing East Asian ‘Mixed Race’ in Australia”. In *Mixed Race Identities in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands*, edited by Farida Fozdar and Kirsten McGavin, 84-95. New York: Routledge, 2017.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315559391>, 84.

All of the Above, “Asian Americans, Education, and the Fight for Justice w/ Dr. Hsieh - All of the Above Episode 53”, YouTube Video, 1:13:47. August 8, 2020.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYfcMsAcP8Y>.

Chin, Frank, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Hsu Wong. “Preface to the First Edition.” In *Aiiieeee!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers*, edited by Chin Frank, Chan Jeffery Paul, Inada Lawson Fusao, and Wong Shawn, by Fickle Tara, XXV-XXVIII. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019. Accessed November 25, 2020.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvr339x8.4>, xxvi.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics [1989].” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 139–67.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429500480-5>, 140.

Danico, Mary Yu, ed. *Asian American Society : An Encyclopedia*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2014. Accessed November 24, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central, xxvii.

Gallagher, Charles A. "In-between racial status, mobility, and the promise of assimilation Irish, Italians yesterday, Latinos and Asians today." In *Multiracial Americans and Social Class : The Influence of Social Class on Racial Identity*, edited by Kathleen Odell Korgen, 10-21. Taylor & Francis Group, 2010. Accessed November 25, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central, 13.

Jennifer Ng, Yoon Pak, and Xavier Hernandez. "Beyond the Perpetual Foreigner and Model Minority Stereotypes: A Critical Examination of How Asian Americans Are Framed." In *Contemporary Asian America (third Edition): A Multidisciplinary Reader*, edited by Min Zhou and Ocampo Anthony C., 576-99. NYU Press, 2016. Accessed November 25, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt18040wj.33>, 576.

Lee, Jennifer and Frank D. Bean. "Intermarriage and Multiracial Identification: The Asian American Experience and Implications for Changing Color Lines." In *Asian American Youth: Culture, Identity and Ethnicity*, edited by Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou, 51-63. Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004. Accessed November 25, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central, 52.

Museus, Samuel D., and Peter N. Kiang. "Deconstructing the Model Minority Myth and How It Contributes to the Invisible Minority Reality in Higher Education Research." *New Directions for Institutional Research* 2009, no. 142 (Summer 2009): 5-15, doi:10.1002/ir.292, 10.

Nishime, Leilani. "Preface: Why Are You? Multiracial Asian Americans and the Question of Visibility." In *Undercover Asian: Multiracial Asian Americans in Visual Culture*, Xi-Xxii. University of Illinois Press, 2014. Accessed December 8, 2020.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt3fh42v.4>.

Soliz, Jordan, Sierra Cronan, Gretchen Bergquist, Audra K. Nuru, and Christine E. Rittenour. "Perceived Benefits and Challenges of a Multiethnic-Racial Identity: Insight From Adults With Mixed Heritage." *Identity* 17, no. 4 (October 2017): 267–81.  
doi:10.1080/15283488.2017.1379907, 268.

## **Appendix**

### Interview Questions

1. Could you briefly describe your background and how you identify?
2. Has the way you identify changed over time?
  - a) If so, in what ways and why?
3. Does how you identify differ from how you are perceived by others?
  - a) If so, in what ways?
4. What languages do you speak?
  - a) If any language other than English, what are the factors that led you to learning that language?
  - b) What languages do your parents speak?
5. If you had the choice to learn a language that you don't speak, would you do so?
6. Have you ever felt that you have to "prove" your identity?
  - a) If yes, in what ways?
  - b) In what kinds of settings?
  - c) How did that make you feel?
7. Have you ever felt marginalized by a community of color?
8. What, if any, are spaces that you've found that validate your identity?

Participant 1

1. Could you briefly describe your background and how you identify?
  - Identifies as half Korean and half Vietnamese, 16 years old
1. Has the way you identify changed over time?
  - a) If so, in what ways and why?
    - Not really, always Korean and Vietnamese or just Asian
3. Does how you identify differ from how you are perceived by others?
  - a) If so, in what ways?
    - People assume Chinese and Japanese because “those are the two countries that everyone knows”
4. What languages do you speak?
  - a) If any language other than English, what are the factors that led you to learning that language?
  - b) What languages do your parents speak?
    - Fluent in English, small phrases in Vietnamese. Father speaks English, mother fluent in Vietnamese, parents were both raised in the States
5. If you had the choice to learn a language that you don’t speak, would you do so?
  - Either Korean or Vietnamese or both in order to be able to talk to family
6. Have you ever felt that you have to “prove” your identity?
  - a) If yes, in what ways?
  - b) In what kinds of settings?
  - c) How did that make you feel?

- When visiting Vietnamese side of family, having to be "more Vietnamese", be "more Asian", no experience with having to prove Asian-ness among people who aren't family
- Especially at company events and large family gatherings, not speaking unless spoken to directly
- Having to stray away from common "American" mannerisms and replace them with more polite, obedient ones "in order to make my mom look better for her family"

7. Have you ever felt marginalized by a community of color?

- Grew up in Massachusetts, being made fun of by people of color who disapproved of tomboyish-ness, mannerisms, "different from the things that they were taught about what an Asian person should be like", not feeling that kind of judgement from white classmates

8. What, if any, are spaces that you've found that validate your identity?

- Around friends or at school, no one questions identity and it's not a factor in treatment



Participant 2

1. Could you briefly describe your background and how you identify?
  - Identifies as a Chinese and Indonesian American
2. Has the way you identify changed over time?
  - a) If so, in what ways and why?
    - Used to identify as more Indonesian because grandmother lives with her, has Indonesian traditions like culture and language, getting more in touch with Chinese side later on, learning more about that side of her family
3. Does how you identify differ from how you are perceived by others?
  - a) If so, in what ways?
    - Assumed to be Filipino because “Indonesian and Filipino cultures get confused”, people don’t assume Chinese
    - Doesn’t have Chinese last name, people ask “What are you?” and “Where are you from?”
4. What languages do you speak?
  - a) If any language other than English, what are the factors that led you to learning that language?
  - b) What languages do your parents speak?
    - Conversational in Indonesian, grandmother only speaks Indonesian so it’s the only way of communicating with her
    - Can’t speak Cantonese or Mandarin
    - Parents speak Indonesian, grandmother speaks a bit of Cantonese
5. If you had the choice to learn a language that you don’t speak, would you do so?

- Would want to learn Cantonese, aunt in Hong Kong speaks Cantonese and so do cousins, also to connect with boyfriend's extended family
6. Have you ever felt that you have to "prove" your identity?
- a) If yes, in what ways?
  - b) In what kinds of settings?
  - c) How did that make you feel?
- Joined Chinese social club at school, felt excluded because of jokes in Mandarin
  - Southeast Asian club is mostly Vietnamese people, they have their inside jokes, feels excluded
  - For that reason, stopped going to the clubs, Southeast Asian club primarily focused on Vietnamese events and traditions
7. Have you ever felt marginalized by a community of color?
- Darker in skin tone than most Chinese people, they're confused about why she's in the club, implied by looks or atmosphere, the friend groups that are made-people all look the same
8. What, if any, are spaces that you've found that validate your identity?
- Going to be involved in Indonesian club next quarter, hoping to feel validated there
  - Mother has church friends and childhood friends who have similar backgrounds, "they understand that you don't have to look a certain way"

Participant 3

1. Could you briefly describe your background and how you identify?

- Mother is Chinese-Malaysian, father is Indian
- Has lived in both United States and London
- Identifies primarily as a Chinese and Indian American
- Unsure of whether or not to incorporate Malaysian aspect of mother's identity into her own

2. Has the way you identify changed over time?

a) If so, in what ways and why?

- Used to identify as more Indian because of color of skin, father's side more present in family
- Tries to identify with them equally now but is more familiar and experienced with Indian culture
- When going into teenage years, saw how others presented themselves online (Tumblr), more aware that it's not just about how you look and that there's many different backgrounds
- Lots of ethnic groups in Malaysia, not wanting to "pretend to be something [she] doesn't have a lot of learned experience or knowledge of", identified as Chinese and Indian

3. Does how you identify differ from how you are perceived by others?

a) If so, in what ways?

- Assumed to be Indian because name is Indian
- People might perceive her as brown Latina/Filipino due to skin color, eye shape

- People don't usually perceive her as Chinese because of skin color
4. What languages do you speak?
- a) If any language other than English, what are the factors that led you to learning that language?
- Knows more French than Kannada or Mandarin because of school curriculum
- b) What languages do your parents speak?
- Parents tried to teach her Kannada and Mandarin but it didn't really stick, prioritized English, English is main language in household because parents don't speak each other's languages
  - Father speaks Kannada, mother speaks Mandarin
5. If you had the choice to learn a language that you don't speak, would you do so?
- Would want to learn Kannada and Mandarin
  - Tried to learn both, wants to learn them simultaneously
  - Wouldn't want to choose and be able to speak with only one parent
  - Learning both on and off throughout life
  - Can't speak with any grandparents
6. Have you ever felt that you have to "prove" your identity?
- a) If yes, in what ways?
- b) In what kinds of settings?
- c) How did that make you feel?
- Yes, mostly when visiting extended relatives
  - Visiting family in Malaysia, feels out of place because relatives are fair-skinned

- Doesn't feel like she has a lot of agency to "prove" identity because of language barrier and not a lot of knowledge of culture
  - When visiting father's side of the family, the feeling isn't as present
  - Identity used to be more like a "fun fact", then became something that was annoying, people stereotyping her based on appearance
  - Now has more of a resigned acceptance that other people won't perceive her to be multiethnic and just assume
  - But also feels guilty of categorizing others in similar ways
7. Have you ever felt marginalized by a community of color?
- Monoethnic East Asians are sometimes surprised when she says she's East Asian, but most have been accepting
  - Struggle with identity has been more with herself than anyone else
8. What, if any, are spaces that you've found that validate your identity?
- Doesn't feel that there are spaces that validate identity
  - Blog postings, seen Chinese Malaysians in India, but haven't interacted with that community
  - She feels that both sides of the family don't see her as both, but half
  - Can't separate identity and be "half", feeling resigned that she won't be meeting people who see her as fully Chinese/Indian
  - Brother doesn't really talk about his identity
  - Spaces where she feels comfortable are where there's less emphasis on culture, they don't remind her of identity struggles, spaces where there's many different races and identities

- Would connect more and be more able to understand others who have multiethnic backgrounds than with people who are fully Chinese or fully Indian
- “We only talk about x culture with x side of the family and y culture with y side of the family”