"THANK YOU, YOUR ENGLISH IS VERY GOOD ALSO"[1]: ASIAN PANETHNICITY
AND ITS PERFORMANCE IN AUSTRALIA AND AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

By Sophia Edwards

A thesis submitted to Victoria University of Wellington in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Anthropology

Victoria University of Wellington

2019

---

[1] Embroidered on a t-shirt worn by Renee Liang, at the 2017 Asian New Zealand Artists Hui.

Abstract

Existing studies suggest that Asian panethnicity is the political mobilisation of diverse groups of people under a new name, to oppose racism and discrimination. Asian panethnicity is shaped by social forces, including those that exclude. As such, it is inherently political. However, it is limiting to think of it only as a kind of intentional, collective action bent towards achieving a predetermined group goal. This thesis expands this understanding of panethnicity, by considering how "Asiannness" is experienced on a subjective level; it asks what "Asian" means to and for the Asian individual.

Lingering Orientalism perpetuates a sense of Asian people as not quite belonging in the West. Though by now cliché, this narrative of non-belonging continues to determine ideas of Asianness and set the parameters of appropriate Asian behaviour. But, this non-belonging is also the site in and from which Asian actors make their own meanings and seek their own kind of situated belonging. This thesis takes an autoethnographic and ethnographic approach to field sites in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand to observe some of the ways Asian identity is formed. It is inevitable that transnational processes contribute to this identity work, but these global processes are also subsumed by localised structures and contexts.

Drawing from participant observation with social and community groups, and interviews with creative artists, writers, administrators, community workers and activists addressing the question of what it means to be Asian, I argue that Asian panethnicity is constituted by "doing". It is made up of different acts, repeated over time, and in different settings. As a product of relationships between externally imposed, in group enforced, and self-made conceptions of "Asianness", Asian panethnicity is both performative and performed. This thesis presents scenarios in which these performances and presentations of the Asian self take place. In considering some of the possible contexts and conventions that give rise to the performative act/s of being Asian, I argue that being Asian is a creative, collaborative, ongoing endeavour. It is a means by which to accomplish belonging in the world.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: "finding out what Asian means"

It is the first week of March 2016 and Victoria University of Wellington's Kelburn campus is crowded. In the student hub, banks of trestle tables take up half the usual walking space. Throngs of undergraduate students take up the other half. This is Clubs Week, and I feel old – surely too old to be here, in the hustle and bustle of this particular identity marketplace. The reason I am here, is to visit one stall – that of the Asian Law Students' Association.

There is not much to distinguish it, besides the banner, and a bowl of Korean sweets on the table. I approach the booth, staffed by a man and a woman, both looking as though in their very early twenties, to introduce myself. They smile, greet me, and introduce themselves as the President and the Mentor Liaison, with the easy and affable self-assurance of those who are elected by their peers, to the Executive of university student clubs. At their request, I give a brief but broad explanation of my thesis topic. When I finish, the President says, "I'm looking forward to finding out what Asian means."

"Finding out what Asian means", was a succinct summary of my intended research. I was to study "Asian" as a type of person – a lived category in New Zealand and Australia. Being a student of anthropology and aspiring ethnographer, I needed to find "Asians" to talk to.

"Asian" is of indeterminate meaning. In Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, it is often a word used for bureaucratic convenience. It can be an imposed, racialised classification or even an expression of abuse. Increasingly, it is a term of self-identification, one used to find and address an assumed community. I wanted to know who these "Asians" were, and how and why they came to be Asian.

I could not easily circumscribe this field, given that Asian is an ambiguous term, and part of my research project has been to understand its varied and changing meanings. To assume who was Asian prior to undertaking any research, to impose my own definitions prematurely, was at odds with this.

I looked for Asians by finding those who called themselves Asian. This was an early indication of the performative nature of Asianness. Initially I contacted entities with Asian in their name, or in their mission statement. For example, The Asian Law Students' Association of Victoria University of Wellington, or Asian Meetup groups. Contacting small social or recreational groups was the most fruitful way of finding self-identified Asians, as that is often a prerequisite for membership.

When it came to organisations with a focus on diversity and civic participation, or access to services, many of those with managerial or founding roles were Asian themselves. For example, Proudly Asian Theatre and Oryza Foundation in Auckland, and Contemporary Asian Australian Performance and the Asian Australian Rainbow Alliance in Australia. Organisations that focus on trade and economic policy relating to the Asian continent, or the study of Asian culture, often have non-Asian administrators (or a combination of Asian and non-Asian administrators). For example, The Asia Society, Australia and the New Zealand Asia Foundation. In this way I ended up talking to many people, (Asian or non-Asian) engaging professionally with the idea of Asia and Asianness, and many self-identified Asians willing to talk about themselves.

My application for ethics approval for this thesis, did not mention that I am Asian (and my full name does not give away my Japanese heritage). This was not by my design; it didn't come up within the parameters of the application. When the ethics committee rejected this application, I then made the conscious decision to not include that I was Asian in the revised version. I wanted to meet the same ethics requirements that would be expected of anyone else and I wasn't convinced my being Asian, and of my field should necessarily change my ethics obligations to participants. But, there was another reason.

One of the committee's explanations for rejecting my application was, to quote the feedback I received: "No consideration has been given to cultural protocols loss of face, etc." I suspect some of my reluctance to include that I am Asian in my response was because of a childish fantasy that I may have to go before the committee. They would see my Asian face and have to explain to it what "Asian" cultural protocols

were. Then, as the daydream went, I would ask them to expound upon the many other protocols they had in mind when they included the "etc".

None of this eventuated. I explained in my response that it was unlikely a set of cultural protocols applicable to all Asian people existed. I also assured them that as I was likely to be encountering people from diverse cultural backgrounds, I would maintain high levels of cross cultural sensitivity and respect. They accepted this, along with my other explanations and amendments. This was the first time I felt indignation on behalf of my field and for myself as part of it.

There are perks, of course, in being of one's field, the most immediate of these may be ease-of-access and acceptance (Dwyer & Buckle 2009, 58).[2] The Asian Law Students' Association (ALSA) was the first prospective participant organisation I contacted. I emailed their address listed on the Victoria University website and asked if I could come along to one of their events. I tried to give myself an "in" by including that "I am a former Asian Law student myself." This proved effective, as ALSA have a mentoring programme which relies on Asian people who have law degrees volunteering their time to mentor current Asian Law students at Victoria University. I agreed to do this when asked via return email by the President, and I had my first field site. I was invited to visit the stall during Clubs Week and meet the Executive team.

In the few minutes I stood at the ALSA stall making polite chit chat, the Mentor Liaison told me about the upcoming launch party, organised for existing and potential student members. Though not an event for non-student mentors, I was invited to come along as a research opportunity.

On the day of the event around sixty of us crowded into a classroom on the law campus, milling around a table laid with dumplings and sushi provided by local Asian food businesses. Looking around, students appeared to be of a variety of ethnicities and I heard snatches of different Asian languages spoken. The tentative

---

[2] There are other advantages in that I may be seen to have extra credibility and sympathy in the eyes not only of my participants, but readers of my research (Dwyer & Buckle 2009, 56).

conversations we had amongst ourselves indicated a combination of domestic and international students in attendance. I do not think I was the only one grateful for the pause in small talk when the President stood up to address us all.

He explained the reason for ALSA's existence. Strictly, it was not tutoring. "We're all Asian, so we don't need academic support", he explained to polite chuckling. The "central feature" of ALSA is the mentoring programme, designed to:
1. Support Asian students, who are more likely to be the first in their family to attend a university in New Zealand.
2. Encourage networking amongst Asian students who may have fewer professional contacts than their non-immigrant peers.
3. Provide a place to celebrate "our heritage".

So new to fieldwork, and so out of place I left early. As a woman in her late twenties at the time, it felt almost inappropriate for me to be there playing ice-breaking games with people in their late teens. Otherness is organised around many different boundaries, social and cultural (Doja 2015, 68; Narayan, K. 1993 671). Even as a researcher apparently "of her field", it is not always possible to be authentically and uncomplicatedly "inside". Feeling out of place at this event was a symptom of my being well beyond the average age of those present, rather than my being a researcher. The launch party was the first and last time during fieldwork that I attended a social event I couldn't reasonably have attended anyway – either as an Asian person, or a person academically or professionally interested in "Asianness". This was the only instance where I did not already fall within the eligibility criteria for attendance and an actual exception was being made to accommodate me. All other social gatherings I attended for the purpose of research, I could reasonably have attended for a purpose other than research.

On future occasions, whenever I found myself outside, it was because I was a researcher; "a professional identity that involves problematizing lived reality inevitably creates a distance" (Narayan 1993, 671). To research others through fieldwork is to take yourself outside experience by observing yourself having the experience, and then writing about it. It is to set yourself apart from the other people

with whom you experienced something, because you are the one who chooses to do this.

A couple of weeks after the launch party, I walked into the Southern Cross, a pub on Cuba Street, favoured for university social occasions. In the beer garden the group is easy to spot, all Asian, and with the detectable stiffness that characterises all networking events. The mentors are distinguishable from the students not through age (many of them graduated the previous year), but dress. The young professionals have come straight from work – wearing clothes ranging from "business casual" to suiting. The students all look presentable, adhering seemingly without any instruction via the emails and Facebook posts I have been privy to, to a "smart casual" dress code.

This event was called the mentoring launch, where mentors meet the executive team and the mentees they will have. The mentee I would be assigned was here, but I didn't know her yet. We all went around in a circle and introduced ourselves. I was so busy preparing in my head for my turn that I did not catch the introductions of anyone other than the people to my immediate left and right. I was introduced via email to my mentee the following week and we arranged to have coffee.

We met at a courtyard in the middle of the Wellington CBD,[3] not so much a park as the grassy frontage of some cafes with a few benches for the public. I was early. I realised I didn't have my mentee's mobile number, and we hadn't swapped any identifying information. I was not sure that I would recognise her from the mentoring launch. I was not even sure that she had attended it. I conducted some socially-acceptable racial profiling, scanning the immediate area for a woman whose appearance correlated with the Chinese surname I knew my mentee to have. There was only one, reading a book in the shade. I decided that if she was still there at the appointed time, I would approach her. Ten minutes passed and another East Asian woman arrived. She was in her early twenties, as I had assumed my mentee to be, with a bag large enough to carry the miscellanea of undergraduate life. She put her

---

[3] In Australia and New Zealand, CBD is an acronym for Central Business District.

bag down on a bench and immediately consulted her smartphone. I stared at her until I caught her eye and, thankfully, she recognised me or realised who I was. There were many occasions like this during the time I spent "in the field". Fieldwork in my case meant mostly scheduling and conducting interviews and waiting at the interview location for the interviewee. I arrive early, always, which means I spend a lot of time waiting. When I am meeting someone at their place of work, there's no issue. I introduce myself at the front desk and wait for the interviewee to come and collect me. On all other occasions, when I was waiting for someone at a café or other public place, I worried about approaching the wrong Asian. It would be unseemly, as a researcher of Asian communities, to do such a thing.

Doing the correct thing, as a researcher of Asian communities and, more specifically, as an Asian researcher, was a special concern of mine and the cause of much self-consciousness. "In the field, we are constantly (and sometimes consciously) considering how the ways we look at others and the images (stereotypes, expectations, etc.) others have of us will manifest in the research" (Boylorn 2011, 179). The way I presented myself during fieldwork included, of course, performing the role of researcher, and I aspired to a kind of professionalism. For the role of Asian researcher, I attempted camaraderie: I am one of you, I am on your side. This was not difficult to do in person. For one thing I look Asian.[4] However, via email, I found myself consciously deciding on how to best present myself as an Asian, and to express sensitivity to the Asian cause, whatever that may be.

Looking back at notes from the very early days of my research, this self-conscious and other-oriented (Boylorn 2011, 179) approach to presenting myself, seems especially obvious. Early on when writing my thesis proposal, I toyed with the idea of conducting digital ethnography and wanted to make a new Google account to avoid using my personal email.

Extract from fieldnotes, 18 December 2015

> Creating a new Gmail account would be convenient when exploring the possibility of YouTube as a site for ethnography.

---

[4] Though being "half" may complicate things. I'll write more about that later in Chapter 10.

I would prefer a nom de plume (or nom de blog as Erik Ringmar (2007, 28) writes). seedwards and other variations of my initials are taken and suffixing my usernames with sequences of numbers is something I'd like to avoid, mainly for aesthetics.

If my username suggests my Japaneseness or Asianness that is fine, even preferable ("I am one of you!"). However, I do not wish to appear like an *otaku* or a *weaboo* by using generic Japanese words like "ronin" or "samurai" or "ninja" or "sakura", etc. Nor do I wish to be too brazen or obvious, or use a "sassy" name like "hapa girl" (taken anyway). Also, I might want to avoid racially fractionalising names.

So, to adapt my name. I do not want to use my full Australian name, nor my full Japanese name. Sophia Edwards - Soso? Soso, the name of the half Asian inmate in *Orange is the New Black*. The actress playing her is half Japanese. I don't approve of that reference.

However, so so in English translates I think to *maa maa* in Japanese. How about "sosomaamaa"? Taken. "sosomama"? (though the "mama" has connotations that are less than ideal). Taken. "Mamasoso". Taken. "Maamaasoso". Taken. "somasoma". Taken. "Somaasomaa". Taken. "doremifasomamiso". Not taken, but ridiculous. Though, miso is nice, obviously Japanese. "misoso". Taken. "misosomaamaa". Not taken. Wonderful. Create account. Though it is meaningless in the extreme and silly. Also, does an Asian female want any internet name for herself to begin with something phonetically similar to "me so…"?

Create new account: "sophatvic".

When I contacted larger organisations, charitable trusts and foundations that deal with government in an official capacity, I didn't include my ethnicity. However, when I approached the smaller Meetup groups, I did. And when I approached arts collectives, I did.

I emailed Amy Weng, an Auckland based artist, blogger and arts worker after stumbling upon her blog while I was staying in Auckland. I saw a post that used the word "ethnographic" as almost synonymous with Orientalist or imperialist. Whenever I reached out to possible participants via email I included a general topic pitch. My

first email to Amy included this pitch, as well as the added sentence: "As an Asian Australian, the topic of Pan-Asian identity and ethnicity as it exists outside Asia, is of personal interest to me." I also added the words "auto-ethnographic or" to the sentence: "I will be researching the different uses of the word 'Asian' for statistical and public policy purposes, as well as taking what can be considered an auto-ethnographic or ethnographic approach." Reading her blog, I was anxious about meeting Amy.

I wonder if she will be cool and remote, in the way I imagine arts workers to be, or brusque and uncooperative in the way I fear artists will be. Or, more uncomfortable still, if she will be politically "radical" in a way that would embarrass my irretrievably middle class sensibilities.

Her choice of coffee shop does not allay my concerns. It is sparse and hip, with a number of pour over options. In truth, the kind of coffee shop I enjoy visiting. She is a bit late, has a crisp haircut, is wearing all black and either no makeup, or makeup undetectable to my eye. She doesn't take any milk in her coffee. Despite these signposts she lacks the calculation and contrivance that unfairly goes along with my mental caricature of the gallery worker. Instead, Amy is sincere, even earnest.

She is interested in my research from what seems like an academic perspective. At a later date she tells me that my research topic should help her hone her own postgraduate research, which she was thinking of returning to. I liked Amy immediately. But, I had trouble navigating a relationship where I was afraid to mistake a participant's enthusiasm for the research project for a burgeoning friendship.

On another occasion I met Amy for lunch in a café at Britomart – a lot of glass, untreated pine, marble countertops. They also give you sparkling water for the table instead of tap water. We each ordered a different burger and when they arrived it was obvious that mine, the soft shell crab burger, was the superior choice. You could tell by looking, and Amy commented on this: "I think I have food envy."

I murmured – a sound that I hoped was a combination of conciliatory but non-committal – and we carried on chatting. I have many regrets from the field. Looking back, I wish I had spoken to certain people, had more tact during delicate interview moments, had worded questions more artfully, seized certain opportunities I let pass by, paid more attention, made fewer stupid comments. But, I really, really should have offered Amy some of my burger.

This was only the third or fourth time we'd met. Sharing a burger is something you do with a friend. Would it be too familiar of me to assume that's what we were? This hesitation I allowed to persist until it was too late for me to rectify the wrong. After the meal, when we were standing outside the restaurant, there was a silence, a pause, during which I contemplated the appropriate parting gesture. I decided against a hug.

Back in Wellington, I recounted this story to another research participant Penny,[5] during a conversation where we complained about people who won't partake in family style dining at a restaurant, particularly at Asian restaurants where that mode of eating is encouraged. I felt the need to confess. After all, I had been cold towards a participant and, perhaps, friend, but also unAsian. I told her what Amy (whom I referred to as another participant) said, and how I didn't know exactly at the time what I was supposed to do.
"Did you give her some?"
"No! I didn't."
"Oh?!"
I'm sure I could see the disapproval on Penny's face.

Restaurant etiquette was a problem in more ways than one. I wasn't always sure what to do about money. If I met people for a one-off interview at their place of work, I would take a small gift, like a voucher, or a box of chocolates, costing twenty dollars. Sometimes I emailed people vouchers that were aligned with their interests, like book vouchers, or entertainment vouchers.

---

[5] During my three years as an ALSA mentor, I was assigned several mentees. Penny is one of them. I use pseudonyms for each of the mentees who feature in this thesis.

The twenty dollar limit was influenced by the remunerable amount of money offered for kohā[6] per participant by the university's postgraduate research funding process. Not that I was especially averse to being out of pocket. I am grateful for participants' time, and happy to spend my own money to demonstrate that if that is appropriate. Rightly or wrongly, I thought the university's allocated sum for kohā was an indication of what was appropriate.

If meeting at a coffee shop instead of their place of work, I would also pay for their coffee or drink. Interviewees significantly older than myself responded favourably to this. They thanked me for the gift and for shouting[7] them. One participant, whose age I don't know, but who, like me is born in the year of the rabbit, believes she is "not twelve, not twenty-four, not thirty-six, but forty-eight years older" than me. On the two occasions I have spent time with her (the first time, at a coffee shop, the second time at a community dinner to which she invited me and paid for my ticket) I brought her small gifts of appreciation. Both times, she has responded that she had gifts for me too, which she retrieved from the boot of her car. The first time, a hi-vis vest printed with the name of their organisation, worn by members, and which I now treasure. The second time, a jar of delicious peanut biscuits. I hadn't considered that for some people, even if they are doing me a favour, when they receive a physical gift, they feel the need to reciprocate, even if, seemingly, with what they happen to have on hand.

People closer in age to myself protested a little when I told them I would shout them a coffee. I would tell them that treating participants to a coffee was covered by my research grant, and they assented. With ALSA mentees, things were more complicated. As mentor, I am expected to pay. This seems intuitive enough, and also, at the launch event for the second year, a long term mentor said as much during his address. However, the first time I went to coffee with my 2016 mentee, she paid for her own coffee. Somehow, she positioned herself to be served at the counter before me while I was still deciding what to order. I didn't want to partake in that much-ridiculed "allow me – no allow *me* – no I *insist*" routine of affected

---

[6] A Māori term meaning gift or contribution.
[7] To shout someone means to treat them, usually to pay for their part of a meal, or for their drink. This usually refers to instances where a meal is either shared, or had in each others' company.

politeness, so I didn't. But when she somehow managed to pay for her own coffee the next time we met, it became unacceptable. The next time I pre-empted any attempt she might make to reach for her wallet with: "I'll get the coffee. I'm the mentor, *I'm supposed to shout you* coffee."

Occasionally we would go out to celebrate certain milestones: her graduation, or her admission to the legal profession, and I would pay for the meal. On one occasion, she shouted me. At that point, when we had gone from a mentor/mentee dynamic, to a postgraduate student/full-time lawyer dynamic, it may have become embarrassing for both of us if I continued to pay. Nearly three years since first meeting, we have come to split the bill.

Awkward methods

I am what would popularly be described as an introverted person. This is something that other people can tell, and occasionally comment on. This is because I am not just introverted, but awkward. After commencing anthropology, not really knowing what it would entail, I learned more about ethnographic methods. I grew worried that I was uniquely ill-equipped for ethnographic research.

I searched the online databases using various combinations of terms: "shy", "introverted", "ethnographer", "ethnography", "anthropology". One thing I found was "Reflections of a Shy Ethnographer: foot-in-the-mouth is not fatal" by Juliana Flinn (2000). This was a heartening read. She described a search process similar to mine before she left for her fieldwork trip to Micronesia. She had even managed to get a hold of an article published in the Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology with a promising title,[8] that I had seen come up but had given up on actually getting a copy of. According to Flinn, it was not useful.

She also wrote that shyness is "a productive and useful ethnographic tool" (2000, 63). I clung to this. I convinced myself that if no shy people undertook ethnography the cumulative findings of the practice would be inevitably skewed. So, if indeed

---

[8] "Memoirs of a shy ethnographer" by L.S. Kemnitzer (1972).

most ethnographers were like the people I had encountered in Victoria University's Anthropology Department – all seeming to me to fall somewhere on the spectrum between exuberantly outgoing and effortlessly sociable – then I could bring something different to a dataset. I think that at least the fieldwork process may have been different. The bonuses: I didn't impose much on people and they were more likely to approach me in a social setting. I didn't interrupt interviewees too often and when interviewing people less accustomed to awkward silence than I am, they tended to fill it, unprompted.

Whenever I met people at an event or function I was attending for the purposes of participant observation, I always included in my introduction my student status, my thesis topic, and the fact that I was in attendance because of research. This is not to say I didn't have a good time at some of these events. I did. But for me, when I go into a room of strangers, being able to engage with even one of them and sustain a conversation with nothing but my meagre social abilities, summoned with effort, feels like success. It is a minor victory. And if anyone else gets that feeling, I would not want to be responsible for diminishing it by telling them I am a researcher, academically invested in what they have to say. I know it would undermine my sense of accomplishment, so I do not want to risk doing it to others.

But even with that, some people feel used. I went to yum cha[9] as part of a Meetup group event for Asian Australians in Melbourne. I had contacted the organiser beforehand, and was approved as a member of the group. I arrived quite early, only the second person there. The restaurant was in the CBD, in a small shopping arcade, up an escalator. It was large, with lion guardians flanking the entrance, and multiple large dining rooms furnished with wooden dining chairs and gold toned decoration. It was familiar and comforting in the way that Chinese restaurants in Australia are to me. While making small talk with the other early arriver for a time, the table started to fill up. I ended up with the organiser on my right and a young man, who I'm here calling Alex,[10] on my left. Conversation branched off into pairs. I

---

[9] Literally meaning 'drink tea' in Cantonese, yum cha describes a meal of dim sum had with tea.
[10] I have kept the real names of participants when they were speaking as representatives of an organisation or association, as the creator of a work, or were publicly known in association with the topic discussed. Where participants represent only themselves, I use a pseudonym or refer to them as a participant.

explained, as was my protocol, that I was a researcher and in Melbourne as part of my research into Asian panethnicity. I listened to Alex talk about his recent move to Melbourne for his new commerce job with a small startup company. He talked about the long hours and the pressure of it. I listened attentively, made comments I considered appropriate, and answered questions when he asked them. I let the conversation of the table infiltrate ours from time to time. I thought I was respecting the ebb and flow of a social gathering, in the calculated way I imagine is common to introverted people. But, for all my calculations, I do not know what caused him, at one lull in conversation to ask, "you really are just here for research aren't you?"

I don't remember exactly how I answered, but I know that I expressed no surprise, acted as though it were a commonplace observation, and explained that there was an awkwardness to research with human subjects, to gain advantage from the people you befriend. When I finished he said, "At least you're not taking notes." But, what he said bothers me still, because it is true. I would never join a Meetup group, let alone one designed only for Australians of Asian descent. Alex was not a participant proper at any time. He never signed anything. I had never seen him before and have never since, but he felt my presence to be self-serving to a degree worth commenting on.

Fieldwork is about finding ways to be yourself in new and different settings,[11] to maintain sincerity as a person socially interacting with others, while pushing yourself to pursue opportunities that arise in the field. I knew no other way to approach the participant observation facet of this fieldwork other than by trying to make friends. Given this, I was about as good at participant observation as I am at making friends. Though, I am slightly better at making friends through fieldwork than I am at making friends without it. With an ethnographic project, we already have something to talk about, and I am extra committed to being nice.

Arguably, making friends and completing longitudinal qualitative research in the form of participant observation should be complementary, even indistinguishable. At the

---

[11] This point was discussed in a 2018 Victoria University roundtable on fieldwork for Anthropology students.

very least, they should not be inherently incompatible. In "Friendship as Method" Lisa M. Tillman describes the similarities between friendship and fieldwork: "Both involve being in the world with others. To friendship and fieldwork communities, we must gain entrée" (2015, 3). I would differentiate my method from Tillmann's by describing it not as friendship-as-method, but trying-to-make-friends as method. The main differentiation is the level of importance I think I came to have in my participants' lives. That said, Tillmann's observation of her method that the "primary procedures are those we use to build and sustain friendship: conversation, everyday involvement, compassion, generosity, and vulnerability" (2015, 6) is true of my method too.

If ever it felt to me that friendship and fieldwork were at odds, even if they may not have been, I tried to choose friendship. I did my best. Towards the end of thesis writing, I went out to dinner with a participant I had come to know. We got to talking about how couples share, or don't share finances. She mentioned her father had a history of gambling and that this continues to affect how her parents manage money. I felt myself register this topic as one of relevance to an interview with the Asian Family Services branch of New Zealand Problem Gambling I had done two years earlier. I did my best to ignore the impulse to ask for further details. I did not trust my motives.

To manage the awkward tension of the research-participant-or-friend dynamic, I kept in mind the necessity for consent to be an ongoing process (Tillman 2015; Haynes 2013). I reminded one of my participants, my 2016 ALSA mentee, that she was a subject of my research. We had at that stage met for lunch or coffee several times and I asked her if one day she would be okay with taking part in a recorded interview. She agreed, but said in a low voice "I'm not sure I'd be any help though". I assured her that she already had been.
"Really?"
"Yes. You know that story you told me about the tooth fairy?"
"Yeah."
"That's in my fieldnotes."

I was less smooth with my 2017 ALSA mentee. Towards the end of our conversation over coffee, chatting mostly about food and cooking and fussy people, I thought a reminder about my data gathering was in order. I suggested we do a recorded interview at a later stage then fumbled through some explanation of our unrecorded conversations also being part of my research. She said, "I assumed everything we talked about was fair game."

I know, as I have been reminded on occasion, that no one, bar the few who are professionally committed to do so for the direct purpose of deciding whether or not I earn my PhD, will read my thesis. No one except, maybe, my participants. Not all of them, but some. At the very least, they might skim through to see where and if, and *how* they feature in it. That is what I would do. The audience for this thesis, though extremely limited is diverse,[12] I strive to accommodate all of the few who will read it, but I regard my participants as an audience and I do write with them in mind (Tillmann 2015, 9).

I ask one participant if she has a preferred pseudonym. She says no. I tell her I have been thinking Madeleine. I think the name suits her. She seems happy with it.
"Now I know what to text search when I read your thesis."

At the third ALSA mentoring launch I see the president from two years ago. This time he is in a suit, having graduated and started working. He is here as a professional mentor for younger students.
"I'm really looking forward to reading your thesis."
"You don't want to read the whole thing. Maybe if you just text search for the bits that apply to ALSA."
"Find all the places where you've talked shit about us?"
"I wouldn't use the name ALSA for those bits."
"Then I'll search for Wellington based university association for Asian law students."

---

[12] Writing for different audiences is a common difficulty in producing ethnographic works and research communication generally (Butz and Besio 2009, 1661).

If I am a good and responsible researcher, who has gained ethics approval (I have[13]) and was open and honest when explaining her research and the rights of participants to those participants (I was), then, what reason do I have for nervousness? I've already accepted that my thesis will wield little power, will yield at best, only the most limited of consequences for those other than myself. Best case scenario, I get to call myself doctor, and contribute in some small way to a body of knowledge. Worst case scenario, I am not granted my doctorate. I do not think that the worse scenario of striking a blow against the field I am studying, of egregiously disserving them, or altering public or academic opinion in a manner that disadvantages them, is likely.

> If writing involves risk, does it not also entail responsibility? If the possible and the impossible, the factual and the counterfactual, the present and the absent, the living and the dead all belong equally to life's reality, where does this leave our responsibility to be faithful? In what ways are we responsible, for example, to those whose lives we seek to write about? Should our writing emerge, in the first instance, out of our solidarity with our informants, as a response to the demands they place upon us? (Pandian and McLean 2017, 22)

My participants, by and large, are engaged in the same topic of inquiry as me. They are, for the most part, middle class like me. Moreover, many of them have built platforms for themselves with significantly more reach than I have, or will achieve by way of a doctorate. Anything I say against them, I think they could take on the chin and keep going, onwards and upwards.

And my nervousness comes only in part from the feeling that they may not like what they read. That they may disagree or take offense at my characterisation of them. Even something not particularly critical can sound so when you hear it said about you, not to you.

---

[13] As mentioned earlier, I received ethics approval from the Victoria University of Wellington Ethics Committee.

Obviously, I do not want to contribute to the misrepresentation of a group of people. But, that is not the cause of my nervousness either, really. I do worry, that my participants, some of whom I might now describe as friends, could read what I write and dislike me. To write about your personal relations with people undermines friendship. As a fact, not a feeling. "Betrayal is inescapable, in this practice of working with words that are not our own" (Pandian and McLean 2017, 14). Once I have written about them, my new acquaintances are just research subjects. Presently, they are both research subjects and possibly friends. My participants are doing me a favour and helping me out with my research. The fact that I met these participants only through research is beside the point. Once I have written the thesis however, I will have used them.

My participants mean more to me than I do to them. This is not just because I need them for data. When I first started at Victoria University, I had been in New Zealand for less than a month. I had moved here from Australia with my now-husband, who had arrived a couple months earlier to start at his new job in Wellington. Apart from him, I knew no one. My participants, who I started meeting the following year, were the first people I spent time with socially, outside the School of Social and Cultural Studies. For a long time, I had spent more one-on-one time with some of my participants than I had anyone else in this country, excluding my husband.

I am looking forward to handing in this thesis and spending time with some participants. If they are the kind to harbour any doubts about the nature of our relationship, knowing that it endures beyond the period of my PhD should put their minds at ease, as well as mine.

Belonging

> And I remember, I was cleaning out my stuff from my parents' place in Sydney just last Christmas and found like um, … this page that I wrote in and I must have been, I think I was like eleven or twelve and it was three wishes, that I was older, that I was White, and I can't remember what my other one was.

It is possible the above story sounds like a confession, like something divulged to an interviewer in a particular research context when there is the guarantee of anonymity. Though it is the latter, this is the kind of thing one Asian person says to another Asian person when they are talking about being Asian in a non-Asian country. The interview in which it was spoken gave the interviewee and me the opportunity to talk plainly about this, and many of the people I interviewed were creating similar opportunities for themselves and others.

There is a kind of not-better-than-but-different quality bestowed upon both "insiders" and "outsiders" in discussions of qualitative research. There is perceived value to the productive "naiveté" of the outsider and their "strong capacity for defamiliarization" – these things being a foil for the also useful and complex "familiarity" of the insider (Lins Ribeiro 2016, 629). My apparent lack of "stranger value" could be seen to affect my subjectivity, and it likely does.[14] On some occasions when speaking with participants, I was aware of a kind of shorthand that could be undesirable in ethnography – a taking for granted of things that perhaps could have been interrogated. Research participants would sometimes interrupt their own stories to say, "I probably don't need to tell you", or finish one by asking me directly if something similar had happened to me. There was often an assumption that my experience in some way mirrored their own and they were offering me a chance at possible catharsis.

When an interviewee recounted that she had wished she was White as a child, I wasn't unearthing something about a field bounded and defined solely by my research. My research taps into a conversation that people are having and have been having. This burgeoning conversation, is one I could walk in on through interviews. The shortest interview[15] I conducted was around forty-five minutes, the longest approximately three hours. They were often one-off, usually recorded, and arranged in advance, whether by one day or by several months. They ranged from

---

[14] There are accepted benefits in being a member of the group you are studying but there are perceived dangers. A shared status amongst researcher and research subject may lead to assumptions of understanding being made by both parties (Dwyer & Buckle 2009, 58).

[15] What I am calling interviews here refer to formal, structured interviews that I arranged before meeting someone for the first time.

relaxed to quite formal, depending mostly on the disposition of the person interviewed, and often explicitly revealed my own limitations.

My baseline academic understanding of Asian identity is not significantly greater or more sophisticated than my interviewees. Occasionally they even pre-packaged their comments in neat analytical bundles for my benefit. They are conscious of the politics of representation, and I talked about the typical anthropologist's dilemma with some of my participants. One of them, when I wondered aloud about the role of the anthropologist, said to me: "anthropologists love to contest the space of anthropology."

As well as being wary of representation, participants have often been wary of cliché, laziness of expression. Annette Shun Wah, Director of Contemporary Asian Australian Performance,[16] talked about working with external marketing on past arts projects, and having them fall "back onto cliché".

> Me: What kind of, when you say cliché, in the marketing?
>
> Annette: Oh, you'll take a storytelling show to somewhere that might have all these great interesting stories about, you know, a group of individuals, and then they will immediately turn it into – this is a work about the "migrant experience" and "belonging" and "identity". And I guess, just about every story, every human story is about those things, apart from migration I guess but really for us it's much more interesting that this is a story about a man who's had five children from four different mothers and is gay (laughs). Or, this is a story of a woman whose grandparents fled China to end up in Taiwan, but the woman grows up and goes back to China to work in the burlesque club. I mean, this is fascinating stuff, this is not your standard migrant story about identity and belonging. Juicy stuff! That's the stuff you should have in the press release. Not the old cliché…

---

[16] My interview with Annette will be presented at greater length in Chapter 7.

Me: It's funny, when you mention those clichés, I think all of those were probably in my research proposal, that I submitted.

Annette: (Laughs) Woops.

I felt a bit sheepish about my use of such glib shorthand, (though part of this is the need to use bureaucratic/administrative language when applying to a bureaucratic/administrative body for anything, including ethics approval and funding). But I felt better when TK Pok, Annette's colleague, an experienced arts administrator and current high school English teacher, struggled to avoid the same kind of language later in the interview.

Me: Um… while I try and think of my next question…

Annette: You haven't asked him the Asian one yet (laughs)

Me: Oh yeah! Thank you.

TK: Oh god.

Me: What does Asian mean?

TK: …Delicious, pungent flavours. (laughs). Um… incredibly complex networks… …of ideas in… um… expressions of kinship…

Annette: Oh, you mean belonging? (laughs)

TK: …Yes… (laughs)

Annette: Sorry.

TK: Taking the piss out of an English teacher now (laughs). I was giving a Band Six[17] answer thank you very much (laughs at length)… Um… yeah… Do you want more?

Belonging, however trite a word in colloquial, and possibly also in academic usage, is a recurring theme in this thesis. It suggests the impetus behind identity work. In *Outside Belongings* Elspeth Probyn writes:

It is through and with desire that we figure relations of proximity to others and other forms of sociality. It is what remakes the social as a dynamic proposition, for if we live within a grid or network of different points, we live through the desire to make them connect differently… The desire to belong propels, even as it rearranges, the relations into which it intervenes (1996, 13).

Words and their usage are inevitably an area of focus when discussing the minority experience. Not just the imprecise language of human categorisation (Omi and Winant 2012, 967), but the conceptual and descriptive terms used to talk about it. There are many words used to describe the experience of marginality that suggest movement through/location in/demarcations of physical space. Immigration studies and critiques of multiculturalism often make mention of transnational mobility, the idea of fluid multiple identities and/or the "situational use of identity" (Collins 2000, 125), diaspora, heterogeneity (Lo 2008, 18), hybridity, cultural interstices (Bhabha 1994, 163) and existing in the space between cultures. Immigrants and their descendants are apparently "building their lives" between one or more countries or cultures (Somerville 2008, 25). For my purposes, Probyn's vocabulary is evocative. "Belonging" – "not just be-ing, but longing" (Bell 1999, 1) – to describe the desire, an often unarticulated yearning, that pre-exists identity and therefore pushes aside any sense of identity as essential or fixed. "Outside" as a means to consider the social, "surface" and "skin" to describe "relationships of proximity" (1996, 11) between those who find themselves outside. Probyn explains her sociology of the skin:

---

[17] Band Six is the highest level of achievement in the New South Wales High School Certificate grading system.

21

To replay Donna Haraway's question, "Why should our bodies end at the skin?", I also want to ask why skin should end at our individual bodies? For what I am trying to capture in these essays is the sense that belonging expresses a desire for more than what is, a yearning to make skin stretch beyond individual needs and wants... It follows that I risk privileging my own perspective. While I am well aware that I walk a thin line that at any time may disappear into narcissism or endless auto-reflexivity. I maintain that the body that writes is integral to the type of figuring I wish to do. It is a body that is fully part of the outside it experiments with. If the angles from which I look and which I seek to create are unrepresentative, they are nonetheless part of the world as I see it becoming. (1996, 6 *references removed*)

This is useful terminology for thinking about my fieldwork, thinking about my methods, and for undertaking writing. I cannot shake my wariness of claiming or aspiring to ethnographic "depth". Even aside from the autoethnographic element inevitable in writing about a field of which you are part, I do not think I could embed myself in my field any more than I am. "Even for a purported insider, it is clearly impossible to be omniscient: one knows about a society from particular locations within it" (Narayan 1993, 679). With what I have, an assemblage of tentative friendships, fleeting encounters at one-off social events, formal interviews, and works created by participants and by others, I will "examine examples as interstitial moments in the work of articulation" (Probyn 1996, 5).

Assembling a "patchwork" ethnography finds points of contact where people, settings, objects and ideas connect and intertwine (Tsing 2005, x-xi). It suggests pathways and partiality, helping to avoid too easy generalisations and a false sense of wholeness. Ethnography is, "a way of participating in the activity of the world, a making and remaking of instances of life entangled with moments of thought" (Pandian and McLean 2017, 14). The ethnographic methods I use – participant observation, making friends, formal interviews, autoethnography,[18] and to a lesser extent, a "participative approach to the study of online culture and communities" (Kozinets 2010, 74) – disclose a panethnic Asian subjectivity. I present an Asian

---

[18] The kind of autoethnography I use is explained in Chapter 3.

subjectivity in this text, not to universalise Asian experience, but to avoid objectifying it. The goal is to reveal how the different meanings of Asian make themselves known to, and felt by, Asian people themselves, and how they, in turn, may make new meanings. When I asked Annette what Asian means, she responded with:

> It's a term I've never been comfortable with, because Asian actually means, from that geographical area that's called Asia. Of course in our context it's about culture and people and therefore it's a bit of a false construct. Because… there really isn't such a thing as an Asian person. You can be from Asia. But you know, Asia is a huge place with so many different cultures, and people from Asia… get to Australia in so many different ways that they're all different as well. So, you know, like an Indian person is not gonna have a lot in common with a Filipino person, you might not have a lot in common with say… someone who's Uyghur. And even if you just took one group like Chinese people, you know people who come from mainland China, might be very different to people in Australia who've been here for generations, or other people come from South East Asia or, from the Pacific who are all Chinese, but they all have very different perceptions and ideas. So I guess in this context Asian is just like a handy, it's a label that people seem to have a general understanding of, that's used to lump a group of people together. Whose commonality is that they are, not something else, really.

Benedict Anderson's "notion of the imagined community as a mass mediated collectivity where members may not all know each other, but where each shares the idea of a common belonging" (Spitulnik 1993, 295) does not quite cover then what it is to be Asian in the West. If Asians are defined by being "not something else, really", it might be more appropriate to say, Asians are characterised by an imagined common non-belonging. Addressing and mitigating this narrative of Asian non-belonging, and finding belonging not just despite it, but within it, drives Asian panethnicity as a performative identity.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Frameworks

In this thesis I argue that there is an emergent Asian panethnicity in Australia and in Aotearoa New Zealand, and that this Asian panethnicity is fundamentally performative. To date, major studies on the topic have typically described panethnicity as a sense of solidarity in shared oppression or political circumstances, manifested in formal organisation and collective action. However, in this thesis, I use these panethnic manifestations – for example the creation of panethnically named organisations, self-identification as Asian through participation in social groups, the proliferation of Asian-designated cultural products – as byproducts of a panethnicity that is actually experienced by the individual on a subjective level. This practice, both solitary and shared, I have argued, is performative – in that certain ways of acting are required – and performed – in that it is creatively and agentively enacted in response to that imposition.

Understanding panethnicity, the ways that it is being creatively performed, experienced and mobilised, in a range of national and sub-national contexts is crucial for our developing understandings of race and racism, nation and nationalism, and their associated new and emergent forms of identity politics. This is an ongoing and urgent task, as these ideologies continue to be deployed even as part of the Western project of multiculturalism.

Like its progenitor ethnicity, panethnicity has been given many different definitions. At the outset, it can be very broadly operationally defined as: "the grouping of multiple nationalities and ethnicities under a single label" (Bozorgmehr, Ong and Tosh 2016, 727). Panethnicity can be layered with other forms of identification. It is shaped by social forces, from inside and outside the panethnic group, the locally specific, the transnational, the imagined. It can be mobilised politically. It can be claimed by the individual, with that claim then negotiated, validated or invalidated by others. As an identity it is performative. It involves the repetition of acts over time, and in that repetition there is both coercion and agency at work.

This chapter summarises influential theories of ethnicity and discusses their applicability to the study of panethnicity. I provide a definition of panethnicity as a

social phenomenon, and consider some of the main ways the concept has been used. I also set out the limitations of the panethnic model as I see them, and say how I propose to use the concepts of performativity and performance to overcome these limitations.

Theories of Ethnicity

The varied theories on ethnicity are usually arranged into two very broad groups: primordialist[19] – those which focus on "communities of culture" – and instrumentalist – those which instead emphasise "communities of interests" (Cornell in Espiritu 1992, 3). Primordialist approaches characterise ethnic groups as sharing a number of circumscribable traits: a common name, a myth of common ancestry or descent, a shared history, one or more elements of a common culture, a link with a homeland, and a sense of solidarity amongst at least some members (Smith and Hutchinson 1996, 6-7). The power of these shared traits is described by Clifford Geertz in an oft-cited passage from "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States":

> By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the "givens" – or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed "givens" – of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbor, one's fellow believer, ipso facto; as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest or incurred obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself. The general strength of such primordial bonds, and the types of them that are important, differ from person to person, from society to society, and from time to time. (Geertz 1973, 259)

---

[19] Primordialist is sometimes called circumstantialist or transactionalist.

Primordialism, as expressed by Geertz in the above quote and by others before and since, has been widely dismissed, for its "reified, ahistorical quality" (Hoben and Hefner 1991, 23); it neglects to take into account the practical effects of self-interest, doesn't address the role the state plays in reshaping allegiances (particularly in colonial contexts), sees tradition and culture as static (Hoben and Hefner 1991, 23-24), fails to differentiate ethnic group behaviour and consciousness from other kinds of group behaviour and consciousness, and assumes that "recruitment" to ethnic groups is one-off and final (Hlophe 1973, 240). As such, primordialism has become a "view of ethnicity that authors cite only in order to distance themselves from it" (Banks 1996, 185). Before I too distance myself from it, it is worth noting that although much maligned, and often dismissed out of hand, primordialist and primordialist-leaning works on ethnicity can be too easily misconstrued, even "caricatured" (Jenkins 1997, 45). Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov argue that with the rise of constructionist approaches to ethnicity, primordialist positions have been trivialised as "naturalizing" and "essentializing" (2004, 49). What this critique misses is that there is a difference between primordial attachments as actual "givens" and primordial attachments as "assumed givens" or "perceived givens", an important distinction that is made in the Geertz' passage above. The primordialists are, in fact, "analysts of naturalizers", rather than "analytic naturalizers" (Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov Loveman 2004, 49), who accept the importance of these kinds of affective bonds to the people being studied (Banks 1996, 185).[20]

However, it is not enough to treat affective bonds as givens. I do not adopt a primordialist approach in this thesis, because as a system of analysis it does not satisfactorily address the social and structural conditions that cause ethnic groups to change, or to emerge. Pivotal to contemporary ethnicity studies, and particularly to panethnicity studies, is the acceptance that ethnicity cannot be reduced to roots, or shared traditions or a common heritage (Yancey, Erickson and Juliani 1976, 400; Nederveen Pieterse 2007, 25-26).

---

[20] With regard to panethnicity specifically, it may be that the naturalisers are not those who claim a panethnic identity, but those who impose a racialised one. "Assumed givens", or "perceived shared cultural or physical traits" (Stevens 2018, 44) are used by majorities or the dominant group to lump together minority groups "with little or no common history, language or association" (Stevens 2018, 44).

Fredrik Barth was incredibly influential in directing ethnicity studies towards the study of ethnic groups as "communities of interest". In his introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969) Barth described ethnicity as a process largely set in motion by actors themselves, who are able to generate, maintain and shift boundaries between ethnic groups (1969, 10). By redirecting analytic attention from the "cultural stuff" enclosed by ethnic boundaries, to the boundaries themselves, Barth argued that ethnic groups are socially constructed (1969, 15). While the belief in being culturally distinct from others informs the social and exclusionary character of ethnicity, ethnicity is the strategic use of culture; ethnicity is not the culture itself. Barth's approach has had some detractors – it has been criticised for not valuing the role of solidarity (Jenkins 2014, 810), for its rigidity, and for overemphasising the cultural nature of ethnicity. Further, cleanly separating cultural content from ethnic categories as the "organisational vessels" that house that content, makes it more difficult to grapple with the dynamism of ethnicity as a "variable" (Cohen 1974, xv; Yancey, Erickson and Juliani 1976: 399). These critiques are compelling, but my fieldwork demonstrates that, like Barth's performances of ethnicity, performances of panethnicity can often function as a kind of boundary maintenance. In that Asian panethnicity is politically prompted and creatively done, the why and how of *who* is Asian, can be seen as a social negotiation of in group/out group divides, by Asian people themselves.

In *Custom & Politics in Urban Africa* (1969) Abner Cohen wrote that ethnicity is "basically a political and not a cultural phenomenon, and it operates within contemporary political contexts and is not an archaic survival arrangement carried over into the present by conservative people" (1969, 190). Vehemently instrumentalist, Cohen stressed that ethnic identity is claimed for political and economic reasons, not psychological ones. Ethnicity, always relational, is a "form of interaction between culture groups operating within common social contexts" (Cohen 1974: xi). It brings people together to serve a purpose within those contexts (Eriksen 2012, 1; Banks 1996, 39). Marcus Banks described this view of ethnicity – "manifested in a *perception* of common origins, as well as in group interaction" (1996, 79), as the one favoured by anthropologists. In comparison, political scientists

or sociologists saw: "ethnicity as a product of modernity and manifested in group action" (Banks 1996, 79).

The sociological approach to ethnicity describes it as a form of civil organisation resulting from the rise of the nation state (Olzak 1983: 358; Björklund 1987: 21). Modernisation and bureaucratisation, the regulation of capitalism, politicisation of daily life, and the "formalization of the relations between politicians and their constituencies, between authorities and their subjects motivate people to invent new types of participatory democracy and to proclaim new ideologies" (Björklund 1987: 22). The modern state prompts political participation based on demands and grievances directed at the state from collectives that fall under "ascriptive statuses". An ethnic group is one such collective. Ethnic mobilisation – collective action organised around ethnic markers (Olzak 1983: 357) – is a response to ethnically determined political access and resource competition (Nagel 1994: 244).[21] As a unifying identity, ethnicity enables a group to gather numbers, momentum and political standing with which "to maximize its power in this competition for resources" (Lee 1994, 186). This structural and "goal-directed" (Banks 1996, 35) view of ethnicity most strongly informs contemporary studies of panethnicity.

Panethnicity

> Panethnicity refers to the development of bridging organizations and the generalization of solidarity among heterogeneous subgroups that are racialized to be homogeneous by outsiders. As such, panethnic groups are not biologically differentiated groupings but are social, cultural and legal constructions. Whatever their basis of affinity, pan-movements involve shifts in levels of group identification from smaller boundaries to larger-level affiliations. These developments cannot be explained adequately by the dominant theories in the field of U.S. immigration studies—theories of assimilation, amalgamation, "melting pot," or cultural pluralism. As an emergent phenomenon, panethnicity focuses attention on ethnic change—on

---

[21] The political construction of ethnicity and the allocation of resources along ethnic lines raises questions of "eligibility" and "authenticity" (Povinelli 2002), failing to meet the standards of which can lead to accusations of "ethnic fraud" (Nagel 1994: 248).

the "contingent, changeable, partial, inconstant, and ultimately social" nature of group boundaries and identities. (Espiritu 2016, 1, similarly defined in Espiritu 1992, 14; Lopez and Espiritu 1990)

Linked fate

In the wake of the US civil rights era, commentators observed the political mobilisation of diverse, and otherwise unrelated ethnic groups, under new names (Bozorgmehr, Ong and Tosh 2016, 727). As an exercise of strength in numbers, this enabled different groups to "be more efficiently mobilized under one manageable heading" (Lee 1994, 186) and pool their political resources (Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000, 227). In early work on this topic (1984; 1985), Felix Padilla coined the term "Latinismo" to describe a "situational type of group identity and consciousness" (1984, 651) amongst Latin/x in the US. Padilla observed the "creation and adoption of a Latino ethnic identity, separate and distinct from individual ethnic identifications of Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans", and attempted to understand Latin/x as an ethnic group by "treating 'Latinos' as a collective and emergent type of group form created out of the interethnic relations of at least two Spanish-speaking groups during some situations or historical moments" (Padilla 1984, 651). Steve Tammelleo has since elaborated on the historical process of Latin/x ethnic identity formation within a US context, using the term "Hispanic identity". Starting in 1848 with the US acquisition of parts of Mexico, followed by the 1898 acquisition of Puerto Rico, this identity is in part a product of the historical codified racism directed at Latin Americans in the US (Tammelleo 2011: 541) and has been developed through the continued arrival of Latin/x migrants (2011: 547), and supported by the shared Spanish language.[22] For Alejandro Portes, Spanish language is the single criterion for the title Hispanic. Though this label was intended to corral Spanish speakers for bureaucratic purposes (Portes 1992: 139), it spawned a reactive ethnic category.

One of the most significant works on panethnicity is Yen Le Espiritu's *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities.* Published in 1992,

---

[22] For Jose Itzigsohn and Carlos Dore-Cabral, a common language is one of three possible prerequisites for panethnicity, alongside a common culture and/or a common regional origin (2000, 226).

Espiritu's book popularised the word panethnicity as a social science term, and provided the model that is still the most often used (Bozorgmehr, Ong and Tosh 2016, 729). In formulating a framework for panethnicity, Espiritu applied the social construction thesis of ethnicity to the coming together of diverse groups of people under the name Asian American. She considered a possible panethnic solidarity at work in electoral politics, in responses to the allocation of social services funding, in ethnic enumeration for census purposes, and as a "reactive solidarity" in the face of anti-Asian violence.

The case-study for anti-Asian violence and panethnic solidarity was the 1982 killing of Vincent Chin, a fifth-generation Chinese American. More so than the other areas Espiritu examined, the Asian-led protests that followed cut across class, generational, political and ethno-national lines (Espiritu 1992, 145). Chin, a Detroit draftsman, was celebrating his bachelor party at a local bar where he encountered two White auto industry workers. The two killers, who blamed Japanese auto imports for the difficulties facing the American motor industry, mistook Chin for Japanese. Later in the evening, after stalking Chin, the two men beat him to death with a baseball bat. Neither of the two killers, both of whom pleaded guilty to manslaughter, received jail time for the crime. Even more so than the murder itself, the lenient sentencing sparked protests and mobilised the Asian American community (Wu 2010: 17-18). The fact that it was not just Japanese who were at risk of attack, but all those who could be mistaken for Japanese, spurred panethnic consolidation (Espiritu 1992, 145). As the protests gathered momentum, recognition that all Asian ethnic minority groups may be at constant risk of racialisation and therefore racist attack, expanded the Asian American movement beyond just East Asians (Espiritu 1992, 146).[23]

Since then, other focusses of panethnic research have been residential segregation along ethnic lines (Kim and White 2010), class based action stemming from the racial segregation of some labour markets (Okamoto 2003; 2014), in-depth analysis of voting trends (Min 2014), the emergence of Asian leaders (Okamoto 2014) and

---

[23] Asian solidarity following racist attacks against Asians happened in New Zealand as well (Mok 2004).

the creation of panethnic media outlets or panethnic organisations (Stevens 2018, 46). An element in all of these areas of focus is the possibility of a shared consciousness within a panethnic group, or, at least a sense of shared fate.[24] Political scientist Tae Eun Min defines panethnicity as "psychological solidarity" and elaborates that "when Asian Americans and Latinos feel that both their individual interests and their national group's success (or failure) depend on the fate of other groups of Asian Americans and Latinos, it is an expression of a sense of solidarity" (Min 2014, 700, 701).

Classification

For Dina G. Okamoto and Cristina Mora, panethnicity is defined by the unique "tension derived from maintaining subgroup distinctions while developing a sense of metagroup unity" (2014, 221; Okamoto 2014).[25] Panethnicity does not just recognise the diversity of its subgroups, but in fact relies on it in order to perpetuate itself. Panethnicity is overarching, as opposed to overriding, and the layering of ethnic and panethnic affiliations speaks to the contextual and fluid nature of identities. Individuals may at times choose how to position themselves, identifying panethnically or ethno-nationally, depending on the situation in which they find themselves (Stevens 2018, 44). A British study suggests people of Vietnamese heritage may choose either the broader category of "Oriental",[26] or the ethno-national category "Vietnamese", depending on which provides the best outcome in the given moment (Barber 2015, 105) and Caribbean-born women in America may similarly decide whether or not to adopt a panethnic Black identification (McFarlane 2010, 104). An "American Indian might be a 'mixed-blood' on the reservation, from 'Pine Ridge' when speaking to someone from another reservation, a 'Sioux' or 'Lakota' when responding to the US census, and 'Native American' when interacting with non-Indians" (Nagel 1994: 241).

---

[24] What in ethnicity studies has been called a "presumed consciousness of kind" (Yancey, Erickson and Juliani 1976, 400).

[25] The importance of acknowledging subgroup diversity to maintain panethnic unity will be addressed in Chapter 5.

[26] "Oriental" being a term of self-identification in Britain that is generally not used in the US, New Zealand or Australia.

There is flexibility available to some individuals at some times when it comes to claiming an ethnic, panethnic or racial identity. Though, the examples above do not just speak to freedom and fluidity, but also convenience and constraints. The fact that these strategic decisions are often made to minimise negative social consequences, reveals a significant point of weakness in a "narrowly instrumentalist" (Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov 2004, 51) approach to identity. A purely "situational" (Okamura 1981) view stresses choice and the manipulated nature of ethnicity and panethnicity as though these are things over which actors have conscious and constant control (Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov 2004, 51). However, racism, and other hierarchical social classifications can make some identifications a forced choice, and others a non-option. New immigrants may assess different identity options based on their impression of racial and ethnic dynamics operating in the country to which they have immigrated (Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000, 227). "For immigrants of color, however, the ethnic choices are severely restricted by the imposition of racial and ethnic labels by mainstream society" (Waters in Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000, 227).

It is rare to see ethnicity, panethnicity and race, as well as nationality, analysed without reference to each other. As theories of human boundary-making they cross-pollinate. Barth's argument, though intended to apply to ethnicity, applies also to race and nation (Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov 2004, 32). Benedict Anderson's work on nations as imagined communities (1983) is frequently invoked in ethnicity and panethnicity studies. Michael Omi and Howard Winant's work on racial formation in the US as a social process (first published 1986) has been valuable in panethnicity studies, as has Michael Banton's writing on race (1983; 1998).[27] Panethnicity, ethnicity and race, rather than being "things in the world" are "way[s] of seeing the world" (Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov 2004, 47). Not just constructed, but constructed by analysts (Banks 1996, 187) as a tool that catalogues and categorises perceived differences between people and renders them comparable (Eriksen 2012, 1). Ideas of racial, ethnic and panethnic groups can often be conceived via the same theoretical frameworks, but it is necessary to commit to a differentiation between

---

[27] Work on race performativity is valuable to work on ethnic performativity and later in this thesis I will rely on both.

them. Usually, ethnicity is seen as more "cultural", and "voluntary", while race is perceived as "physical" and "imposed" (Banton 1983, 10). Race involves "constructing the 'Other' as 'fixed', natural and hailed by the self-evident attribute of not being the same" (Hall in Barber 2015, 58).

The distinction between panethnicity and race is on similar grounds. Race is an imposed categorisation of difference. Panethnicity is a response to that imposed categorisation, by those who have been categorised. What characterises the panethnic group as opposed to the racial group, is the agency of those who choose to claim a panethnic title (Stevens 2018, 44; Okamoto 2003, 812[28]). Although, as I will argue in this thesis, this response is not composed only of intentional political resistance or deliberate group mobilisation. The emphasis on imposed categorisation and exclusion from the mainstream is a primary feature that distinguishes theories of panethnicity from theories of ethnicity. Espiritu took issue with instrumentalist (and also primordialist) studies of ethnicity for their inadequate consideration of these catalysing elements of group making. Even transactionalist and instrumentalist approaches to ethnicity, in their championing of choice, often neglect to fully address the impact of external categorisation (1992: 6).[29] "Panethnicity is at root the product of externally formed boundaries of exclusion" (Stevens 2018, 44), "constructed in part or wholly as a mode of resistance to the imposition of racial identity by the state and civil society" (Lee 1994, 9).

Regional focusses

To date, panethnicity research has been fixated on a limited number of panethnic groups, and mostly in the US setting (Okamoto and Mora 2014; Stevens 2018, 44), "where racial/panethnic categories like 'Asian', 'African-American', 'non-Hispanic white', 'American Indian', or 'Latino', not only carry discursive weight but have also been institutionally validated through census enumeration and, significantly, resource

---

[28] In her 2003 "Toward a Theory of Panethnicity: Explaining Asian American Collective Action", Dina Okamoto uses the words "pan-national" and "panethnic" interchangeably (Okamoto 2003, 812).

[29] Since the publication of *Asian American Panethnicity*, classification and categorisation, both self-categorisation and categorisation by others, has been a greater focus in ethnicity studies (Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov 2004, 32). Richard Jenkins has theorised a two-way process of internal definition and external definition (1997, 53). He acknowledges the possibility of one group of actors imposing categorisation on another, but it is not the focus of his discussion (1997, 53).

allocation" (Stevens 2018, 44). There are gaps in the literature due to this limited focus. Asian Americans and Latin/x are both groups whose panethnogenesis occurred soon after the civil rights era. It has been argued that there is a possible sample-selection bias in existing scholarship, and the historical specificity of these case studies may complicate the application of current panethnicity frameworks to contemporary contexts (Bozorgmehr, Ong and Tosh 2016, 727). Mehdi Bozorgmehr, Paul Ong and Sarah Tosh noted that the existing panethnicity model should predict an emergent panethnic category for Middle Easterners and South Asians (either separately or as one large group) in post-9/11 USA. These groups experienced racialisation, hostility and demonisation and also had the potential to borrow from political strategies shown to be effective by Asian Americans and Latin/x, who in turn had borrowed from preceding civil rights movements. However, they found no such panethnicity had emerged (2016, 727).

Population demographics, social structural issues in cities and neighbourhoods, contact between different ethnic, cultural and language groups, as well as the inclusionary or exclusionary practices of the state are important contributors to panethnic organisation (Okamoto and Mora 2014, 229-230). In their comprehensive review of panethnicity, Okamoto and Mora suggested comparative studies as an avenue for further research to develop panethnicity as an area of study (2014) – comparative both in the sense of analysing more than one group at a time in the one region, and also looking to other regional and historical contexts. This thesis is an effort to help expand ethnicity studies beyond the confines of the US to the Antipodes. In this effort, I join a relatively small group.

In New Zealand, an ethnographic study of East Asian and South East Asian international students in Auckland found a Pan-Asian identity predicated on proximity and "shared regional association" (Benson and Rahman 2007, 205). The participants in the study were united by relationships formed via and across Appadurai's scapes (1996), helped along by the influence of ASEAN (Benson and Rahman 2007: 205). According to this study, shared Confucian values were apparent amongst all the students (not just those who were Chinese), with participants exhibiting family loyalty, studiousness, polite manners and respect for social harmony (2007: 208).

In Australia, anthropologist Catriona Stevens used quantitative and qualitative methods to search for Asian panethnicity in Perth, Western Australia (2018). Drawing from the 2011 Census, Stevens combined country of birth, language and ancestry responses to undertake a spatial analysis of ethno-national group distribution in the Perth metropolitan area. Her findings were more suggestive of ethnic residential segregation than panethnic or racial segregation (2018, 49). The qualitative element of her project drew from interview data with Chinese migrants living in Perth[30] and participant observation with the Chung Wah Association – a community organisation that provides support and services to Asian migrants – and the Chung Wah Community and Aged Care organisation (2018, 47). She found no evidence of panethnic affiliation or identification as a result of this fieldwork. I do not think that Stevens' fieldwork was very well suited to the task of discovering panethnicity. However, she does confirm an important observation – panethnicity is largely performed by middle class, university educated, English speaking and often native-born Asian people[31] (Lee 1994, 9) and has come to signify "'bourgeois' politics" (Espiritu 1992, 53). She names a number of Australian forums, particularly academic or arts platforms[32] dedicated to the topic of what it means to be Asian in Australia, and a kind of panethnic advocacy. She finds that: "this niche and often elitist panethnic work seems far removed from the experiences of many new migrants from Asian countries living in Perth, distanced by language, by geography (as such work is predominantly in the eastern states) and frequently also by migrant generation" (Stevens 2018, 53-54).

Relevant to the kind of panethnic activity observed in my fieldwork, is Kirsten McGavin's research about panethnic Pacific Islander identity in the Australian context. McGavin describes re-traditionalisation – "The idea that some elements of material or intangible culture may be appropriated from Islander cultures other than the actor's own" (2014, 146) – as part of Nesian or Islander identity. This cultural borrowing and sharing results from the permeability of boundaries between Island

---

[30] These interviews were conducted as part of another research project.
[31] Though Robert Lee encourages consideration of what he sees as the "transnational working class character of Asian America" (1994, 186).
[32] A footnote provides examples of these forums: the 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, the magazine *Peril*, arts festival BrisAsia, and the Asian Australian Studies Research Network. My research has in part involved engagement with "niche" and "elitist" panethnic work of this kind.

nations – not separated by the sea but connected by it (2014, 129) – as well as the practical difficulties diasporic Islander people face in maintaining access to cultural knowledge and resources (2014, 146).[33] Particularly relevant for my purposes is McGavin's assessment of Diasporic Islander identity as including "connecting to place", "material culture", "association with other Islanders (whether or not these are people from the same Island)" and "behaviour" (McGavin 2014, 140). This account of panethnicity recognises its day to day enactments, including how they are carried out in relation to humour, and via the use of social media.[34] McGavin's approach is personal and autoethnographic, and focussed around a diasporic community.[35] She takes up Tracy McFarlane's use of panethnicity as "an identity label that 'transcend[s] national boundaries and [allows the formation of communities] based on cultural background and similarity of experiences prior to and since' becoming part of a diaspora"[36] (McGavin 2014, 127) to conclude that "panethnic identities are solidified in diasporic settings" (McGavin 2014, 140).

Transnationalism and Diaspora

Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* details the rise of nationalism and the role of print-capitalism in building fraternity between diverse sub-communities of people (1983). As well as referring to the symbolic value of a shared written language and the practical consequences of increased literacy, print-capitalism also refers to rapid developments in communication technologies that allow information and ideas to be disseminated quickly, to a massive audience. Similarly, the global reach of today's mass media, the boom in digital communications and the internet have made it "possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about

---

[33] McGavin describes things like using words from a language that is not your own, wearing dress not from "your island", performing hula, etc. In the literature on Asian identity, I have not found instances of re-traditionalisation, with the possible exception of "She's really become Japanese now" (Jong-Chul Yoon 2001), about a Los Angeles based taiko drumming group. Despite being a distinctly Japanese musical style, the group has non-Japanese Asian members, who see taiko as an expression of Asian culture. Outside the literature, when Asian cross-cultural borrowing occurs, it is an explicit and self-aware use of stereotypes in order to subvert them, or a heightened appreciation of other Asian cuisines, products, popular culture and entertainment. Re-traditionalisation amongst Asians could be the subject of future research into panethnicity.

[34] I address Humour in Chapter 6 and social media (but to a lesser degree) in Chapter 9.

[35] Diaspora as a unifying "form of consciousness" is strictly avoided by some other scholars, who see it as homogenising (Aly 2015, 14).

[36] McFarlane used this definition to describe Caribbean-born people in the US (McFarlane 2011, 101).

themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways" (Anderson 1983, 36). Anderson's work has been critical not just for thinking about nationhood, but also because it is usefully applied to ethnicity, as well as diaspora and "imagined communities" that cut across national borders. Studies of transnationalism and "transnational ethnicity" indicate that allegiances and moral ties may persist for generations, in large part owing to improved telecommunications technologies and the cheaper cost of air travel. (Eriksen 2012, 7). When it comes to these kinds of "transnational social worlds", there are competing assumptions as to how likely transnational ties are to exist or persist where there is contact and incorporation into a mainstream population. Arguments that minority identities become less salient in this scenario challenge assertions that ethnic boundaries tend to be strengthened during intensified intergroup contact (Somerville 2008, 25; Eriksen 2012, 2; Barth 1969). Ien Ang discusses the relationship between identification with a distant homeland and marginalisation within the host land (1999, 555). Kara Somerville observes that country migrant groups may "assert their transnational connection and identification to avoid negative racialized identities and to compensate for their lack of inclusion in the mainstream" (2008, 25). In New Zealand, Voci and Leckie (2011) have argued that personal histories, localised experiences and contexts are at least as relevant as ethnic and diasporic relations and may be even more powerful than ancestral ties to a now foreign motherland.

I agree with Okamoto and Mora's diplomatic approach. Panethnic identities are played out in local contexts, shaped by broad geopolitical conditions and relations between states, and transnational processes (2014, 231). Panethnic identities may be transmitted to different countries through visits, through contact with migrants, and through the consumption of transnational media (Okamoto and Mora 2014, 231). For my purposes, this international exchange is not just between Asian countries and Western countries, but between Asian communities in Western countries. The conditions of modernity blur the public and private, the at-home and not-at-home. Existing as they do within a globalised media landscape, identities today, particularly youth identities are "constituted within a range of salient discourses" (Ríos-Rojas 2011, 67), including those discourses that are found or constructed online, or otherwise removed from a specific physical locale. As a function of ideology, media can construct an image of the lives of different groups of people, in turn providing

representations of how these images ought to be brought together to suggest the "whole" (Hall in Spitulnik 1993, 295). It is within this shifting landscape that "identities are actually reaffirmed" (Georgiou 2001, 312). It allows for new imaginative horizons, as well as for the "widespread sharing of intimacies" (Ringmar 2007, 107).[37] However, while I accept and consider the "deterritorialized conditions of imaginative resources and practice" (Ong 1999, 11), I do not ignore the importance of the local in recontextualising transnational media (Khoo 2008, 2).

I have generally avoided using transnationalism, hybridity and cosmopolitanism as frameworks to examine Asian identity. A lot of the work done under these frameworks is valuable in illuminating certain aspects of minority identity construction, particularly for people considered "diasporic", or otherwise marginalised. But I feel that hybridity and cosmopolitanism can speak to a kind of mobility that is often only practiced by "elites", and a fetishisation of this mobility as a means to radical agency. To use these frameworks here would be to neglect individuals' desire for an often quite situated belonging.[38]

The limitations of panethnicity

So far, panethnicity has been largely understood as an intentional form of group mobilisation for political ends. It has "conventionally only been measured at the group level" (Bozorgmehr, Ong and Tosh 2016, 729). In their "Panethnicity revisited: contested group boundaries in the post-9/11 era", Mehdi Bozorgmehr, Paul Ong and Sarah Tosh go so far as to state that "panethnicity does not necessarily occur on a subjective individual basis" (2016, 729). While this is an assumption that seems to follow quite naturally from the bulk of panethnicity writing, my fieldwork has convinced me that it is mistaken. To date, "manifestations" of panethnicity such as the creation of organisations and media platforms, political mobilisation and trends in

---

[37] Recognising the effects of globalisation also has ramifications for the practice of anthropology: "The old conceit of the bounded field as something out 'there', separate from the 'here' where the anthropologist works and produces knowledge, and where their audience also dwells, is now untenable (Lins Ribeiro 2016, 628), especially "amid the contemporary global flows of trade, politics, migrations, ecology, and the mass media" (Narayan, K. (1993, 673).

[38] Ghassan Hage has spoken of "the migrant's needs for roots" and criticised "the whole rhizomatic, always on a 'route' to nowhere, approach to the diasporic condition" (2005, 467).

civic participation have been treated not as symptoms or byproducts of panethnicity, but as panethnicity itself.[39] I argue that we need to instead treat these manifestations as an access point into panethnicity as performative and performed.

Performativity

Even when acknowledging ethnicity's social, relational and changing character we risk speaking of it as something if not innate, at least possessed. A cluster of underlying factors that are brought forth, a kind of "true" or "core" self that is asserted, an internal "ethnic-ness" manifested externally. Alternatively, ethnicity is presented as an "artefact" fashioned and polished to serve a specific purpose in specific circumstances. But Asian panethnicity, and ethnicity are not things that can be quantified as isolated properties people may "have" as a result of being born to a group, or "have made" as a result of jealous encounters with other groups. Nor do I think that panethnicity is best described by deliberate and collective action that is then sustained via the invention of culture and sentiment (Espiritu 1992, 11).[40]

Marcus Banks' definition of ethnicity as "a collection of rather simplistic and obvious statements about boundaries, otherness, goals and achievements, being and identity, descent and classification, that has been constructed as much by the anthropologist as by the subject" (1996, 190) strikes close to the bone. But, as he also writes: "it is too late to kill it off or pronounce it dead; the discourse on ethnicity has escaped from the academy and into the field" (Banks 1996, 189). Ethnicity is an analytical invention that groups of people have come to use to describe and understand themselves, and others. Part of this thesis is seeing what the discourse on ethnicity is doing out in the world. Panethnicity may be the project of people who are very articulate in matters of diversity and multiculturalism. But beyond this, is it a real thing that exists?[41] My answer is that it exists only insomuch as it is performed.

---

[39] The blurring of different but related concepts in studies of panethnicity has been identified by Tae Eun Min. He critiques the way in which empirical studies of Asian American and Latin/x panethnicity have sometimes conflated panethnic self-identification with a sense of solidarity, and sometimes treat panethnicity, group consciousness and even collective action as interchangeable. (2014, 699, 702).

[40] It may be useful to reformulate the question of how culture and tradition is invented, to "Against what are traditions invented?" (Thomas in Carrier 1995, 3).

[41] Omi and Winant's racial formation theory sees race as real because it is "real in its consequences" (2012, 963).

Rather than being innate, cultural, the inevitable outcome of local structural conditions, or a calculated means to a political end, I argue that Asian panethnicity is performative. "Asianness" is constituted by doing. This "doing" can be, at different times and in different settings, externally compelled, internally compelled, self-conscious, creative, an act of rebellion and resistance, and/or fun. Asian panethnicity is characterised by a tension between these things.

Judith Butler's formulation of gender sees it as a performative that does not spring from a stable or preexisting gender identity. Instead "what is called gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo" (Butler 1988, 520). It is the "stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 1988, 519; 1990: 140), over time that constitute gender identity. Butler's use of performativity to account for the formation of the gendered subject (1988, 1990) has been adopted and adapted by writers on race and ethnicity, wherein categorical labels are "best understood not as a form of authentic 'being' but as repertoires of 'doing'" (Aly 2015, 7). An immediate effect of reframing race and ethnicity as performatives (or performances) is that as an approach, it is inherently deconstructive or de-essentialising – it rejects the fixity or foundationalism of identity[42] (Kondo 1997, 7; Barber 2015, 56; Canham and Williams 2017, 24). Further, "a critical project attuned to knowing the performativity of race is indeed better suited to decipher what work race does in the world" (Muñoz 2006, 679).

In writing about the Black, middle class subject, Canham and Williams conclude that it is "regulation and reification of institutions and practices […] that give rise to identity categories such as blackness and whiteness" (Canham and Williams 2017, 24). These regulatory and reifying practices present some ideals as "normal", placing constraints upon the subject and punishing those who transgress the norms (Butler 1993, 2). Performative identity does not endow the subject with endless possibilities and render identities completely fluid or "radically free" (Butler et al in Aly 2015, 19).

---

[42] Though, for some writers on the topic it can be fraught to assert, not just to the anthropological world but to the world of their field (to which they may also belong) that there is no "essence" or "specialness" or "innate" quality to their ethnic identity. In writing about the performativity of Arabness in London, Ramy Aly expresses nervousness at the outset of his project: "How will readers in the Arab world react to the way I question the existence of any a priori essence which might constitute 'Arab womanhood' or 'Arab manhood'?" (2015, 7).

The repeated acts or citations performativity requires are "never merely the voluntary choices of a humanist subject; rather, they are the product of constitutive constraints that create identities, creative performances elicited under duress" (Kondo 1997, 7).

Performativity vs Performance, Structure vs Agency

> Cultural theorists like to engage with the idea that, like gender/sex, ethnicity/race can be performed and modified through performance. In working with Butler's insights they usually take one of two basic approaches: a "cosmopolitan" approach that calls attention to the fact that modern subjects have arrived at a stage where they can try out and "consume aspects of ethnicity or a political stance that wants to instrumentalize the performance of ethnicity to actively change negative scripts associated with aspects of ethnicity. Both approaches stress individual and collective agency and deemphasize the idea that identity-forming processes are so complex that they withstand redirection. (Mueller and Hofmann 2017, 8-9).

Performance and performativity are sometimes used interchangeably however, their differentiation as "make-believe" and "make-belief" (Schechner 2002, 42), has dramatic implications for the subject actor (Brickell 2005, 25; Aly 2015 27). "Performance" is often associated with the work of Victor Turner (1982; 1992) concerned with ritual, rites, and other aspects of public culture and cultural performance. The writings of Richard Schechner, frequent collaborator with Turner, (1985; 1988) have helped found the field of inquiry that is called performance studies. Performance also references Erving Goffman's work (1959) on everyday interactions examined as a form of theatrical performance (Sullivan 2012). "Performativity", on the other hand, is more occupied with the deconstruction of hegemonic discourses (Aly 2015, 28). Ramy Aly, who uses the term performativity in his writing, sums up debates about performativity and performance as being fundamentally concerned with the question of structure and agency (2015, 28).[43] The

---

[43] Mueller and Hofmann instead describe it as "contingency vs intent" (2017, 1).

seeming lack of room for agency, and the disappearing of the subject actor, is a commonly cited issue with Butler's performativity (Brickell 2005) .[44]

Many scholars of performativity and performance have managed, however, to discuss both the constraining effects of discourse, and the space of agency[45] – "the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style" (Butler 1988, 520). José Esteban Muñoz wrote about prescriptive cultural logic that coerces performance, (2006, 680) but offered "minoritarian performance" as a world-making endeavour of powerful potential (1999). John Clammer talks about ethnic and racial labelling and the assignment of identity, but argues "assigned identity can be contested, confirmed, elaborated, or even satirized by the response that is elicited by that labelling" (2015, 2159). In *About Face*, an important work of counter-Orientalism on the performance arenas of Asian American theatre and Japanese fashion, Dorinne Kondo discusses a performativity of Asian American identity that both reproduces and undermines discourses of race (1997, 6).

The tensions between structure and agency, between imposition and creative response, line up with similar tensions that trouble theories of panethnicity. For me, Butler's writing on gender performativity does include the potential for agency. She writes, for example: "In its very character as performative resides the possibility of contesting its reified status" (Butler 1988, 520). However, thinking of panethnicity in purely performative terms does not necessarily equip me with the tools I need to address the agency in panethnicity.[46] I therefore supplement performativity with theories of performance. Considering Goffman's theories of performance in conjunction with performativity helps to clarify issues of subjectivity and agency, and sociality (Brickell 2005, 29). By relying on Goffman's dramaturgy (which I do in Chapter 6), my aim is not to empty out the political or level out the power imbalances and coercion that do characterise ethnic difference. Instead, I look to dramaturgy because it provides rigorous ways to examine scenarios and commonplace

---

[44] Aly acknowledges this critique of Butler's work but does not agree with it. His work centres on ethnicity and race as "forced recitation[s]" (2015, 29) imposed by the discourses of ethnonormativity (2015, 30).
[45] Similarly, Homi Bhabha's post-colonial hybridity is both regulatory and potentially transgressive (1994).
[46] But on the other hand, the cosmopolitan viewpoint adopted by some Asian area studies scholars suggests a radical mobility that I do not see reflected in my fieldwork.

interactions between individuals who have their own interests and intentions. These examinations can reveal that some parties to a given social transaction have more at stake than other parties.

Thesis Overview

Before starting this thesis, I was obviously aware that some people were sometimes described as Asian. I could be described this way, and had been, though it was not a term that I typically applied to myself. Growing up, I did not identify as Asian, nor was I aware of other people who described themselves as Asian. However in more recent times, I began to regularly encounter people who did. Not only did they name themselves Asian, but they would name others as Asian, and, quite often they would name me Asian. And, I found that when this happened, I enjoyed it. "Asian" seemed like a club, and being a member of that club, looked like fun. This thesis considers the shift from Asian being something you were called by non-Asians, to Asian being something you were called by other Asians.

I describe Asian panethnicity as a performative and performed identity in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. As an identity, a performative, it is inescapably political. As already discussed, existing literature on Asian identity and panethnicity addresses the deliberate and premeditated political actions of those who are claiming the title Asian – by this I mean things like engaging with government, civic participation, the creation of formal organisations and publications. This focus is too narrow. My fieldwork demonstrates that panethnicity is not just instrumental; it is not only performed with instrumental ends in mind. Asian panethnicity can be, and is, enjoyed. And this enjoyment motivates people.

Panethnicity is of course shaped by and made possible by political processes and global circumstances. More importantly for my purposes, it is shaped by and made possible by perceptions and ideas of and around those processes and circumstances. There are power dynamics and social forces at work on the individual that I acknowledge and of which participants in this research spoke. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, about Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand respectively, I mention some of the particulars: historical context, racist legislation and immigration policy

and other elements of the legacy of imperialism. This is not the main focus of this work. A chronology or explicit outline of the historical events that catalyse panethnic affiliations is not the goal of this thesis. I use words like colonialism, colonisation, Orientalism, the West and Western. In the thesis these concepts are working abstractions. I show some of the ways in which these abstractions are interpreted and felt by participants.

When talking about these abstractions – the West, the Orient, etc – I am not occupied with establishing causal relationships between larger structural conditions, the creation of identity, and the advent of political organisation. Pinpointing or connecting links in a causal chain, is not the goal. Instead, I point out limitations in the academic literature, and provide an alternative method for examining and understanding panethnicity. By differentiating between panethnicity as an intersubjective lived experience that is nevertheless political because it is about identity, and panethnic mobilisation and group action, I critique shortcomings in panethnicity studies up until this point. Speaking back to theory, complicating theory, is one of the goals of ethnography, and it is the goal of this one.

Having field sites in Australia and in Aotearoa New Zealand, asks whether these abstractions have different interpretations or effects in different places. In this way there is an element of comparison to the thesis. Asian panethnicity has a necessarily international character; it is a kind of identity enabled through transnational flows. But, this research shows how participants may seek an emplaced belonging, as well as how there are different cultural and discursive resources available to Asians, depending on where they live and make their homes. I present in this thesis more regional, or nationally specific kinds of non-belonging, alongside a more global sense of community and belonging fostered through that shared sensibility of non-belonging.

This project is the first anthropological and ethnographic study of Asian panethnicity across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Although field sites for this research are in two specific countries, the aim is not a strictly comparative study. Instead, it conceives of Asianness as something born of the Western condition. This condition is marked by the failure to come to terms with imperialism. An inability to reconcile

what colonialism has done, what it continues to do, with what the West imagines itself to be. Asians, as a kind of people, are placed somewhere in the shadow of Asia as it is cast on the Western world. They are obscured, both by the more immediate power relations of colonialism that operate specifically and regionally at different points within the West, as well as by an Orientalism (Said 1978) that lingers in global consciousness.

As a mode of self-identification, Asian panethnicity involves recognition of White hegemony and acknowledges the social constructionist viewpoint of race. In this way, boundary maintenance, but also a sense of "teams", is prominent. A person can be seen as "less Asian" because they do not fulfill the ethnonormative regime of Asianness from a White mainstream point of view. But also, from a panethnic Asian point of view, one can be "less Asian" because they do not recognise the cultural and racial politics to which they are subject.

This is not to say that Asian performativity and performance are all strictly and deliberately about political advancement. Asianness also involves "play frames" and the joy of communal creation. This play (examples of which I provide throughout the thesis) or enjoyment of one's own panethnicity, is in itself a kind of resistance. It is something that the individual can enact in everyday acts and interactions. It is at once a recognition of the discourse to which the Asian person is subject, a renunciation of it, and a redeployment of it.

Thesis Outline

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I discussed the methods used to undertake fieldwork. My primary data gathering techniques were formal, recorded interviews, as well as participant observation at various events held by and for Asian people across field sites in Wellington, Auckland, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. I also introduced my fieldwork process of trying-to-make-friends as method. Though the bulk of my methods discussion is in this chapter, I mention other details of my methods throughout the thesis, as and when they become relevant.

Chapter 2 locates this research within a multidisciplinary framework. I apply a variety of analytical tools to the emergence of an Asian identity, or self-described category of people. From anthropological theories of ethnicity, I take the relational and instrumental nature of group formation. From sociological theories of panethnicity I take social constructionist and structuralist understandings of collective action and the necessary diagnostic of the creation of organisations. From performativity I take the unequivocal rejection of essentialism and fixity, and the vantage point from which to see identity as constituted by doing. From performance studies, cultural studies and Asian area studies, I take the agency and disruptive potential of the actor and the power of their creative acts. This chapter is dedicated to laying out these tools.

Despite employing no one grand theory, the strand of academic inquiry to which I think I am most contributing, is panethnicity. It is panethnicity that presupposes the emergent grouping I witnessed during fieldwork, and encountered before fieldwork in the moments that fueled a desire to pursue this research project. In taking on this topic, I acknowledge the tension in the way Asians in the West have been constructed as "both partial subjects and objects" (Kwok and Khoo 2017, 280); I hope to return subjectivity to Asian individuals in this thesis. But I do this not so much through the celebration and examination of texts, but through ethnography.

From anthropology I also take the ethnographic tradition and the vocabulary with which to attempt to talk about others, and to talk about myself talking about others. Chapter 3 provides an explanation for the methodology and the writing approach adopted in this thesis. There is some need to provide justification for why I have chosen the particular impressionist, autoethnographic style that I have. By prioritising the presentation of intersubjective relations, this style better reflects the collaborative tensions at play in Asian panethnicity and the ways these tensions are navigated in social transactions. It acknowledges my placement in the field, and preserves the voices of participants, which is important not just as a tenet of anthropology, but to the project of Asian panethnicity to which this thesis hopes to contribute. The ethnographic focus of this chapter is my encounters with social groups formed under a panethnic heading, through the Meetup website. Recounting these moments emphasises the shared experience of fieldwork, the different desires for different

kinds of connections, and belonging as a performative achievement. It also asks of participants: "what does Asian mean?"

Chapter 4 is set in Australia. Where the purpose of Chapter 2 was to locate this research within its broader academic context, one of the purposes of Chapter 4 is to locate me, as an Australian researcher, in the context of my field sites. The larger topic of this chapter, is Whiteness as a means of social ordering, as well as the representational practice of stereotyping (Hall 1997, 257). Australian immigration policy, multiculturalism, electoral politics, – in particular Pauline Hanson and the One Nation party – are discussed in relation to ethnonormative discourse and Asianness as both a burden and a resource.

Major works on panethnicity acknowledge that interethnic, international, and intercultural histories and relations affect migrant communities in complex transnational settings. This chapter provides one example of generational grievances held by one Asian national group, against another, and how this affects panethnic solidarity.

Chapter 5 shifts the ethnographic focus from Australia, to Aotearoa New Zealand. As discussed in this chapter, Okamoto and Mora conceive of panethnicity as reliant on subgroup diversity and acknowledgement of that diversity. This practice of panethnicity was made evident during participant observation I conducted at the Asian New Zealand Artists Hui of 2017 and the Asian Aotearoa Arts Hui of 2018. The concept of "Chinese" or "East Asian" privilege is presented in this chapter, and the ways that underrepresented Asians seek greater visibility by resisting, "Chineseness", as the dominant image of Asianness.

Chapter 5 also illustrates the predominance of biculturalism as the foundation upon which non- Māori New Zealanders, tend to build their national belonging. This is the case for many of the Asian people I met during fieldwork. However, where bicultural discourse tends to overlook non-White immigrants to New Zealand, many participants seek to engage directly with Māori (without Pākehā mediation) in order to achieve a bicultural relationship or standing.

Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand are separated in these two chapters, to contrast the historical and cultural environments in each country which give rise to performative and performed Asianness. The two chapters provide different contexts "within which we [Asians] mount our interventions" (Kondo 1997, 9). Whereas biculturalism is sometimes seen to crowd out discussions of non-White settlement in New Zealand, in Australia, multicultural discourse provides the framework with which we talk about immigration only. Multiculturalism is separated from conversations around "reconciliation" between indigenous and non-indigenous (White) Australians. Autoethnographically speaking, these chapters show ways in which a panethnic identity (like mine, as an example) can travel between geographic locations and the different ways it can be deployed to forge allegiances in new settings.

Chapter 6 is about humour and stand up comedy, and the play frames of Asian panethnicity. It draws from Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) and the sociology of humour as a form of resistance. It addresses the role of in group/out group distinctions in politically acceptable joke telling, and the dramaturgy of both telling ethnic jokes and laughing at them. It applies the idea of "teams" to Asians and non-Asians in the context of stand up comedy. Where an Asian comedian performs to an audience of both Asians and non-Asians, Asian audience members may police the panethnic, racial or cultural performance of the Asian performer. This kind of boundary maintenance can also occur in day to day performances of humour. This chapter draws from formal interviews with New Zealand stand up comedian James Roque and Australian comedy writer Michelle Law, as well as from their creative works.

The cultural politics of representation and the creation, consumption and critique of depictions of Asians in various Western media are the focus of Chapter 7. Through interviews with a number of theatre practitioners and performing arts bodies, including Contemporary Asian Australian Performance, the Lotus Playwriting Project, Proudly Asian Theatre and the Oryza Foundation, this chapter is about the burden of representation, and writing Asianness into being. The Proudly Asian Theatre production of *Call of the Sparrows*, and Michelle Law's play *Single Asian Female* provide examples of Asian New Zealand and Asian Australian theatre respectively.

The role of film, television and other forms of creative performance and storytelling are analysed for their ability to create, shape and reject images of Asianness.

Chapter 8 is a reflection on the role of "authenticity" in positive panethnic affiliation. Some ways in which aspects of Asian culture are rescued by Asian individuals, from being merely a resource for non-Asian consumers seeking "ethnic experiences" are contained in this brief chapter. As well as describing reactions against the commodification of some aspects of Asian culture by non-Asian people seeking cosmopolitan capital, Chapter 8 also considers a prospective aesthetic of Asian cool. The possibility of Asian cool is contrasted with an established Black cool, as well as the White uncool that I see as its opposite.

Gender is the topic of Chapter 9. The racialised and gendered global imaginary of Asia and Asian people gives rise to different grievances. There is a lot of existing scholarship on the trope of Oriental femininity and the ways in which this imperialist ripple proliferates stereotypes of hyposexualised Asian men and hypersexualised Asian women. For Asian people in the West, romantic relationships are often brokered within these constraints. Less covered by the existing literature, is the impression of Asian female complicity in Asian male subjugation. reddit is one online forum in which some Asian men, while seemingly decrying aspects of White hegemonic masculinity, ape its trappings through racialised misogyny directed at Asian women. This isolated internet extremism is used as a jumping off point to examine the impacts of online platforms, gender and sexuality in panethnic communities. This chapter contains formal interviews with blog writer and cofounder of the Asian Australian Alliance Erin Chew, with comedian and Proudly Asian Theatre cofounder James Roque, and with Asian Australian Rainbow Alliance representative, Rachel Cecilio. This chapter recounts some participants' personal stories of courtship, romance and rejection, to help understand the ways in which Asian men and Asian women navigate romantic and sexual relationships online and offline.

Chapter 10 is about the embodied nature of race and ethnicity, the immediacy of phenotypic difference and the role of visual belonging in predominantly White settings. The cliché of "Where are you from?" as a marker of the Asian experience is

unpacked here during an ethnographic encounter. The perceived inbetweenness of mixed race Asians, particular in relation to their ability to "pass" as White (or Asian) has complicated consequences for ethnonormative discourse. This final chapter relies heavily on participant observation and autoethnography.

Chapter 3: The patchwork and entanglements of fieldwork

In that the patchworks (Tsing 2005, x-xi) and entanglements (Pandian and McLean 2017, 14) of fieldwork require threads, as researcher I am inevitably one of those threads. Autoethnography provides the means to acknowledge this, and to organise the examples found in fieldwork,

> Identity is often conceptualized as the result of continuous, often tacit, social effort manifest simultaneously as the presentation of self to others through the outward projection of biography and experience, and as 'a form of ''introjection'', a presentation of self to self… We all engage in this sort of identity work, this presentation of self to others and to oneself. At its most basic, autoethnography may be understood as the practice of doing this identity work self-consciously, or deliberately, in order to understand or represent some worldly phenomenon that exceeds the self. (Butz and Besio 2009, 1660)

With the "crisis of representation" and the deconstruction of ethnographic authority marshaled by works like *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986), anthropology necessarily looked to different strategies of writing.[47] Criticism of anthropology's practice of speaking for the other (Strathern 1990, 110), recognition of the power relations intrinsic to fieldwork (Doja 2015, 62) and the potential reproduction of these asymmetries of power via "realist" ethnographic texts caused anthropologists to contend with the subjectivity of anthropological knowledge and experiment with how that knowledge is written into being (Butz and Besio 2009, 1662). In autoethnographic writing, the role of the researcher as the "agent of signification", and the role of the research subject as the "object of signification" or "object of research" are broken down, blurred or switched (Butz and Besio 2009, 1663, 1668; Strathern 1990, 110).

---

[47] Or continued to look. Feminist writers had already sought to break down boundaries between the researcher and the researched in their work (Dwyer & Buckle 2009, 59).

Stylistically, autoethnography often differs from more classical approaches to ethnography through a focus on interpersonal exchange (rather than culture) and different modes of authorial voice (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011, 277).[48] Unlike anthropological works that signaled ethnographic authority through use of an omnipresent and omniscient voice that narrated the life of the research object/s (Gordon 1990, 152; Marcus and Clifford 1985, 269), the autoethnographic approach "demystifies" fieldwork and the practice of participant observation through analysis (Marcus and Clifford 1985, 267), intersubjective relations (Doja 2015, 62) and introspection. This introspection has led to criticisms of autoethnography as "narcissistic", "self indulgent", "simplistic" (Adams and Holman Jones 2011, 111), and not theoretical, analytical, or empirical enough (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011, 283). By treating the researcher-self as "subject matter" – not only an epistemological resource but an ontological one (Butz and Besio 2009, 1661) the anthropologist may neglect the knowledge gained from fieldwork. I fear drawing these criticisms, because I do believe it is a danger in autoethnographic writing. But autoethnography is invaluable in acknowledging that in the field "I am visible, interacting, affecting and being affected" (Aly 2015, 8). All anthropologists should be held to a standard of reflexivity, or acknowledging their positionality, whether or not they are considered of their field (Aly 2015, 9; Abu-Lughod 1991, 53). As Edward Said wrote of writing about the Other: "Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself vis-à-vis the Orient; translated into his text, this location includes the kind of narrative voice he adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kinds of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text" (1978, 20).

Postcolonial and anticolonial works of counter-Orientalism (Barber 2015, 4) or reverse Orientalism (Abu-Lughod 1991, 55) seek to "valorize for the self what in the former system had been devalued as other" (Abu-Lughod 1991, 55). Asian area studies, with its interdisciplinary engagement with the cultural politics of representation, "resists objectification through the depiction of theoretical, cultural, and lived hybrid subjectivities" (Kwok and Khoo, 2017, 279). In this area of study, as well as postcolonial, diaspora, performance and cultural studies, a significant level of

---

[48] These more familiar aspects of narratively driven writing can make anthropology more accessible to more people (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011, 277; Narayan 1993, 682).

power is attributed to cultural performance or cultural products, including academic texts, in that they have the potential to disrupt the racial and ethnic status quo. Writing and other creative practices might "challenge hegemonic visions of the nation" (Yang and Lo 2008, 128), or become "interventions – contestatory and/or problematic – in circulating Orientalist discourses" (Kondo 1997, 5). I share this optimism and in that autoethnography assists in this endeavour, I employ it as "both a method and a text" (Reed-Danahay 1997, 9). However, I also believe that it is not just through texts that these challenges and disruptions can be accomplished.

Through ethnography I consider what panethnicity means for the people who identify as Asian, and the different ways they may come to see themselves as connected. What I am interested in is the way that Asians are Asian together. Asian panethnicity is performed by individuals, but often through creative collaboration with others. This is worth reflecting in ethnography. I myself am performing Asian panethnicity and, being of my field, autoethnographic and highly reflexive writing is an intuitive choice. It allows for transparency when it comes to the interpretive aspects of fieldwork and ethnographic research. In taking up autoethnography, I present myself in this thesis the way I was in fieldwork: "seeking understanding, engaged in dialogue and interpretation with other people who are engaged in dialogue and interpretation seeking meaning" (Lawless in Boylorn 2011, 180).

Allowing ideas and themes to emerge from the ethnography, is truer to the unfinishedness of the field, the unfinishedness of the Asian panethnic project, as well as the contradictions, nuances and tensions within it. To quote Ien Ang quoting Homi Bhabha, being Asian in the West "means being positioned in the grey area of inclusion and exclusion, in the ambivalent space of 'almost the same [as us], but not quite'…" (1995, 45). This experience of Asianness, not appearing immediately to be as marginal as some other minority experiences may be, but instead, often seeming just a bit off, a bit skewed, a bit different. As a student of anthropology, I believe ethnography provides the best means for bringing the subtly of that 'not quite'-ness out.

There are ways in which "people embellish day-to-day settings, activities, objects and identifications with meanings" (Aly 2015, 10) and organise them in support of an

identity. In these everyday processes and performances of self there is potential for subversion and resistance (Barber 2015, 4). I have written this thesis in a way I hope reflects these everyday practices. John Van Maanen wrote of "impressionist tales" in ethnographic writing (1988, 101) as first person, "dramatic recall" (Van Maanen 1988, 103) of events and encounters experienced in the field. Instead of being overly interpretative, these tales are designed to say, "here is this world, make of it what you will" (Van Maanen 1988, 103). This stylistic decision is made not just to avoid a falsely authoritative voice, or to set a scene, or because it could make this thesis easier to read. By presenting at some length, stories of fieldwork as I remember them, I try to convey how "Asian", as an "identification becomes discernible in the quotidian in all its complexity" (Aly 2015, 12). By adopting an impressionist approach to writing up fieldwork encounters, I often choose to "show" rather than "tell". By "showing and telling" (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011, 277) I seek to convey the occasionally "taken-for-granted" (Strathern 1990, 100) nature of Asianness in people's lives.

The idea of the reflexive subject means understanding that "there is very little one can think or imagine in the confines of academic study that is not already thought in some version, expression, or venue in sites and scenes of fieldwork". (Marcus in Butz and Besio 2009, 1663). To allow participants in this research to speak in context, I spend time relaying that immediate context. To avoid interrupting them unnecessarily, I use footnotes to flag certain theoretical concerns raised by the exchanges. I do not "forsake analysis", but have it "move over" (Narayan 1993, 682). Where a participant has explained to me something about their own experience, I generally choose to retain their words, rather than paraphrasing them and needlessly interspersing their quotes with things taken from academic sources. Though I obviously pick and choose what is included in this thesis, for what I have picked, I try to let participants speak for themselves. That said, I have at times interrupted passages of analysis or application of theory, with comments from participants.

What I mean to convey about Asian panethnicity in this thesis, is better expressed through this kind of ethnography than it would be via more traditional kinds of analytic writing. It is important to preserve the voices of my participants. They are engaged in areas of inquiry quite similar to mine, they often engage very explicitly

and directly with the topics of my thesis. To unnecessarily paraphrase them, or insert analytic passages on top, when participants have provided expression of an idea, would be clunky, verbose, and even disrespectful. For the same reasons, not always, but very often, the most appropriate way to present fieldwork encounters, is to recount my engagement, as I expressed it, with a participant's idea, as they expressed it.

The rest of this chapter details how I found social groups to engage with via the online platform Meetup. I use the following ethnographic examples to ask "who is Asian?", and to show how belonging, as an Asian person, may be sought and achieved. And I use autoethnography as the "performance, in a sense –of a process of critical reflexivity" (Butz and Besio 2009, 1662).

Meeting up and making friends

Meetup

It's a September day in Brisbane. This is my first time back in a while, and I'm walking along the footpath next to the road from the bus stop to the Chermside library. The rain, which is just a drizzle, isn't enough to break the humidity. As much as returning to South East Queensland will always be a coming home, I remember what I don't like about this place.

I've never been to the Chermside library before. It's not far from Chermside shopping centre, which is not a place I frequented but it is a local landmark. If you wanted to you could geographically divvy up Brisbane by using the giant shopping centres (usually, but not always, a Westfield) as wayposts. This city becomes a different one depending on which of these monoliths you live closest to. Chermside was never my nearest shopping centre. Mine was Garden City for a long time, then briefly Carindale. This is further north than I normally had a need to go.

Like other small suburban libraries I've visited, Chermside library has that grey, low-to-the-ground, civic kind of look. When I enter I can see that it is also well-used. All of

the meeting rooms are in use which, according to the schedule on the wall, is usually the case.

Rufus has texted me to say he'll be wearing a scarf despite the heat – he is recovering from a bout of sickness. He also let me know in earlier correspondence that his hair isn't as long as in his online profile picture. I would have spotted him despite these bits of added info, but I appreciate them.

Rufus is the organiser, but not the founder, of a Meetup group for Asian people in the area. I've joined the group but haven't attended any events, and I haven't met Rufus before now. What I hope to understand is why the group exists, or put another way, why people would join this group.

I see him sitting, head down, amidst other similarly occupied people in the library. I go and introduce myself and we find a quiet low table with chairs near the glass door entrance to the building. We chat briefly before I turn on the tape recorder and ask how he came to be part of the group.

He grew up in Brisbane, but worked in Adelaide after finishing university. When he came back after seven or eight years he felt he:

> Rufus: …didn't have a circle of friends… so I did some googling and found this Meetup group. Actually, I joined a couple of Meetup groups, not just [this one]. I guess, cos I was coming back from Adelaide I was just looking for, a way to meet more people and make some new friends. I guess, I picked [this one] because I thought, I've got an Asian background, that's pretty much it.

> Me: So, do you reckon that would be the same with most of the members? Kind of a way to make new friends, and you see [the group on the Meetup website] and you think well, that's me…

> Rufus: Yeah, I think most of them would be like a member of another Meetup group or, their friend is a member of another Meetup group and they get recommended this group through the Meetup app. But I guess there'd

probably be some who just join primarily because this is an Asian group and, they have a stronger connection with Asians than with any other group I suppose.

Me: So would you, say that you feel a stronger connection to other Asian people than you do with other groups?

Rufus: I think so. I think especially now that I've been running this Meetup group it's kind of reinforced that connection. Yeah, once you get familiar with just hanging out with Asian people you kind of just, you get more connected.

I can think of exceptions where they just kinda like, steer, stay away from Asians, they're so Westernised that they would actually feel uncomfortable being around like an Asian group. Yeah. Think one example would be my sister (laughs). She actually doesn't, like I've invited her to you know join the activity of this group and, she'd just rather not like, all her friends are kinda like Western (laughs) so, you're gonna get exceptions.

Later in the conversation, Rufus's "Westernised" sister comes up again.

Rufus: Well I mean, for you, your father's Australian… so you kinda like, you could've said, oh I'm more Australian than Japanese.

Me: Yeah, I think, to… talk about myself, I think one of the… part of the appeal of the word Asian… I can't speak Japanese, I haven't lived there I mean I've been there but I haven't lived there so describing myself as Japanese is a bit, you know, am I allowed to? Have I earned it? Whereas, Asian, yes, I am… I don't have to, that's what people see… you know what I mean?[49]

---

[49] Here I am alluding to the use of a nonspecific label like Asian, to signify physiognomic difference (Barber 2015, 100).

Rufus: Yeah, but you could have said, I'm more Australian than Asian, I think. Like my sister would say "I'm Australian."

Me: Oh, I would say that too.

Rufus: But you're still having that ownership of your Asian background, which is, I think that's… not the same experience. Some people would steer away from it.

I have felt the "stronger connection" Rufus speaks of from time to time, but I don't seek it out as insistently as folks who join an Asian Meetup group. It is possible that it is not just the "Asian" part of the Asian Meetup event that keeps Rufus's sister away, but the "Meetup" bit.

Not so much a platform for virtual communities, Meetup provides membership software for groups of people to gather in real life. A person can sign up for an account on the website at no cost, search for groups in their area that they are interested in joining, and then apply to join. The organiser of the group is notified, and has the discretion to approve, or not approve that membership. To create a group, a person has to become an organiser by paying a monthly fee. Depending on the plan, this currently costs between USD9.99 - USD14.99.

Organisers may request a small joining fee. For example, Rufus requests a one-off membership fee of two dollars to help cover the cost of running the group. Some may collect electronic payment for an event prior to the event being held. One Meetup organiser explained to me that it is common for people to start up a group, perhaps taking advantage of a free trial period, meet a few new people, then, when they have established a manageable number of budding friendships, move communications off Meetup to avoid paying further fees.

Before starting this research, I had never been to a Meetup event. Partly because of the introversion, and partly because I cannot guess who would attend these things and why. It seems you get all types.

Members of a Melbourne Meetup group (the one that held the yum cha event mentioned in Chapter 1) regale newcomers with the tale of the time a new member, a man nobody had seen before, turned up to a meal. He ordered and ate a huge quantity of food, engaged in only the most perfunctory conversation, then excused himself to go to the bathroom, never to return. Now Lucy, the organiser, is quite vigilant about collecting money.

Apart from the occasional deviant who joins to dine at strangers' expense, Lucy believes people have a very specific motive for joining a Meetup group. Towards the end of the yum cha event, as attendees began to leave and our two tables condensed to one, talk turned to a recent Meetup gathering she had organised. It was a "speed friending" event. People had been confused and even disappointed by this event, which had been designed to meet new friends. They had hoped for the more traditional blind date element. Making sure that everyone at the table could hear, Lucy said to me, "If you're going to quote anything, quote this. Everyone here will deny it" (she was correct, they did), "but most if not all of the people who join Meetup are looking for a partner."

Another research trip conveniently coincided with a networking event hosted by a Meetup group for Asian Professionals in Sydney. Also conveniently, the event was being held at a venue five minutes' walk from where I was staying in the CBD. I made my way over, not looking forward to the inevitable awkwardness of another networking event, which would be compounded by the fact that I was not an Asian professional of Sydney but, instead, a researcher from New Zealand, only around temporarily. Though, as an aspirant Asian professional who had signed up online, I was welcome to attend.

Upon entering the pub, a large standing banner at the bottom of some stairs told me I was in the right place, and I ascended. At the top of the stairs there was a table with nametags for those who, like me, had RSVP'd to the event on the Meetup site. I pinned the nametag to my shirt and headed into the crowd of, at that time, around thirty people, clustered in groups of five or so. I lingered clumsily at the edges of conversations, waiting for when someone would politely invite me to introduce myself. I had a spiel ready: "I'm Sophia, I'm a PhD student from Wellington here on a

research trip. I'm researching Asian panethnicity, which is how I found out about this group. My hotel is not far from here, so I thought I would come along." Each new person or group I encountered would receive some variation of this introduction. Some would ask questions, others would nod agreeably and carry on with a group discussion. Many of the attendees already knew each other. I continued this ungainly strategy until one girl, in a black shift dress appropriate for both work and after work drinks, stepped in front of me to ask, "Are you mixed?"

I answered in the affirmative that I was half Japanese, half Australian. She said she had studied in Japan and asked me, in Japanese, if I spoke Japanese. I answered "not really" in English, before trying harder. I said in Japanese that because my father did not speak Japanese, and because I was born in Australia, my Japanese was still not good at all. Her eyes widened. "Wow", she said. I decided to take this as a positive assessment of my language ability, but was grateful that she did not speak any more Japanese after that.

She was a real estate agent, and had in the last few years arrived from mainland China. She was here to socialise and had approached me because she didn't know anyone here. She wanted to know what my socialising strategy had been. I explained that I had just been standing at the edge of a group and waiting.
"That's really awkward."
"It is."
"It's easier when it's two girls. See those two guys over there?"
I looked at the two young men to whom she was discretely motioning with her eyes and nodded.
"They're going to come and talk to us soon."
When they did almost immediately, she started to laugh, and told them triumphantly of her prediction. I gave my spiel to all three of them. One of them said that they say these things are for professional networking but everyone is just here to meet people.

The evening was much more pleasant for me after this. Eventually, I no longer had to introduce myself. My new acquaintance would first introduce herself, and then continue with: "This is Sophia, she's from New Zealand. She's here researching

Asians. Her hotel is a five-minute walk from here." I was not embarrassed at this demonstration of how mechanical my conversation must have been.

On the same trip to Sydney I met Mr Panda, this name being his chosen pseudonym. I had contacted him online to request an interview to talk about the Asian-focussed Meetup group he had founded. I received a reply a couple of days into my stay, by way of a phone call. He had a pleasant phone manner and an accent I was not able to place without knowing his personal history. We talked about my research and his possible participation. Despite my limited time in Sydney, we decided the best course of action would be for me to join the group, attend an event or two, and we could go from there.

I joined the group and registered online to attend one of the advertised events, a short film festival screening at the Blood Moon Theatre in Kings Cross. The Meetup event page indicated a small number of members would be attending, including Mr Panda. He was not there, nor was anyone else from the group as far as I could see. Or at least, there were no Asians in the tiny assembly other than myself.

I called Mr Panda to learn that he was attending a different event across town, which I was welcome to attend. Committed to attending the event I paid for, we arranged to meet after the screening. I stayed and watched the short films before calling again. He was nearby at Rough Edges, a soup kitchen of which he spoke very highly and at which he "ends up most nights."

I walked there to find him at a table with a group of people. He was easy enough to spot. He wore red framed glasses, moss green trousers, soft brown boat shoes and a faded, patterned velvety blazer which obscured the words printed on the t-shirt underneath. He had a grey beard, and grey tendrils of shoulder length hair hung about his face.

I had arrived just before closing time and, after introducing myself, only had time to sit and briefly explain my research to those interested at the table before we all moved to the street and began to disband. I was setting up my mobile phone as a

recorder, sitting and talking with Mr Panda when a Rough Edges patron who hadn't been at our table approached us.

"Excuse me. You're the most humble looking person I've ever seen… It's in your demeanour."

Mr Panda was not taken aback. "I often get told that I look like Jesus."

Before meeting him in person, and after speaking to him on the phone, I discovered Mr Panda was White. I had assumed the founder of an Asian Meetup group would be ethnically Asian. After learning otherwise, my fresh assumption was that as a person of Russian descent who had spent part of his childhood in China, Mr Panda considered himself Asian. I was interested in talking to an ethnically non-Asian person who identified as Asian, either as a Russian, or because of time spent in China. But, it turned out Mr Panda did not consider himself Asian at all. Instead, a childhood spent in many different countries made him feel like a "lost boy", or "maybe American". He had started the Asian Meetup group almost as a "joke".

> Mr Panda: Okay, I'll fill you in, so a friend of mine, he was actually, he was Iraqi or something, he started another group… different style to me, his style was very different… People getting together and he would sort of organise events for them, and say "hey let's talk about the beach" or "let's talk about… hamburger" or something… He was very proactive in it so anyway one day, I heard about this event at such and such a place at Strathfield and we just happened to be together so we went there and started asking people, "where's this place?" And it was, "oh I don't know", "I don't know", "I don't know". And the people that we were… seeing as we were walking around, basically… basically were Asian or whatever and so I thought gee you know… They're Asian but they're not involved in their community, or places… whatever, so… I've got a vacancy for a Meetup group.

Who gets to join?

The only question common to all interviewees, was "what does Asian mean?", in some form or iteration.

Me: Okay… this is, it's a really… awkward question but I've asked everybody that I've spoken to so far. For the purposes of the group, what does Asian mean?

Rufus: Yeah, it's a hard (smiles), thing to define cos, when I took this group over as the organiser I actually had problems with non-Asians joining and then like, I couldn't draw the line. And I had trouble with it and people saying Asians should be just like, just ethnic Chinese kinda thing, and other people saying what about Indians? Middle Eastern people are they part of Asia? In the end I just thought, just admit anyone… even if they're non-Asians. It was also the idea of… not trying to be like, appearing as a group that's just tied to race so, um, yeah, it's pretty hard to define actually and I don't have an answer (laughs) no clear definition.

Me: So, anybody can come?

Rufus: Yeah, as long as they pay their membership fees.

Me: Do you think it would become an issue if there were more non-Asians than Asians in the group, or…

Rufus: It could be like I've had members come up to me and say "oh why did you admit this non-Asian person" because the more they join then, you know it's gonna be no longer an Asian group… and then they would say there's no good reason why they would want to join because for example why would they want, like, why would I want to join, you know a female friendship group or a mothers' group? There's no good reason, and they see the same thing. Non-Asians, why would they join unless they have some motive that has nothing to do with social aspects of the group?

Me: Have you encountered people, non-Asians joining who do have, dodgy motives, or?

Rufus: Yeah, had a couple people, I had to ban them because they were joining just to pick up girls, get dates, kinda thing. That was few years past. After Meetup.com introduced a policy, there shouldn't be any Meetup groups for dating so that kind of I think, stopped those people coming in.

Me: Um, I guess before the policy where everybody was welcome, it was generally, if you identified as Asian, so that meant, it may be that the greater numbers were East Asian people and then, maybe… just interrupt me when I'm getting it wrong, then South East Asian people as well, and South Asian people, would also join and some Middle Eastern people would also try and join under the banner of Asian, or was that quite rare?

Rufus: Yeah, it's rare but yeah, you'd get like, Iranian… sometimes it's hard to tell cos like I'm not gonna ask them what their background is…

Me: Yeah when you were saying that people, some members kinda want you to police it a bit more, like, what do you, what do they want you to do? Look at the names of people who are signing up and go, hmmm?

Rufus: Yeah, it gets subjective.

Me: And look at the picture and go, "ohh maybe?"

Rufus: Yeah, exactly, that's what they were thinking I should do but it was very difficult, cos I actually, I actually rejected an application for membership from someone who actually looked South American. Turned out he was Filipino (laughs) so… Decided that was too hard.

I met with Barry to talk about his recently created Meetup group, which invites Asian families to bring their children along to events. We met in the Brisbane CBD at a restaurant founded by celebrity chef and paleo-diet advocate Pete Evans. After we each ordered a drink, I asked Barry, who was on his work lunch break, if he had any questions for me.

Barry: Right, so what is your definition of Asian?

Me: I don't have one… So I'm the researcher I don't need to have one… But um, that's the, interesting thing cos… you know according to the census in Australia, they do Central Asia, South Asia and kinda East Asia, and East Asia includes South East Asia. So it's very broad, stretching to kind of… around Pakistan going that far out.

Barry: Sure.

Me: Um… and I would probably, if, if pushed in my day to day life I would… that fits for me. But I have noticed um, people within that group might not necessarily, not everybody in that group might necessarily call themselves Asian and if you were to say Asian to me, or describe somebody as Asian… I might just picture somebody from just a smaller portion of that.

Barry: Absolutely. Okay.

Me: So… you actually stole my starting question (laughs). What do you think Asian means?

Barry: Um, similar to you know, to what you've just said. Like, you know, when we identify ourselves, Asian is mostly… Put it bluntly, yellow skin, black hair, from South East Asia, maybe. […] I think you can ask a lot of you know, Asians, they probably don't, they wouldn't identify Pakistan, and Indians as Asian… When we say Asian we use the term loosely it's mainly… yellow skin, Chinese, or South East Asian sort of groups. Yeah.

As to why Barry wanted to start a Meetup group for Asians with yellow skin and black hair, he explained:

Barry: See, the reason why we started this Meetup is because we wanted to meet you know like, culturally [similar] sort of people with young kids, so our kids can grow up and have friends of a similar ethnic group, and it's also for

65

us as well. So for the kids to grow up with life-long friends, similar culture, things like that. It's not to say that we don't view very favourably Western kids or the Western culture or stuff like that but it was moreso [about] getting people culturally aligned in terms of morals, principles, values, and stuff like that, to bring our kids up that way. I mean even though we set up a group as you know, looking for likeminded people or people within the Asian background that's not to say that it is against other people [being] part of that group.

So you know, when we set up the group just fairly recently and you're right you know we've got requests from people from different ethnic groups you know, Saudi Arabians, Indians that have asked to join the group and that, that was fine too. But you know like I said I was quite surprised because you know we did, we were quite specific about Asian. When you get different groups like that requesting you're thinking huh, okay, this is broader than that. So that's been our experience so far.

But yeah it has to be fairly broad I mean if you look at the other Meetup groups like [the group Rufus organises] – so, I was part of the group, the original group that started up [that group] quite a number of years ago – and similarly that's what we found. We found a lot of different groups such as you know your Indians, Pakistanis, Saudi Arabians and stuff like that joining the groups too, Arabs… so yeah.

The conception of Asian as applying to only a narrow group of people, those from South East Asia, East Asia, or even just China (Ong 1999, 7), came up throughout fieldwork. During the PhD programme at Victoria University, I have met two PhD students who are both female, half Iranian and half White, who, after learning what my thesis topic is, have said, "You could interview me. I'm Asian." There was a defiance in this almost, as if they were challenging me to disagree. One of them complained about New Zealand Asian Leaders[50] and how she is never sure if she is included as an Iranian person.

---

[50] A high profile organisation with a mission "to accelerate Asian leaders' contribution to New Zealand".

At the Asian New Zealand Artists Hui[51] in 2017,[52] a person arrived for the final session of the day, in time for the end-of-day wrap up, where we went around the room and one by one shared what we had learned. When it got to his turn he said that as an Iranian person, he was not sure if this event was meant for him. If not, he did not wish to take up time that was not his. He was reassured by another attendee a few turns later.

When, throughout this thesis, I use the word Asia, I am referring to East, South East, South and Central Asia, in general accordance with census protocol in both New Zealand and Australia. When I use the term Asian, it is either very broadly to suggest a person whose ancestry can be traced to any of these regions, or specifically, to describe a person who self-identifies as Asian, whether they come from one of those regions or not. My starting point is the observation that Asian is the banner behind which some people, myself included, are assembled. Being that according to the definitions I have adopted here I am Asian myself, to demonstrate my positioning within, and allegiance with the field, throughout this thesis I use the pronouns "we" and "us".[53] I also capitalise the words "White", "Black", "Brown" and "Yellow", when they apply to categories of people. I do this because I capitalise the word "Asian". I know capitalisation is considered grammatically correct for Asian, and is not necessarily the protocol for the other words. However, I feel it is polite in this context.

Clearly, the meaning of "Asian" and even "Asia" have not been pinned down. There is an ambiguous sense of Asia as geographically bounded, and Asians as those who inhabit that bounded place, or whose ancestors did. An already tenuous term, "Asian", especially when applied to residents of Australia and New Zealand, is often considered an imposed, racialised categorisation – simplistic, pejorative (Spoonley, 2015), and homogenising (Lindstrom 1995, 35). An emergent Asian panethnicity, one that creatively and strategically reclaims the name Asian (Leckie 2005, 291) would be, at least in part, a product of this. What is needed is a deeper

---

[51] Hui is the Te Reo Māori word meaning a congregation or conference.
[52] This event will be discussed further in Chapter 5.
[53] When I don't use these pronouns it is because it "acknowledges that not all experiences can be shared by everyone in any given population" (Dwyer & Buckle 2009, 60).

understanding of the roles that Asians themselves play in Asian identity and the interactive process of maintaining that identity. The acts of claiming the name Asian, of assuming community with other Asians and seeking them out are carried out through these Meetup groups. These acts constitute some of the available repertoire of performing Asian and demonstrate that "[o]ne does not simply or ontologically 'belong' to the world or to any group within it" (Bell 1999, 3). To belong, is performatively accomplished.

Chapter 4: "our place as men and women of our race"

Australia Fair

I wasn't always Asian. I can identify a moment before which, I don't think I was – Pauline Hanson's election to parliament in 1996. Knowing now the significance of "I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians", and the career and profile she would continue to have on the echoes of this rallying cry, might make her maiden speech seem a convenient historical moment upon which to hang a thesis chapter. It may even appear that I am retroactively applying emotional weight to a moment I only later knew to be of lasting political consequence – that I am reverse engineering a childhood memory to use as a literary tool. Hearing her maiden speech is a handy kind of frame story yes, but, while I did not become Asian in that exact instant, I had no sense of being Asian before it.

I remember being Japanese, or half Japanese. To some I was Chinese, and to others Ching Chong. But Asian was new. I also remember the vague disorientation when I began to realise that the person speaking on the television, a mode of communication that, as a nine-year-old, I always assumed to be addressed to me, was not in fact, addressed to me. It was not a sudden realisation, but a dawning and strange sensation. She was not talking to me, but about me.[54] She was not warning me, but warning others of me.

After some clarification from adults about what was meant by "Asians", it seemed unusual to me that Pauline Hanson could get the impression there were so many of us. My family had a dairy farm in rural Queensland, and I went to primary school in the small town of Oakey, as did many of the farm kids in the region. Every weekday morning at assembly we would stand for both the national anthem and the school pledge, the latter an almost word for word recitation of the first verse of Rudyard Kipling's *The Children's Song*.

> Land of our Birth, we pledge to thee

---

[54] This was an early experience of "double consciousness" (Dubois [1903] 2014).

Our love and toil in the world to be;

When we have grown to take our place

As men and women of our race.

To pretend to remember how I felt about that pledge at the time, would absolutely be a reverse engineered childhood memory. I do remember when a classmate told me, in hushed and disapproving tones, that another student's mother had said there were "too many Aboriginals" at the school. This was third or fourth hand information by the time it got to me, but it felt like a grown up thing to talk about. Maybe too grown up for us – taboo. It was as though she were talking about underage smoking or drinking alcohol. This is what I thought racism was at the time, a kind of individual deviance or delinquency. A behaviour a person would get in a lot of trouble for if they were caught at it.

In the ten years during which either my sister or I attended Oakey State Primary School, there was a Thai family and a Chinese family whose children also attended. My picture of Australia was admittedly skewed. To impose some rough percentages on my cloudy childhood impressions, I thought we were 90 percent White (though I am not sure "White" is the word I would have used), 9 percent Indigenous Australian and 1 percent, or probably less, something else.

While Hanson's claim of a deluge of Asians still does not hold water, the absence of Asians I saw was not then, and is not now, reflective of broader national demographics or immigration history. Australia's post-settlement Asian immigration patterns share similarities with New Zealand. There was a small and under-documented early Indian presence that came with the arrival of the British. The gold rush of the mid 19th Century saw a significant influx of Chinese men to Australia. This prompted the passing of the *Chinese Immigration Act 1855* (Vic), which sought to restrict the number (and activities) of Chinese immigrants to Victoria. Following this, similar statutes were passed in other Australian states.

At Federation, *The Immigration Restriction Act 1901* (Commonwealth)[55] placed wide restrictions on who was permitted to enter the country and bestowed broad discretionary powers on immigration officers. One of these powers was the dictation test – in which potential immigrants could be excluded from the country for failing to accurately write out a passage dictated in any European language. One of the most well known examples of its use was for Egon Kisch. Kisch, a Czechoslovakian Jewish Communist – and multilinguist – was given the test in Scottish Gaelic (*R v Carter; Ex parte Kisch (1934) 52 CLR 221; R v Wilson; Ex parte Kisch (1934) 52 CLR 234*).

During World War II, Japanese Australians were interned in Australia (Oliver 2002, 279), as were naturalised Japanese in the United States, Canada and New Zealand. But the end of the war saw a desire to increase the Australian population, and a gradual phasing out of the White Australia Policy began (Tao 2014, 29). The introduction of the Colombo Plan in the early 1950s caused a surge in Asian students coming to Australia[56] to study that continued for decades. The *Immigration Restriction Act* was replaced by the *Migration Act 1958*, and the White Australia Policy was formally abolished in 1973, a period which also saw a wave of Vietnamese enter Australia.

Asian immigration has steadily increased since then. At the 2016 census, 39.7 percent of the 26 percent of overseas born Australian residents were born in Asia, with Chinese and Indian born residents the fastest growing contingent (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). For some, this growing population of Asians is the prophesied descent of the Yellow Horde. The Peril that infiltrates with a view to overtaking the country. There are definitely enough Asians to make it possible, even likely, that during the course of an average day, Pauline Hanson might see one. Maybe even several.

Hanson is not the originator of anti-Asian sentiment in Australia, or anywhere. She is also not the first to engage in what Ghassan Hage describes as "the discourse of

---

[55] Note also the *Pacific Island Labourers Act 1902*.
[56] One participant in this research first came to Australia as part of the Colombo Plan.

white decline" (2000). Though this discourse does not apply only to Australia, Hanson has provided the nation with "its most systematic political articulation" (Hage 2000, 86).

Originally preselected as the Liberal Party candidate for the Queensland seat of Oxley, Hanson was disendorsed prior to the election for comments she made about Aboriginal Australians. After being elected as an independent in 1996, she and the party she cofounded, One Nation, did not attribute the nation's woes solely to Asian immigration.

> Along with millions of Australians, I am fed up to the back teeth with the inequalities that are being promoted by the government and paid for by the taxpayer under the assumption that Aboriginals are the most disadvantaged people in Australia (Hanson, 1996).

After losing her seat in the 1998 federal election, the One Nation party limped along and the years between then and 2016 saw her expelled from the party she founded, jailed for electoral fraud until the convictions were overturned, then returned to the party in 2013. She continued to find a platform from which to criticise immigration policy, including the "huge amount" of people from South Africa "coming into Australia, who have diseases; they've got AIDS…They are of no benefit to this country whatsoever; they'll never be able to work" (2006).

Perhaps most indicative of the kind of Australia in which she has been able to persist is her reality television career. She competed on *Dancing with the Stars*, and *Celebrity Apprentice*.

> While White people can watch Pauline Hanson on TV and normalise her with a kind of 'isn't it cute, we had a racist political leader before and now we have a harmless TV figure', some people I know sit uncomfortably and think 'hey – this is not enjoyable, this woman has seriously hurt me in the past'. But when everyone around you thinks they are having fun, to come and say in their midst: 'this is not funny, this woman is a hurtful hating racist', what you will get is a condescending 'get a life mate, don't be so bloody serious, we're enjoying

some light entertainment here, and you wanna talk about racism?' That's more like classical Australian racism; it hits you and disallows you to say 'hey that's racism'. More often than not, it works in a 'relaxed and comfortable' way (Hage 2014, 234).

Of course, "we had a racist political leader before" suggests we would not again. Or at least, not Pauline Hanson. But, thanks in part to the reality TV process of normalisation, she was elected to the senate in 2016. She widened her aim and reformulated her catchphrase. It became: "I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Muslims."

A couple of months later, I spoke to Molina, of the Victoria branch of the activist group Asian Australian Alliance:

> Molina: Pauline Hanson is a very big issue for us. I think that all this condenses basically, to that mindset and ideology that we want to fight against, so these are all reflections of what is happening, dilution of agency, Pauline Hanson being elected, Islamophobia, phobia of Asians taking over the world that kind of thing, they're all sort of reflections of what the society is thinking right now so… the whole idea is to get behind, to understand why that's happening and tackle it, systemically.

> Me: Just… to ask you about Pauline Hanson, I might be naïve, but there is a time when I would never have thought she could be back. Did you always think it was possible?

> Molina: That she would come back? Actually no (laughs). It came as a big shock. I mean I thought there was this sentiment, there is a minority. But we always believed that was a minority and they're not gonna be big enough to actually elect a representative that reflects their views. So, I personally didn't think that someone like her would come back into power but she… but she did. I'm not sure, there might be different thinking amongst people who were thinking obviously she was gonna come back – cos "that's how we feel."

Pauline Hanson gifts us with the knowledge that there are more people like her. In that we "discover the self by becoming conscious of oppression from the Other" (Strathern in Abu-Lughod 2012, 467), Pauline Hanson hinted to me that though not hers, there was an "us" to which I might belong.

Popular mythology has it that there are some things Australia has that make it Australia. The outback, beaches and barbeques, native animals dangerous to humans, and some fairly generic "values" (Hage 2001) that might seem universal, but for purposefully provincial terminology like "mateship".[57] Multiculturalism – of a decorative sort (Fozdar and Perkins 2014, 122-123; DeSouza 2012; Hage 2004) – would also rate a mention. Invoked to a far lesser extent, is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.[58]

Both Australia and New Zealand in the Asian Century, or the Asia Pacific Century, cite the economic potential of Asia as a reason to engage in the region. In Australia in particular, geographic proximity and close trade ties have been pushing recognition of Australia as part of Asia for decades (Dixson 1999, 74). This discussion is not as prominent in New Zealand, which instead, is part of the Pacific.[59] When I spoke to the Asia Society Australia, an organisation whose mission is "to prepare Australian leaders for the Asian Century", the identification with Asia was something their members, predominantly big business, could do only in part:

> There are still a lot of people… in this country that kind of, geographically they accept that we are part of the, of the region, but not kind of on that philosophical, personal or cultural level.
> -Philipp Ivanov, Asia Society Australia

Australians, if not "obsessed" with identity (Dixson 1999, 2) are at least preoccupied with defining the national character. Finding answers is difficult, as is often the case

---

[57] The idea of an "intense homosocial bonding" between men is a major contributing element to the mythos of Australianness (Morris 2008, 158).
[58] The seeming absence of Indigenous Australians from the conversation around Asianness and Asian belonging is in dramatic contrast to the New Zealand situation, which will be presented in Chapter 5.
[59] At the 2017 Asian New Zealand Artists Hui, one attendee neatly described Asian New Zealanders as "sPacifically Asian". I borrow this for the title of the next chapter.

with identity work, but it is especially tricky when circling, never addressing, the elephant in the room. In Australia, like other Western post-settlement nations, Whiteness is the "absent centre", absent because of the "denial of imperialism" (Nederveen Pieterse 2007, 26). Though the lack is felt the centre can hold still. And a racially exclusive Australian identity preserves itself; it is jealously maintained. Jacqueline Lo describes the hegemony of state multiculturalism as "essentially a culturalist response to dealing with the threat of political instability in the face of changing demographics" (2008, 16). Asian faces do not just evoke fear that the White Australian race is dying out or dwindling, they pose a threat to Occidental rationality and order (Carrier 1995, 18). They are an unspoken reminder of the contingency of Australian identity, Australianness, and Australia itself.

Whiteness and racial formation

Whiteness as a world ordering ideology is variously described by race scholars as a discourse, or a prescriptive and regulatory cultural logic – "the affective ruler that measures and naturalizes white feelings as the norm" (Muñoz 2006, 680). Whether termed as Whiteness, or White supremacy, White hegemony or the "white racial frame" (Feagin 2013), that serves to protect "society's extremely inegalitarian structure of resources and hierarchy of power established by and for whites, particularly elite whites" (Feagan and Elias 2013, 937), it has at its disposal strategies of self-preservation like "white fragility"[60] and White "victimhood" (Canham and Williams 2017, 28).

Established as the normative category of race, Whiteness has a quality of "invisibility" or "unconsciousness" (Flagg in Okizaki 2000: 482). As a consequence, race or ethnicity become bestowed upon non-Whites only (Nederveen Pieterse 2007: 25). Whites enjoy a "psychological wage" (Dubois [1903] 2014) or "white privilege",[61] a "racial obliviousness" (Bonds and Inwood 2016, 717) or claim to colour-blindness that comes from not having to consider their own race on an everyday basis. These various but related terms see Whiteness as the

---

[60] Term coined by Robin DiAngelo.
[61] Term coined by Peggy McIntosh.

organisational mechanism for a racialised social order that perpetuates systemic or institutional racism.

In US studies of race[62] there has been disagreement and debate between Joe Feagin and other proponents of the systemic racism theory, and Michael Omi and Howard Winant, who propose a theory of racial formation. In what follows I address these competing viewpoints and their relevance for panethnic studies.

In their *Racial Formation in the United States* (first published in 1986), Omi and Winant describe racial formation as the "sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (Omi and Winant 1994, 55). It results from various "racial projects", defined as "simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines" (Omi and Winant 1994, 56). These racial projects can be large-scale, or take place on a macro or individual level and occur amongst and between different groups. They are historically situated and linked to the development of hegemony (Omi and Winant 1994, 56). They can be racist or not racist. As they clarify in "Resistance is futile?: A response to Feagin and Elias" (2012), Omi and Winant see an understanding of "race" and its modes of construction as an essential prerequisite to an understanding of "racism" (though the one informs the other). On the other hand, Joe Feagin and others who focus on systemic racism in the Western setting, see "race" as something that should be understood by first analysing "racism" as systematically perpetuated by Whites.

I, like other writers on the topic (Golash-Boza 2013), find practical value in applying both theories to my field. Omi and Winant, (who do not dispute that Whites are inarguably at the top of the racial pecking order and may have a stake in keeping it so), favour the agency their theory affords People of Colour. Racial formation theory also describes the instability of racism and White dominance and the ways in which these things can and are being challenged, by non-White people but also White

---

[62] The US being where a lot of writing on race relations originates.

people who are arguably working against their own immediate material interests (Omi and Winant 2012, 971).

That said, racial formation theory can understate the role of White social actors in preserving racist power structures and the ongoing effects of institutionalised racism (Wingfield 2013, 989). I take racism as a major factor in panethnic formation and I see White dominance as a dramatic part of shaping panethnic identifications and meanings. Systemic racism theory works well for Australia as a post-settler nation. It is helpful in explaining the unusual placement of Asian people within that system, as well as the tactics they may adopt, or be encouraged to adopt. Assimilation is one of these strategies. To mitigate the discomfort of White Australia around difference generally, assimilation was, and remains for some, the preferred tactic of Asian Australian existence.

> Annette: I look like this. And I had a Chinese upbringing to some degree, and that's just part of who I am and I don't wanna have to leave that behind. I did actually. I'm, quite old, so I was brought up in the age of assimilation, when you were encouraged to be a new Australian, and leave all of that other cultural baggage behind. That's what we were all encouraged to do. And to speak English, learn to speak it well, and be as Australian as possible. When I was at university, I remember someone said, "oh we forget that you're Chinese, you know, because you're so Australian, we just think of you as one of us." And I was really proud of that. But there are a hundred things wrong with that statement, but at the time it was a statement of acceptance. Belonging. So I wasn't very sophisticated about it, even when I was at university. But because I've grown up in that age, where we were encouraged to assimilate, and I think that's the worst thing possible because I've seen other people forced to assimilate. And they don't deal well with it. They can't be the full person that they are. And that can create all kinds of, mental illness, insecurity… all sorts of terrible things.
>
> And I believe the opposite. I believe if you embrace the richness of who you are it leads to so much more that makes you have so much more to offer. I remember a conversation with a woman, and this is interesting, I remember a

conversation with a woman in the Northern Territory. She was a councillor on the Darwin Council, and she was of Indigenous, Aboriginal, Kiwi Islander, Scottish, Chinese background, and she grew up next to a Chinese family. She said, she thought the reason the Chinese… got on better, the Chinese side better than the Indigenous side, was because the Chinese managed to hold onto their culture. Whereas the Indigenous were forced to leave it behind. And, that was the big difference she saw.

Apart from the personal consequences on individuals that Annette, as a Chinese Australian woman, describes, and the legacy of colonialism that Aboriginal Australians endure, assimilation does something else. It promotes the notion that if a racially othered person renounces their ancestral culture and traditions, speaks unaccented English, does not act as though their ethnicity is something of which they might be proud, and avoids "playing the race card", then their racial difference will become invisible and they will achieve social parity.

If there is not a gulf between Asian Australians and White Australians, there is at least an uncanniness to Asians in White Australia. Asians experience outsider racialisation (Tan 2008, 67),[63] (or perpetual foreignness, or the foreigner axis) – the sentiment that an "English-speaking Chinese is seen, from a Western perspective, as so much more "unnatural" than an English-speaking Norwegian or Italian" (Ang 1999, 566). To once again quote Ien Ang quoting Homi Bhabha, being Asian in multicultural Australia "means being positioned in the grey area of inclusion and exclusion, in the ambivalent space of 'almost the same [as us], but not quite'…" (1995, 45). It is something that you can't get away from, despite being otherwise valued as a contributing member of society, you remain different. As one participant said: "It's there, isn't it? It's always there."

Ethnonormative discourse and Asian stereotypes

One ought never to assume that the structure of Orientalism is nothing more than a structure of lies or of myths which, were the truth about them to be told,

---

[63] This is an experience found to be similar to other Western countries, like the US (Tan 2008, 67).

would simply blow away. […] …what we must respect and try to grasp is the sheer knitted-together strength of Orientalist discourse, its very close ties to the enabling socio-economic and political institutions, and its redoubtable durability (Said 1978, 6).

An individual is not free to construct her work identity like the white mainstream; she is Asian—the model racial minority (Park 2008, 556).

The middle class migration that accounts for much of the contemporary Asian presence in the West arguably minimises but does not eradicate the effects of institutionalised historical racial disadvantage for large swathes of the Asian population. There are exceptions to the stereotype of Asian superior socioeconomic status. This difference in circumstances amongst different ethnicities within the Asian population is one of the touted issues with panethnic categories (Espiritu 1992). Though Asian disadvantage exists to varying degrees, and though statistics supporting Asian success in the West are often simplistically presented, there is a belief in Asian diaspora as an immigration success story. The financial gain that some Asian diasporic peoples have achieved through globalisation contributes to an "out-of-placeness", with "wealthy Asian immigrants" inducing a "sense of displacement" among those "who have not benefited from globalization" (Ong 1999, 10). This picture of success may breed resentments; it causes Asians to be held up as the "model minority", or, to use a term a fellow anthropology student introduced me to: "pet migrants". This term, though derogatory in the extreme, captures the value of the model minority myth to mainstream society. Asians can be used as the paragon of immigrants, or ethnic minorities. If everyone else just worked as hard, they too would be as successful as the Asians. This term also alludes to the fact that Asians should, in order to continue enjoying the benefits of being the favourites, know their place.

The pervasiveness of normative regimes, is found in the prevalence of commonly held but unsubstantiated beliefs about minorities (Omi and Winant 1994, 59). Stereotyping as a signifying practice (Hall 1997, 257), can cross national borders and travel alongside a global narrative of Asian immigration to the West. Stereotypes like the model minority myth, or the Yellow Peril, "have been the precondition for the

cultural marginalisation, political impotence and psychic alienation" of Asian groups from mainstream society in US, British and Australian settings (Barber 2015, 69). Occasionally, stereotypes can be made more palatable by being bundled together as unifying facets of culture. The model minority myth is repackaged to include things like having hard working, strict parents who make significant personal sacrifices for the sake of their children (Park 2008, 553). However, in this unification through a shared narrative of immigrant struggle, is limitation, and a "particular set of parameters that place limits on what an [Asian] can be" (Park 2008, 552). This limited narrative of course frequently and inappropriately belies the very real cultural distinctions and historical divisions between people who might be called Asian.[64]

Asian Histories

Japan and China got mad beef.[65]

It is not just differing levels of political access or visibility that contribute to conflicts between subgroups in a panethnic category. Yen Le Espiritu documented instances of anti-Asian discrimination prior to panethnic formation. Rather than combating discrimination against one Asian ethno-national group with solidarity, other ethno-national groups would instead disassociate themselves from the targeted group (Espiritu 1992, 20). An example of this "ethnic disidentification" occurred in the US during and after World War II with Chinese and Korean Americans distancing themselves from Japanese (Espiritu 1992, 23). Even in the last ten years, qualitative research in Australia has shown that some Chinese Australians avoid appearing in public on Anzac Day for fear of being mistaken for Japanese and becoming the target of abuse (Tan 2008, 72-73).[66]

It seems likely that it is not just because of fear of violent reactions to Japaneseness that other Asians were averse to being mistaken for Japanese. Histories of the peoples and nations of Asia continue to impact the lives and sentiments of Asian

---

[64] Other divisions within the Asian panethnic grouping are discussed in the New Zealand context, in Chapter 5.
[65] Said by a teenage, male attendee during a group discussion which took place after a fieldwork event.
[66] The failure of Asian attempts at "disidentification" (Espiritu 1992, 22) point to the persistence and power of racialisation.

people who have migrated to the West. Not only was there non-Asian animosity towards Japanese, but, given the histories of Japanese imperialism and the Second Sino-Japanese War, there was, and remains, non-Japanese Asian animosity towards Japanese. Indeed, the Rape of Nanking, Unit 731 and comfort women have come up in my discussions with participants. However, although their immigrant parents may continue to feel the importance of historical antagonisms, their children do not necessarily do so (Espiritu 1992, 27).[67]

Florence, a Malaysian-Indian Australian, whose parents and siblings lived through Japanese occupation of Malaysia, was generous in her assessment of Japan. A committee member of the Australian Asian Association of Victoria, Flo, as she prefers to be called, met me at the Melbourne city train station.

We sit at an outdoor café at the station talking for around three and a half hours. The location is not ideal. She tells me she would have invited me to her home, but it is so far away. Later she thinks we should have gone to her RSL club,[68] one she speaks fondly of throughout the interview. It is quiet, largely unused; it would have been "perfect".

Flo is what I would expect a retired nurse to be: kind, matter of fact, with broad life experience. She is unworried about catching the illness that causes me to cough incessantly throughout the interview. She says as much, and as if to prove this to me, at the end of our conversation she clasps my hand with both of hers and holds it for a time.

The Australian Asian Association of Victoria is for "Friendship, understanding and good fellowship between the people of Australia and Asia." Its president from 1963 to 1993, was Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop AC CMG OBE, a decorated WWII veteran and former prisoner of war.

---

[67] One participant sounded apologetic when they talked about the animosity their parents hold towards Japanese people.
[68] "RSL" stands for Returned and Services League, Australia. It is an organisation designed to support former and current members of the Australian defence force. An RSL club is a commercial enterprise, usually with a bar and dining facilities.

Flo: Weary Dunlop did it for thirty years straight and given he was, you know, all his history, he was very happy, very supportive. He travelled to Japan many times, he'd come back, he had a lot of respect for Japanese oddly enough, despite being a prisoner of war, how weird is that. But the thing is, he saw there was kindness in some of the soldiers, and I must admit that my mum used to tell me about Japanese soldiers being very good to her family, when my brothers and sisters were little. I wasn't born yet; I was born after the war. But she was saying how they would come and give treats to the children, because they missed their children, so it's pretty much the same thing. But Weary Dunlop, all the abuse he'd copped as a prisoner of war, he'd forgiven everybody and he had mended bridges and fences and everything and he'd gone to Japan.

Flo's story, invested with her significant skills of oration, is open-hearted. But it also reflects a Japanese military strategy that saw Malays and Malaysian-Indians dealt with less harshly than Malaysian-Chinese. However, Flo's forgiving stance supports the generational discrepancy Espiritu describes. Though regional histories of conflicts, imperialism and their resultant atrocities may be harder to overcome for those who lived through them, [69] these histories are less likely to hinder panethnic solidarity amongst second or 1.5 generation Asians in the West. The political value of the Asian panethnic category is to challenge what is considered the dominant culture and ethnicity – to critique hegemonic multiculturalism or ethnonormativity. As such, Asianness is not derived from commonalities as much as from the search for commonalities.

Asian Australian electoral politics

The Asian Australian Alliance (AAA) is a grassroots organisation that stretches their resources across Victoria and New South Wales, and several specialised branches:
- Asian Australian Alliance
- Asian Australian Alliance Women's Forum

---

[69] This specific topic cannot be adequately covered by this research, and it is not the aim of this research.

- Asian Australian Alliance Young Leaders Program
- Asian Australian Rainbow Alliance
- Movement of Asian Australian Academics

I became aware of them through their campaigning in support of the Safe Schools Program. The programme aims to support LGBTI students by providing training and resources for secondary school teachers and students. Petitions protesting against Safe Schools, apparently signed by thousands of members of the Chinese community, were lodged in both New South Wales and Victoria Parliaments. AAA were outspoken in condemning the petitions, describing signatories as hypocrites. The language used was more aggressive than I was used to seeing. When I spoke to AAA cofounder, Erin, she explained the organisation's deliberately "confrontational" approach. It is her attempt to bring an "American style of activism" to Australia.

Not specifically in the context of the Safe Schools debate, other Asian organisations have criticised the smash and grab nature of AAA's activism. They also criticise the perceived lack of community consultation and question the validity of AAA and the motivations of its founders. When I brought up the Asian Australian Alliance during an interview with one organisation, the name was met with a massive eye roll.

Me: …there's the Asian Australian Alliance and they're quite–

Participant: Yes, but they're very political and they have been shunned by everybody else.

Me: When you say everybody else…

Participant: So Asian Australian Research Network, all the academics, there's been quite a big push back, cos they're seen as using the term for media.

Me: Yeah, so that's actually something that interests me.

Participant: […] You have to also dig a bit deeper make sure you're talking to [those who have] been doing the research for a long time, the noisy ones are not necessarily the ones that are actually worth…

Me: Oh, sure, but I guess, for my purposes I'm interested in the noise–

Participant: They'll be gone by next year.

Me: You reckon?

Participant: Because they just spoke on behalf of a community… they hadn't consulted with.

Me: Even that would be interesting to me, that flash in the pan–

Participant: I mean it's a particular person's political aims as well… And using the term Asian as a means to advance someone's own political career is very dangerous.

The interviewee elected not to name the person she was talking about, but one of the founders of AAA is Kingsley Liu, the 2016 Greens candidate for the division of Lindsay. His campaign billboards included the slogans: "Asian Greens are good for you" and "Nerd Appeal, Not Sex Appeal".

Yen Le Espiritu wrote of how Asian American political officials "recognize the benefits of touting the pan-Asian line" (1992, 80). Kingsley Liu's campaign (though unsuccessful) was seen to be bolstered by his association with a panethnic Asian organisation that is very vocal in their opposition to White hegemony. AAA's brand of community activist, confrontational politics (Espiritu 1992, 53) is usually considered incompatible with electoral politicking, and this, contrasted with the possibly cheesy refrains of his campaign billboards, speak to an uncomfortable precarity. This is a challenge in practicing Asian panethnicity: How to make ideas of "Asian" work in your favour, but also other Asian people's favour.

[T]he concept of race is not deployed as biological 'fact' but rather used strategically to unite people of various Asian ethnicities thereby enabling a degree of political solidarity and critical purchase. […] The concept of strategic essentialism suggests that it is possible to utilise specific signifiers of racialised identity to challenge and destabilise hegemonic discourses that marginalise Australians of Asian descent, while simultaneously acknowledging the internal contradictions and differences within the category of Asian Australian so as to ensure that such essentialisms are not reproduced by the very apparatuses that we are trying to dismantle (Lo 2008, 15-16 *references removed*).

At a different point on the political spectrum, is Shan Ju Lin, former One Nation Queensland candidate. Lin was dropped from her candidacy after a Facebook post where she suggested homosexuality was a precursor to pedophilia. Prior to her suspension from the party, she drew local media attention for being both Asian and a One Nation candidate. Headlines from a number of media outlets focussed on her comments that "good Asians" like her, would support One Nation. #BadAsian trended on Twitter for a short time after.

I interviewed Lin in Brisbane not long after she was dropped from One Nation, and a few days before the Ipswich-held World Harmony Day Festival she organises annually. Of all the interviews I tried to set up, this one was most quickly arranged. I sent an initial email to an official World Harmony Day address, and by the following day, the date, time and place of the interview had been decided. I pursued the interview because Lin's candidacy had put the word "Asian" in the news, and I thought that it might be in the interests of research thoroughness, or breadth. It seemed in some way worthwhile to talk not only to those well versed in "diversity speak", a way of talking that, I have found after thirty or so formal interviews and countless informal ones, can fairly or not, start to sound rote.

Lin and I went to a pub and talked for a couple of hours. While she was speaking, I felt myself looking around to adjacent tables, to see if Lin was being overheard. When she left I wondered momentarily if my voice had been loud enough for the other patrons to know I did not share her opinions.

The things she said that are relevant to this research: She is vehemently opposed to the Chinese Communist Party. She finds it offensive to be called Chinese, preferring Taiwanese. She says she finds race (including being Asian) to be largely irrelevant in terms of cultural differences in Australia. There are only two types of people: "I think the big picture is only right wing and left wing. The left and conservatives."

The main takeaway from the interview, is that Lin did not dwell on the fact of her Asianness as insistently as the media who reported on her. She did not really bring it up at all, until I asked. She told me that similarly, she did not bring up "good Asians" until she was asked about Asians by journalists.

Clearly, there is not some kind of universal Asian political mentality or leaning, which wields identity politics in a uniform way. It is not as though people labelled as Asian are incapable of holding views considered abhorrent to other people labelled as Asian. This should go without saying. Research has also suggested that Asian people tend not to vote en bloc (Espiritu 1992, 59).[70] It is worth noting, that "Asianness" as a political resource was drawn from by the Greens candidate to a far greater degree and far more overtly, than by the One Nation candidate. But, both candidates were positioned, by themselves or by others, according to their ability to represent Asians. They were both also judged for how appropriate these Asian representations were. This is something to which all Asians are subject, but these two examples provide an intensified depiction of it.

The ethnonormative discourse that privileges Whiteness, that maintains stereotypes including the Yellow Peril, and the myth of the model minority is one found not just in Australia and New Zealand. It creates a performativity of Asianness that coerces the "doing" of Asianness within narrow parameters. While this "doing" may be within a signification system of global reach, they interact with and are impacted by local contexts and emplaced belongings, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

---

[70] Yen Le Espiritu noted that socioeconomic status likely has more impact than other social classifications (1992, 56).

Chapter 5: "sPacifically Asian"[71]

"Excuse me, do you speak Chinese?" A Chinese female stranger approaches me to ask this while I wait at the lights on Karangahape Road.

"No, sorry."

"Oh, where are you from?"

"I'm Japanese."

"How long have you been in Auckland?"

"I'm only here for two weeks."

"Where do you live?"

"Wellington. But I've only been here for a year. I'm from Brisbane, Australia."

"Are you an Australian citizen?"

"Yes."

"Oh, so you're a real Australian. How long have you lived in Australia?"

"I was born there."

"Oh." And then the light turns green and she crosses the road, turning left at the other side.

This was during my first field trip to Auckland; the first field trip for this thesis. My husband told me on the phone that one of his colleagues, after being told I was staying on Queen Street, asked if I was staying on the "good end" or the "bad end". As it turned out, I was staying on the latter. It seems harmless enough to imply that the "good end" is the swanky end, close to the waterfront. However, having gone for a walk from one end to the other on the day of my arrival, I noticed the heavy Asian presence (in terms of businesses and people) on the "bad" that dissipated into a more universally palatable smattering of sushi restaurants and bubble tea stalls the further north I walked. I couldn't help but bristle a little at the dismissal of Upper Queen Street.

Auckland is different from Wellington. Twenty-three percent of Auckland's population identifies as Asian, compared to Wellington's 14.9 percent (and to 11.8 percent of

---

[71] As mentioned in the previous chapter, I am repeating this term which I heard used at the 2017 Asian New Zealand Artists Hui.

New Zealand as a whole) (Stats New Zealand, 2013). That 8.1 percent makes a difference. When I arrived in Auckland for my first research trip in July 2016, there seemed to be Asians everywhere, and they were not like the Asians in Wellington. They are louder, they travel in packs, they dress ostentatiously. They are more unabashedly Asian. In the words of a participant: "it's practically China."

> When you leave the CBD and take the buses out to the eastern suburbs of Auckland you see elderly Chinese men, who, like their Pākehā counterparts, favour the seats directly behind the driver and who, like their Pākehā counterparts, speak little. A Chinese man alights, gives the driver a nod (or a bow) of acknowledgement, another voices his thanks.

> A Pākehā old man on the left frontmost seat motions towards the "stop" button on the pole of the right frontmost seat, in which a Chinese old man sits. He smilingly obliges. On another trip, Chinese and Pākehā old men in front seats, the Pākehā manoeuvres his wheelie bag out the front of the bus, holding a yellow plastic bag in one hand. The Chinese man points to a second plastic bag left on the seat, the Pākehā old man nods to show he has not forgotten it, retrieving the bag after he has freed his wheelie bag from the door jam and plopped it on the footpath.

> On the bus back into the CBD an elderly Chinese woman disembarks, holding her AT HOP public transport card to the reader. She seems to have trouble interpreting its response, and retries a couple of times before the driver indicates she is fine to disembark. Pulling out from the curb the driver shakes his head, "they can't read it", I hear him say to the inspector sitting in the front seat.

I spent a long time documenting these kinds of exchanges on the bus. This was my first field trip and I was convinced it was important to capture these moments. Witnessing and documenting them felt vital at the time, even revelatory. Riding the bus in east Auckland was my anthropological arrival.

I indulge in romanticising diasporic histories, so grand in scale, spanning centuries and continents, sweeping people along in the current. An eddy brings me here, where it has brought so many others. This place looks familiar to me, Antipodean suburbia, where Asian immigration has left its mark. Unfamiliar to me, is the feeling I know a place I am in for the first time, and to recognise so much of my home in it. This doesn't stifle the adventure of the field, or make the world seem small. It makes me feel small, and that the world, now so big, still has need of explorers. I was such an explorer.

This feeling, or delusion, which invigorated me at the time, I can't recapture now. But the memory of having once had it is pretty good. It was this memory I was enjoying when again in July 2017 I was on a bus out to the eastern suburbs.

Headed to the Asian New Zealand Artists Hui, I made sure to arrive early at Pakuranga.[72] I walked around the shopping centre where the bus had stopped off, killing time until I could arrive at Te Tuhi art gallery tastefully early. Between the shopping centre and the gallery was the Pakuranga Library and Citizens Advice Bureau. A standing sign read "INFORMATION FOR NEW MIGRANTS Information you need, if you're here to live and work. ASK HERE".

In Te Tuhi, Yona Lee's art installation, *In Transit (Arrival)*, was just inside the entranceway. A maze of silver connecting tubes with mattresses placed as a bunk bed, two straw brooms, a red umbrella, a curtain, arranged over and in the labyrinthine piping. Not crowded, but some small children pottered about while their parents watched. A community noticeboard with tacked up posters and fliers advertising childcare, medical herbalist services, the Manukau East Shopping Shuttle, crafts markets, design courses, community networking events, an "Introduction to mindful eating course", and a public meeting with Winston Peters[73] (this poster proclaiming, "It's common sense").

---

[72] Pakuranga is an eastern suburb of Auckland, New Zealand.

[73] Winston Peters is the Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand. He is the leader and founder of the populist political party, New Zealand First. His election campaigns have relied on anti-Asian and anti-immigration rhetoric. Peters, who is Māori himself, justified this stance by claiming that immigrants to New Zealand would intensify marginalisation of Māori (Ip 2007, 244).

I walked around looking for the place our hui would be held. I couldn't find it. I considered asking but I knew I was too early. At that point I saw a petite East Asian woman, in her mid twenties, dressed in jeans, a dark green woollen jumper and boat shoes, her bob haircut braided until pulled backed in a low ponytail. This was Amy, my participant, the convenor and the person who had invited me. I intercepted her.

She took me, moving quickly, to the room in which we were to gather. I would not have found it myself. There were rugs and pillows on the floor, chairs and benches around the perimeter. There was only one other person there, to whom Amy introduced me before leaving to deal with the demands of her convener role.

As the room filled up we were directed to arrange ourselves so that we were all facing each other. Amy addressed the whole room, inviting us to go around and introduce ourselves one by one. Everyone gave their ethnicity and their connection to the arts. I said I was Japanese and Australian and that as an Anthropology PhD student studying Asian panethnicity in New Zealand and Australia, I was here to learn.

To cover the processes of finding identity and belonging, as they apply to Asians, "panethnicity" was already my keyword of choice. Needing a pithy way to introduce myself and frame my research, I benefited from using it as a kind of umbrella term. If asked to elaborate, which I often was at events like the hui, I relied on Okamoto and Mora:

> Panethnicity refers to the construction of a new categorical boundary through the consolidation of ethnic, tribal, religious, or national groups. It is often misunderstood as simply synonymous with race, ethnicity, or national identity. Conceptually, we argue that panethnicity is uniquely defined by an inherent tension derived from maintaining subgroup distinctions while developing a sense of metagroup unity (2014, 221).

My definition of panethnicity, a paraphrased version of the above, was met with thoughtful and approving nods. This solidarity through difference seemed echoed in the invitation to the event itself, which began with a Māori welcome:

E ngā mana,

e ngā reo,

e ngā karangarangatanga maha,

tēnā koutou katoa[74]

The event was something of a continuation of the inaugural Chinese New Zealand Artists Hui held in Auckland in 2013. Amy hadn't attended this event herself, but chose to hold a follow up of sorts, broadening it out to "Asian" instead of just "Chinese".

The 2018 Asian Aotearoa Arts Hui was quite different from the previous year's event. Held in Wellington, it was huge. A collection of events and exhibits hosted by Massey University College of Creative Arts and the National Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, it ran from 3-23 September and included a one-day seminar held at Te Papa.

On the day of the seminar my new acquaintance – whom I had just been introduced to outside the theatre – and I settled into some seats. She expressed surprise at the set up. A large auditorium with rows of audience seating and a stage from which presenters would speak. She thought it was going to be more of a discussion, and that we would be seated in a circle, with everyone facing each other.

The sheer scale of the event was impressive. There is an apparent abundance of Asian New Zealand art and arts practitioners to showcase. Onstage throughout the day I saw people I recognised, either because their work is prominent, or because I met them the year before at the 2017 hui. Most of them, I didn't speak with again.

The etiquette to observe when attending events like these: full-day or multi-day conferences and seminars, is not always clear. Does one sit with a new acquaintance, met at the outset of the event, throughout the day? When you meet a different conference goer on the morning tea break, do you sit with them instead?

---

[74] All authorities, all voices, all affiliations, greetings to you all.

Would it be rude, a kind of ladder-climbing, to abandon these people to seek out the company of those who were presenting? Do different rules apply, when people mark, or don't mark, their territories by leaving their belongings on the seats? Creative arts events have an added layer of self-consciousness. As someone whose commitment to art culminated in choosing Visual Art as a senior high school subject before putting it aside to pursue more sensible career paths, I am perhaps a little awed by those who have chosen, and managed, to make a life for themselves in the practice.

Clearly, networking is not my forte, neither is speaking to artists as though I don't think they're a special kind of person. But I think it is fair to not attribute all of the lack of mingling to my personal inadequacies and/or personal regrets. The nature of the day itself made it difficult to talk to people, particularly the "experts" who appeared onstage. I too had expected more of a discussion. Instead, the day was comprised of a series of themed three-member panels, each with a mediator.

The last panel of the day was titled "Translations & Mutations", where "Leading artists explore cultural storytelling and creative collaboration through writing and performance." The three speakers, Renee Liang, Lynda Chanwai-Earle and Alice Canton, and the mediator, Julie Zhu all had experience in theatre, and spoke of the importance of allowing people to tell their own stories. When privilege came up, as is inevitable at events like this, Zhu, a Chinese New Zealander, asked the three panellists, all also of Chinese descent, about "Chinese privilege", or "East Asian privilege". They each acknowledged its existence.

Zhu suggested a similar practice to that of male speakers refusing spots on panels when they learn that no women are included. She asked if the panellists would be willing to do the same in future if they learn that no non-Chinese are included on an "Asian" panel. All the panellists responded in the affirmative. I was surprised that this – being afforded the opportunity to present at a large Asian Aotearoa arts conference – could be considered an "East Asian" variety of privilege.

At this point in the day, I had already done some quick maths. Of the twenty-two people who had been onstage throughout the event, either as a panellist or a mediator, and not including the three Chinese New Zealanders who had offered

opening and closing remarks, I counted three people who were not of Chinese descent (and they were not East Asian). At the welcome, one speaker suggested the creation of a Waiata Hainamana,[75] and throughout the day, speakers would say "Chinese" then correct themselves to "Asian", or the other way around.

It is no surprise, given the character of transnational Asian capitalism (Ong 1999, 7) and the population demographics in New Zealand, that Chinese people – who, comprising 4.2 percent of the population are the country's largest Asian ethnic group (Stats New Zealand, 2013) – are the dominant picture of Asians. But there was also an early presence of Chinese in Aotearoa. Following the petering out of the gold rush in the 19th Century, many Chinese in New Zealand operated market gardens, and this past is an important feature of New Zealand's narrative of multiculturalism. Indeed, I have heard one person describe herself as "stereotypical" because her Chinese grandparents ran a fruit and vegetable shop.

The relative advantages of Chinese New Zealanders in multicultural New Zealand discourse shows how ethnic mobilisation as "a response to ethnically determined political access" (Nagel 1994, 244), can occur even within a panethnic group. During my thesis this happened, albeit on a small scale, online. *Mellow Yellow*, is a zine and blog: "dedicated to radical social change from a section of the 'Asian' tau iwi population in Aotearoa." Its mission is one of decolonisation; it seeks solidarity amongst oppressed people. Perusing their Facebook page, I found a call for submissions for a new blog:

> Following the self-perceived unresolved, privilege-complicit-gearstuckness of Chinese and East-Asian dominance of the zine/collective that is known as Mellow Yellow Aotearoa, I am done waiting for ethnic majorities of minorities to open up space for its minorities, pushing a demand for brown voices of all left-to-centers in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand! I (aka #batik) announce my splitsies from that yellow boat and am smashing out all the rotten bananas in my life to bake up a new, hot-off-the-stove 'zine: BANANACAKE!

---

[75] A song or chant for people of Chinese descent.

Work will commence in a flow of consciousness this week and so I call out all peoples who identify as BROWN, the colour of indigeneity, the 'third world', the diasporic melt of mixed bloodlines across Asia-Pacific in a white/neocolonized world, the decolonizers resisting beyond anti-white supremacy, bringing out the multi-tones and pigmentations of a collective solidarity experience that makes our tan a birthright to articulate, illustrate and demonstrate our existence as worthy of our own space.

One commenter took umbrage at this post:

Panethnic Subgroups

Dina G. Okamoto, in her *Redefining Race: Asian American Panethnicity and Shifting Ethnic Boundaries* (2014) lays out the elements she considers essential to panethnic formation, including, imposed racialised categorisation. Okamoto argues that in the Asian American context, racial residential segregation and occupational segregation helped catalyse panethnic organising. She also argues that community activists and leaders were pivotal in creating organisations and panethnic narratives (2014, 78-79). Okamoto also stresses that ethnic organisation does not hinder panethnic organisation. Rather, it helps it. As panethnicity does not override ethnicity, but instead overarches it, or runs alongside it[76]; the two identifications inform each other in the Western context.

---

[76] This is supported by the "'both-and' perspective" demonstrated by Asian individuals (Park 2008, 556) who acknowledge the diversity of ethnicities and cultures falling under the heading "Asian".

People I met during fieldwork often actively differentiated themselves from the dominant picture of Asian, often in ways that mitigated or acknowledged their privilege. Those with ancestors who arrived in the West generations ago, distinguish themselves from those who are "fresh off the boat", and vice versa. Chinese immigrants set themselves apart by either being not wealthy, not having a long-term family settlement in the country, not being from Guangzhou. People from Taiwan or Hong Kong set themselves apart that way. People who are not Chinese, or not East Asian differentiate themselves that way. Half or mixed race Asians consider themselves different, and different from other part-Asians depending on which of their parents is Asian and what ethnicity the other parent is. Others regard themselves as different depending on where they grew up, with no other Asians around, or no other Asians apart from family members, or outside an urban centre, or because they do not speak the Asian languages of their parents or ancestors.

There may be competing interests within panethnic groups, whose members are scattered across different class, ethnic, national and citizenship/visa status divides (Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000, 227; Espiritu 1992; Lee 1994, 186). Okamoto's formulation of panethnicity suggests that panethnic success is based on acknowledging these divides in order to bridge them. To their credit, panethnic institutions like the Asian Aotearoa Arts Hui and Mellow Yellow Aotearoa do not resist these challenges. They do not dispute that some minority groups have more visibility, more infrastructure, more access than others. A characterising feature of a successful panethnic movement is to not shy away from these divisions, to acknowledge power discrepancies, to be open to critique. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing cites this as "a central feature of all social mobilizing: It is based on negotiating more or less recognized differences in the goals, objects, and strategies of the cause. The point of understanding this is not to homogenize perspectives but rather to appreciate how we can use diversity as well as possible" (2005, x).

Aotearoa

On 29 July 2015, a couple of months after I arrived in New Zealand I went to a lecture hosted by the Political Science & International Relations Programme, titled

Canada's history wars and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: indigenous genocide and public memory in the United States, Australia, and Canada. The speaker was David B. MacDonald. During the questions and comments that followed the talk, Professor MacDonald elaborated on the greater comfort Canadians felt with the term "cultural genocide" as opposed to just "genocide". The latter term is one that they shied away from, not thinking it applied to them, despite the UN definition of genocide including what is colloquially understood as "cultural genocide". An audience member wondered about whether they thought "genocide" more appropriately described what the United States had done. Professor MacDonald said, that it is a "very important part of Canadian identity" to be able to say, "we weren't as bad as the US."

As an immigrant to New Zealand, even two months in, this was familiar. It seems very important to New Zealand identity to be able to say, "we aren't as racist as Australia". New Zealanders don't particularly enjoy hearing an Australian critique New Zealand. I'm not sure anyone wants to hear an Australian even ask about the colonial legacy of anthropology and its ongoing presence in New Zealand. I did this once when I first arrived. My intention was not to accuse, but to express my ignorance and surprise at what I thought would have been different. The New Zealander to whom I was speaking immediately brought up Australia and its worse state of affairs.

It is assumed that Australia is a more hostile place for Asians than New Zealand, with one Kiwi asking almost rhetorically "so is Australia more racist towards Asians?" Strangely enough, I felt defensive, and answered, honestly, that I don't think I can say it is (when it comes to Asians). New Zealand interviewees often bring up Pauline Hanson, as a symbol of widespread Australian racism. I went to Australian stand-up comedian Nazeem Hussein's show in Wellington. He said he was told there was a New Zealand equivalent to Pauline Hanson, Winston Peters. Before he got to the punchline, about senior citizens and public transport,[77] the crowd murmured their

---

[77] Apart from employing anti-immigration rhetoric, New Zealand MP Winston Peters and his New Zealand First party are also known for the establishment of a discounts and concessions card for senior citizens and veterans called the SuperGold Card.

disagreement, not with Winston Peters' policies or positions, but with the comparison. One audience member loudly proclaimed "no", or "nah".

One participant praised Te Reo Māori (Māori Language) revitalisation in schools, something not available when she was school age. As a Māori/Chinese/European person, she felt the absence. She described the progress since then "it's slow, but at least it's a start, I think we're way ahead than Australia, if I can say that. Do you know what I mean?" The tone however, is often one of commiseration, as though as an Asian person I am unequivocally a victim of racism in Australia, rather than party to it.

Calling myself an immigrant is a way to avoid calling myself an expat. The former word usually being code for people who either themselves are considered less "wealthy" or less "White" than the average person in the countries to which they migrate. Or, whose countries of origin are considered less "wealthy" or less "White" than the countries to which they migrate. But, no matter how fraught, racialised, and indicative of international hierarchies reserving the word "immigrant" for People of Colour, or people from the global south may be, there is an awkwardness in an Australian in New Zealand calling themselves an immigrant. As though doing so belies the very particular privileges I enjoy here.

During the 2017 Asian New Zealand Artists Hui I chatted to other attendees about being a bit out of place. They dismissed my concerns, humanities and the arts being so similar in their eyes. Like "sisters". They treated Anthropology almost as my art practice. My Asianness was a given, something that travelled with me from Australia to New Zealand. And despite being from Australia, living, as I do, in Aotearoa, I must negotiate my belonging here the same way everyone else does: in relation to biculturalism and via the Treaty.

One week into the PhD program, I attended Professor Rawinia Higgins' inaugural lecture at Te Herenga Waka Marae.[78] On the day of the lecture I found out there might be a pōwhiri.[79] I had heard of this, but, knowing nothing else, I quickly searched the internet, not just for pōwhiri protocol, but etiquette on the marae generally. The online tools didn't quite prepare me. That first time and every time since that I have been on the marae, I have not adequately prepared myself. Hongi[80] has been broadly explained solely for my benefit, prior to a pōwhiri. This is something I did appreciate, but a broad understanding is what I already had. What I really wanted were specifics. Orders in which to do things.

I carefully watch what looks like an assembly line of hongi in front of me. But I find that sometimes people touch their foreheads together, and sometimes they don't. The internet told me that foreheads should touch. When it gets to me, I try as best I can to make sure my forehead meets those of the people welcoming me onto the marae. I worry about head butting my hosts. I take too long to get my face where it needs to be. Our foreheads do not touch and I am moved on.

People have always been kind about my ignorance. At the Diversity Forum at Te Papa museum in 2016, the crowd was sluggish to arrange themselves in marching order to enter the marae. A fellow female attendee, whom I had never met, looked at me, "let's go to the front," she said, smiling. I knew this is what I should have been doing, but she had assumed correctly that I was reluctant to do it without direct encouragement or instruction.

Twice now, I have been the sole ignorant Australian standing silently on the marae while everyone else around me sings *Te Aroha*. Having identified the song and learned the words since then, there will not be a third time. But next time, perhaps it will be a different song. I wonder how everyone knows what song will be sung and if these songs are well known to all New Zealanders. Having spoken to people about

---

[78] This is the marae on Victoria University of Wellington campus. It is a gathering place which provides a tūrangawaewae (a place where Māori custom prevails) for students and staff (https://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/explore-victoria/marae).
[79] Pōwhiri is the process by which visitors are welcomed onto the marae.
[80] Hongi is a traditional Māori greeting where two people press their noses together.

it, it seems the answer is no, and yet, I am the only one who doesn't know what to do.

I rarely feel more Australian than when I am on a marae. It seems appropriate that I think of my lineage and my home during a pōwhiri. It makes ceremony of the guest/host relationship, and I am a guest and feel a guest. I am very comfortable with that being my part. Though, thinking of my place of birth does not happen because of the introductions being offered up around me, and often on my behalf. It happens because when I am on a marae I compare New Zealand to Australia.

Whereas Australian academic conversations about Asian immigration focus on Asianness in opposition to a White nationalism that also oppresses Indigenous Australians (Khoo 2008, 4), the New Zealand conversation focuses on multiculturalism in light of biculturalism (Leckie 2015, 288; Spoonley 2015). There is considerable overlap in these two vantage points. Arguments against multicultural discourse and cultural "tolerance", often critique the ways in which these frameworks ensure minority cultures remain sub-categories under a dominant mainstream. But, the differences between the two conversations happening in both countries, include the conceptual resources readily available in each.

Many participants I have spoken to in New Zealand engage with Te Tiriti o Waitangi, or the Treaty of Waitangi, as a founding document, and question the standing they are granted in relation to it. They feel as though the Treaty is misconstrued as being between Māori and Pākehā only. Asian people in New Zealand are not necessarily thought of as a party to this document, at least in public consciousness. There have been attempts to reframe this Māori/ Pākehā binary to an ongoing engagement between Tangata Whenua[81] and Tauiwi[82] (Ng 2017, 85), one that would reestablish or reassert the sovereignty of Tangata Whenua. The grassroots group, Asians supporting tino rangatiratanga,[83] is an example of this attempt.

---

[81] A term for Māori people that means, "people of the land".
[82] A term that refers to foreigners, or non-Māori.
[83] Tino rangatiratanga is a term used in Te Tiriti O Waitangi. It is today usually translated into English as "absolute sovereignty".

In Australia, we lack this language and this variety of popular constitutional jurisprudence. For one thing, we have no Treaty. Instead, "immigration" as a national conversation is held wholly separate to that of "reconciliation" and connections between Asia and Aboriginal Australia that pre-exist or are otherwise not explicitly mediated by the bureaucracy of European settlement, go ignored by mainstream histories (Stephenson 2001).[84] As such, Asian Australians' relationships to colonialism are not well articulated and there is little encouragement of "the formation of minority coalitions (such as Aboriginal-Asian Alliances)" (Lo 2008, 16).

At the end of the Asian New Zealand Artists Hui, eight of us drove to Te Tahawai Marae to stay the night. Despite not understanding the words, not being Chinese, nor a New Zealander, to hear Amy speak extemporaneously in Te Reo Māori, English and Cantonese to introduce us, and to thank our hosts, felt meaningful.

I asked Amy about what speaking Te Reo meant to her.

> Amy: I guess the reason why I'm interested in learning Te Reo isn't because I feel guilt about the dying out or anything. It's because I'm interested in that relationship between Asians and Tangata Whenua because, I think it's been underplayed a lot, like historically. I just feel like, how there's all this talk of, minority cultures… surpassing Western Pākehā culture in something like sixteen years and I don't know, I can't help feeling that… maybe our allegiances or, I don't know if that's the right word but yeah, our allegiances being misaligned when we identify strongly with the dominant culture here, which is White. I just think, it's… only by working with Tangata Whenua… are we gonna be able to start building something positive out of it. Because, I dunno, I read all these stupid comments on Facebook all the time… hating on Asians and it makes me really upset because it's not that… it's not that, oh, I don't know. I feel like that kind of racism is perpetuated… by the dominant culture and that is Pākehā.

---

[84] Though there are works that do document these relationships, like those of Peta Stephenson (2001; 2003; 2007) and Som Sengmany (2008). See also *Lost in the Whitewash: Aboriginal-Asian Encounters in Australia 1901-2001* by Penny Edwards and Shen Yuanfang (2003) and *Mixed Relations: Histories and Stories of Asian/Aboriginal Contact in North Australia* by Regina Ganter (2003).

Right down to the name of Amy's blog, the Māori word for Chinese person (or China man), Hainamana is an attempt to bypass Pākehā mediation of Asian and Tangata Whenua relations. An effort to enter a conversation that often excludes non-Europeans.

Me: So, I guess, what sparked Hainamana?

Amy: I guess a lot of things… I mean, I'd be lying if I said it wasn't something to do with discovering my own cultural roots and identity, but I guess it kind of came about from a, few things kind of like converging. I came back from, living abroad in Edinburgh and… it kind of seemed like the political climate in New Zealand had changed quite a bit, or maybe I'd just become more aware of how Asians were used as scapegoats for all like, our economic woes, to the housing crisis and, I dunno, it just seemed really aggressive when I came back.

Asia's always considered this outside thing in New Zealand. And, just through talks and conferences that I went to there was always quite a heavy emphasis on like, Pākehā and Māori relations or Pākehā and Pacific relations but not really anything to do with, how Asians relate to this context and I found that quite weird because actually Asians are… the first non-European settlers in New Zealand… and it just seemed like, that kind of history wasn't being acknowledged.

The history of New Zealand includes the ancient migratory route of Māori from Asia through the Pacific. A journey, a whakapapa that has been used to challenge assumptions of European cultural dominance in Aotearoa (White 2002, 40-41). European settlement however, remains the preferred origin story for what is now New Zealand.

Amy continues:

I think in New Zealand there's an acknowledgement that… Māori are Tangata Whenua and so are Pacific Islanders[85]… there's that kind of understanding that Pacific people belong here also and that they are treated as Indigenous, whereas, Asian people are not treated that way. And so… I guess there's a kind of tension to being Asian, I think it's almost okay to not like Asians.

The story of White settlement in New Zealand in many ways mirrors that of Australia. Following the mid 19th Century gold rush that saw many Chinese men emigrate to New Zealand, *The Chinese Immigrants Act 1881*, imposed a "poll tax" of ten pounds on Chinese migrants and restricted the number permitted to land from each ship arriving in New Zealand to one per every ten tons of cargo. This became one hundred pounds and one Chinese passenger per two hundred tons of cargo in 1896 (Ng, 2017 40-45). Opposition to Asian immigration manifested itself in groups like the Anti-Chinese Association, the Anti-Chinese League, the Anti-Asiatic League and the White New Zealand League, as well as the killing of Joe Kum Yung on Haining St in Wellington (New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2018). Yung's killer was attempting to rid the country of the "Yellow Peril". The poll tax was waived from 1934, and repealed in 1944.[86] Even after World War II, during which five naturalised Japanese New Zealanders were interned at Somes Island, New Zealand policy continued to favour European immigrants until 1986 changes to immigration practices (Butcher 2008, 5).

The Chinese population of New Zealand, and their relationships to Māori have been the subject of popular histories (Ip 2003; 2009) and theatrical works (Renee Liang's *The Bonefeeder*, Mei-Lin Te Puea Hansen's *The Mooncake and the Kumara*). Todd Nachowitz has conducted historical research into the far less documented subject of early Indian contact with Aotearoa, drawing upon ships' logs and early census information to demonstrate an Indian presence from 1769 onwards. He explores non-Māori minority invisibility and the ramifications for multicultural discourse of an Asian presence that exists alongside the more prominent Anglo presence (Nachowitz 2015). His research speaks to the often awkward positioning of Asian

---

[85] It may be that Pacific Islander people are seen as "honourary Māori".
[86] The New Zealand government officially apologised to the Chinese community for the tax in 2002.

ethnic communities in New Zealand (and arguably in other post settler countries) as something that is a later addendum to a foundational colonial narrative.

> In New Zealand, ah well probably worse so in Australia, that dialogue with the Indigenous is difficult, and you know, it's rife with problems … and to a very large extent, the Asian segment has been distanced from it in that we're not part of that. You know, that's not our conversation to have.
> -Yee Yang "Square" Lee, Oryza Foundation[87]

The fieldwork that informs this chapter suggests the difficulties in panethnicity as an act of political mobilising. It also speaks to the value of recognising diversity to form new allegiances and strategic alliances, not just with other groups within a panethnic formation, but with other minorities. The New Zealand stories in this chapter, apart from situating me in a social context (Reed-Danahay 1997, 9), show the ways in which the title "Asian" can be redeployed in new settings to attempt an oppositional stance to Whiteness.

The communication of this stance, is a tool of varied political purpose. The ability to signify Asianness, in contrast to Whiteness, can also form the basis of more overt types of Asian performance. The next chapter, is about humour, ethnic jokes and stand up comedy. This particular area of creative performance, provides insight into both the positive affect that often characterises Asian panethnicity as I experienced it in the field, and the ways in which group boundaries are policed by those within the group.

---

[87] A New Zealand based arts organisation that will feature more in later chapters.

Chapter 6: "in jokes"

In the early days of my research I typed the word "Asian" into Google with different combinations of words. Australia, New Zealand, Wellington, Auckland, Brisbane, etc. Organisation, group, club, association, etc. I do not remember what combination of words brought up Pretty Asian Theatre (PAT – but now an acronym for Proudly Asian Theatre), an Auckland based theatre company dedicated to promoting Asian theatre practitioners and Asian stories in theatre. I cannot recreate the search term that would return their website on the first page.

I used the online contact form to introduce myself to them, and ended up interviewing cofounder James Roque twice, and was appreciative of his candour and grateful for how easily he brought to mind illustrative examples of the "Asian condition" from his own life. It took seeing his stand-up comedy to realise that many of the topics we spoke about were common to his comedy material. Not to say he was trying out "bits" or trotting out jokes already told onstage. Rather, that he thinks about Asianness, "Brownness'", and "Filipino-ness" to work in stand-up comedy, a job that is driven by personal experience.

James has grappled with his use of "race jokes" or "ethnic humour". When we first met in 2016, he was asking himself whether or not telling jokes about being Asian is "hack". If so, or if not, why did so many people think so? Does it depend on the subject matter itself, or the execution? By the following year, he had come down firmly on the side of not inherently "hack".

> So I think, some comedians find it hack to talk about it, but I'm like, it's not hack if it's an authentic experience that you've had. When, White comics tell Brown comics that when they talk about race it's hack I'm like, shut up, like. This is… what we live so what else? Of course you can just talk about surfboards or whatever the fuck you wanna talk about, that's what you live.

Like in anthropology, in stand up comedy, the body is the instrument via which observations about the world are parsed and presented. The work of humourists like James, as "protoanthropologists" (Kozinski in Paolucci and Richardson 2006, 29)

involves the interrogation of daily life, including the quotidian aspects that often go unscrutinised. Particularly for the non-White comedian, race and ethnicity are an area ripe for analysis. Also similar to the anthropologist, the comedian must be mindful of their positionality.

Dramaturgy of Ethnic Humour

Goffman's dramaturgy (1959), a popular framework in the sociology of humour, is more frequently thought of as describing the behaviour of elites in institutional contexts (Paolucci and Richardson 2006, 27). However, stand up comedy, with its explicit onstage setting affords "ethnic" comedians, who may be marginalised outside that stand up setting, an authoritative platform from which to present critiques of culture and society. In the case of Asian comedians, if they choose to pursue Asian subject matter, they are able to present ideas about race, and about being Asian.

I've heard James tell different iterations of the same stories in different contexts: in online videos of a standup performance, or during a filmed interview for the *Asian Men Talk About Sex* documentary, directed by PAT cofounder Chye-Ling Huang. The accounts I choose to place the most stock in, are those that were told to me, during the interviews recorded for my research.

There's the seemingly obvious reason for this, that jokes do not make a claim to literal truth. They can be told and told again, with no requirement that they be repeated verbatim. Stories told to me during interviews, even the "ready-mades" (Bönisch-Brednich 2016, 205), may be anecdotally amusing, honed to such a point that they require fewer and fewer amendments with each rendition. However, when compared to stories told in the art of standup, they lack a discernable set up, and a punchline. They also lack a lot of the framing that would "key" me to the fact that it was intended as a joke.

Linguists speak of humour as a kind of "play frame" where speakers can dispense with social conventions of good taste. This they extend to the frame of stand up comedy, as a performance of "verbal art" (Bauman in Da Silva 2015, 188), where the audience is invited to hold up the act of speaking to intense scrutiny, assessing the

performers "display of communicative competence" (Da Silva 2015, 188). Stand up comedy is further keyed by the ritual aspects of a show (Chun 2009, 280-281). The comedian is introduced by an MC, the audience responds to the comedian's jokes via laughter, applause, heckling, silence, or worse. This play frame contributes to a context in which boundaries of political correctness can be stretched, though, because of that context, not necessarily transgressed.

Reverse Humour

One of the tools available to the ethnic comedian is what Simon Weaver describes as the "reverse discourse" of humour, in which a racialised other uses recognisable hallmarks of racist discourse to produce new meanings. Ideally, to minimise the possibility of a "monosemic racist laugh" (Weaver 2010, 36) in response to it, an ethnic joke would be told by, for, and to those within the relevant ethnic group. With the "context collapse" (Wesch 2008) of performing comedy to an audience of unknowns, many of whom may not be Asian, it becomes more and more difficult to predict how a joke will be received.

This problem is preempted in the introduction to the Australian book *Shit Asian Mothers Say*, a satirical and affectionate compilation of Asian Mum stereotypes, written by Michelle Law and Benjamin Law. They offer the following disclaimer:

> *Note: Only Asian people, and non-Asian people who intend to give this book to an Asian person, are allowed to buy this book. If you aren't Asian – and by "not Asian", we mean white; Latinos and black people are Asian in spirit (just go with us here) – and you are purchasing this book to ridicule our proud cultures and mothers, we'll see you in court. (2014)

It is possible to subvert ideological relationships between ethnicity and nationality by using the language of such ideologies – by lifting stereotypes and racist ideas from their usual context and isolating them for critique (Orton 2012, 26). To use stereotypes of Asianness as an Asian person involves engaging in "racial crossing practices without symbolically crossing racial boundaries… performing the speech of

a racialized other who is not necessarily a racial other" (Chun 2009, 264). This requires identification and "authentication" as an Asian person.

I spoke to Michelle Law[88] via Skype, a couple of weeks after seeing her play *Single Asian Female* in Brisbane. At one point in the play, the main character Mei purges her Asian stuff – a puffer jacket, Doraemon paraphernalia, etc. On the morning of the day I was to Skype Michelle, I remembered that my Skype picture is of Doraemon savouring a *dorayaki*. I contemplated changing this picture. Not because it might make me seem like a fangirl by referencing her play (Doraemon is far too popular for that to be a specific reference). With my preoccupation with "impression management" (Goffman 1959), I was concerned it might seem calculated, a self-conscious display of Asianness.

I asked Michelle about what kind of Asian jokes were okay, including when they were performed by Asian comedians.

> If they're not doing it smartly and with purpose, I tend to question that quite a lot. But if it's something like Ali Wong's standup on Netflix, that *Baby Cobra* special, like she talks a lot about race. Then that is fine for me, because I know she's making a point of it for a reason. And the reason isn't to make a joke of Asian people. It's like… making a point of laughing at society as a whole.

As well as words like "smart" and "purpose", participants spoke of "delivery", "tone", "subtly", "nuance", "satire", and significantly, "intention" to describe what a good, non-racist joke should have/be/do well. But despite the subversive potential of reverse discourse, "racist meaning is generated despite the intentionality of the comic rather than because of it" (Weaver 2010, 43). James has described the discomfort he has felt as an Asian comedian, making Asian jokes to an often non-Asian audience.

> I've had some crowds where it feels a little bit less like I'm getting stuff off my chest and it's funny, and more like, Brown dancing monkey… Where it's like,

---

[88] More of my interview with Michelle will be in Chapter 7.

you're laughing at this in the same way as when an animal does something funny in a zoo. So I've been there, but it's not all crowds that do it. You can kind of feel it if you're tuned in to the audience, what they're laughing at. I think probably the best way to turn that around is to, to make sure your material is as human, as relatable as possible and you're not just mocking the culture.

[…] I've been very guilty in the past of using being Asian as a cheap laugh. And it kills me a little bit inside but sometimes you just need that cheap laugh to keep you going. Cos, if it's like a rough gig and you're having a bad week, it's hard. And you just kinda have to live with it.

Me: Could I maybe ask for an example, of a cheap laugh?

James: In terms of a cheap laugh, like, I would say that, I have a bit where I say, "oh, if you're Filipino and you have this strong accent, some words sound the same" and then I say a sentence where like, four words sound like the same word. And I'm like… "cool trick man". Do you know what I mean? Like, where the joke is… we sound funny. You know what I mean? Still to this day, I haven't abandoned that bit, but I've tried to frame it in a way where, I'm, "don't get me wrong, I'm not making fun of this, I'm sad that I don't have this accent cos it's fucking special." Do you know what I mean? So, frame, it, in a way…

Me: Yeah, is that difficult to do in earnest, in the context of a stand up show?

James: Um… it's… not really. It's all about where your sort of, where the perspective of the joke is coming from and the point of view. I used to do that joke as… it was hard to take Filipino people seriously if you had that accent cos you sound funny but now every time I'm like, oh, I'm gonna do that joke, I will frame it as I'm sad I don't have that accent because it's fucking special and people who have that accent have the ability to do this thing that I don't. I mean you could argue that that's just fucking putting… like a different coat on it, but… I think… for now anyway it's enough to sort of satiate my guilt… but, I try not to do it, but sometimes it's actually quite fun to do.

James differentiates between the "cheap laugh" generated by feigning a Filipino accent, and a joke of which he is proud:

> James: I did a bit in 2014 on TV, which is my favourite thing I've ever done in my stand up career. "Defending Asian Drivers" […] I did a five-minute-long, sort of… bit about it and it's my favourite thing I've ever done. It was hugely cathartic and to know that it, went on TV and I could actually say, a lot of people watched it, was satisfying, for me, cos not only did the audience get a buzz from laughing cos it was entertaining, but also they got like… a positive social message. I honestly felt my buzz, like ego wise, as a comic, like, oh I made people laugh in the room but I also got, I kept that cathartic feeling of… finally I got this off my fucking chest.

> But even then, stories like [this] still happen to me. Where people come up to me afterwards. Like I was practising that bit before we put it on TV at The Classic,[89] and after – it was a gig to forty people, fifty people – one of the women came up to me afterwards, from the crowd, was quite, sort of, middle-aged, not even, sort of young professional age woman, came up to me and grabbed me by the shoulders, like, looked into my soul (intense eye contact) and said, "Asians can't drive!" That's it. No hello, nothing, and then let go and then walked away. This was after, at half time, cos I was last on the first half, and they walked away and… things like that remind me that I need to keep doing this. I was just kind of shocked, and I looked over and all the comics that were on that night, who were like, big names in New Zealand and they were all like, "what just fucking happened?"

> Me: Does it still kind of shock you? Or do you think, "oh, another one", at this point?

> James: I think, I might, I always think that I'm numb to it cos it's happened so many times, but whenever it happens, it gets me down, every time. The most

---

[89] An Auckland comedy club.

recent thing that's happened was… where [a] guy came up to me and was just like, [this] guy was a fucking douche the whole night. He was… White dude bro in a business suit the whole night, jacked, laughing, sitting in the front row, laughing at the wrong parts, I mean laughing at the bits where someone would talk about, going down on a girl, like where it wasn't even the punchline… Like (imitates a stupid laugh)… he was a dick, but, whenever stuff like that happens… Just when you think like the knife is blunt, it's still sharp as ever (makes self-stabbing motion), cuts you real deep.

I watched the televised version of the "Defending Asian Drivers" joke online. It deals explicitly with the stereotype of Asians being bad drivers. By the end, James blames racism and racist anti-Asian abuse for contributing to traffic accidents by placing undue stress and anxiety on Asian drivers. He finishes the bit by playing on a New Zealand anti-drinking ad campaign: "Stop a mate from driving racist. Leeeegend."

At one point in the performance, James suggests how quickly people will turn on their Asian friend, if that friend was to crash into their car. He talks about a hypothetical Asian person, whom you've known for years, named Steve. The audience laughs when he says this name, James stays in the moment, pauses briefly, acknowledges the laughter by saying "right?" and then continues with the rest of the bit. As a viewer I am not sure whether the name Steve was intended as a joke. If it was, is the joke the supposed unlikeliness of an Asian person being named Steve? Or does it allude to the practice of Asian people with Asian names adopting an Anglo name when in Western countries? The former speaks to ideas of perpetual foreignness that Asian people are associated with. If the latter, why is that funny? Is it the idea that Asian people would seek to "pass" by using a Western name, when clearly their phenotypic difference renders passing impossible?

I am not sure how this particular moment during the extended joke was intended to be received, and I do not know how to interpret the laughter it provoked. As a feat of technical skill the joke succeeds as a whole. I find it funny and the video demonstrates the audience did too. But the reaction to "Steve" creates a sense of unease in me. Asian stand up comedians' performances are subject to this extra

layer of scrutiny. They are assessed by Asian audience members on how well they serve the Asian "team" (Goffman 1959).

In group/Out group

I gave a presentation at the postgraduate conference held by the Victoria University School of Cultural and Social Studies. I roughly outlined the idea of Asian as a performative identity, and the use of ethnic jokes as an element of this. I put up a table, made up of things mentioned by participants during fieldwork as either "White" or "Asian". There were a few titters in response.

White (Western)	Asian
Salt and pepper shakers	Noodles
Ordering fried rice in Asian restaurants	Sharing food at
Ordering own dish at a restaurant and not sharing	restaurants
Drake	Interest in trying new
Coldplay	restaurants/Obsession
Chicken sandwiches	with food
Chicken sandwiches that aren't spicy with mayo	Liking chocolate
Roasts (at Christmas)	Lactose intolerance
Spiritual journeys to India	Asian flush/glow
Allowing your children to become sexually active at a young age	Squatting
	Noisiness
Moving out of home immediately after finishing high school	Traditional gender roles
	Filial piety
Kaftans	Discipline and hard work
Yachts	Collectivism
Sport – Football, cricket	Sunnybank, Brisbane
Eat Pray Love	Glen Waverly, Melbourne
Having a *Minions* phone case	Sandringham, Auckland
Individualism	
Racism	

I also put up a meme, chosen as it's James' "favourite meme on earth", but which he says is also "soooo bad, and super racist."

The meme, which has a few different iterations, is roughly: "If your phone gets wet, put it in a bowl of rice. The rice will attract Asians, who will repair your electronics." The response to seeing this slide displayed was a little more reserved, with a couple of people telling me afterwards they found it amusing. One White person said "That's funny. I can't say that. You can say that." This, like Sanjeev Bhaskar's explanation of "I can make fun of my mother, but you can't"[90] basically explains the in group/out group rules that govern ethnic humour.

John Clammer has written about ethnic performativity as repeated and reproduced day to day, "particularly in the circumstances where one is asserting an ethnic identity, not simply being 'assigned' one" (2015, 2159). He elaborates that ethnic performativity is dynamic and constantly expressed, even in the face of oppression and prejudice:

> Indeed, one way of responding to such negative labelling is to deliberately
> heighten the supposedly 'unacceptable' characteristic as a form of resistance
> and 'in your face' response to insult or denigration. Ethnic jokes, for example,
> can often be told within a group as a kind of self-mockery or way of making
> fun of external prejudices, but would be quite unacceptable if told by an

---

[90] Bhaskar said this when he was a guest on the television show *Parkinson* in 2000.

outsider whether to a member of the in-group or to other outsiders, where such jokes might easily cross the fine line between humour and insult (2015, 2159).[91]

One participant spoke of the different rules that apply to a White person.

> I think it depends on who's delivering it. We had like, a team planning day sort of thing you know, fifty people, a lot of new staff there. One of the managers made some joke about… he was trying to say, let's share as freely and as broadly as we can but he said… you know let's just, have an open kimono. And that really, on so many levels… I was just so offended cos I'm just like, you're this, big, sort of, you know football player looking kinda White hairy man – again I'm stereotyping – and you're here on your first day talking about an open kimono as a joke and everyone, lots of people laughed. I just looked at a couple of colleagues, and they were looking at me going that is so fucking wrong […]

> I made a lot of people know why I felt it wasn't okay. Whereas, oh I'm sure if someone else said that joke that I knew, I'd probably take them down a few notches too, but, it kind of… depends how far you go. If you're attacking females, and Asians, and (laughs), and sexualising them, then it's just too many. So it's kinda like, maybe just depends on the subtly and how much I know you and all of that kind of stuff as to whether I get offended. Yeah.

The in group use of ethnic jokes is similar to the way that some racial slurs have been reappropriated by some of the people to whom they have been applied as terms of solidarity (Da Silva 2015, 202). In writing about "Oriental" identities in Britain, Tamsin Barber conducted interviews with young Vietnamese living in London. She found a number of them "appropriated the racialised term 'chink' as a self-referential 'comedic term' which can also stand in for 'Oriental'" (2015, 101). She describes this process, as one similar to the transformation of the racist slur "nigger"

---

[91] Kirsten McGavin makes similar points about the use of stereotypes and humour in asserting an Islander or Nesian identity (2014, 138-139).

(or "nigga"), as a form of interpellation, in the Stuart Hall sense, "whereby originally racist terms are transformed and take on new subjective meanings" (2015, 101). She also notes that her participants express that it is acceptable for them to refer to themselves as a "chink" but if used by someone outside of this group context, it becomes racist abuse" (2015, 101).

"Chink" is a term meant for Chinese people. I quoted in full the above paraphrased Tamsin Barber passage in my presentation, pronouncing the word "chink", after preempting my use of it with an apology. I also included an extended version of the quote, which included the word "chink" and the word "nigger", on a presentation slide. The slide – or more specifically the direct quote typed on it that isolated these racial slurs for analysis – didn't give me much pause, though perhaps it should have. But saying the word, even with the disclaimers, I wondered about. I was under the impression that no Chinese people were present, and I don't know if that would have changed my use of the word. "Chink" is often used for any East Asian person. Those who use this word to describe people tend not to differentiate between them. I have been called the name "chink". But does that mean it has been given to me? Is it now mine to use as I wish? Does being Japanese specifically affect the answer? Does it depend on the context?

The performance of a joke

As a heightened form of communication, James explained the contextual and cooperative nature of joking and of stand up:

> See the thing is that, I feel like, there's a lot of comedy, a lot of the actual stand up that's left in the room. That is just, solely for the room. That you can't actually transcribe onto paper or video. I think… If the performer has the trust of the audience and they've done their homework and they contextualised everything and they're not punching down, they can actually joke about stuff like that. What's the problem now is like, people will take that out of that context of a comedy club…

James paused before expounding on the context of a comedy club as a particular kind of social contract:

> The contract between the performer and the entertainer, is that, the performer goes "I promise to… have done my research and promise that I'm not punching down, and I promise that I'm doing my best to make you laugh." And the promise of the audience member is to go "I promise to give you the benefit of the doubt that you're just actually trying to make me laugh and I've given you this money and we're here at this comedy club." And so there has to be a bit of leeway from both sides.

There are many metaphors used to describe the performance of identity that evoke the arts. As well as the theatre for example, there is the mask (Fanon 1970) and fashion (Kondo 1997). Asian panethnicity is suited to the metaphor of the stage. But, stand up comedy lends itself particularly well to the task at hand. Unlike other forms, comedy, perhaps designated as a "low art" (due to its accessibility), does not have the protections against misinterpretation that "high art" often enjoys. Comedy is more intimate than other arts practices. It is predicated on the establishment of an agreed state of affairs between a performer and the audience. To succeed it requires understanding, even near unanimous agreement on who falls on which side of the in group/out group divide. It is overtly and immediately cooperative and collaborative.

Humour itself, as social practice, has the same markers as stand up as a professional practice. Like the way performative identities are achieved by the "repetition of acts through time" (Butler in Canham and Williams 2017, 24) jokes are rehearsed, revised, reiterated, retold. And like all communication, there is power at play in a joke. There are, to use James' words, "victors" and "victims" of a joke. There are allegiances, relationships of dominance and solidarity.

In this way, humour can be a form of resistance. By discussing ideas of what constitutes Asianness, by foregrounding non-Whiteness and perhaps making fun of Whiteness, an Asian joke can be seen as an act of "de-centering whiteness" (Chun 2009, 283), undermining it as the normative standard of race (Bonds and Inwood 2016, 717). But, an Asian joke can also reinforce this standard.

Participants spoke about making jokes to out group members when they were growing up in predominantly White school environments. These jokes were made in an effort to distance themselves from Asianness by deliberately adopting, but not repurposing, the markers of racist discourse. James described his teenage self as having, "a complex about being Asian". He would "make self-deprecating jokes about being Asian, not being able to drive and shit like that."

The participant who was so offended when the "football player looking kinda White hairy man" made a crass reference to Asianness, once told Asian jokes herself, "almost to make fun of myself." She also suggests a motive of self-preservation/self-protection, in that by making these jokes she was able to "put it out there before people can give it back to you, so you kind of own and control that situation." Even jokes made with an Asian friend were part of the same attempt to distance herself from Asianness: "we used to joke about other Asians as if we weren't Asian." There is a word for Asians who don't consider themselves Asian; for those who are "White on the inside" and "Yellow on the outside": "banana".

A useful means of convincing others that you are not Asian, is by demonstrating that you are racist towards them. This act of symbolically declaring oneself not actually Asian like other Asians, operates in a similar way to racial "crossing". One of the most important elements in establishing membership of the "in group" for the purposes of telling an ethnic joke, is conveying that racism exists, and that you are the victim of it. The experience of racism is a shibboleth that distinguishes Asians in the telling of jokes, and by extension in the performance of Asian panethnicity. Recognition of a common racial oppression, makes even intraracial Asian jokes acceptable in the play frame of race performance.

> I think that for marriage it can be nice to be with somebody of your own race. The advantage is that you get to go home and be racist together. You get to say whatever you like. You don't gotta explain shit. My husband: half Filipino, half Japanese, I'm half Chinese and half Vietnamese, and we spend a hundred percent of our time shitting on Korean people.
> -Ali Wong, *Baby Cobra*

Asian humour, much like performativity relies on maintaining a distinction between "us" and "them". It also involves ensuring you do not discredit the Asian "team". "Among members of the team we find that familiarity prevails, solidarity is likely to develop, and that secrets that could give the show away are shared and kept" (Goffman 1959, 238). What constitutes a betrayal of the team, and when someone should be ejected from it, is an ongoing bone of contention – one that is negotiated in each performance.

The role of humour, and the rules that govern who can and can't make jokes at the Asian person's expense, support the idea of panethnic boundaries as shaped and maintained through performance. The reverse discourse present in some Asian jokes also reveals the creative space that can be carved out within a coercive regime of meaning to subvert some of those meanings. This process of meaning-making is one that can also be found in the creation and consumption of arts, literature, theatre and other creative forms. Representation and presentation in these forms are the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Presentations of the Asian Other, and of the Asian Self

Yellow face

When *The Mikado* was on at the Wellington Opera House, I didn't go to see it. I had spent some time wondering about whether it was necessary to do so. It wasn't a dilemma, really, but I wondered if it could be read as a political decision to not go, an act of Asian solidarity. Or simply a courtesy to some of my participants, who are Asian theatre practitioners, specifically campaigning and working against the kind of thing *The Mikado* represents: the practice of Yellow face.

White performers adopting stereotypical cross-cultural or cross-racial markers to pose as non-White people, "does not only disclose a search for knowledge about, and hence power over, the Other, but also a desire to overcome the gap between whites and non-whites that arose as a consequence of empire building and colonial violence… 'it appears that cross-cultural dress is invested with a magical fantasy of wholeness that can make good colonial alienation and lack'" (Ching-Liang Low in Hübinettea and Räterlinckb 2015, 507).

Whatever the naïve drives of its perpetrators, Yellow face "in the end becomes nothing but a way for the white subject to avoid the possibility of genuinely meeting the Other in her or his reality" (Hübinettea and Räterlinckb 2015, 508). Yellow face operates inevitability within and in accordance with, a racist social order, and in so doing, reinforces it. When I spoke to James he had described a comedy sketch he saw shared online:

> Someone in our industry, were on a sketch that was… she's a White lady, it was her playing a Korean person, and she had like a fucking stereotypical pan-Asian bowl cut with… kind of a tingey yellow makeup on, and… the character was called Soo Young and the joke was she had an accent… and… I wasn't fine with it.
>
> I think… in order to move past the shit, like the people in the majority need to actually be on side. And I don't think they were, enough, to really go "no, fuck

this, this is bad." I will email you the link. Because I think it's potentially up there… with Mickey Rooney. It's supposed to be a sketch and a sketch relies on the premise of the joke but when the premise of your joke is this is a funny accent! Look at this, how hilarious this person is, then it's just racist. It's just bad.

I.Y. Yunioshi, as portrayed by Mickey Rooney in the 1961 film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is a useful benchmark in Yellow face conversations. The characterisation is so spectacularly racist the word most readily called to mind isn't "offensive" so much as "tacky". No amount of Audrey Hepburn in black Givenchy can stop the movie from seeming cheap. If *The Mikado* would be a similar reference point, then should I actually make the effort to attend, in order to fully assess the claims of racism and Yellow face commonly levelled at the musical, and whether the stylistic tweaks to the production (with Hello Kitty and Harajuku fashion references) make a difference. For completeness and fairness, was it necessary for me to go?

In matters of pop culture I normally tend towards completionism, but I didn't really want to go see this Gilbert and Sullivan show. I almost wished I felt just a little more strongly about *The Mikado* and then my not going to see it could be seen as a political decision, rather than lack of desire to sit through it. Instead I held out for the Red Scare Theatre Company's production of *Yellow Face* by David Henry Huang at Whitireia Performance Centre. This work, about an Asian American playwright (a fictionalised version of Huang himself) who, after publicly decrying the casting of White actors in Asian theatre roles, unwittingly does just this in his own production, began its run one week after *The Mikado* finished.

During my thesis fieldwork, there were a number of Asian, or more specifically, Chinese-centered productions in both Australia and New Zealand. There was *Chimerica* – Sydney Theatre Company's production of a work by British playwright Lucy Kirkwood about US-China relations and the "Tank Man" of the Tiananmen Square protests. Melbourne's Malthouse Theatre staged *Little Emperors*, set in Beijing and Melbourne about the generation of sibling-less children born during China's one-child policy. Brisbane's La Boite Theatre ran *Single Asian Female*, the

story of a mother and her two daughters who run a Sunshine Coast based Chinese restaurant.

In New Zealand, as well as *Yellow Face*, there was *The Mooncake and the Kumara*, a play which has been performed in a number of New Zealand cities since premiering in 2015. It is inspired by writer Mei-Lin Te Puea Hansen's own grandparents' – a Māori woman and a Chinese man – and their courtship in a market garden. Renee Liang's opera *The Bonefeeder* based on the story of the SS Ventnor[92] had its run in Auckland, as did a number of PAT productions, including *Call of the Sparrows*.

Call of the Sparrows was Proudly Asian Theatre's first full length play, put on in October 2016. I flew to Auckland from Wellington to attend the preview night, having tried to organise some interviews around the production. I didn't tell Proudly Asian Theatre that I was coming.

The entrance to the Herald Theatre, part of Aotea Centre – is difficult to find via Queen St – Google Maps doesn't even give that option. It is small, with a bar. When I eventually find my way there, there are already people gathered, waiting in groups no smaller than pairs. I see someone I have interviewed, one of the directors of Oryza Foundation – an organisation that helps fund and develop Asian New Zealand arts – in conversation with someone I do not know. Attendees look to be in their early twenties through to their sixties. There are a few Asians but not a noticeably high number, if anything, noticeably few.[93]

A theatre attendant walks around, distributing programmes during one circuit, announcing the show will start shortly during another. A couple of people walk in and out of the closed door to the theatre where the performance is to take place. In front of this door is a stand with a notice informing us of the use of lasers in the show and

---

[92] The SS Ventnor was carrying the exhumed bones of 499 Chinese New Zealanders when it sank off the coast of Hokianga, in the North West of New Zealand in 1902. The remains had been intended to be returned to the families of the dead for burial in their homeland. The bones and the lives of thirteen crew members were lost. When bones washed up on the shores of Hokianga, local iwi Te Roroa and Te Rarawa recovered and cared for them (Wong 2014; *Xinhua News Agency* 2014).

[93] White consumption of art by and/or about minority groups is discussed in Chapter 8.

prohibiting the use of cameras, filming or recording of any kind. Just before we are to file inside, James[94] walks out and addresses the crowd. He welcomes us all, stresses that this is a development season. He spots me and thanks me for coming. A part of me had wanted to go unobserved. What if the play is not good? I don't want to have to lie about liking it if asked. Even worse, what if it becomes necessary to write about it in my thesis? There are so few Asian-centered works, there is a lot of pressure on them to not be bad.

It was a relief to like it. It was impressive. In a seat a few rows back, I was struck immediately by the set design. White fabric painted in swathes of blue were strung and draped about the stage – both as backdrop and a floor. There were six actors, and all but the lead played multiple characters. The different personae were indicated by masks and costume changes. Large in scope and grand in scale, the play dealt with themes of isolationism, insider/outsider, the value of tradition and the limitations of superstition, class struggle, revolutionary excess, whether to destroy symbols or repurpose them. The line "Throw the old to the wind, now let's begin" was repeated by characters throughout.

Not to diminish the artistic achievement of the production,[95] but it is ceaselessly thrilling to see a cast made up entirely of Asian people. Dorinne Kondo wrote in 1997 about the potential effect of empowerment and the "general subversiveness in simply being able to see progressive plays by and about people of color" (205). The "liberatory potential of staged performances" resonates partly because of the immediacy of the form (Mueller and Hofman 2017, 9). However, this subversive delight transfers across media, and change has not been so dramatic that its experience has dimmed since Kondo's time of writing. As Australian writer Benjamin Law has put it: "there's some gland inside me that reacts to seeing an Asian—any Asian—with a broadcast media platform" (Law, 2009).

I have this gland too. There is a reaction that feels physical whenever I notice an Asian onscreen in Western media. Though, in my case, the reaction is particularly

---

[94] James Roque – the same James from Chapter 6, PAT cofounder and director of *Call of the Sparrows*.
[95] And the purpose of this thesis is not to isolate specific texts or works for dedicated critique or analysis.

pronounced in a work of fiction. It's like a pricking up of the ears, a milder version of hearing your name said in front of an audience when you don't expect it. Not anywhere stressful, like an airport, or at an occasion where you might then be asked to speak. Perhaps it can be likened to winning something, not an award you've earned, but a minor raffle, or door prize. Not expected, but welcome. Seeing an Asian onscreen is like a fun surprise.

Annette Shun Wah prompted an early instance of this sensation. She was, amongst other things, the host of *Eat Carpet* – a television show compiling different short films each episode. This show, alongside any other late-night offering on Australian television channel, SBS (Special Broadcasting Service), was a formative part of growing up in Australia. SBS is the public broadcaster[96] responsible for providing multicultural and multilingual services; it reflects multicultural Australia in a way commercial television channels tend not to. It has a reputation for niche programming: the culturally specific, the foreign, the weird, and the risqué. For some Australians, "Late-night SBS" or "SBS movie" is almost a euphemism for soft-core porn. But, it revealed to me a whole new horizon of screen arts. Like riding buses in East Auckland – for an Australian, SBS makes the world seem big.

When I met Annette, she looked the same as when I was a child. I interviewed her in her capacity as Executive Director of Contemporary Asian Australian Performance (CAAP) – a professional arts company that dedicates itself to creating contemporary Asian Australian performing arts. When I asked Annette to describe the performing arts landscape that gave rise to CAAP in 2004, she cited an Australia Council report from 2000, titled, *the Taxidriver, the Cook and the Greengrocer.*[97] This was around the time she began her acting career:

> When I started out acting in the mid 90s, I was only ever offered roles as a
> waitress in a Chinese restaurant. These days most, or many of the young
> female actors on our books largely get asked to be sex workers and things
> like that and the young men get asked to be drug couriers and gangsters and

---

[96] SBS is hybrid-funded.
[97] Full title: *the Taxidriver, the Cook and the Greengrocer: The representation of non-English speaking background people in theatre, film and television* (Bertone, Keating, Mullaly 2000).

things like that. So it's changed in that way, gone from being cooks to gangsters, but… it's been through that stage and is now improving. But basically it was really heartbreaking to think of people who would go through an acting training course, or degree… you do your Shakespeare, you do your Ibsen and you come out and the best you can get is a gangster or a sex worker.

These – the taxi drivers, hospitality workers, sex workers and gang members are the familiar Asian bit parts. Though, expanding the field to other English language screen industries – which globalised mediascapes have already done for us (Appadurai 1996; Khoo 2008) – IT workers, doctors and accountants can be added to that list. My personal preference is for the "incidental Asian". This is when an actor of Asian appearance, who is not a main character but has a speaking role, portrays a character not explicitly designated as Asian in the script, and who may not traditionally be cast as Asian.

For the rarer category of Asian role, a co-lead character, or regular cast member of a studio or mainstream work, there are some options. The gland reacts to all of them. But with some of them, after initially registering that "they're talking about me!" comes hearing what they're saying about you. And, representations of Asians in mainstream media do have the power to speak a particular kind of Asianness into being. Aihwa Ong describes the ways in which "publics" – "nonstate fields of power in which images, information, and practices—now highly mediated by print, electronic, and film media" – contribute to the production of cultural norms that impact the opinions and actions of people in their day to day life (1999, 159). The following is a list of the most common representations of Asians in Western screen media:

- Nationalist villain philosophically opposed to the US (from Communist China, North Korea, the Middle East, or, if a WWII film, from Japan)
- Token minority in the ensemble cast of a procedural crime show (Daniel Henney in *Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders,* B.D. Wong in *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*)

- Secondary member of a group of geeky friends (*Silicon Valley, The Big Bang Theory*)
- Sensible or repressed friend of White heroine (*Gilmore Girls, Crazy Stupid Love*)
- Asian member of a pan-global cast in an action blockbuster (*XXX, Fast and the Furious* franchise)
- Martial artist in an ensemble cast (*Into the Badlands, Iron Fist, Star Wars: Rogue One*)
- Asian female whose independent or rebellious personality is symbolised by a blue/purple/pink streak in her hair, in an ensemble cast (*Glee*, *X-Men: Days of Future Past*, *Pacific Rim*)
- Sacrificial Asians, who are "sacrificed for the sake of the white protagonists' emotional fulfillment" (*The Year of Living Dangerously, Turtle Beach, Heaven's Burning, Japanese Story*) (Khoo 2008, 46)
- Set decoration for White characters discovering themselves abroad (*Lost in Translation, Eat Pray Love*)
- White passing or ethnically ambiguous character (Keanu Reeves in anything, Chloe Bennet in *Agents of SHIELD*, Kristin Kreuk in *Smallville*, Olivia Munn in anything)
- Stars of a movie or show about being Asian, usually in a predominantly White, post-settler country (*Fresh Off the Boat, The Family Law, Kim's Convenience, Crazy Rich Asians*)
- Comedian starring in something they also wrote or created, often about finding love with a White person (*Master of None, The Mindy Project, Maximum Choppage, The Big Sick)*
- Ethnic caricatures for comic relief (*The Hangover, Priscilla Queen of the Desert, Dude Where's My Car? Sixteen Candles*)
- Ethnic caricatures in cartoons who are not voiced by Asians (Asian reporter Trisha Takanawa in *Family Guy*, Apu in *The Simpsons*)
- White actors portraying Asian characters, in Yellow face (*Breakfast at Tiffany's, Cloud Atlas*)
- White actors portraying Asian characters, not in Yellow face (*Aloha, Ghost in the Shell*)

This list is limited to works that could be called mainstream. There are obviously many Asian creators, some of whom have lent their voices to this thesis, who are providing counter-representations. At this point there is also the added category of "character in a mainstream work that does not deal explicitly with Asianness" (*Searching, Killing Eve, Elementary, Quantico, To All the Boys I've Loved Before*). This is a very small category, and each new addition is heralded as a breakthrough for Asian representation. This may be a middle class symptom, but it is through the medium of movies that I am most frequently reminded that Asians are different, and that we have strange habits and proclivities, real or imagined, and useful only for their capacity to amuse a White audience. Watching the character of Cynthia in *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, exuberantly portrayed by Julia Cortez, hurts in a way I am still surprised by. The Filipina wife of Barry Otto, she delights in expelling ping pong balls from her vagina, for the raucous enjoyment of the White male patrons of a small town Australian pub. I wonder, "is this what they think of us?"

Debra Spitulnik quotes Stuart Hall on the ideological function of mass media: "the mass media are more and more responsible (a) for providing the basis on which groups construct an 'image' of the lives, meanings, practices, and values of *other* groups and classes; (b) for providing the images, representations and ideas around which the social totality, composed of all these separate and fragmented pieces, can be coherently grasped as a *'whole'*" (1993, 295). When we rarely see stories, by, about, or for Asians told at all, it does something. When I spoke to Michelle Law just after the Brisbane run of her first play, she talked about her career prospects based on her assessment of the Australian dramatic arts scene:

> When I finished school I was tossing up between several career paths. So, I wanted to, be a visual artist or a writer or an actor. And the way I narrowed it down was that… if I was to follow an acting path I knew that I wouldn't get any work. Or if I was to get any work, it would probably be not the kind of roles that I would be interested in. Cos they'd be really stereotyped and really two dimensional. And so I thought, as a writer that I'd have more agency to create work that other people as well as myself could perform in.

And I guess growing up… the theatre that I saw, I grew up on the Sunshine Coast, which was and is still quite a monoculture, it's mostly Anglo folk (laughs) and… the theatre that I saw there was… very White. And then when I'd come to Brisbane, for, field trips and things, I think the only production I saw that had, interesting Asian characters in it was Miss Saigon, which isn't the newest work out (chuckles) there. I guess that sort of reinforced to me, and not only just theatre but the other media I was consuming, like books and TV and film, that, there just weren't roles for people like us. Or… you know, our stories weren't very interesting, or like didn't deserve to be told.

At the time I interviewed Annette, I also interviewed TK Pok, who had headed up the Lotus Asian Australian Playwriting Project. The project, a joint endeavor of CAAP and Playwriting Australia, provided training and mentorship for Asian Australian artists and writers interested in theatre. Running from 2014 to 2018, and offered in Melbourne, Sydney and Australia, the staggered programme began with free introductory playwriting workshops, followed by an intermediate playwriting course, showings of works-in-progress at local theatres, more in depth guidance and tutelage to develop draft plays, and a limited number of theatre company residencies. Though with each round of the programme the field was narrowed through a selection process, over seventy emerging Asian Australian theatre practitioners participated at some stage of the project.

I asked how and why the Project came about.

Annette: We actually got a phone call from this guy… from [another state's] Education Department, Board of Studies over there wanting to know what Asian Australian plays were in existence that they could consider for their curriculum and I actually rang up Playwriting Australia at that point and said "can you help me cos I've got no idea". And they came back… and said, "well, it's a really good question. We've searched through and done some research and we think there's probably only one or two… and we're, we're appalled." (Laughs).

This phone call, alongside a general lack of opportunities for Asian Australians in theatre, was cited as one of the reasons for the Lotus Playwriting Project. The phone call exposed a lack of plays written by or about Asian Australians, as well as demonstrating a bureaucratic effort to diversify the types of literary content taught in Australian schools. It also raises the question, what is an "Asian Australian play"?

> Me: Somebody from the Education Department, in an education government-y type role, wanting Asian Australian plays for the curriculum. Do you think… that somebody in that position looking for that kind of play, would find what they're looking for with some of the Lotus plays? Do you think people already have that broad idea of what an Asian Australian play can be? Or do you think they would be expecting something a bit more about "migrant experience" and-

> Annette: and belonging and identity?

> Me: Belonging and identity…

> Annette: Yeah, I think they probably are. If they've thought about it at all, I think that's what they expect. And that's because for a long time a lot of migrant writing was also like that. Prose writing and, you know other kinds of writing were… were often shoved in, marginalised into that little ghetto too, you know. So I've been very careful not to… do the same thing with Lotus, [we] wanted to avoid that. Trying to learn from past experience you know, having had the past experience being in television and whatever, and publishing, just trying to stay away from those tracks. So hard. So hard to do.

The thematic expectations of plays by and/or about Asian Australians indicate the pervasive "perpetual foreigner" conception of Asianness. By insisting on the Asian experience as characterised by non-belonging, that non-belonging is perpetuated. These narrative tropes also prop up a binary of "the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')" (Said 1978, 43). It is by now not controversial or even novel to suggest that writings by and about these "others", however varied, can "confront the dangers of ethnic and racial stereotyping and the

behavioral conventions of how nationality is performed to expose the myths of belonging" (Orton 2012, 24). The limited depictions of Asians in Western media, and the resultant narrow conception of Asians in life, could be challenged just by increasing the number of depictions presented by Asians themselves.

An "unconventional" career

> One of the most common questions I get asked [...] is hey Ronny, hey Ronny, what do your parents think about this? Hey Ronny, what do your parents think about what you do? Are your parents okay with you doing stand-up comedy? Ronny what do your parents think about this? Are your parents okay with you doing stand-up comedy? Ronny what do your parents think about this? Innocuous enough question. But the insinuation behind that is downright racist. You're only asking me that because I'm Asian. You would never ask these other White comedians that question, because you know their parents don't give a fuck about them.
> -Ronny Chieng (2015)[98]

The stories we tell and have told to us are important to who we think we are, how we feel about who we are, and how we relate to others. For my purposes, I am interested in creative arts and its practice because of the "performative potential of media to create meaning" (Koehler 2017, 162). But, I wondered if the value of media representation is inflated by some people, those professionally invested in the issue of ethnic representation. As a long-term student of humanities, "representation" is a term I encounter frequently. My formal education convinces me it is important and that representations and reality are mutually constitutive. This seems to be a conviction also commonly held by the writer, actor, director, arts worker, etc. Further, for these professions, work opportunities are often limited by the imagination of those established in the industry. I danced uncomfortably around this issue when talking to Michelle, who is outspoken on the lack of diversity:

---

[98] Delivered during a televised segment for the Melbourne International Comedy Festival Gala.

Me: I had expected when I started talking to people, that representation, media representation particularly in entertainment and pop culture would be… very important to most people. And… I've been surprised to see it's not… it's not hugely important to people across the board. But, people whose job it is to tell stories, it's, obviously hugely important to them, and not just for professional reasons but because they may look to stories more than other people, to, maybe validate their own experience and things like that. And I was surprised because I had thought that for most young people, entertainment is a huge part of kind of figuring out your own, your own identity but do you think having that, that interest in storytelling generally since you were young makes… makes you feel the absence of Asian stories more keenly?

Michelle: Yeah, I think so. I don't think I ever, like I've never wanted to be, I never grew up being like I'm going to be a writer or I'm going to be an actor you know, it was just something where I would see an Asian person on TV and it was just like a huge deal for me. Um, I think because often when you're consuming media, it's aspirational and to not see someone who looks like yourself on TV or on stages is like, oh well, we're not as good as, other people. Or, you know our lives aren't something that people want. […] So yeah, it's interesting, I think as well in the creative industries you see less Asian Australian artists, I think it would be different if you were in a different career stream. I'd say… business or, or health, I think, there's a disparity there.

Part of the popular narrative of immigration is that people come to the West to seek a better life for themselves and their children. As such there are stereotypical Asian jobs – ones with prestige, security, greater likelihood of financial dividends, and perhaps greater ability to be applied in different professional jurisdictions. This stereotype is part of a bundle that comes with the notion of Asians being a model minority. Asians in the West:

cannot be countercultural, contentious, unconventional, or lead an independent lifestyle. The ramifications are not that the image itself is

129

threatened but that the individual is somehow less authentically Asian American if he or she diverges from it. It is an identity imposed by others and places considerable constraints not only in the area of study one selects but the very trajectory of one's work and contribution to society (Park 2008, 552).

Oryza[99] Foundation is the New Zealand charity, mentioned in previous chapters, whose goal is to enable Asian performing arts in Auckland. The foundation's Square Lee and Sums Selvarajan, spoke about the Arts as an "unconventional" career path for Asians:

> Square: Our experience is probably quite unusual compared to your average Asian migrant. In that we have had, well, couple of things, liberty but also opportunity to work in the areas that we work in. Also [we] crafted our livelihoods and lives around, what is an unconventional frame to begin with. I think compared to your typical Asian migrant, our… opportunities might have been more liberal, than others. So, it would be interesting to see if someone who's got a sort of very conventional pathway into New Zealand would feel the same way […] [as] like someone who's migrated here to become an accountant […]

> Sums: But probably those who work in the creative industries as well, I mean if you work in a [conventional] profession, it's probably a bit more straightforward in how you get from A to B. This is slightly… it's quite unconventional. …Our parents still think we'll be lawyers someday.

Counter-representations and self-presentations

I took my sister to see *Single Asian Female* in Brisbane. Michelle Law was known to us because of her contribution to *Growing Up Asian in Australia* (2008), an anthology edited by Alice Pung that my sister and I had read together. The play didn't speak particularly to our experience. We're not Chinese. Our family doesn't own a restaurant. Our parents aren't estranged. My high school best friend wasn't a bubbly

---

[99] Oryza is the grass species of which rice is the seed.

White girl of equal parts sass and nerd. Mixed race Asians were referred to once, when a character is talking about her ex-boyfriend's new girlfriend. And yet, there was something familiar about it anyway. And when we laughed, which we did often, it was of a kind not often available to Asians in the West: the "laughter of recognition" (Kondo 1997, 201). In a play with a predominantly Asian female cast, there was no lone Asian carrying the burden of representation; there was no single character presumed to represent all of Asianness (Said 1978, 231). There was also the rarity of seeing a work about Asians, performed in English.

The Western Asian relationship to English is complicated depending on whether you speak it, if so, how well you speak it, whether another language suffered because you favoured English,[100] whether your parents speak it, whether you have an accent, whether you are perceived to have an accent, whether people are surprised if you don't have an accent, how often strangers speak to you with a Mock Asian accent, particularly, neutralising the "phonemic distinction between /r/ and /l/" (Chun 2009, 268).

Penny[101], a fourth generation New Zealander, was speaking with a new co-worker, who eventually asked, "Where are you from?"
"I'm from Wellington, but, I'm Chinese", she answered, recounting to me that she wasn't sure why she added that extra information at the time.
"Okay, that explains it. I was trying to figure out your accent." Penny doesn't speak any language other than English. Neither do her parents or her grandparents. She has never lived anywhere outside of New Zealand.

At the 2017 Asian New Zealand Artists Hui, Renee Liang – a well-established and well-known playwright who gently but firmly leads discussion, arrives after lunch. She is on a break between rehearsals of her upcoming play *Dominion Road: The Musical*. At one point, while speaking on the stereotypes Asian New Zealanders

---

[100] In one YouTube video by the Fung Bros, "HOW TO GET YOUR ASIAN CARD" (2014), the two comedians list twenty features, each worth a point, that contribute to whether you can get your "AZN card". Number 15 on the list, is that "You've got to at least speak one Asian language. Or be ashamed that you can't."
[101] Member of the Asian Law Students' Association and one of my mentees.

endure, she removed her jumper to reveal the brown t-shirt she was wearing underneath. Across the chest were the embroidered words: "Thank you, your English is very good also". She and her sister, Roseanne[102] had these t-shirts made.

These examples from fieldwork speak to the unease around how the Asian person's use (or sometimes non-use) of English is perceived by others. It was also brought to the surface during Law's play. At one point during *Single Asian Female*, the character of Lana, the White, bitchy fellow high schooler Mei is trying to befriend imitates Mei's mother's accent, I felt myself, and the audience around me bristle. I asked Michelle about this moment:

> Michelle: I think the actress was… doing something different but I can see how people would have that reaction, which is funny.[103]

> Me: For me, it felt like at that point, everybody kind of became aware, okay, this character, she's not going to be redeemed. And I'm used to seeing I guess in movies and things like that, that deal with racism, this kind of… almost redemptive tale where it's about… can the White people come to… be enlightened, through this story. Or… will the minority person be able to illuminate something for the rest of the world through her struggle. And that doesn't happen, in your play. Yours isn't about, didn't appear to be about that. It's not about how do we Asians convince the world through our virtues, that we deserve to be here. …Are you, were you kind of actively trying to avoid, maybe more common narratives about racism?

> Michelle: I don't think I actively was, but I think on some unconscious level I would have been aware of that, cos I don't like stories (laughs) like that either. I don't like the types of narratives where the experiences of othered people are used as, devices to enlighten, the protagonist or what have you. … and it's sort of been a discussion that's come up […] it's sort of a hot topic in

---

[102] Roseanne Liang is also well-established and well-known in the Asian New Zealand arts scene. She directed "My Wedding and Other Secrets", the first film made by a Chinese New Zealander to receive a theatrical release.
[103] My possible misinterpretation of this moment may suggest an over-sensitivity to this particular point.

diversity at the moment, where it's like… how do White writers, depict Asian characters authentically? Or any sort of question to do with representation, that isn't coming from the voice of someone from that cultural background. People are sort of like, "how do I do it?", like I don't want to offend anyone. And they're sort of… asking for help… from… those People of Colour and it's like, well it isn't their responsibility (scoffs). They have a lot of other things that they need to do, and it takes a lot of emotional energy to educate someone on those things. And so, you should really be doing that of your own accord, and not, relying on other people who have got enough on their plate to do that for you.

National identity, as a kind of belonging, is both pedagogical and performative; individuals can "create national identity and at the same time, are created by it" (Orton 2012, 23). Arjun Appadurai talks about mass media consumption as something that "provokes resistance, irony, selectivity, and, in general, *agency*" (I996, 176) and popular culture can exist in opposition and resistance to dominant ideas, including the ethnocentric and racist (Robertson 1998, 28). If this is the task of "migration literature", or minority writing, it is heavy work. To carry the weight of an othered category of people and their expectations. This requires a kind of labour not expected of mainstream creators. When Whiteness is the normative standard of race, White writers enjoy a position of neutrality. This is often the difference between what is considered "satirical" and what is "political". The former is something that White writers' work can be, the latter something minority writers' work inevitably is.

Me: So would it be fair for me to describe *Single Asian Female* as a political piece?

Michelle: Yeah I would say so. I am… very heavily invested in social politics. So, I think in all of my work, there is some level of politics to it but I think that's just the nature of… who I am. Because… you are… by nature of being a minority person in this country, living a political life.

Given the power wielded by media, and the added burden on practitioners of Colour to represent more than just themselves, there is added care taken to protect their

work from misinterpretation. At the 2017 Asian New Zealand Artists Hui, we talked about the problems facing New Zealand Asian creative artists. One attendee mentioned the pitfalls of dealing with academics when your work is regarded as representative in some way. The attendee relayed an experience where an academic had completely misinterpreted her work. Despite being told this, the academic said she didn't care; she went off to present the paper overseas. At this point I asked, "As an anthropology student, my thesis will involve interpreting works. And, if the creator told me I was wrong, I would write that they said that, but I would also include my interpretation. Would that make anyone uncomfortable?"

One artist said, "if it does violence to the work" then yes. But if it is another offered interpretation then that could be okay. The attendee who prompted me to ask the question, talked about academics as outsiders, and the danger of them essentially saying "this is what they said, but this is what they actually meant". A third artist countered somewhat tentatively with the belief that once you have created a work, you have given it up, and how it is interpreted is not something you can control.

At the marae the following morning, Amy and I sat in the supply room sipping tea, waiting for the others to wake up. She said that she had overheard this conversation, when I asked the question that had been "jumped on". With perfect respect for all who contributed to the discussion, she spoke of art critique and different schools of thought (as though offering me reassurance that I did not have to abandon my approach). She said some art critics felt that artists know nothing, and it is actually up to the critic to draw meaning from the work.

I appreciate, as I always do, Amy's input. "We know that to name is to show, to create, to bring into existence. And words can do a lot of damage… words do things, they make things – they create phantasms, fears, and phobias, or simply false representations" (Bourdieu 1999, 20). Representation through the arts, media and literature is not just a kind of referential system of signs and symbols. It is creative, at once reflecting and making that which it purports to represent. As Dorinne Kondo wrote, "we must continue to write ourselves into existence" (1997, 208). As such, creating art, but also consuming art, and critiquing art, is part of the ongoing process

of creating ourselves. The pursuit of "cool" as an avenue of self-creation and self-validation through Asian panethnic performance is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 8: The ethnic supermarket

> There is nothing mysterious or natural about authority. It is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value (Said 1978, 19).

Madeleine[104] and I are at a Mexican restaurant during Wellington on a Plate,[105] trying one of the burger and beer matches. We talk briefly about how she was enjoying her first job out of uni around six months in. Conversation move to the New Zealand International Film Festival that had just been. I told her I had watched Takashi Miike's *Blade of the Immortal*, a live-action adaptation of a popular manga and anime. It starred a famous Japanese boy band member.

"Who?" Madeleine asks.

"Kimutaku from SMAP."

"I loved SMAP! I used to play them on my iPod all the time."

"Really? How come a New Zealand person has SMAP on their iPod?"

Madeleine explains that her older brother was into anime, and then Japanese music, and studied Japanese language. He got Madeleine and her sister interested in these things, and they studied Japanese language too. But then, everyone started doing these things and "getting dressed up and going to Armageddon[106]", so "we couldn't do it anymore."

"White people ruin everything," I say.

"I *knoooooow*."

Madeleine's not being able to "do it anymore" in reference to enjoying Japanese pop culture is not a strictly elitist attitude – a hipster kind of "I liked it first". It is a disavowal of the excesses of anime fandom, distancing herself from the kind of fetishism of Japan and other parts of East Asia, that people associate with (non-Japanese) *otaku* or *weaboo* – the Orientalists of pop culture.

---

[104] Madeleine is a Wellington based participant.
[105] Wellington on a Plate is an annual food festival involving special promotions and events put on by local food businesses in and around the Wellington region, during the month of August.
[106] Armageddon is New Zealand's premier pop culture convention.

The impression of anime fans, or aficionados of Japanese media, as culturally appropriative, or creepily Japanophilic, pasty, neck-bearded, Yellow fever-ridden nerds living in their mothers' basements,[107] is prevalent. Since anime and manga are part of a huge global industry that can hardly be considered niche the persistence of this impression is interesting.

At a networking event, an organiser told me she and her little sister had been to Japan and her sister wanted to go back. "She's really into anime and all that stuff, it's pretty sad."
"I think it's sweet."
"No, it's not. She's such a *weeb*. I'm like, don't worry, you'll grow out of that."

So it is that anime is something you're supposed to "grow out of". As a Japanese person, it is possible I may not have to. Or, at least not as soon, though I may be deluding myself. But some other Asian people, it seems, may feel the need to stamp out the behaviour because of its ties to a specifically White brand of "uncool". White uncool is a kind of uncoolness perceived as a lack of culture, alongside a lack of sensitivity towards, or desire to co-opt other cultures, as well as general middle class privilege.

Coolness

A more general kind of "cool", is keeping calm under pressure, maintaining composure despite external stressors, enduring hardship and being undiminished by it. If you haven't been tested, it makes it hard to be cool. There can be no quality or aesthetic of coolness unique to Whiteness, as there is no particular pressure, or special hardship associated with being White. More specifically, White uncool, is the opposite of Black cool.

> Black cool, that hard-to-define-but-infinitely-mesmerizing quality, has carried
> Black people through crazy hard times. It's a mixture of audacity,

---

[107] This impression also aligns with stereotypes of White men who date, marry, or otherwise pursue Asian women. Interracial relationships are discussed in the upcoming chapter.

determination, genius, authenticity, dignity, style and a dozen other elements that reveal themselves and create their own moment of truth. Black cool is being yourself, fighting for what's right and looking crazy good – or at least, solidly righteous – while you're doing it (Walker 2012, 116). [108]

The black/white paradigm is a ubiquitous binary in race studies. It can be an essentialist concept of race and racial hierarchy, isolating different racial groups as bounded entities and placing them "on a single continuum along the black-white axis" (Kondo 1997, 6). Asians as "constructive Blacks" or "honourary Whites" permeates the literature. Do Asians aspire to Whiteness? Or to the kind of shared and recognised history of subjugation and oppression that "Black is universally understood as a marker of" (Canham and Williams 2017, 38). Do we, Asians, crave the vocabulary, embedded in civil rights movements, to describe our lived experience unself-consciously? There is at times a self-consciousness when it comes to talking about Asianness. A sense that we experience trivial "micro-aggressions". The US dominates space in the global consciousness when it comes to race relations. Not to say that the location-specific nature of cultural relations doesn't affect people on a day-to-day basis, but I would argue that many of the popularly available discursive/cultural/language resources available have often come to us via the US.

So, if there's a ranking of historical grievances, with imperialism at the top, we can sub-rank: slavery and genocide vying for top spot, followed by taking of lands. Asians chose to come here. They are not Indigenous, not Tangata Whenua, cannot lay claim to the land. They were not kidnapped and brought here like the "Kanakas" in Queensland. What we expect from Asians, we expect from all migrants (including or especially refugees) – effusive, unwavering, gratitude. Asians, are not seen to have suffered, but if they have, it happened elsewhere.

In post-settler nations, members of mainstream society may have, at differing levels of commitment, a sense of historical guilt and responsibility for the effects of

---

[108] "Blackness" in this conception, is characterised not by victimhood itself, but by the struggle or the ability to overcome.

colonialism in their own countries. This sentiment does not necessarily extend to countries and peoples whose histories of oppression may either be unlinked to European imperialism, less directly linked to European imperialism, or linked to a different colonising country.

In contrast to indigenous peoples and peoples forcibly displaced (in the post-settler nation), migrants (being from other nations), or those who are marked as migrants, are a "mobile referent, an 'other' upon which the idea of proper citizenship depends" (Moulin 2012, 55).[109] In that Asians are therefore understood as having been permitted, or gifted a citizenship to which they are not "naturally" entitled, appreciativeness is expected in accordance with a convoluted cultural logic.

Amy articulated this unusual placement of Asians, when I asked her to describe what Asians have in common:

> I would say that… it's the fact that we do not have… I'm not sure if this is the right word, but that we don't have a minority status… I'm talking specifically, about, Asian migrants because… I was wondering why is it okay for you know, a group like the Pacific Panthers to borrow from the language of Black civil rights movement, but it's not okay for Asian New Zealanders or foreign-born Asians to use it, and I think it's because… I realised this when I was talking to friend of mine who's from China and she came to New Zealand relatively late in life, I think when she was about twenty or something, and the reason she doesn't have a problem with her identity the same way that I do, because her home isn't occupied. Like, if you look at, specifically talking about East Asian countries, they haven't been colonised in the *same way* that… Pacific or African nations have been. They're just, yeah, our land… and so we don't have that minority status that other migrant groups might have. So I think that's, an issue because, it kind of feels like when you're saying, hey

---

[109] Carolina Moulin has written about this unfavourable construction of refugees who refuse "certain terms of the (humanitarian) protection architecture" (2012, 54) as "ungrateful subjects" and "underserving, unwelcomed others" (55). These sentiments, that she suggests can extend to non-refugee migrants (though I am applying this extension more explicitly than she did in the article from which I quote) are a result of normative assumptions that underlie legal subject statuses. As a result, refugees and migrants must choose between liberty, or protection (55).

we're not being equally represented, in the media or whatever, I think like, it might come across as asking for more than you deserve. Because, there is an assumption that you're already financially well off and that you haven't been oppressed and things like that.

The acceptable adoption, or appropriation of elements of Black American culture by some groups, but not others, is also suggested by the different ways James' phenotype presents itself:

James: I'm like Brown Asian, I'm like Islander Asian, you know what I mean? So there's a little bit of leeway there, cos I feel like, Filipino's are like… hip hop Asian (laughs) […] so it's easier to, fall into… what do I want to… um… what's it called? Position myself as… more of like an Islander I suppose. And not really in a way that's like I'm ashamed just… not position myself, sorry, but to be seen as. Not consciously.

Me: That's interesting that you can kind of move around, almost racially, like Jennifer Lopez.

James: Yeah, yeah. Depending on who's looking at you, you know. But yeah. I dunno what that means. I don't know if that's, I don't know what that means, morally, or… if that's a good or bad thing, but, it just happens, you know.

Being hip hop Asian, is borrowing from African Americans' hard won aesthetic of cool. In James' case he is aware of the awkwardness of his positionality. Media representation of Asian people, as discussed in the previous chapter, is something of a call to arms. Both Annette Shun Wah, and Oryza Foundation's Square described diversity in entertainment as part of the "zeitgeist". But, "hypervisibility does not equal privilege" and it can appear that Asians "are resentfully chasing the hypervisibility of Blackness" (Zhang 2018).

Another measure of coolness, is being unapologetically oneself. Maintaining one's individuality, even or especially if that means rebelling against the norm – a kind of

"authenticity".[110] However "authentic", Asianness does not often provide a gateway to cool for Asian people, or at least not as readily as some forms of it (not including manga and anime) provide that gateway to White people. Asianness, is but one ingredient of multiculturalism, a highly commodified concept practiced largely via "food and festivals". "State multiculturalism is the management of cultural difference based on the premise of unity in diversity; difference is represented as the supplement that enriches the national (White) culture" (Lo 2008, 16). In noting the change in popular metaphor for multiculturalism from "melting pot" to "salad" Angela Y Davis writes: "Who consumes multiculturalism is a question begging to be asked" (in DeSouza 2012).

Taste

I first saw Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen's 2005 performance video *Absolute Exotic* at Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen.

> The artist poses as the most clichéd stereotype of an exotic woman. Just
> recently dumped for a black woman, she expresses great anger at being at
> the bottom of the racial hierarchy in her capacity as an Asian.
> (http://www.lilibethcuenca.com/Absolute-Exotic)

It's still awkward to watch. Not understanding Danish, I rely on the subtitles and I recoil when she sings "it's hip to be a nigger". Even with the pastiche of "ethnic-ness", the irony is too subtle for me. But it does make very explicit the idea that some ethnicities and cultures are more fashionable than others.[111] Permitted and accepted insofar as they add variety and interest to predominantly White culture, some cultures can be in style, which means that other cultures can become naff. Taste for some cultures/ethnicities doesn't give you the same "cosmo-multiculturalist" (Hage 2003) credibility as taste for another culture/ethnicity. Can even belonging to a

---

[110] Writing about performative markers of "authentic" blackness, Hugo Canham and Rejane Williams note that depictions of blackness and black people in popular culture are predominantly concerned with the experiences of the black "lower-class". As a consequence, middle class Black people may be perceived as "inauthentically" Black (2017, 38).
[111] And some ethnic womanhoods are more prone to fetishisation than others, at different times.

particular culture/ethnicity be better than belonging to another in terms of cosmopolitan capital?

Asia is out of fashion
fed up with competition
used to feel I was the flavor
suddenly I'm in disfavor
so sick of being a target
in this ethnic supermarket
(Cuenca, 2005)

Varieties of "cool" associated with specific racial or cultural markers have differing pay-offs in terms of social capital. This is not just for the "ethnic" person, but the White person associating themselves with it. Even the seemingly unfettered enjoyment of the taste of food – one of the "crudest pleasures", "the archetype of all taste" (Bourdieu 1977, 79) – is not unaffected by the varying returns of social and cultural capital. And, as far as cultivating cultural capital via "authentic", "ethnic" experiences goes (Hage 2003) it seems there is not room for everyone, or every culture, at once.

A *bon Appetit* video, "PSA: This Is How You Should Be Eating Pho", which was taken down after being castigated in the comments and on social media, sparked many an online think piece. In it a White chef explains to the camera how to eat pho, declares the dish to be the "new ramen", admonishes people who would add condiments, and outlines a method for swirling the noodles around chopsticks in a spoon to avoid slurping. The origins of wearing a baseball or snapback cap backwards seems to still be undecided. People who work in kitchens likely do it to keep hair out of their face, and out of the food. However, to wear one for the purposes of a video interview, like this chef did, seemed like a conspicuous display of "White uncoolness". Apart from the shaky optics of having a White chef chosen as the expert on a Vietnamese dish, the pronouncement that "pho is the new ramen" suggested a forced competition. A competition between two very different Asian cultures and cultural products for top spot as the ultimate signifier of White, cosmopolitan, coolness.

A cliché of the Asian or immigrant experience is taking your "ethnic" food to school and having it met with confusion or revulsion by your classmates. Pioneering restaurateurs have often had to adapt the flavours and presentation of the food offered in their establishments to suit the Western palate and food mentality – one that is put off by things like MSG, slippery mouth feel, intense spiciness, grease unaccompanied by crunch, etc. Contemporary middle class palates however, have developed over time. Emboldened by the likes of Anthony Bourdain and a smorgasbord of other food and travel show hosts, as well as their own overseas holidays, White, Western restaurant-goers seek "authenticity" – a requirement not generally applied to non-"ethnic" food establishments.

Demand, presumably of both Asian and non-Asian consumers, has elevated Kewpie mayonnaise,[112] once a rare treasure, to a place on the shelves of any Countdown or Woolworths supermarkets. More likely the result of non-Asian demand, shirataki,[113] once hard to come by and only found in specialty Asian grocers, is now available in many large grocery chains as "Miracle Noodles" – a diet food prized for its negligible calorie count.

Many Asian cuisines have been culturally legitimised for the mainstream population by the middle class Western restaurant goer. The Asian person at the Asian restaurant experiences different standards of cultural legitimation. "In anthropological studies, migrant food rituals are commonly understood as markers of ethnicity used to enhance group solidarity in contradistinction to the dominant host culture" (Trundle 2014, 83). Indeed, at one Meetup event I attended at a Chinese restaurant, one diner was mocked for ordering fried rice – something "only Westerners" do – and prawn toast,[114] an entrée of which I too am quite fond. When I took one the person next to me screwed up his face: "What *is* that?"

---

[112] An extremely delicious Japanese brand of soybean oil based mayonnaise, containing rice vinegar.
[113] A type of Japanese noodle made from konjac yam.
[114] Prawn toast is popular in Australian Chinese restaurants. They are made of small triangles of plain white sandwich bread, spread with a minced prawn mixture, then deep-fried. It often has sesame seeds on top.

On another occasion, on the marae, after the Asian New Zealand Artists Hui, we shared a homemade meal of fish, vegetables and rice. One person expressed concern over not knowing the correct protocol to eat and dunk dumplings. My preferred method, which I explained but didn't demonstrate (as we weren't actually eating dumplings at the time) – first dunking and biting a dumpling in half, then submerging the remaining half in dipping sauce (only when provided one vessel per individual, of course) to trap the maximum possible volume of liquid – was considered so vulgar it drew guffaws.

Whether or not you have sufficient phenotypic markers of Asianness, your authenticity (or inauthenticity) can be signaled through performative ethnic markers (Canham and Williams 2017, 38). Even if you comport yourself better than I was seen to on those two occasions, having insufficient phenotypic markers can invite extra scrutiny. A half Chinese person I spoke to described being "auditioned through food" by her Australian-born "full" Chinese peers. Despite having lived in Hong Kong for most of her childhood, it was through food – by avoiding eating "too many of the fried dumplings" – that they came to recognise her as one of them.

The performance of food rituals can be a self-conscious route to ethnic group membership. It is one thing to feel out of place at an upmarket establishment, to not recognise the words on a menu, or not use the correct utensil at the correct time. To fear you are not acquitting yourself on an ethnic level because of the way you enjoy eating is another. Bourdieusian approaches that focus primarily on class, see cultivated taste as an accrual of social capital. They do not always account for the performative and performance aspects of food, its preparation and consumption for the "ethnic" person. In large part, the unabashed enjoyment of food is an act of reclamation.

Asian food can be a grey area in terms of cultural appropriation. It is an aspect of tradition for which we can have an effusive but not uncomplicated love. It is something we wish to protect. In finding an Asian cool, through authenticity and pride, cuisine is an area that lends itself to the task. The performance of food rituals highlights the performativity of Asianness more broadly, in that the same food, the same food practices publicly conducted, mean different things when performed by

the Asian person, than they do when performed by the non-Asian person. Consumption of "authentic", "ethnic" experiences in the West, has been a method by which some people, usually White, may pursue cosmopolitan capital. Reclaiming these "authentic", "ethnic" experiences, involves both an internal policing of Asian "authenticity", and the ongoing endeavour to create and perform an aesthetic of Asian "cool".

The mission of creating this aesthetic, exists not just in the realm of food. To find fun in Asian affiliation and identity, to seek not just pride but enjoyment in being Asian, extends to legitimising and validating a positive image of the Asian self. It is part of the mission of making Asianness itself not just something to be tolerated, but to be desired (rather than fetishised). Conversation around the romantic and sexual desirability of Asian people, is a very literal manifestation of this endeavour. Romance, gender and sexuality are the topics of the following chapter.

Chapter 9: "no rice, no spice"

Interracial Relationships

"This is nothing against you, but Asian families think that if an Asian woman has to marry a White man, there's something wrong with them." Rebecca leans in across the table as she says this, sheepish and jolly at the same time – like we share a fun secret. She offers the disclaimer because she knows my husband is a White man, I had told her this a few minutes prior. She also knows my mother is a Japanese woman married to my father, a White man. She knows this because the first time we met, at a Wellington networking event, she asked me if I was "mixed". On this, our second meeting, it is just the two of us, having coffee in Rebecca's spare time.

"Is this Asian families or Chinese families?" Clarifying whether "Chinese" or "Asian" is the more fitting word when I am speaking to Chinese people is something I have found necessary to do from time to time.
She smiles. "Chinese families."
I tell her that after talking to lots of people for my research, and finding lots of things that all Asians seem to have in common, no one faces the same marital pressures as the Chinese. Rebecca vigorously agrees. In her early twenties, she is already facing pressures from her family, her grandfather hinting at matchmaking her with eligible young men he encounters. The criteria for eligibility are well known to Rebecca.

She lists the people she can't marry:
- White people – because they have a different culture.
- Japanese people – because they are too short.
"Really? I thought it would be for historical reasons."
"I have a friend whose parents won't let her marry a Japanese for historical reasons, but for my parents, they say they are too short."
- Koreans – because they are arrogant
- Northern Chinese – because they are also arrogant
Their preference is for an ABC.

"An ABC?"

She starts to explain the acronym, American Born Chinese.

"We use that in Australia too because it fits, but you say that in New Zealand?"

"Yeah, cos NZBC doesn't work."

It only occurs to me later than Aotearoa Born Chinese works nicely.

I make a mental note to ask her next time we meet, about the notable omissions from the "list of people Rebecca can't marry." I feel like their absence from the list does not actually indicate their eligibility. I don't want to ask her now; it might sound too accusatory.

The next time we meet for lunch, I remember to ask.

"So… last time I remember you mentioned, a list of people you can't marry."

"Yeah."

"So… if you brought home a White boy, that could be okay…?" (she had just finished elaborating on this point, the details of which seemed to have changed since last time we spoke). "But what if you were to go out with, say… a Māori person? Or, African? Or Poly-"

"That wouldn't be acceptable." She laughs a little. "I just know. That wouldn't be acceptable."

Rebecca says her parents don't necessarily say who she can and can't date, but she knows who they would and would not approve of based on what they say about other people. Her parents needn't worry however, Rebecca is convinced she will end up with a Chinese man. For one thing, she has seen her ethnically Chinese friend's failed relationship with a Pākehā boy. The disintegration of this romance was due largely to the racism of his family. Rebecca wants to spare herself this. Not to mention, she watches C-dramas,[115] which she believes is why she envisions herself with a Chinese man. As do most of her friends who watch C-dramas.

"You're saying because of C-dramas, that's your picture of romance? And that's your idea of male beauty?"

"Yeah."

---

[115] C-drama is an abbreviation of Chinese television drama.

"That's interesting. The role of media comes up a lot. I don't have a big pool of reference with dating, but my husband is a White man. And I wonder if there's something subconscious or cultural that makes that more likely. I wonder, because I didn't grow up in Japan, but I grew up with Japanese media, and J-pop and things, so the attractiveness of Asian men was never in doubt."

Rebecca smiles. "This is nothing against you. Not being discriminatory. But… I have noticed that all my friends who like J-dramas[116] and J-pop end up with White guys, and the ones who like K-dramas[117] and K-pop end up with Asian guys."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"This is your Asian friends, or your non-Asian friends, or everyone?"

"My Asian friends."

"Asian as in Chinese, or…"

"No. All kinds of Asian."

The sense that Asian people, whether or not of the same specific nationality, make for culturally compatible couples had already come up in fieldwork. During one interview with a male participant:

> Male participant: It's just the way that [Western people] are brought up, it's just different. Like for example, if you go out, if you date an Asian guy, more often than not you will find the Asian guy picks up the tab, or pays for it, or they're generous… They don't, they pretty much won't allow the woman, or the lady to pay for anything, or whatever. Whereas you find in the Western culture, you'll find a lot of them will go on dutch dates and, "I'll pay my own" and stuff like that, it's more you know, formal.

> You'll find Asian people join bank accounts as soon as they're together and Westerners are probably a little bit more, "what's yours is yours what's mine is mine" until they get into marriage, so it's just a little bit different. There's no right or wrong, you know.

---

[116] J-drama is an abbreviation of Japanese television drama.
[117] K-drama is an abbreviation of Korean television drama.

Me: I guess in relation to that with um, dating, would you think, would you say an Asian woman would be more comfortable to have her meal paid for? And take it as a sign of respect, or politeness or good manners?

Male participant: To some extent yes, but now we're finding a lot of uh, mixed marriages or mixed relationships and you'll find [it's] more common, for Western men to marry Asian women than [for] Western women to marry Asian men. Because I think, you know one of the values of Asian women is that they, I won't say they serve the man, but they will, do a lot to make the man's life comfortable. Because that's just culturally, you know that's what they do and a lot of Western men obviously like that. Whereas you find, on the flipside, Western women they're more independent and stuff like that so, that's why you find less Asian men with Western women. But it's starting to get more and more prevalent now, as you would expect over time, yeah.

Me: Okay, so that's another um, that is another interesting one, I mean I agree completely and I've seen the statistics,[118] definitely there are more Asian women with non-Asian men and, I do agree that, part of the reason for that, I guess, … the non-Asian men may be looking for more traditional gender roles at home.

Male participant: Yeah, that's right.

Me: But, I've also heard the theory that perhaps the Asian women are looking for less traditional gender roles, so they are therefore attracted to non-Asian men.

Male participant: Mmmmm, okay.

Me: Do you think that… that's pushing it?

---

[118] It may have been more appropriate for me to have said "literature" instead of "statistics" (Khoo et al 2009: 17; Shin 2004: 4; Omi 2008: 2; Birrell et al 2009: 17).

Male participant: I think so, I think so from what I know and what I can perceive and what I can see. But then with that said – again this may be generalising a little bit – we do, I do see a lot of break ups, with mixed couples. Particularly with the Asian men and the Western women… You know my wife's extended families and stuff have a lot of Cambodian men marrying Western women and most of them are divorced or separated. I think it's because culturally it's not, aligned, or it's not the same so they expect one thing. But you can't blame the Western women because that's just the way that they're brought up. That's just in their culture. That's just in the DNA. That's how they operate, so if you want to be with them you need to be able to accept, you know, those are the attitudes, behaviours.

The experience of encountering resistance to one's own intercultural romantic partnership had arisen when talking to a female participant:

Madeleine has been going out with her boyfriend for almost four years. They have been planning to move in together for some time, but their last plan, to move into a home owned by his parents, sharing with his brother, didn't go ahead. She tells me she has been thinking of telling her parents about her boyfriend. She is waiting for him to get a job. Ideally, she would wait for him to finish his Master's so that she does not have to describe him as a student. If she said that, her mother would ask if he is younger than her. She is aiming to pre-empt the questions she knows her mother will ask, and she knows that the very first one will be "what's his job?"

Madeleine has been bolstered by her parents' acceptance of her sister's non-Asian boyfriend. Though her mother "picks away" at him. Madeleine's older brother owns a house in Auckland with his boyfriend of many years. The boyfriend is known as the "friend" by Madeleine's mother, and only once did she outwardly question the nature of this relationship. Madeleine says her brother keeps saying he will tell their mother he is gay, but hasn't yet.

"Have you seen that movie, *My Wedding and Other Secrets*?"[119]

"Yes… You know the last two boyfriends I've had, their mothers have both asked me if I've seen that movie."

"Did I just ask a really annoying question?"

"No. If an Asian person has seen it, it's because they wanted to watch it. When [these White mothers] watched it, it was because they're trying to understand what's happening with their son."

After seeing the film, the previous boyfriend's mother wondered whether Madeleine should continue to stay over; she felt sorry for Madeleine's parents. Madeleine thought at the time, "Why don't you feel sorry for me?"

Madeleine thinks it is still not common in New Zealand for an Asian woman to go out with a White man. I tell her that the impression I've been getting is that people think it is common to see an Asian woman and White man together, but not an Asian man and a White woman. She responds by recounting that when she and her White boyfriend are out, getting drinks together, just the two of them, people will assume they are not a couple. Women will come and hit on her boyfriend in front of her.

Sometimes people I've only recently met have an interest in my husband, whom they have not met.

"Is your husband also Japanese?"

"What ethnicity is your partner?"

Perhaps most suggestive of the idea that as an Asian Australian, I am not supposed to be dating non-Asians is the question: "How do you like riding Australian cock?" – put to me by a drunk White male acquaintance who knew my partner to be a White Australian. In case this sounds at all like a proposition, be assured it was not. This was just a crass expression of his unfamiliarity with interracial relationships. It was also obviously a conflation of White and Australian.

I am happy to defy societal expectations associated with my ethnicity. I am happy not to behave in the manner expected of an Asian woman. So I must say I prefer

---

[119] This is a New Zealand 2011 romantic comedy film directed by Roseanne Liang and set in Auckland. In it, a Chinese New Zealand woman keeps her marriage to a Pākehā man a secret from her disapproving parents.

Madeleine's belief that it is not common, that I am with my husband despite socialisation, not because of it. My participants, and my field generally is engaging in the agency vs structure debate on my behalf, and directly and indirectly adjudicating what it is that explains me and my choice of partner.

When I arrived at Asian New Zealand Artists Hui and was first led to the room in which it would take place, there was one person there already.

We talked for a while and then:

"Are you half?"

"Yes"

"Me too!"

"Are you Japanese?"

"Yes."

"Me too!"

"Is your Mum Japanese?"

"Yes."

"Mine too. That's always the way."

We did not revisit this conversation even after later that day meeting another half Japanese woman, but whose father is Japanese.

A half Asian, half White European person I met in the field told me she was "quite the oddity" growing up, and not the "normal mix", and that being half Asian with a Chinese father was also "very unusual". She was talking to me about the dangers of assuming commonality amongst Asians and offered this personal account to illustrate the point. Though an important point, it was like when Fanon writes about Mayotte Capecia's pride at having a White grandmother: "I was certainly not the only one who had white blood, but a white grandmother was not so ordinary as a white grandfather" (Capecia in Fanon 1970, 34). "Since he is the master and more simply the male, the white man can allow himself the luxury of sleeping with many women. This is true in every country and especially in colonies. But when a white woman accepts a black man there is automatically a romantic aspect. It is a giving, not a seizing" (Fanon 1970, 37).

This person can feel comfortable that their parents' partnership looks politically acceptable to an outside observer. Her words suggest the cultural and ethnic hierarchy, of broader power dynamics between groups that mix that may infiltrate a relationship between two people via their genders (Narayan 1993, 674). In this understanding of interracial and intercultural marriage, as an embodiment of political imbalances, my marriage falls somewhere on the spectrum between "symptomatic of racial and gender based oppression" and "unoriginal". I couldn't help but be reminded of the kind of rhetoric I'd seen on reddit.[120]

r/hapas
10.7k
Subscribers
272
Online
A Hapa community for multiracial Eurasians, Blasians, Quapas, Hāfus (ハーフ), Hùnxuè'ér (混血儿), Luk khrueng (ลูกครึ่ง), honhyeol (혼혈), Amerasians (Mỹ lai). We also provide an anti-racist safe space to discuss the unique challenges of being children of White Fathers & Asian Mothers. We critique the ways white patriarchy & white privilege can create inegalitarian relations within many interracial White-Asian families & work to overcome the negative consequences this has for Half White, Half Asians.

reddit

Me: Um… To jump around a bit… PAT,[121] is making a documentary [*Asian Men Talk About Sex*].

James:[122] Yes! […]

---

[120] reddit is an online community forum where members post content to different discussion boards called subreddits. Posts to these boards can be upvoted or downvoted (or otherwise engaged with) by other members. Upvotes and downvotes affect the visibility of the posts.
[121] Auckland based theatre company, Proudly Asian Theatre, discussed in Chapter 7.
[122] James is a comedian and the cofounder of PAT, introduced in Chapter 6.

Me: As somebody who's trying to do research, I guess… the fact that Asian men have been desexualised, comes up, kind of peripherally, a lot […] And I wanted, to get at it a bit more, or gender things a bit more.

James: Yep.

Me: And the only way… the way I had, was with, you know those weird reddit groups?

James: Yep.

Me: …and they're quite militant…

James: Yep.

Me: […] So I was so excited when I saw that PAT was making this documentary, because I thought, oh, like… socially well adjusted people (laughs), talking about this topic.

James: Not just fucking people on reddit who you don't know (laughs), who are these people?

I arranged to meet Erin in the lobby of my hotel. She had just that week returned to Sydney from the US, where she spends most of her year. We found our way to an uncrowded coffee shop, which took a while find in the Sydney CBD on a weekday morning, to record our conversation.

The interview began before I set up my recording apparatus, with Erin asking if I had "mixed heritage". This was asked out of curiousity only it seemed, but it illustrated immediately a kind of bluntness, or comfort talking about ethnicity and race. The conversation turned eventually to what she saw as divisions within the Asian community, caused by different responses to interracial relationships.

Erin: Yeah, that whole interracial relationship is looking at the, gender, power dynamic so, some people, say, if the father or the husband is non-Asian, with an Asian wife, is there a power dynamic? Does the Asian wife assimilate to the culture of her husband? And then… if a wife is White or non-Asian and the husband is Asian, is the wife more willing to support the Asian causes? So… that's a huge, that's actually a big debate, regardless.

There's an interesting reddit group, some of it is a little bit extreme. There's a… reddit group called Hapas, so it's for all the mixed Asians and they debate that issue a lot. …Sometimes, some of the things they say are very extreme and I don't agree with it… And the other thing in the Asian American sense is that, some of them see some of the media activists, like Constance Wu and all that who do have a non-Asian partner, there are some people in the Asian American community who feel that she cannot speak for Asian issues because she's with a non-Asian partner.

[…] I think that is a huge debate, particularly online… particularly Asian Americans talk about it a lot… You do find a lot of Asian men, particularly in the US and even here who are quite angry about that. Because they feel emasculated as Asian men, you know. Why are they losing out to non-Asian men because, Asian women are going with non-Asian men?
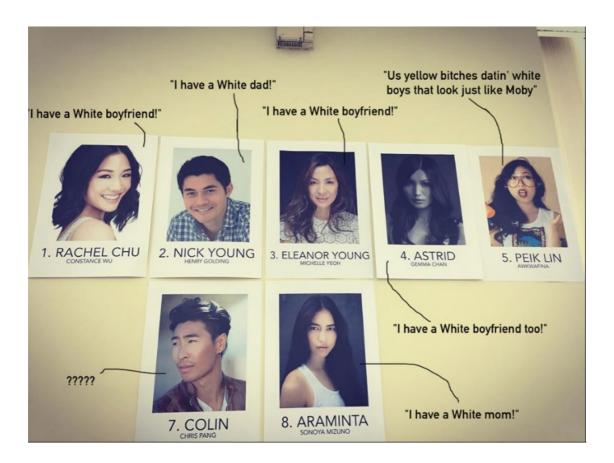
A professional writer, Erin cofounded the Asian Australian Alliance[123] activist group and contributes to the American blog *You Offend Me You Offend My Family*. The "confrontational" style she chooses to adopt for the Asian Australian Alliance's social media channels can also be seen in Erin's blog posts, which often cover racism against Asians in popular media. Erin is aware of detractors, including within the Asian community, and of other sources of "push back". Courting disagreement is part of the ins and outs of blogging.

One of Erin's blog posts, published after our conversation, "Distasteful Meme Created To Mock The Actors Of CRAZY RICH ASIANS", addresses a meme

---

[123] This grassroots organisation was discussed in Chapter 4.

response to the casting announcement for the film adaptation of Kevin Kwan's novel, *Crazy Rich Asians*.

The blog post's opening paragraph:

> Talk about a new low. A meme has been making its rounds on social media mocking the main cast of CRAZY RICH ASIANS. Looking at it close up, I can pretty much determine who the creators are, and what kind of sick in the head, keyboard warrior pricks created a meme in a bid to destroy something that we as the Asian diaspora can be proud of. These people (and I am pretty damn sure it comes from the circle jerk cohort of the 0.01% Asian men) do not want equality, nor do they care that CRAZY RICH ASIANS is an Asian story with pretty much an all Asian cast. They want supremacy at the expense of all the hard work and advocacy Asian diaspora groups and activists everywhere have done thus far to get more representation and visibility (2017).

Like all (all is not an exaggeration) of the online articles I have seen that discuss interracial Asian and White relationships, the article has attracted a particular type of comments:

The Golden Man 7 months ago
Asian Female media/social privilege is real. Just check out the AMDb's if you don't believe me or aren't woke.

Hapa privilege in the media is real:
https://www.reddit.com/r/RacialPrivilege/comments/6bj1kz/on_hapa_privilege_in_the_media/

Acoount An 7 months ago
It's cute how you blame FULL Asian men when you don't even realize that meme was created by a Eurasian male, who was deeply disturbed by his parents racial dynamic!! You all think the real threat to Asian culture is .00001% of Asian men when it is creepy white dudes and Eurasian people from WMAF!! Elliot Rodger, an WMAF Eurasian, killed three Asian men because he HATED Asians. Don't be mistaken, it was from his racist father who ONLY dates submissive immigrants, and his self hating mother who ONLY dates white men. (Not even other types of men, JUST whites) more examples of angry Eurasians: reddit.com/r/Hapas or just check out racist Daniel Holtzclaw, Alex Buckner (who murdered his entire family). Now, not every Eurasian is mentally disturbed (narcissistic AND self hating toxic combo) BUT 75% of exclusively WMAF Eurasians are!!! You guys are idiots and I feel sorry for you that as an Asian female, I have to hear my fellow Asians argue over themselves when the real threat is Eurasians AND creepy white men!! Stop letting yourself get colonized!! And stop producing Kelly Baltazar, who is a WMAF eurasian that did extremes WHITE WORSHIP porn where she sucks off 60 year old guys who berate her and tries to pass as a full Asian female to perpetuate the Asian fetish and white fever. Us Asians need to address these Eurasians and toxic colonization NOW. Just wait till more Eurasians try to replace AND kill us!! You guys are all idiots for supporting the one thing that will end your race: colonization. Get over yourself and realize this issue is way worse than you could've ever imagined and is spiraling out of control!

Acoount An 7 months ago

Stop blaming full Asian men. Seriously, whats the problem with you? I'm a full Asian female and I already know the racist and haters are in fact EURASIAN people. Proof that a Eurasian made this because he hates his racist WMAF parents.
https://www.reddit.com/r/hapas/comments/6fko15/this_hapa_guy_called_himself_east_asian_actor_got/

It's ridiculous how Asians still won't acknowledge white worshipping and that you can't raise a biracial kid as a full Asian kid. Do you seriously are so blinded that you think a half white kid will ever take your "Tiger Mom white worshipping attitude"?? Yes you, Constance Wu. Stop cucking and worshipping white people. One day your degenerate Eurasian child will fucking attack you. Don't be an idiot, stop supporting colonization.

I personally do not think whites and Asians have anything in common. If anything, other races have more in common with us culturally.

You played yourself idiots. Still won't acknowledge how Eurasians are the #1 killers of Asian people?? Check yourself sis. Fuck you for giving non white worshipping Asian females like me a bad name.

Ask yourself why so many half white/Asian females try to pass as full Asian to perpetuate the white fever. If you see any "Asian" girl doing white worship porn, making white worship blogs, I kid you not, they're most likely half Asian. Eurasian children are extremely white worshipping and they won't see themselves as Asians, but aspiring as white.

Shim An 6 months ago

And based on the first five sentences, I could tell this was written by an AM-hating, self-colonised Auntie Tan. #truthhurts

American writer Celeste Ng has written an article for *The Cut*, "When Asian Women are Harassed for Marrying Non-Asian Men" (2008) about the online harassment some prominent Asian American women receive for choosing non-Asian partners, and for having multiracial children. She spoke to thirteen other women for the article and gives examples of some of the abuse she and they have received.

Name: Brandon Ho

Email Address: ████████████.edu

Subject: I'm a huge fan

Message: Of watching your son develop mental illness because of your internalized self hate. Your Asian looking son will grow up knowing his mom thinks he's ugly, and his dad won't be able to relate.

(Sent via *CELESTE NG*)

From: Hate WM AF <hatewmwf@gmail.com>
Subject: the interracial problem

Message Body:
We are going to kill a whole lot of white motherfuckers and their asian sell out bitches.

We are going to get their kids heads and smash them into the concrete pavement, and get a baseball bat and smash all their fucking bones and grind them up and feed them to their disgusting sell out ho mamas.

She points to a specific subreddit, "AZNidentity",[124] as the orchestrators of these online attacks. She notes that though members of AZNidentity claim to fear that Asian men will be wiped out through intermarriage between WMAF (White male and Asian female couples),[125] they often applaud Asian men who date or marry White women (AMWF). This latter relationship is touted as inherently progressive, the former inescapably anti-Asian in nature.

In July 2018, an update to the AZNidentity rules was posted, reemphasising the "Guidelines on WMAF/AF discussion". Urging members to "Keep in mind your

---

[124] "AZN" is a colloquial abbreviation of Asian.
[125] There are some American writers who argue that Asians are "becoming white" (Liu in Shin 2004: 8; Zhou 2004), including through economic and education advancement, and by marrying into White families at a high rate (Omi 2008: B57). This has caused speculation that eventually Asians will be phased out and become "a new variant of white" (Hacker in Shin 2004: 5).

audience here includes healthy, self-accepting asian women", to "Be tough on the problem, NOT the person."

> Bitter people who don't know how to communicate have no place on this sub. We want winners who can help us win the narrative war, not people who just use this sub as a littering ground for their emotional butthurt. Everything you say should help us win the narrative war, make us look good, noble, moral, and undercut the dynamics (not the people) that are holding us back. repeat violators will be permanently banned.

Erin too is the subject of a thread on AZNidentity. It simultaneously discredits her for apparently demonising Asian men, and praises her for at least being married to an Asian man. I have lurked on reddit throughout the period of my PhD. I toyed with joining Hapas at one point but decided against it. As mentioned in the Introduction, I considered conducting internet ethnography, netnography (Kozinets 2010, 74), or something more like "internet related ethnography" (Bonilla and Rosa 2015, 8). I think an anthropological study of AZNidentity – or other Asian themed subreddits – would be better served by studying it as an "isolated social world" (Kendall in Boellstorff 2008, 62). But I am not researching a cyber-community of Asians. Instead I am suggesting an Asian panethnicity and the possibility of an imagined Asianness that is sustained, in part, by media technology.

"Social scientists are increasingly reaching the conclusion that they can no longer adequately understand many of the most important facets of social and cultural life without incorporating the Internet and computer-mediated communications into their studies" (Kozinets 2010, 2). For many people, particularly younger generations of "digital natives", the internet is a mainstay of daily life and the online and offline merge into one, complex world or narrative of life (Campbell in Boellstorff 2008, 61).

After an Asian event, a group of us chatted over dinner. A half Asian, half South American woman, told us that her previous boyfriend was White and they encountered some hostility from Asian (particularly Chinese) men when they went out.

"Oh yeah, that's very common", a Chinese New Zealand man (around the age of nineteen) nodded knowingly.

Another woman, of Chinese descent, thinks sometimes she must be out of the Asian loop in some way, because "I didn't even know this was a thing."

"I thought it was a thing on the internet. I didn't know it was a thing in real life." I said.

AF and AM

When I was thirteen and my sister was seventeen, we were in Osaka, walking along the streets of Umeda. For whatever reason, in the area surrounding the department store LOFT, you are likely to encounter English speakers.

On this occasion a White, French man approached us. He walked alongside us, and started talking to my sister in English. I don't remember the conversation exactly, but he confirmed what he suspected, that she was half Japanese and half White.

"You look half" he said to my sister.

"You don't, you just look Japanese" he said to me and added, "*Kawaisou*"– meaning "what a pity".

It is too easy to fill a paper with personal accounts of racism and sexism and I don't want to rely only on them. But, possibly because my sister and I were young and this lends a slightly heightened character of predation to the encounter, it really lingers in the memory. Also, I knew that this stranger's opinion should be of little value to me, and I remember holding that stranger in something close to contempt. The racism of his assessment was not in doubt. Yet I still felt personally insulted.

The idea that looking half, or more White, is better than looking Asian, is expressed often. People do fawn over the idea of half White, half Asian children. People have in the past told me "no offence, but you look full Asian". A middle-aged White woman, after finding out my partner was White, said that "your children will be beautiful", because that is what half Asians are, apparently. Not meeting her expectations of half Asian attractiveness myself, she had assumed I was not. Being "half" can mitigate the undesirable aspects of Asian foreignness, presenting instead as

worldliness, or "exotic" ambiguity, the embodiment of an elite globalisation, or "cosmopolitan chic" (Matthews, 2007).

I am not allocating many words in this thesis to talk about the beauty standards that yoke women. Nor do I really wish to talk about self esteem and dwell here on unkind things said to me while I was growing up. But, to be dismissed, as a member of your sex, on the basis of your non-Whiteness, or your Asianness, can build a locus of internalised racism and misogyny that requires effort to dismantle.

In this very specific arena – in which strangers appraise your worth via your sexual viability – outright dismissal (as opposed to objectification and violence) on the basis of race, is something "full" Asian women may experience to a greater extent than "half" or "mixed" Asian women, and it is something Asian men likely do experience more often than Asian women. This variety of exclusion may also be something Asian gay men experience more explicitly than straight Asian men (Ayres 1999, 89).

The fact that the term "Yellow fever" is thrown around so easily suggests both an objectifying and infantilising of Asian women; pursuing a relationship with someone who is an Asian female (even when not *because* she is an Asian female) is a sign of predation and perversion if you are a non-Asian man. In a first year Anthropology class that I tutored, we talked about intercultural romance and interracial relationships. One student said that when she sees a White man with an Asian woman, her first reaction is to think "oh no, she is being oppressed."

On the internet "Asian", when combined with any word denoting females, is almost a byword. A porn site search term. At the outset of my research, when I typed various combinations of words that included "Asian" into Google, I found a lot of porn, or near-porn websites, dating websites and matchmaking businesses, as well as the occasional brothel. I had dismissed these search returns as not what I wanted. But, if this is what comes up when you search the word "Asian" why was this?

I did contact a few dating services and matchmaking sites for an interview. Only one, which specialised in matching New Zealand men with Asian women (both in and out of Asia) agreed. A week before the arranged date, they pulled out. My subsequent

attempts to reschedule have gone ignored. Either they are too busy to fit a student's university project into their work timetable – which is true of many people and businesses – or they reassessed whether the project is something in which they would want to participate. It is understandable that they would be concerned about how they are presented.

One participant, when I told them I hoped to speak to an Asian dating agency, immediately dismissed such an entity as peddling in racist and sexist stereotypes. Though at the time trying to maintain a sense of neutrality, it was hard not to share this sentiment. A non-Asian man actively seeking out Asian women, and only Asian women, as partners has become a punchline, a cultural cliché (Constable 2003, 145). Many Asian women have their anecdotes about encountering these types of men.

In *Single Asian Female*, the characters are shown dealing with the difficulties of being the three titular things. Halfway through the play, two White actresses stand off stage, in the audience. Spotlighted, they are dressed as stereotypes of White masculinity. This is a depiction of the dating life of one of the main characters, Zoe, who is standing onstage. In one especially memorable exchange, one of the caricatures of White maleness, or male Whiteness, dressed in a flannel shirt and truckers cap, expresses his interest in the main character.
"I bet you have a tasty Chinese finger trap" he says before throwing his head back and sticking two fingers in his mouth. He then pulls them out with a languorous sucking motion. The contrast between the lecherous pursuit of Asian women, who may embody for men like this, a "sexy blend of enigma, suffering and compliance" (Ayres 2000, 161), and the emasculation of Asian men is not lost on playwright, Michelle.

> Me: Do you think the um, the Asian experience in Australia, it's dramatically different depending on your gender?
>
> Michelle: I think so (chuckles). Yeah. I think… in many ways it is cos, my boyfriend is Chinese, well he was born in Auckland, but he lives in Sydney now and, I've dated a half Japanese guy in the past [but this is the] first time

I've dated someone who I guess is full Asian (laughs). Just the differences in terms of you know, Asian women are hypersexualised and then Asian men… they're just completely ignored. Like in terms of you know, within the romantic sphere and they're never sexualised in the sense that people view them, as… good looking or, masculine. It's… always this sense of… you know Asian men not being good enough. Or it's like a triumph if an Asian guy dates a White woman.[126]

The sticking point about the internet talk surrounding WMAF, is that the AM reddit rhetoric does not focus on the racist discrimination faced by all Asian people in the dating sphere and the way this affects all genders, differently. It focusses on discrimination faced by Asian men as something Asian women also knowingly perpetrate, or are at least uniquely complicit in. It does not see the fetishisation of Asian females as a form of discrimination against women. Instead it is a symptom, welcomed by Asian women, of discrimination against men. Asian women, it is argued, consider their fetishisation to be a boon – one encouraged and indulged by "White worshipping" Asian women seeking to "marry up".

The issues with the idea of hypergamy – where a man marries a woman of lower social status – including the male-centricity exhibited even in the definition itself, are discussed by Nicole Constable in her *Romance on a Global Stage* (2003, 167)*.* When applying the term hypergamy, people tend to not define "up" in any meaningful way (Constable 2003, 167). In general terms, it would mean socioeconomic status, class and income. In cross-national marriages between women in Asia and women in the West, particularly the United States, and also Australia and New Zealand (Doar, 2011) this could be thought to apply. The West is often presented, not least to the Western audience, as the place "other" people would prefer to be; the land they'd like to infiltrate. Presumably the "up" that Asian women with White male partners enjoy, is assumed access to White privilege.

---

[126] In the same conversation Michelle also spoke of gender discrimination within her particular Asian ethnic group: "I think that's embedded in, particularly Chinese culture, where it's like, men are valued higher than women." This is not a thread I am taking up, but I am mentioning it because it was part of the answer to the question she was asked.

Though writing about correspondence marriages between Chinese women and Western men, and Filipina women and Western men, when Constable discusses global hypergamy, she refers to a cultural logic, an established imaginary, of the coupling of an Asian woman and a Western man (Constable 2003, 170). Racist residue of Western imperialism, one that portrayed Asian men (and the men of other colonised peoples) as weak, and Asian women as submissive (171) helps to make the partnering of a Western woman and an Asian man less likely. The Western colonial fantasy of Asian subordination loiters, as do notions of women as passively acquired through marriage. However, those who espouse the kind of anti-Asian female rhetoric seen on some of the discussed subreddits, rather than seeing women as devoid of agency, conceptualise them instead as hyperagents, eschewing one Western stereotype "lotus blossom", for another: "dragon lady" (Constable 2003, 92-93).

At this moment in time Asian panethnicity and solidarity seem widely felt enough to move me to write a thesis about it, and for the participants I spoke with, to recognise themselves as part of the field I am researching. I felt that we, as Asians, could name the issue: Whiteness, and the legacy of Western imperialism that continues to subjugate Asia in the global imaginary and Asian men and women in the West. Instead, these anti-AF, AM redditors blame Asian women. This is not to say that Asian women and Asian men cannot contribute to supporting the very structures that disadvantage them. But the flagrant misdirection of AM internet ire, seems like such a waste and such a disappointment – "we're supposed to be on the same team", I think when I encounter these comments. The racialised objectification of Asian women receives academic attention. It could receive still more. However, Asian women's outrage at this kind of treatment does not contribute to the divisions within the ranks of "Asian" in the same way that some Asian men's outrage at their desexualisation does.

I do not know what it is to exist as an Asian man with the awareness that others have actually spent time contemplating how small your penis is. So, despite the belief in male sexual entitlement and other tenets of hegemonic masculinity promoted by these internet commenters, and despite the frightening echoes of incel terminology

used by some of them, it may be worth wading through the muck to get to their point. Or, disregarding the muck that obscures the point others are also making.

No fats, femmes or Asians

> I am, in the eyes of the majority of the gay male population, as undesirable as a woman (Tony Ayres 1999, 90).

James has had his own difficulties dealing with stereotypes of Asian male masculinity, subject matter he mines for his stand up comedy work. Any success he has had dating White women, has been by being seen as an exception to the rule.

> James: I do a gag about it onstage, it's less of a gag and more of a truth, but… every, sort of Caucasian girl that I've ever dated has, at one point or another… in the relationship actually said to me, "you know I don't normally date Asian dudes, but… you know, you're pretty good." I'm like? "I appreciate you saying that but that's not a compliment." If you hear it a certain way, it can either be, "oh, you are so great that you are changing my perception", or you could hear it as… "man you guys are gross, but you somehow are an exception."
>
> […] Yeah, it's like the comment of, you're Asian but not that [Asian]. You know what I mean? And in high school that used to be a compliment cos for me I was still struggling with my identity and, being ashamed of the fact that I was Asian you know. Then now as like an adult, as a twenty-six year-old adult (chuckles)… you think back, you look back at that and you're like, that's not a compliment at all. That's a compliment on how well you've shed your own skin and assimilated, but that's not a compliment on you as a person. It feels like that, it's the same feeling. But, it's affected me hugely and I think because of the fact that… sort of, White women, kind of would look at me differently. It's kind of in the same way that you know you can't get something and it's dangled in front of you, you want it even more. So it sort of warped my perception, had a reverse effect where I've gone like… and I joke about this, but I sort of don't know how to consolidate this idea, but, I low key feel a little

bit like I'm doing a service. I'm like… one White girl at a time changing perceptions (chuckles).

Me: So, I guess, there's a, I don't know if it's a joke, or a stereotype… of White women as like a holy grail, for many, for many ethnicities […]

James: Yeah, I think, that's just one of the things that contribute to it. I don't think that's exclusively it, the fact that, because they don't want that ethnicity, they're desired more by that ethnicity. I think that's just one aspect of it, I think the other aspect of it is, they're not… White women are not taught by the media and the stuff they consume, to find Asian men [attractive]. That's not programmed into the system, that that is a thing that's a viable… choice, do you know what I mean? This is why, for me personally, I'm real big on like representation… just because… you're slowly shaped by what you take in, right? What you do. So, when you don't, in New Zealand, when you don't see a sexy Asian man on TV, or in movies, or in theatre, then you're not conditioned to find Asian men attractive at all are you? You just, when all you see is the Spray and Walk Away guy,[127] or the guy from the Caltex BP commercials.

Me: I don't know those references.

James: Well they're, nerds in coats right? They're like stereotypes, when that's all you're conditioned to see, that's all you're gonna find in the world. You know what I mean? And so I'm huge on representation, in that sense. I fucking love Glenn from *The Walking Dead*, he's Korean. I fucking love Daniel Dae Kim, from *Hawaii Five-O* and *Lost*. That guy is ripped. I'm like, we need more people like that. We need that in New Zealand. That's what we need.

As James said above, we don't often see "ripped" Asian men in Western media. We don't often see Asian men presented as objects of desire, often the opposite (Barber

---

[127] This refers to a commercial for a moss, lichen and algae killing product that comes in a bottle with a spray dispenser. I looked it up after this interview.

2015, 68-69), as objects of ridicule and pity. Though, the transnational flow of media directly from Asia to the West provides different depictions of Asian masculinity. Hallyu, or the Korean Wave of popular culture that has achieved global attention and success, has contributed to not just a greater acceptance of Asian male beauty, but an expanded idea of masculinity beyond that of the White western norm. "[S]oft masculinity, epitomised in performances of masculinity by K-pop stars, is a blend of various Asian and transnational cultural patterns of masculinity, including Chinese Confucian masculinity, in which intellectual achievement is foregrounded over aggressive or bodily domination, Japan's 'pretty boy' imagery found in manga, and global metrosexuality" (Jung in Sinnott 2012, 454).

Despite the power of transnational media consumption, when Asian media travels to the West, there is recontextualisation (Khoo 2008, 2). The word "twink", is a gay slang term for gay or bisexual young men of slight build and little to no body hair, of delicate appearance. This word has been borrowed and used almost as a slur to describe K-pop idols and the kinds of East Asian men that commonly rise to prominence in the media industry. Rather than seeing hallyu as a broadening of the aesthetics of masculinity, some consider it another way that Asian men have been emasculated. This seems an uninspired point of view, but appropriating the word "twink" in this way suggests a latent homophobia. The equation of the emasculation of the Asian male with male homosexuality doubly marginalises gay Asian men (Zhang 2016, 65; Tan 2008, 72). And gay Asian men face not only racist and anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination from mainstream society, they also experience racist discrimination from other gay men (Ayres 1999; 2000).

Tony Ayres has written of his own experiences: "Because the majority of gay Asian men in Australia are slimmer and smaller than their Caucasian counterparts, they are also stereotyped as feminine or 'boyish'. However, in a culture where Tom of Finland is the pinnacle of what is considered desirable, being feminine is neither respected nor valued. The same racial stereotype that makes Asian women desirable makes Asian men marginal" (2000, 161).

This precarity of Asian male masculinity (and its strained relationship to Asian male homosexuality) has been depicted in David Henry Huang's much theorised about

play, *M. Butterfly*. In it, a French diplomat in China, Rene Gallimard, falls in love with Peking opera singer, Song Liling, after seeing him perform. They have a sexual relationship and Gallimard either doesn't realise, or is wilfully blind to the fact that Liling is a man. David L. Eng uses this play as a jumping off point to combine critical race theory and psychoanalysis in *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America:*

> [R]ather than seeing at the site of the female body a penis that is not there to see, Gallimard refuses to see at the sites of the Asian male body a penis that is there to see. The white diplomat's "racial castration" of Song thus suggests that the trauma being negotiated in this particular scenario is not just sexual but racial difference. As such, Gallimard's psychic reworking of fetishism challenges our conventional interpretation of the Freudian model by delineating a crossing of race with what is traditionally seen only as a paradigm of (hetero)sexual difference (2001, 2).

As well as subverting the "Butterfly trope" – where an Asian woman sacrifices herself for the love of a Western man (Koehler 2017, 161) – famously rendered in Puccini's opera *Madam Butterfly*, *M. Butterfly* "justifies being read as a fictionalization of Edward Said's *Orientalism*" (Koehler 2017, 163). Toward the end of the play, and David Cronenberg's film, Song Liling, unmasked as a man says: "being an Oriental, I could never be completely a man" (Hwang in Koehler 162).[128]

No Asians, no Indians

I met Rachel, at her suggestion, at an inner city restaurant and bar after she had finished work. For the benefit of the tape recorder, and to avoid the gloomy Melbourne weather, we sat inside by a window near the bar. Though reserved in demeanor, she was not deterred from sharing personal information, even as the bar area became increasingly crowded and noisy during the course of our discussion.

---

[128] An intensification of Said's: "An Oriental man was first an Oriental and only second a man." (1978, 231).

I had made contact with Rachel because of her involvement with the Victoria branch of the Asian Australian Rainbow Alliance. Rachel was new to the role and took many opportunities to remind me of this, often referring me to another person when I asked questions about the organisation. Despite the official capacity in which she had ostensibly met me, Rachel instinctively knew that I was interested in her personal stories as an Asian Australian.

When I first asked her to tell me about herself she offered her family's immigration history (both her parents immigrated from the Philippines), the cities they had lived in (Melbourne and Sydney), an employment summary (she has a background in social work), her relationship status (with a partner of four years), her age (32) and her inability to speak Tagalog, despite having lived in the Philippines for 9 months the previous year to: "try and get more in touch with my heritage cos I felt like that was really lacking throughout my childhood."

I asked Rachel about the particular issues faced by the Asian Australian LGBTQ+ community and we talked about the prevalence of racism in online dating towards Asian gay men by inclusion of terms like "No Fats, Femmes or Asians"[129] (Ayres 1999, 89) and specifically, "no rice, no spice" in personal profiles.

> Rachel: To say that! in an ad like holy shit! You wanna be more overt about your racism? And people actually just internalise that as like, "no no no, it's a preference". I'm like no! no! no! that's not a preference, that's internalised racism like you can't just say that a whole race is unattractive to you… What is that about? …no one has, tried to… unpack that… it's just been so accepted for so long, and I think that would highly impact the gay Asian community, you know, to kind of be classed as second best. Or, to have White men have an Asian fetish, stuff like that I think that's a real um, that's a real issue… We're people (snorts). We're not just this big label and to me that, that's probably the biggest, the biggest one.

---

[129] As this thesis deals with creativity and performance as a response to coercive regimes and imposed negative categorisations, I note that drag queen Kim Chi reclaimed these terms for the song "Fat, Fem & Asian".

I asked Rachel about whether there is a difference between fetishes and preferences:

> Rachel: It's almost like you have to… and I know not everyone has this ability to do it, question yourself, like why? Get down to the heart of what it is you're actually getting at. You know I can say… the patterns of people that I've ended up liking have all been sort of Italians but I can't say definitively that I like Italians. I guess they just ended up being, all three of them, all Italian. Or you know I find, you know, Black women attractive and it's like well, why is that? Like I've always had to unpack it for myself. And what quality is that cos you know that's not true, I don't find all Black people attractive, but it's particular qualities that a [member of any] race could have. I just feel like you know… it's, not unpacked enough and people will often… in this idealised world of love, like people don't often think about that enough and will always… try to seek that perfect, ideal… relationship that just ticks all the boxes and it just doesn't. The movies have done terrible things to, you know, what people think love should be. Or relationships…

At this point it occurred to me to ask if she was attracted to Asian women. I didn't. I should have given us both more credit because I knew it wouldn't have been taken in any way other than the way I intended. But, for me to ask someone in a bar if they like Asian women sounds flirtatious and kind of pathetic. I just couldn't bring myself to do it.

When in a later interview, with James, he talked about his history of dating White women, the question occurred to me again. This time, I managed: "Can I ask have you dated a Filipina woman before?"

> James: No. So that's another thing that really fucked me up recently when I was, when I was sort of going back, and sort of, looking at my dating… I used to say in high school – but this was before I sort of, started to come to terms with my identity in New Zealand – I used to say it's cos they were like my sisters. But that's a scapegoat. That's not true, they don't. Yeah, it's a

scapegoat, that's not true. They don't. Yeah, no I haven't. […] it doesn't look good. On paper, it's like "argh!"

James' seeming success with dating White women is at odds with the underlying idea of women being disinterested in Asian men. This he has thought about too, wondering if he has benefited from being Filipino, as opposed to a different kind of Asian.

James: I legitimately went back recently (chuckles). Cos recently I was writing my show and I made a list of sort of every woman I've dated, or been with – very White list. And it made me reflect about, you know what does that mean for me? What does that make me? Why is that? Why does my dating list look like, at any given point, at least one person on this list has a *Minions* phone case, or some shit… I dunno, and I don't and that's still something I'm processing, but, it's true. I think, no one talks about it. That's one of the sort of unsaid things in New Zealand culture at the moment. But it's just accepted, that, White girls aren't into Asian dudes really.

Here he mentioned his possibly different experience as an Asian man who is Brown, or "Islander Asian", or "hip hop Asian".

Me: You're… you're, reasonably tall.

James: Yeah. That does and I… I, yeah. I realise it. I'm a reasonably tall, Brown, Browner Asian.

James has encountered the heterosexual equivalent of "no rice, no spice", the more straightforward "no Asians or Indians".

James: […] there are profiles that say that, and… like, look, I ain't fucking around like, not to like beat around the bush. I do stand up, I'm successful, I (lowers voice until the end of this sentence), make money, and I am not a bad looking dude, I don't think. But, I had a rough time, on Tinder.

I note that James is not incorrect about being "not a bad looking dude", but even with all the benefits of being good looking, funny, gainfully employed, tall and "hip hop Asian", there is the media issue. And then, there is the widely disseminated stereotype of Asian men having small penises.

> James: One time, when I took a girl home, and she was about to go down on me, she goes "oh" (exclamation of pleasant surprise)… like she was surpri- I'm like, for real? Here's the thing. I didn't realise, only til after (chuckles), in retrospect, what, that meant. But in the moment, you're like… I don't give a shit, we're about to have sex (laughs), like you know, my primal dude instincts sort of thankfully blocked that and I still went ahead with the experience, but two days after I was having coffee and I was like, "fuck that!" Like, that sucks.
>
> […] It's really funny, that's a modern construct too, cos, if you look at fucking ancient Greek, like ancient statues from Greece and shit, they all have small dicks. Cos it was better to have a small dick right? It was seen as grotesque if you had a huge cock and, so, it's such a construct of this modern day thing. Do you know what I mean? Like, even if that bullshit stereotype is true, you just made that up to keep us down. That's what it is (chuckles).

The contemporary stereotypes that keep Asian men down have deep roots. The colonial subjugation of non-White men continues a cultural fantasy (Constable 2003, 171) of White Western men as conquerors, rightfully entitled to the world's spoils (Fanon 1970). Early Asian, particularly Chinese, immigration to the West, was disproportionately male, often as a result of legislative measures made to prevent the growth of a minority population. The "anxiety of miscegenation" (Miyao 2007, 111; Ip 2003) that forbade sexual relations between Asian men and non-Asian women (Stoler 2001, 843), was executed not just through explicit regulation by law, but through other modes of cultural prohibition. We continue to see these effects in popular media.

The feminisation of Asian men has happened not just through the convergence of racialised and gendered views on bodily difference, but has also been passed down through the historical relegation of Asian men to jobs, like laundry work, traditionally

considered the domain of women (Wang 2004). These strategies of representation, amongst other dehumanising narratives promoted during and after World War II, as well as anti-Asian policies implemented throughout the Western world, leave traces. They prescribe and regulate the logic of desire, by allowing only the narrowest of cultural crawl space in which a public idea of Asian male sexuality can exist.

The "education of desire" (Stoler 2001, 832), was an explicit feature of the colonial project, and the regulation of intimacies continues within the multicultural project. By considering the intimate domains of sex, dating, marriage, domestic arrangements, miscegenation, child-having and child-rearing, as political sites, we have a productive vantage point from which to consider the damages endured by different groups of people, and to whom they direct their grievances and why. To consider the "tense and tender ties of empire and to sex" is to ask what rationalities of power and dominance make certain "distinctions and categories viable, enduring, and relevant". (Stoler 2001, 865). Where this chapter focussed on interracial relationships, the following chapter will consider the children of these relationships.

Chapter 10: Looking the part, acting the part

When I went to visit the office of Oryza Foundation, I spoke first with Sums, before we were joined by her husband and cofounder, Square. Sums remained in the room, attending to other things, while I conducted the second interview. She did however always have an ear to the conversation.

> Square: You know with categories like Asian, it doesn't really, there's no, there's no space in there for… people like yourself who are, half Asian, and half something else. There's no easy or neat way to… I don't know whether there needs to be, you know an easier neat way. Like, when we have children, our children–
>
> Sums: Just one.
>
> Square: –will be Chinese Indian (Laughs). When we have children (plural said deliberately). This is on record (gestures to recorder, Sums laughs). You know, our kids will be… in Malaysia we'd call them Chindian. And actually over here, certainly in the industry we are seeing a slightly different dialogue coming from… practitioners who are part Asian as opposed to full Asian, I think that conversation is different. Or possibly more, more introspective and more searching in terms of the questions and challenges.[130] Not, very different, but different. There is a difference in tone.

Part White privilege

> Neither Australia nor New Zealand has formally named mixed race populations, in the way that Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, colonial India, and some other countries have. This is partly because neither has a single racial group with whom the dominant Whites have mixed— mixing has occurred across a range of groups. The result is that there is no single population of

---

[130] The sense mixed race people may experience of not visually fitting into discrete ethnic or racial categories has been described as a "trigger for self-reflection" (Fozdar and Perkins 2014, 129-130).

mixed-race people to which an identifier can be applied. In both nations, most indigenous people of mixed race identify as indigenous and the rest of the mixed population come from such diverse backgrounds that no single identifier would suffice. The closest these nations come to recognizing this racial diversity is through a multiplicity of hyphenations (such as Anglo-Celtic, Vietnamese-Australian, Fijian-New Zealander, Cypriot-Turkish-Australian), with many citizens identifying with a number of different heritages […]. An interesting aspect of such identifications is that the "Australian" or "New Zealander" part of the hyphen is automatically presumed to be White (Fozdar and Perkins 2014, 120).

In Australia, there is a popular response to describing yourself as "half". "Which half of you? Your left half or your right half?" In a country where Indigenous children's assimilability was measured by blood quantum, where people were categorised according to half caste, quadroon, octoroon, an unequivocal claiming of Aboriginal heritage is a strike against rules of hypodescent or blood-policing. Though they seem arbitrary,[131] the racial categories and sub-categories with which we continue to carve up the social world originated to serve the purpose of protecting the racial order and maintaining the dominance of those in power (Moghaddam 2008: 5). To refuse these categories, as many Aboriginal Australians do, is to refuse to allow your access to your cultural history to be mediated or regulated by bureaucratic assessments of whether you are "Aboriginal enough" or "Black enough". In New Zealand, a self-claimed bicultural identity of Māori people of mixed heritage is arguably more common (Ward 2006), but in Australia, typologies that fractionalise Aboriginality are avoided for carrying "a residue of colonial racist usage'" (Fozdar and Perkins 2014, 131).[132]

---

[131] To provide a contrasting example of categories, in South Africa, people were assigned to the categories of "White", "Colored," and "Black" by an official Race Classification Board (Moghaddam 2008: 5).

[132] Similarly, in the US, terms like mulatto, quadroon and octoroon are rejected as they hark back to slavery era terminology (Darity 2001, 39) as crass ways of "coding the extent of miscegenation" (Harrison 1999, 626). In comparison, though ideas of blood quantum have been imposed by US governments onto First Nations peoples (Sturm 2002), the concept of "blood", has also been taken up by some Native Americans themselves as a measure of "Native Americanness" (Garroutte 2003).

This is not a history or experience shared by non-Aboriginal Asian people in Australia. As such, to be asked "are you half?", "are you mixed?", is common enough for people of Asian descent. There is an "overdetermination of both physiology and physiognomy in narratives of racial mixing" (Edwards, Ganguly and Lo 2007, 2), and "blood" remains for many people, a synecdoche for culture, ethnicity and race (Williams in Munasinghe 2002, 664). Though I prefer not to be referred to as half caste, I am used to having my Asianness assessed on the basis of my appearance when first meeting people, as I suspect many half or part Asians are.

An Asian networking event was held at the Wellington CBD high rise office of a sponsoring company. I had met a couple of people there before, but none of them appeared to be immediately available for conversation. I found two young women who looked as though they would appreciate another person joining them. I did so, and after brief introductions one of the women asked me, "are you mixed?" I answered yes, at which the other woman's face lit up.
"Me too! But I feel like everyone is looking at me, like, why is that White person here?"
We all exchanged our basic ethnic history then. The mixed woman had one Filipino parent. And, I realised, I had been trying to guess what this person's heritage was since I first saw her. This is something I do whenever I can tell that some isn't "full Asian". Others do the same. Omi and Winant describe this moment of uncertainty in terms that highlight the role perceptions of race play in understanding the social world:

> One of the first things we notice about people when we meet them (along with their sex) is their race. We utilize race to provide clues about who a person is. This fact is made painfully obvious when we encounter someone whom we cannot conveniently racially categorize—someone who is, for example, racially "mixed" or of an ethnic/ racial group we are not familiar with. Such an encounter becomes a source of discomfort and momentarily a crisis of racial meaning (1994, 59).

Sometimes people like to get it out of the way early in the conversation, sometimes strangers approach me to confirm their suspicions of "halfness":

At the first ALSA event of the year, an executive member approaches a group of us. She doesn't know me, and believes us all to be new law students.

"Hi. Are you half?"

"Yes. Well spotted."

"I can always tell. I'm really good at it."

When I was talking to James about his preference for White women, it came up that he is under no familial pressure to date or marry within his own ethnicity. James' mother has even light-heartedly expressed that she would rather a White daughter-in-law.

> James: In fact, my Mum's like, give me a half White baby (laughs). She's campaigning, and maybe that goes back to the fact that um… I think, for me, it goes back to culturally in the Philippines, it's seen as desirable to have lighter skin, you know? Cos when the Americans came there, they were sort of seen as like, rich or posh and so that was desirable, and you wanted to have lighter skin, you wanted to have blue eyes and stuff like that so it's a bit of a hangover from that I think, that my parents want me to have half White kids. And maybe I dunno, maybe I'm not giving them enough credit and it's really fucking intelligent and [they] just know that if I did have, half White kids, it might have, like a, less hard time (laughs), do you know what I? I don't know.

> Me: I'm just curious… I don't want this to sound accusatory–

> James: Ask away.

> Me: –like I'm jumping on something you said. Do you think that half White Asian people necessarily have an easier time?

> James: No. Not at all.

> Me: Not at all?

James: Nah, I think… not necessarily it's all, it all comes down to context I think, you know like, maybe back then I would've, but I think it's unfair to say that. I have a lot of friends who are half Asian, or half White, and whatever, and they aren't necessarily… cos they have their own things that they've got to deal with too cos they have… like I was speaking with [a friend who is] half. For her it's like, where do I land? Like which one of these two things do I identify with? And it's that feeling of not fitting into either/or, that I've spoken to her about and she's expressed. A lot of my favourite artists, are musicians who have that problem in their work. Like there's a rapper called Logic who's half Black and half White and a lot of his music has got a "where the fuck do I sit in between these two?"

So, I will, like you know, cos I know you're half Welsh as well so I would never in a million years think that you've got it easier, but I'm saying like, out of ignorance, my mother might think that. You know? And she might be for that, because of that reason. But I know for a fact from being friends with and hearing what it's like, and it sounds like it's just as shit a time.

I felt at the time that there was a joke to be made here, about "some of my friends are half", and "a lot of my favourite artists are half", but it was beyond me to formulate one on the spot. Even now, trying to think of a good one after the fact just for the mental exercise, or possible inclusion as part of this reflexive moment brings up nothing. Even if I had been able to come up with one while speaking to James, I doubt I would have had the confidence to deliver it in front of a professional.[133]

My feeling the need to ask a "full Asian" what he thought of "part Asians" because of an offhand comment suggests my own feeling of contingent belonging. As does my desire to then make a joke of it. James' answer suggests he is well-versed in the popular stories surrounding being "half",[134] or mixed race – a kind of inbetweenness,

---

[133] Not appearing especially "half" myself, it is possible it slipped James' mind. Scholars have suggested that where researchers appear to be highly culturally ambiguous, research participants may be more cautious in what they say for fear of unwittingly offending a group to which the researcher belongs (Naaeke, Kurylo, Grabowski, Linton, and Radford 2011, 155).
[134] Edwards, Ganguly and Lo have written about the "performative dimensions" of being mixed race (2007).

where acceptance by those you are in between is not guaranteed. However, I have been reminded of my "less hard time" occasionally, gently and incidentally, not necessarily *by* my participants, but through talking to them. For one thing, I have a parent who was born and raised in the country in which I was born and raised. English – global lingua franca and official language of my home country – was the main language spoken in my childhood home by both of my parents. My father, a White man, could be our interface with mainstream Australia.

As a child, every time one of my baby teeth fell out, I put it under my pillow, and by the next morning it would be replaced by a white envelope containing a two dollar coin. When my 2016 ALSA mentee, who had learned about the tooth fairy at school, put her first fallen baby tooth under her pillow, nothing happened. She woke up to find it still there. Such is the immensity of my privilege, I consider this a sad childhood story.

There are these things, localised, Westernised, structural knowledge that I benefited from, because I had someone to teach it to me. But there are other ways that being half White makes it easier to move through the Western world.

Passing

I sit and wait in the lobby of the Melbourne Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV) City Club. It has a general air of exclusivity. The area I am in is sectioned off from the rest of the building by a single entryway, seemingly warded by two security guards, or concierges? It is hard to tell which they are. I decide to walk through to pass the time. They do not intercept me. Large metal mobiles hang from the ceilings, made higher by the loft-like construction of the second level. They complement the glass winding staircases. I can see that the nondescript piano music wafting through the place is being produced by a woman on the second floor, seated at a piano, her back to the glass balustrade.

Having exhausted the traversable space on the first floor, I walk back through the entryway and take a seat in the lobby. When Susie arrives, black suit, black hair, she has to sign me in. She is the founder of an Asian organisation that matches potential

sponsors or donors to suitable charitable organisations, or other projects in need of funding. A lawyer by trade, Susie is one of only two people who decline to be recorded. She believes strongly in the power of Asian Australians to decide on their own identity and what that means. She is also strikingly business-minded. Referring to the hiring difficulties faced by Asians in Australia she tells me, lightheartedly, "You have a great name."

It is true that on paper and over the phone, I am quite Anglo-Celt Australian. One day in high school, I attempted a reverse charge pay phone call to my mother at home. She did not accept the call, the operator told me. My mother would that afternoon tell me that the caller name she was given was not Sophia, but Rebecca. Not knowing this at the time, I was confused. I checked the number with the operator. There was no mistake. I pressed for him to try again. "It's an Asian household. They don't know you," he said before hanging up. I was surprised, either because it meant people can, after simply talking to her on the phone, decide my mother is Asian, or, because they can't tell that I am.

When talking to James, he summed up the idea of "passing" enabling a person to opt out from time to time:

> Me: It is interesting, cos my sister for example looks far less Asian than I do and I feel myself going, when she's talking about "the struggle"…
>
> James: (mock contempt) You don't know. You have no idea. […] You can blend. Shit if you can blend man, it's a, that's the ticket. […] My girlfriend and I have this conversation cos she's Jewish. So… I mean, her people know oppression. But also, she doesn't feel it in New Zealand, cos she can blend. She looks White, so she's seen as a White person. So, yeah we have this really interesting dynamic, we talk about this a lot… we get to a point in the conversation and she just has to tap out, "well I don't know cos I can blend in." Or, we'll get to a point in the conversation where she has to remind me that, she's Jewish and I have to go, "oh I'm sorry, I forgot, I'm so sorry." Yeah, cos there is that, on that base level, if you can blend man, it's a gift for me… in that sense you can have it easier, if you can blend in, because you don't have

to wear that look, you don't have to, you can put a mask on when you want, when you're tired, or when you can't be fucked dealing with "where are you from?" You can just not.

Where are you from?

The 2018 New Zealand Festival included a Writers & Readers panel with the writers Emma Ng, Brannavan Gnanalingam and Rajorshi Chakraborti. During the event they fielded questions from the moderator about their recent books, being Asian New Zealand writers, and being Asian in New Zealand. At one point, Gnanalingam spoke of being asked "where are you from?" and the askers not finding "New Zealand" a satisfactory response. His answers become more and more specific, culminating in confusion and frustration whenever he reaches the final answer of "Naenae".[135]

At the end of the panel discussion, when audience questions were invited, one elderly woman raised her hand. She prefaced her question by identifying herself as Pākehā. She described her children and grandchildren as being of many and multiple ethnicities, including Māori, Cook Islands Māori, Samoan and Indian. After offering her progenies' ethnicities by way of credentials she arrived at her question. "Why would you resent being asked where you're from? I would ask where you're from because I can see that you're not Pākehā, and I can see you're not Māori, because I think I know pretty well what they look like [by now]."
Gnanalingam qualified that he's not sure he would go so far as to say he "resents" the question, but that: "The question I would put to you is… would you ask that question of a Pākehā person?"
The audience member's voice grew louder to counter him: "I'll ask you not to make assumptions –"
She was cut off by the moderator, who, noticing Ng's agitation, invited her to comment.
"I think it is completely reasonable to not want to discuss your family history with a complete stranger."

---

[135] Naenae is a working class suburb of Lower Hutt, near Wellington.

"Really?!" (this comment from the same audience member elicited audible groans from other members of the audience).

"I do," Ng nodded, slowly and firmly, while the mediator moved on, making this the last word on the matter.

This whole interaction was a surprise. I did not expect this type of disagreement at a literary festival event called "New Asia, New Zealand". I had thought the panelists were preaching to the converted and that surely, for all who chose to attend, the connotations, the discourse even, of "where are you really from?" was well-plumbed, and a possibly exhausted topic. I was wrong of course. There was, most obviously, that one audience member who didn't seem to consider that in phrasing her query, she had suggested its answer. "I can see that you're not Pākehā and… you're not Māori". There are only certain types of people whose presence here is questioned.

The audience was predominantly Pākehā, according to the quick scans I made in the low lighting, and it's possible some of them hadn't had reason to reflect on the subject. I remember years ago, during a Master's class discussion of Ien Ang's *On Not Speaking Chinese*, a White Australian man, around 70, raised his hand. He told us he had been asking non-White people "where are you from?" his whole life and only now, after reading Ang, had he thought about this, and he was very pleased to have had the opportunity.

There were the people in the audience who had been asked the question many times in their lives, and were happy to see it discussed in any forum. A couple of weeks after the panel, I met an Asian New Zealander who had also been in attendance. We talked about the woman in the audience and our own experiences of "where are you from?"

For me, the question of "where are you from?" and, the follow-up question of "where are you *really* from?" pops up frequently, at different points along the living spectrum of personal experience, personal interest, and academic interest. I had mistaken this frequency for cliché, when I could probably have taken it as relevance. Maybe this is what people are talking about when they praise the distance that comes readily in outsider ethnography.

The question of "where are you from?" has been used in Asian area studies and countless other disciplines, to sum up the idea of Asians as perpetually foreign. This question as illustrative of the Asian experience is so widely known it seems naff to write about. *Where are you really from?* was the title of my Master's thesis. It is the name of an SBS television show about immigration in Australia that aired in June 2018. "Where are you from really" is the name of a New Zealand based platform for arts by People of Colour. Similar configurations of the words provide the title for countless articles and think pieces on racial othering. It may be mere snobbery, but by the time a piece of social commentary finds its way to *Buzzfeed*-type lists and articles with titles like "You know you're Asian when…", or "Things White people say to Asian people", it ceases to feel like a comment worth making, or an observation worth sharing.

But, like memories of other children being repulsed by your school lunch, or people expressing surprise that you can speak English, being asked "where are you from?" by your compatriots is part of being Asian, (or not White) in predominantly White countries. Because of these shared touchstones, when you meet another Asian person, you assume a cultural shorthand. This is born not of the traditions of your Asian ancestors, but by how you experience life in Australia, or New Zealand, or elsewhere.

> Amy:[136] Where people ask, "where are you from?" And I'd say, "oh, I was born in New Zealand" and then they say like, "oh but where are you like, actually from?" Because, I'm Chinese… it means I can't be a New Zealander.
>
> Me: Are there times… are there situations or, people from whom that question feels more okay to you?
>
> Amy: I mean like, if I'm talking to someone who's also Asian or Chinese, or something it might be… maybe they're trying to find out if there's a language

---

[136] Creator of the blog Hainamana, and convenor of the 2017 Asian New Zealand Artists Hui, described in Chapter 5.

that you share, or something, so I wouldn't mind saying something like, "oh, I was born here but my parents are from China." Yeah, maybe it's like, a sense or understanding that we have that there's a shared experience.

There is a subtly to the art of asking "where are you from?" The different interpretations of the question are usually: "I have noticed you are different from me", or "I think you and I might have something in common", or sometimes "I am making conversation with you".

Hearing, answering or not answering "where are you from?" is an aspect of daily life. The *how* of answering or not answering is part of the fabric of the Asian experience, part of the performativity of Asianness. The strategies people adopt both to interpret the question and to respond to or evade it, are complex. I had a chance to examine the various protocols of "where are you from?" during one of my interviews. It came up casually, as it does, but we found that there are rules. There is etiquette. There are questions to ask.

1. Is the asker White?

   James:[137] If an Asian person or a Brown person asks me where I'm from, I'm fine with it, but if a White person asks me where I'm from I'm like, you're being vague right now, just ask for my ethnicity and I'll tell you.

2. Does the asker have a foreign accent?

   Me: Just out of curiosity if the White person has an accent, that's not a New Zealand accent, does it bother you?

   James: Yeah, that's a weird one… yeah, no. …it doesn't sort of make me feel like I have to assimilate to them… do you know what I mean? Cos they're foreign too. … I feel like we generalise when we say "White person" but it's

---

[137] James, as a stand up comedian and therefore protoanthropologist, was a good person to have this conversation with.

actually just a New Zealand, Pākehā, Kiwi, person, whose like, fucking family colonised this place. That's the people that I get pissed off at, but yeah, yeah, I think for me it's like, if a German tourist asks me, I'm like, oh yeah, I know exactly what you're talking about and I'll answer you… Yeah, I dunno cos, you must, do you get that question?

S: Yeah, I do, and if they have an accent I don't care.

James: Yeah! You're fine right?

3. How bad a day have you had?

James: It depends so much on what mood you're in. If you're in a good mood you're willing to let shit slide… But I feel like, if you've had a shit day, it's 6 o'clock, it's been a rough day and someone just goes, where are you from? And it just fucking sets you off.

4. How nice has the asker been to you?

James: I've definitely been irked by it in the past but I've also been like, fine with it. So I don't know, like it's hard for me, I don't know if that's that my principles and beliefs wavering, of it that just means I'm a moody person, but… so much of it is context, who the person is. Cos if I had a guy, or a girl who I was talking to, lovely person… half way through a conversation put that question in and they've been lovely and they obviously don't have any bone in their body that suggested they think they're better than me… I'll be fine.

5. In what setting is the question asked?

Me: Another fellow I'd just met, just met, in a work situation–

James: Oh, get fucked.

6. How far into the conversation is the question asked?

Me: –and he asked what's your background… and I thought I'll just check that he didn't mean, professionally or education-wise. He didn't. He meant the other stuff.

James: So, my question to you is, if that person had just been specific, if he'd been like, what ethnicity are you? How would you have taken it?

Me: Oh, as the first question, it was really the fact it was the first question.

James: Oh, you can't do that! You can't come in hot! You gotta establish a rapport first, yeah… You can't come in hot with it.

7. When the question is asked, does the asker seem like they have been biding their time?

An acceptable progression when meeting a new person would be, for example:
"Hi, I'm Sophia."
"What do you do?"
"I'm a student."
"What do you study?"
"Anthropology."
"What degree?"
"PhD."
"Oh, what's it on?"
"Pan-Asian ethnicity."
"Are you Asian?"
I described this conversation, which I had recently had with a new acquaintance, to James.

Me: Sometimes it's perfectly natural and other times it's like, oh, you were so happy to have that chance, weren't you?

James: It's like "oh fuck! Now's my chance."

James: I've done this before where someone has asked me where they were from and I've asked them where they were from back. I'm like, "I'm from the Philippines, where are you from?" And they're like, "what do you mean? I'm from New Zealand", and I'm like, "yeah, but where's your family from?" "Before New Zealand like… Scotland?" And I'm like "oh, cool!"

Me: I find it fun sometimes if somebody asks… to kind of very quickly gloss over the Japanese bit and then go on and on about the Welsh and Scottish.

Though, even for aficionados, there is the chance to get it wrong when you encounter someone who isn't playing their part. This can disrupt the whole routine:

James: I was really like taken aback the other day, cos usually when a Person of Colour asks me that I'm like oh, I know what you're talking about and I'll happily indulge you in your question. But, I asked, someone this… "hey where are you from?" Thinking that we have this mutual understanding cos we're both Brown but they got real uppity at me, they got quite mad. I was like sorry, I said "sorry"… and I actually said, "well I just thought, cos we're both… (motions back and forth to suggest similarity) that we just had a mutual…" yeah.

Me: Oh, yeah, that's scary, that's never happened to me.

James: Yeah! I didn't know what to do, cos I was just like, oh, this is… just how it is, you should know, the etiquette! Yeah, they got mad at me, I was like… alright.

Me: Were they New Zealand-?

James: Yeah! That's where I go, come on you're taking the piss… You've swung too far… this is crazy… you gotta understand we're on the same side, like… There's such thing as too far, in like a left direction in terms of… how sensitive you are to these things.

Visual Belonging and Phenotypic Difference

During an ALSA mentoring meeting, Penny and I were talking. She said when she was in China with her family, her cousin, who is half, said, "it's so hard being half White". She complained that she had not shaved her legs for the same length of time as Penny, but Penny's leg hair remained undetectable.

"I can relate. The body hair thing… do you have arm hair?" I asked.

Penny put her forearm down on the table, as did I, and we compared them side by side.

"So, my leg hair is kind of like this too", she said, and explained that in winter she might even avoid shaving her legs to retain a fine and almost imperceptible extra layer of insulation.

"It's a shame you can't pick and choose these things. Because the body hair, and also, I know this is a generalisation, but Asian women tend to be petite."

"My cousin inherited the petite bit."

I told Penny about a person I met during a fieldtrip to Melbourne. She was talking about how Asian Australians may not fit in in Asia, not just culturally, but physically. She had said to me:

"When you go to Japan, they'd see you coming a mile away. It's that butter and milk fat."

I told her that yes, no matter the room I am in in Japan, I tend to be the biggest person in it.

"I call it butter and milk fat. My son has it too."

On a different occasion, Madeleine and I were at Monsoon Poon in Wellington, a pan-Asian restaurant with pan-Asian red and bamboo-look décor and "love u long time" on the steps to the entrance. Madeleine had chosen this place so we could try their Wellington on a Plate[138] burger, the Xi'an Smash Burger, described by the website as a burger containing: "Cabernet Foods pork and lamb patty with sesame

---

[138] Every year during Wellington on a Plate, there is a burger competition between restaurants. Whenever I arrange to meet Madeleine during the month of August, we usually have a WOAP burger (see Chapter 8). I feel this is a fairly common Wellington practice.

peanut mayonnaise, red onion, Asian herbs and Zany Zeus raita, with sweet potato fries." I wondered at why they chose to write "sweet potato fries" instead of "kumara chips".

I had recently returned from my first research trip to Auckland and was telling Madeleine about it. She asked if it was "more racist" there. She mentioned Andrew Little's list of Chinese property owners,[139] and the fact that her brother would be on that list. She had heard though from a friend that people in Auckland are better at telling Asian people apart.
"Are you often mistaken for other Asian people in Wellington?" I asked. She said when she was at university her professors often confused her with another Asian girl in her class, and vice versa. She would have thought that being the only ones, they would stand out and be easily distinguishable.

The sense of belonging (and non-belonging) through appearance was one shared by Australian and New Zealand participants. Michelle talked about not fitting in visually as a Chinese Australian:

> Michelle: I had in primary school there was a girl who asked me, no she said that my nose was really flat like a wombat's and I remember going home (chuckles) and like, putting a peg, like a laundry peg on my nose trying to make it pointier. And… just, sort of everyday instances like that, that made [me] want to change… my physicality in some sense. There were instances like that that sort of made me wish that I wasn't different. Like I never wished that I wasn't Asian. But I just hated being different. And… feeling really alone.
>
> Me: Has that gone completely? Or… And if it did at what point did that happen?

---

[139] Andrew Little is a New Zealand politician who was the Leader of the Opposition and leader of the Labour Party in 2015. In that year, the party used real estate information to guess at the number of foreign property buyers in the Auckland market. Whether a buyer was deemed foreign, was based on whether or not their surname was Chinese-sounding.

Michelle: Um… it hasn't gone completely I don't think. It goes when I'm in countries where the majority of people are Asian (chuckles). But… definitely in Australia… especially in Queensland or when I go back to my hometown, I feel it more keenly. But it's less of a I wish I was different, than a resentment. I think it's sort of an ongoing process like as I've gotten older I've definitely felt, more proud about being Asian. Even things like… I didn't used to put my middle name on like real estate forms cos it's a Chinese middle name and now, it's sort of something that I take pride in.

If, as I'm arguing, Asian is performative, then it is a creative and highly social identity. It is one that recognises a communal racialised experience, of imposed ethnic categorisation, based in large part, on appearance. A performative Asian identity, strikes back at racism, by creating a community, or culture, or mode of interpersonal engagement, that excludes those who aren't Asian, because they haven't called themselves Asian, because they haven't been called Asian. It also means that those who are not often perceived as Asian, come to self-identify more circuitously. They then have to assert this identity, even to those with whom they share it.

I remember talking to a fellow PhD student, who identifies as Chicano. He asked, when I told him about participants being chosen because they self-identified as Asian, if I had ever encountered someone who self-identified as Asian, but who I had assumed was not until they told me. I recounted an interview with an Australian organisation focused on business relations with Asia. The relevant exchange is excerpted below.

Me: Do you ever encounter, or are people ever taken aback […] you have I guess… professional expertise regarding Asia, you work in this organisation, are people ever expecting… an Asian face?

Participant: Yeah, I guess, maybe at face value it looks slightly awkward, but… people running [the organisation] don't look Asian. I mean I have Chinese heritage in my family, not that it's so obvious.

I had assumed my blonde haired and blue eyed interviewee had no Asian heritage. Which was definitely not "best practice", I told him. He smiled, offering commiseration along the lines of "we've all done it."

I also remember feeling uncomfortable asking one participant, who describes herself as Māori Chinese European, the same question I had asked many others during interviews:
"Do you call yourself Asian?"
"I am Asian."

> Me: When you were growing up maybe, or, at any stage did you encounter something with Asian or Chinese in the title and think "oh, that might be for me" […]?
>
> Participant: No… But when I was growing up, it was still… like we used to do family things together. We used to go and play badminton out in Otahuhu, at the courts there and so my parents belonged to a club that was… all Chinese. And so we just all played badminton together. And since then I've never really consciously gone out and looked for anything specific, as an ethnic group, whether it be Māori or Chinese. But since being here… the Auckland Association of the New Zealand Chinese Association, I've had a few dealings, personally, not on the work side, but personally with them and then I've got a couple of key people from, well people that are interested in genealogy, that I keep in contact with as well that came through here.
>
> But prior to that I don't think… no, even when, Helen Clark did the redress to the Chinese and made the apology, I know my Dad went to the meeting, because my grandfather paid poll tax. He was one of the, aliens as they called them, came in and paid the poll tax and my dad's got his papers, and you know, where he signed it, it's just got an "x". Can you believe that? With an "x". Really interesting. So dad went to that, dad went to quite a few meetings actually when they were talking about what they were gonna do with all this money and everything. But no, I didn't… I didn't… it wasn't top of mind for me

then. But… it's like everything, it's a journey and you know when the time's right for you, I think.

This participant may have become Asian later in life; I started to become Asian after 1996. Obviously there are many ways in which those who become Asian, become Asian. In *Dragons on the long white cloud* and *Aliens at my table*, Manying Ip quotes a friend who says they "became Asian" when they came to New Zealand (1996, 2005). I thought "Becoming Asian" would be a common title, of which I would find a thousand iterations. Instead, I found only a couple, one being Andrzej Gwizdalski's blog post "Becoming Asian Australian". Gwizdalski's work has focussed on the visual construction of identity: "The term 'visual belonging' refers to the sense of belonging to a people that a person may experience, based on their appearance" (2014). He notes the perpetual foreignness of Australians of Asian phenotype, and the more immediate acceptance of non-Australian visitors of Caucasian phenotype. Asian people in the West cannot take their citizenship or their belonging for granted when appearance and country of birth or origin are often conflated (Tan 2008, 69); the "face is an inescapable reality that acts as a centering device for segregation and marginalization" (Ngan 2012, ix).

The purpose of this chapter has been to consider the expectations of Asian people, particularly visually. Consequently, it made sense to put discussion of being mixed race in this chapter too. Debates around passing question whether it is transgressive or conservative (Matthews 2007, 48). The transgressive view sees the mixed race person's successful passing as proving the wobbly foundations upon which discrete racial and ethnic categories are constructed. In this way, Bhabha's hybridity and its potential for subversion are affirmed. However, passing assumes that White is the norm unless visual markers indicate otherwise, suggesting an inherent conservatism through an aspiration to homogenisation (Matthews 2007, 48). "[F]ear and antipathy to miscegenation is smoothed over rather than effaced when the mixed race other is recoded as 'cosmo chic' familiar, knowable, manageable, banal" (Matthews in Edwards, Ganguly and Lo 2007, 2).

Being half or mixed Asian is not in and of itself a superior kind of cultural subjectivity. This should go without saying in biological terms, but in critiques of racial discourse,

there is a tendency to celebrate (Fozdar and Perkins 2014, 137), even "fetishise" being mixed race (and hybridity generally) as a "radically paradigmatic subject position" (Aly 2015, 31) in and of itself. This is something I avoid. One reason I, and others speak of being mixed race in analysis of race, ethnicity and panethnicity, is that it is one way of revealing the follies of ethnonormative designations of difference, including their impossibly discrete categories.

Another, is that the language used to designate mixed race members of racial minorities, reflect not just stagnant histories of colonial policies, but the continued attitudes towards what characterises a particular racial minority. Perhaps more than other racial minorities, Asian disadvantage and anti-Asian racism are the consequences of perceived non-belonging of Asian people. In this way, the fractionalising of Asianness, the diluting of Asian phenotypic markers, are seen to franctionalise and dilute disadvantage. Given that this disadvantage can for some provide the catalyst for Asian panethnic identification, it can also provide reason to exclude mixed race people from the panethnic project.

Conclusion

> You rarely see an Asian person in a bar… (waits for me to concur). Not too many, not too many. Usually, those are people came here long time ago and they have been studying in university and then the classmates go together to have a few drinks; it's fine. But actually you seldom see a lot of Asians in a pub.

> I remember ten years ago, I and my wife, I think my wife's birthday, I say "oh we can try to go to a pub" (chuckles). Once we walk into the pub – we're near our house – everyone staring, just like that (demonstrates people staring in open-mouthed astonishment). So then, "oh we don't bother", we go away (laughs).

This anecdote was told to me by John Wong, Director of Asian Family Services, a branch of the Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand. He had spent the earlier part of the interview telling me how the dedicated Asian branch came to be. During a brief and horrific period of time in Auckland, spanning only a few months,[140] three Asian New Zealand men, all of whom were in desperate gambling debt, killed their families. Two of the men then attempted, but did not succeed, to kill themselves. The three men, all of whom were sentenced in 2000, were given life terms in prison. Following the deaths of Jian Huang, Khamphet Vong Phak Dy, Angela Han and her children, Christina and Nicholas, there was greater urgency in setting up institutions and networks to reach vulnerable communities.

This is the work of some of the people I interviewed – finding and speaking to people for whom language barriers, cultural isolation, and lack of infrastructure and resources, preclude access to needed services and support, let alone participation in someone's university research project. In comparison, my work has been to consider the cultural imaginary that cannot account for the reality of a middle-aged Chinese New Zealand man taking his wife to the local pub on her birthday. Mine is the lesser task, but it is not completely unrelated.

---

[140] From August 1999 to February 2000.

Through the kind of ethnographic collage attempted in this thesis, my goal was not to insist on the rhizomic, un-pin-down-able nature of lived experience. Instead, it was to show the many different scenarios, across settings, in which a Western cultural discourse does not see Asian people as welcome, or quite "belonging", "here". There is not enough room in the social imagination to recognise, or anticipate the different circumstances of Asian people and Asian peoples. There remains a persistent "boundary between Orient and Occident—a boundary which hides the diversity that exists among all those labelled Orientals and, at a different level, obscures our common humanity" (Lindstrom 1995, 35).

Though born of a limited imaginary, Asian panethnicity is not just the creation of institutions or associations with Asian in the title, or quantitatively measured changes in civic participation and social organisation. Though these elements form the focus of many existing studies on panethnicity, this thesis was dedicated to the subjective, to the intersubjective, lived experience of panethnicity. "[A]spects of selfhood formerly seen as natural or derived from group membership can be seen as produced through creativity" (Boellstorff 2008: 238). "Asian" is creatively and collaboratively performed in relation to imposed ideas of what "Asian" is.

"Asian" is something people "do". It is something people do together, and it is something I did with my participants. In the first chapter of this thesis I described my process of trying-to-make-friends as ethnographic method. It feels somewhat presumptuous to call participants friends, at least before this thesis is finished, finally submitted and formally complete. I do not think that my research project has been the only thing sustaining these relationships with participants, but it is certainly one major thing that does. (Shared Asianness alone cannot take up the rest of that weight.) At this stage and at least, I do not think I have not let anybody down, and I hope that I have contributed even something very small, to the collaborative project of Asian panethnicity, in which my participants and I are engaged in one form or another.

This is the first anthropological and ethnographic study of Asian panethnicity across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. By choosing these two countries, which have

some similarities in their post-settler historical narratives, I followed two different research pathways. One pathway was to consider a global discourse or social imaginary (Appadurai 1996) which discursively locates Asians in particular positions within the West. This global signifying system is shaped, and can therefore also be changed, through transnational distribution of various media, technology, people and ideas. However, as Aihwa Ong reminds us: "When an approach to cultural globalization seeks merely to sketch out universalizing trends rather than deal with actually existing structures of power and situated cultural processes, the analysis cries out for a sense of political economy and situated ethnography" (Ong 1999, 11). The other research pathway, has been to conduct ethnographic fieldwork to examine how ideas and practices of Asians and Asianness may be differently, or similarly, formulated and experienced, in Australia and in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Asian people, including those who live in the West, have long been the objects of Western research, and the objects of a Western imagination. This thesis presents an Asian subjectivity, not to generalise what it is to be Asian, but so as not to objectify it. Ethnography, and autoethnography, as methods of research, are suited to this task. By presenting fieldwork encounters as discussions and dialogues I had with other Asian people, I have attempted to mitigate an othering of Asian people that has occurred and continues to occur. I have also tried to contribute to a more expansive contemporary anthropology through this methodology.

> As more of us anthropologists from the borderlands go "home" to study our own communities, we will probably see increasing elisions of boundaries between ethnography and minority discourse, in which writing ethnography becomes another way of writing our own identities and communities. And writing that identity in the context of writing one's scholarly work creates a narrative space in the dominant discourse, a space that could refigure the disciplines as home for us (Kondo 1997, 205).

Throughout the thesis I have argued that the field operates under an ethnonormative discourse, one that places Whiteness at the top of a racial hierarchy and attempts to fix the positions of non-Whites through various regulatory regimes, including stereotypes. These regimes and stereotypes may travel globally, however, there are

still localised forces and specific structures that affect the constitution of panethnic identity. Asian panethnicity exists in time and place and can be an expression of an "emplaced belonging" that is nevertheless affected by the "scapes" (Appadurai 1996) and forces, both benevolent and malevolent, of transnational modernity. Though not passive sufferers of social forces, individuals are subject to them, and though we make our identities "we do not make them under circumstances of our own choosing" (Omi and Winant 2012, 963).

Panethnicity is affected by immigrant populations' relationships, legally and discursively, to indigenous peoples and to other minority groups. It is affected by historical grievances and resentments amongst ethno-national subgroups within a panethnic category, and the extent to which these linger. Whether one Asian ethno-national category dominates the conception of Asianness, both in public consciousness and in actual demographic terms, contributes to the different manners in which "Asian" is strategically deployed as a term of self-identification. Where Asianness has been imposed as a marker of difference from Whiteness, Asianness can be claimed to wilfully mark oneself as distinct from Whiteness in allegiance with other minority groups. Although ethnonormative discourse compels a performance of Asianness that can make one "less Asian" if they don't comply, from a panethnic Asian perspective, a person can be "less Asian" if they are unaware of their position within that discourse. Although to be Asian is to be a politicised subject, it is not just made up of intentional acts of subversion, but also, of "play".

There are many instances of the tension inherent in "doing" Asian: joking, eating, dating within and outside your race, consuming and creating art and other forms of media, and seeking authenticity and coolness by accessing or reclaiming aspects of Asian culture that have been commodified for White consumption as a means to cosmopolitan capital. This thesis has also considered mixed race Asianness, not to celebrate mixed race-ness in and of itself, or to promote cosmopolitan outlooks as a response to globalisation (Fozdar and Perkins 2014, 137). Instead, the fact of multiraciality undermines an ethnonormativity that does not account for it, despite its prevalence. It also provides an almost literal articulation of perceived shared non-belonging as an important characteristic of Asian panethnicity.

When writing about art, I have focussed on its consumption and creation, because that is what ethnography equips me to do. I have conducted some textual analysis when doing so illuminates something about a global imaginary, but my project has been to take an anthropological approach. I acknowledge the role of sociopolitical and policy contexts in the formation of panethnicity, but laying them out via an in-depth chronology was never the intention. Instead, I have depicted the varied ways in which panethnic identity presents itself and some of the scenarios in which these presentations occur.

Though the middle class tendencies of panethnic actors have been identified (Espiritu 1992; Stevens 2018) and are further demonstrated by this research, a more in-depth approach to the class and socioeconomic conditions that prevent or facilitate panethnic affiliation would be a fruitful topic of future research. I also think a closer look at the generational divides within "Asian" would be worthwhile.

This thesis has been about Asianness in a Western context. It has drawn upon Western concepts, and these are the concepts with which I and my participants, Asian Westerners, have largely been working. It has very intentionally not been about the various different ethno-national categories within the broader panethnic label of Asian. But, of course, there is a lot of discursive and performative activity, amongst people of different Asian ethnic and national backgrounds (both in and outside the West) engaging with their specific cultural traditions for meaning and value, as a way to reject elements of Western culture to which they do not wish to submit.

What this thesis has done, is combine sociological and anthropological approaches to theories of human boundary making, with performance and performative understandings of subjectivity and identity formation. It has acknowledged Asian area studies understandings of meaning-making via texts and cultural politics, but favoured an anthropological approach to human interaction with texts, and with others. I think pooling these scholarly resources has been fruitful, and an interdisciplinary approach has enriched this thesis beyond what it would have otherwise been. Further research into the intersection of ethnicity, race and identity politics would benefit from this interdisciplinary approach.

By asking if, why and how panethnicity is experienced by the individual, "Asian" is revealed to be performative. It is creative and it is "done". This understanding provides ways to critique and better understand the insidiousness of White hegemony and xenophobia as aspects of multicultural discourse, and what this discourse imposes on members of ethnic and racial minorities. However, performative panethnicity also allows and accounts for the inventiveness, and the agency of the Asian actor in responding to that imposition.

Ethnonormativity and racialisation build "Asianness" in opposition to ideas of "Westernness". it coerces the Asian person to act in accordance with those ideas. However, Asian panethnicity also affords an agency in this process. It is characterised by a tension of competing impulses: recognising the discourse to which the Asian person is subject, and then refusing it, but also repurposing its signifiers. This is not just an act of intentional political resistance. Testing these boundaries, stretching the social skin, can be an act of pleasure and enjoyment. This enjoyment can in itself be a form of resistance. Asian panethnicity, prompted by racialised and culturalist exclusion is inescapably political in nature. But it is driven day to day, by individuals trying to belong together. Ethnicity and panethnicity are not possessed, nor made, but describe the activity of identity making as a way of seeking belonging.

Bibliography

Abu-Lughood, Lila. "Writing Against Culture." In *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, edited by Richard G. Fox, 137-54. Santa Fe, USA: American Research Press, 1991.

Adams, Tony E, and Stacy Holman Jones. "Telling Stories: Reflexivity, Queer Theory, and Autoethnography." *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 11, no. 2 (2011): 108-16.

Aly, Ramy M. K. *Becoming Arab in London: Performativity and the Undoing of Identity.* London: Pluto Press, 2015.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso, 1983.

Ang, Ien. *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West.* New York: Routledge, 2002.

Ang, Ien. "On Not Speaking Chinese: Postmodern Ethnicity and the Politics of Diaspora". In *Feminism and Cultural Studies*, edited by Morag Shiach. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. "Cultural Diversity in Australia 2016 Census Data Summary." *Australian Bureau of Statistics website* June 28, 2017. http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Cultural%20Diversity%20Data%20Summary~30, accessed 01.11.2018.

Ayres, Tony. "China Doll-The Experience of Being a Gay Chinese Australian." *Journal of Homosexuality* 36, nos. 3-4 (1999)" 87-97.

Ayres, Tony. "Sexual identity and cultural identity: A crash course." *Journal of Australian Studies* 24 no. 65 (2000): 159-163.

Banks, Marcus. *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions*, London; New York: Routledge, 1996.

Banton, Michael. *Racial and ethnic competition.* Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Banton, Michael. *Racial Theories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Barber, Tamsin. *Oriental identities in super-diverse Britain: Young Vietnamese in London*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Barth, Frederick. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1969.

Barth, Frederick, ed. "Introduction." In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, edited by Frederick Barth, 9-38. London: Allen & Unwin, 1969.

Bell, Vikki. "Performativity and Belonging: An Introduction." *Theory, Culture & Society* 16, no. 2 (1999): 1-10.

Benson, S. Jeanie & Khairiah A. Rahman. "Pan-Asian Identity in a Globalizing World." *The International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities & Nations* 7, no. 5 (2007), 205.

Bentley, G. Carter. "Ethnicity and Practice." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29, no. 1 (1987): 24-55.

Bertone, Santina, Clare Keating and Jenny Mullaly. *the Taxidriver, the Cook and the Greengrocer: The representation of non-English speaking background people in*

theatre, film and television. A Research Report commissioned by the Australia Council and prepared by Workplace Studies Centre in association with Effective Change and Communications Law Centre, Victoria University of Technology, 2000.

Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. New York & London: Routledge, 1994.

Björklund, Ulf. "Ethnicity and the Welfare State." *International Social Science Journal* 39, no. 1 (1987), 19-30.

Boellstorff, Tom. *Coming of age in Second Life: an anthropologist explores the virtually human*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Bonds, A., & Inwood, J. "Beyond white privilege: Geographies of white supremacy and settler colonialism." *Progress in Human Geography* 40, no. 6 (2016): 715-733.

Bonilla, Yarimar and Jonathan Rosa. "# Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States." *American Ethnologist* 42, no. 1 (2015): 4-17.

Bönisch-Brednich, Brigitte. "What to Do with Stories?" *Fabula* 57, nos. 3-4 (2016): 195.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, Massachuetts: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *On Television.* Translated by Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson. New York: New Press, 1998.

Boylorn, Robin. "Gray or for Colored Girls Who Are Tired of Chasing Rainbows: Race and Reflexivity." *Cultural Studies - Critical Methodologies* 11, no. 2 (2011): 178-86.

Bozorgmehr, Mehdi, Paul Ong, and Sarah Tosh. "Panethnicity Revisited: Contested Group Boundaries in the Post-9/11 Era." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39, no. 5 (2015): 1-19.

Brickell, Chris. "Masculinities, Performativity, and Subversion: A Sociological Reappraisal." *Men and Masculinities* 8, no. 1 (2005): 24-43.

Brubaker, Rogers, Mara Loveman, and Peter Stamatov. "Ethnicity as Cognition." *Theory and Society* 33, no. 1 (2004): 31-64.

Butcher, Andrew. "'Well, They're Very Good Citizens': New Zealanders' Perceptions of Asians in New Zealand." *Sites* 5, no. 2 (2008): 5-30.

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519-519.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Butz, David, and Besio, Kathryn. "Autoethnography". *Geography Compass* 3, no. 5 (2009): 1660-1674.

Canham, Hugo, and Rejane Williams. "Being black, middle class and the object of two gazes." *Ethnicities* 17, no. 1 (2017), 23-46.

Carrier, James G. "Introduction." In *Occidentalism Images of the West*, edited by James G. Carrier, 1-32. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Chan, Barry. "'Being Asian American Is a Lot Different Here': Influences of Geography on Racial Identity." *Journal of College Student Development* 58, no. 7 (2017): 1001-017.

Chew, Erin. "Distasteful Meme Created To Mock The Actors Of CRAZY RICH ASIANS". *You Offend Me You Offend My Family*. 1 June, 2017.

https://www.yomyomf.com/distasteful-meme-created-to-mock-the-actors-of-crazy-rich-asians/, accessed 10.06.2017.

Chun, Elaine W. "Ideologies of Legitimate Mockery: Margaret Cho's Revoicings of Mock Asian." In *Beyond Yellow English: Toward a Linguistic Anthropology of Asian Pacific America,* edited by Angela Reyes and Adrienne Lo, Chapter 16. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Clammer, John. "Performing ethnicity: performance, gender, body and belief in the construction and signalling of identity." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 13 (2015): 2159-2166.

Cohen, Abner. "Introduction: The Lesson of Ethnicity. In *Urban Ethnicity*, edited by Abner Cohen, ix-xxiv. London: Tavistock Publications, 1974.

Collins, James Fuji. "Research Report: Biracial Japanese American Identity: An Evolving Process." *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 6, no. 2 (2000): 115.

Condé Nast. "PSA: This Is How You Should Be Eating Pho." *Bon Appétit,* September 7, 2016. https://www.bonappetit.com/story/how-you-should-eating-pho, accessed 29.12.2018 at https://www.facebook.com/a11in/videos/10155292990304897/.

Constable, Nicole. *Romance on a Global State: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography and "Mail Order" Marriages.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Darity, William A. Jr. "END OF RACE?." *Transforming Anthropology* 10, no. 1 (2001): 39-43.

Da Silva, Emanuel. "Humor (re)positioning Ethnolinguistic Ideologies: 'You Tink Is Funny?'." *Language in Society* 44, no. 2 (2015): 187-212.

Davis, Michaela Angela. "Resistance." In *Black cool: one thousand streams of Blackness*, edited by Rebecca Walker, 59-70. Berkeley, CA: Soft Skull Press, 2012.

Dixson, Miriam. "Introduction." In *The imaginary Australian: Anglo-Celts and identity, 1788 to the present*, by Miriam Dixson, 1-15. Sydney, NSW: University of New South Wales Press Ltd, 1999.

Dixson, Miriam. "Australian Identity Interrogated." In *The imaginary Australian: Anglo-Celts and identity, 1788 to the present*, by Miriam Dixson, 74-97. Sydney, NSW: University of New South Wales Press Ltd, 1999.

Doar, Hollie Alexandria. "Appropriating Stereotypes of Kin, Romance, and Gender An Ethnographic Study of Filipina Migrants Married to or in De-Facto Relationships with New Zealand Men." MA diss., Victoria University of Wellington, 2011.

Doja, A. "From the native point of view: An insider/outsider perspective on folkloric archaism and modern anthropology in Albania." *History of the Human Sciences* 28, no. 4 (2015): 44-75.

Dubois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk.* New York: Dover Publications, [1903] 1994.

Dwyer, S., & Buckle, J. "The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8, no. 1 (2009): 54-63.

Edwards, Penny., Debjani Ganguly and Jacqueline Lo. "Pigments of the Imagination: Theorising, Performing and Historicising Mixed Race." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 28 (2007): 1.

Ellis, Carolyn, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner. "Autoethnography: An Overview." *Historical Social Research-Historische Sozialforschung* 36, no. 4 (138) (2011): 273-90.

Eng, David L. *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America. "*Perverse Modernities." Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.

Eriksen, Thomas H. "Ethnicity." *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization* no. 2 (2012): 551-58.

Espiritu, Yen Le. *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992.

Espiritu, Yen Le. "Race and U.S. Panethnic Formation." In *The Oxford Handbook of American Immigration and Ethnicity*, edited by Ronald H. Bayor, Chapter 13. Oxford University Press, 2016.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks.* Translated by Charles Lam Markmann. London: Paladin, 1970.

Feagin, Joe R. *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing*, 2nd ed. Routledge, 2013.

Feagin, Joe R. and Sean Elias. "Rethinking racial formation theory: a systemic racism critique." Ethnic and Racial Studies 36 no. 6 (2013) 931-960.

Flinn, Juliana. "Reflections of a shy ethnographer: foot-in-the-mouth is not fatal." In *Stumbling Toward Truth: anthropologists at work*, edited by Philip R. DeVita, 57-64. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc, 2000.

Fozdar, Farida and Maureen Perkins. PERKINS. "Antipodean Mixed Race: Australia and New Zealand." In *Global Mixed Race*, edited by King-O'Riain Rebecca C., Small Stephen, Mahtani Minelle, Song Miri, and Spickard Paul, 119-43. NYU Press, 2014.

Fung, David and Andrew Fung (The Fung Bros). "HOW TO GET YOUR ASIAN CARD! (Test Yourself!)." *Youtube*, 14 April 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e995c3uNelA, accessed 12.06.2016.

Garroutte, Eva Marie. *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Geertz, Clifford. "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States". In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, edited by Clifford Geertz, 255-310. New York: Basic, 1973.

Georgiou, M. "Crossing the Boundaries of the Ethnic Home: Media Consumption and Ethnic Identity Construction in the Public Space: The Case of the Cypriot Community Centre in North London." *International Communication Gazette* 63, no. 4 (2001): 311.

Goffman, Erving. *The presentation of self in everyday life.* Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959.

Golash-Boza, Tanya. "Does racial formation theory lack the conceptual tools to understand racism?." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 6 (2013): 994-999.

Gordon, Deborah. "The Politics of Ethnographic Authority: Race and Writing in the Ethnography of Margaret Mead and Zora Neale Hurston." In *Modernist Anthropology: From Fieldwork to Text Book*, edited by Marc Manganaro, 146-162. Princeton University Press, 1990.

Gwizdalski, Andrzej. 2014. blog post "Becoming Asian Australian." Asian Studies Association of Australia, December 3, 2014. http://asaa.asn.au/becoming-asian-in-australia/, accessed 10.10.2017.

Hage, Ghassan. "Hansonism and the discourse of white decline." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 1, no. 1 (2000): 85-96.

Hage, Ghassan. "The Politics of Australian Fundamentalism: Reflections on the Rule of Ayatollah Johnny." *Arena Magazine* (Fitzroy, Vic), no. 51 (2001): 27-31.

Hage, Ghassan. *Against paranoid nationalism: searching for hope in a shrinking society.* Annandale, NSW: Pluto Press Australia, 2003.

Hage, Ghassan. "A not so multi- sited ethnography of a not so imagined community." *Anthropological theory* 5, no. 4 (2005): 463-475.

Hage, Ghassan. "Continuity and Change in Australian Racism." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 35, no. 3 (2014): 232-237.

Hall, Stuart. "Introduction: Who Needs Identity." In *Questions of Cultural Identity* edited by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay. Chapter 1. London; Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1996.

Hall, Stuart. "The Spectacle of the 'Other'". In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall. 223-290. London; Thousand Oaks, California: Sage in Association with the Open University, 1997.

Hanson, Pauline. "Pauline Hanson's 1996 maiden speech to parliament: Full transcript." *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 15 September 2016. https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/pauline-hansons-1996-maiden-speech-to-parliament-full-transcript-20160915-grgjv3.html, accessed 01.11.2018.

Harrison, Faye V. "Introduction: Expanding the Discourse on 'Race'." *American Anthropologist* 100, no. 3 (1999): 609-631.

Haynes, Elizabeth M. *Game Balance: Designed structure and consumer agency in an online game: a thesis submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Cultural Anthropology.* MA diss., Victoria University of Wellington: School of Social and Cultural Studies, 2011.

Higgins, Rawinia. "Ki wīwī, ki wāwā—Normalising the Māori language." Public Lecture, Te Kawa a Māui – School of Māori Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, NZ, July 7, 2015.

Hlophe, Stephen. "The Significance of Barth and Geertz' Model of Ethnicity in the Analysis of Nationalism in Liberia." *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue Canadienne Des études Africaines* 7, no. 2 (1973): 237-56.

Hoben, and Hefner. "The Integrative Revolution Revisited." *World Development* 19, no. 1 (1991): 17-30.

hooks, bell. *We real cool Black men and masculinity*. ProQuest. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Hübinette, Tobias, and Lennart E.H. Räterlinck. "Race Performativity and Melancholic Whiteness in Contemporary Sweden." *Social Identities* 20, no. 6 (2015): 1-14.

Hutchinson, J. and Anthony D. Smith. *Ethnicity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Hwang, David Henry. *Yellow face*. ProQuest. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2009.

Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (Commonwealth).

Ip, Manying. "Dragons on the long white cloud: the making of Chinese New Zealanders." North Shore City, N.Z.: Tandem Press, 1996.

Ip, Manying. "Māori-Chinese Encounters: Indigine–Immigrant Interaction In New Zealand." *Asian Studies Review* 27, no. 2 (2003): 227-252.

Ip, Manying. *Aliens at my table: Asians as New Zealanders see them = tong zhuo yi ke: Niu xi lan ren kan ya yi*. Auckland, N.Z.: Penguin Books, 2005.

Ip, Manying. "Chinese Perceptions of Māori." In *The Dragon and The Taniwha: Māori and Chinese in New Zealand* edited by Manying Ip. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2009.

Itzigsohn, Jose, and Carlos Dore-Cabral. "Competing Identities? Race, Ethnicity and Panethnicity Among Dominicans in the United States." *Sociological Forum* 15, no. 2 (2009): 225-47.

Jenkins, Richard. "Time to move beyond boundary making?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37 no. 5 (2014): 809-813.

Johnson, E. Patrick. "Race, Ethnicity, and Performance a Special Issue of Text and Performance Quarterly." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (2003): 1.

Jones-Correa M. and D. L. Leal DL. "Becoming 'Hispanic'': Secondary panethnic identification among Latin American-origin populations in the United States." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 18, (1996): 214–254.

Karas, Jay, dir. *Ali Wong: Baby Cobra*. Netflix, 2016. https://www.netflix.com/nz/title/80101493

Kemnitzer, L.S. "Memoirs of a shy ethnographer", *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 3, no. 2 (1972): 134-142

Khoo, Olivia. "Telling Stories: The Sacrificial Asian in Australian Cinema." In *Location Asian Australian Cultures*, edited by Tseen Khoo, 45-63. London; New York: Routledge, 2008.

Khoo, Tseen. "Introduction: Locating Asian Australian Cultures." In *Location Asian Australian Cultures*, edited by Tseen Khoo, 1-9. London; New York: Routledge, 2008.

Kim, Ann H., and Michael J. White. "Panethnicity, Ethnic Diversity, and Residential Segregation 1." *American Journal of Sociology* 115, no. 5 (2010): 1558-596.

Koehler, Angelika. "Performing Butterfly: Medial Constructions of Ethnic Identity." In *Performing Ethnicity, Performing Gender: Transcultural Perspectives*, edited by Monika Mueller and Bettina Hofmann, 161-177. London; New York: Routledge, 2017.

Kondo, Dorinne. K. 1997. *About face: performing race in fashion and theater*. New York:

Routledge.

Kozinets, Robert V. *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*. Los Angeles, California; London: SAGE, 2010.

Kwok, Jen Tsen. and Tseen Khoo. "Asian Australian Mobilities—Cultural, Social, and Political", *Journal of Australian Studies*, 41 no. 3 (2017): 277-286.

Law, Benjamin and Michelle Law. *Shit Asian Mothers Say*. Collingwood, VIC: Nero, 2014.

Law, Benjamin. "Michelle Malkin: Awful yet strangely hypnotic." *Peril, Edition 8 – Why are people so unkind?*, November 27, 2009. http://peril.com.au/back-editions/edition08/michelle-malkin-awful-yet-strangely-hypnotic/, accessed 29.12.2018.

Leckie, Jacqueline., Voci, Paola. *Localizing Asia in Aotearoa*. Auckland, N.Z.: Dunmore Pub, 2011

Lee, Robert G. "Imagined Communities: Asian America in the 1990s." *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 3, no. 2 (1994): 181-191.

Lindstrom, Lamont. "Cargoism and Occidentalism." In *Occidentalism Images of the West*, edited by James G. Carrier, 33-60. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Lo, Jacqueline. "Disciplining Asian Australian Studies: Projections and Introjections." In *Location Asian Australian Cultures*, edited by Tseen Khoo, 11-27. London; New York: Routledge, 2008.

Lopez, David and Yen Le Espiritu. "Panethnicity in the United States: A theoretical framework." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 13 (1990):198–224.

MacDonald, David B. "Canada's history wars and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: indigenous genocide and public memory in the United States, Australia, and Canada." Seminar, Political Science and International Relations Programme, Victoria University of Wellington, NZ, July 29 2015.

Marcus, George E. "The legacies of Writing Culture and the near future of the ethnographic form: A sketch". *Antipoda,* 16 (2013): 59-80.

Marcus, George E. and James Clifford. "The Making of Ethnographic Texts: A Preliminary Report". *Current Anthropology* 26, no. 2 (1985): 267-271.

Matthews, Julie. "Eurasian Persuasions: Mixed Race, Performativity and Cosmopolitanism." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 28, no. 1 (2007): 41-54.

McFarlane, Tracy. "Experiencing Difference, Seeking Community: Racial, Panethnic, and National Identities Among Female Caribbean-Born U.S. College Students." *American Review of Political Economy* 8, no. 2 (December 2010): 87-114.

McGavin, Kirsten. "Being 'Nesian': Pacific Islander Identity in Australia." *Contemporary Pacific* 26, no. 1 (2014): 126-54.

Migration Act 1958 (Commonwealth).

Min, Tae Eun. 2014. "The Impact of Panethnicity on Asian American and Latino Political Participation." *Ethnicities* 14, no. 5 (2014): 698-721.

Miyao, Daisuke. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Moghaddam, Fathali M. *Multiculturalism and Intergroup Relations Psychological Implications for Democracy in Global Context*. Washington: American Psychological Association, 2008.

Mok, Tze Ming. "Race You There." *Landfall* 208 (November 2004), accessed in The Big Idea (28 Jan 2005) https://www.thebigidea.nz/node/170488.

Morris, Robyn. "'Growing up an Australian': Renegotiating Mateship, Masculinity and 'Australianness' in Hsu-Ming Teo's *Behind the Moon*." In *Location Asian Australian Cultures*, edited by Tseen Khoo, 151-166*.* London; New York: Routledge, 2008.

Mueller, Monika and Bettina Hofmann. "Introduction: Performing Ethnicity, Performing Gender: Transcultural Perspectives." In *Performing Ethnicity, Performing Gender: Transcultural Perspectives*, edited by Monika Mueller and Bettina Hofmann. 1-19. London; New York: Routledge, 2017.

Munasinghe, Viranjini. "Nationalism in hybrid spaces: the production of impurity out of purity." *American Ethnologist* 29, no. 3 (2002): 663-692.

Muñoz, José Esteban. "Wise Latinas." *Criticism* 56, no. 2 (2014): 249-65.

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of* Politics. University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Naaeke, Anthony, Anastacia Kurylo, Michael Grabowski, David Linton and Marie L. Radford. "Insider and Outsider Perspective in Ethnographic Research." Proceedings of the New York State Communication Association: (2010): Article 9. Available at: http://docs.rwu.edu/nyscaproceedings/vol2010/iss1/9

Nachowitz, Todd. "Earliest Indian presence and settlement in Aotearoa: Minority invisibility and implications for the multicultural discourse" Seminar, The History Programme and the New Zealand India Research Institute, Victoria University of Wellington, NZ, July 31, 2015.

Nagel, Joanne. "Constructing ethnicity: Creating and recreating ethnic identity and culture." *Social Problems* 41 (1994):152–176.

Nagel, Joanne. *American Indian Ethnic Renewal.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996*.*

Nakhid, Camille and Heather Devere. "Negotiating multiculturalism and the Treaty of

Waitangi." In *Asians and the new multiculturalism in Aotearoa New Zealand*, edited by Gautam Ghosh and Jacqueline Leckie. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2015.

Narayan, Kirin. "How Native Is a "Native" Anthropologist?" *American Anthropologist* 95, no. 3 (1993), 671-686.

Nederveen Pieterse, Jan. *Ethnicities and global multiculture: pants for an octopus.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007.

Ng, Celeste. The Cut "When Asian Women are Harassed for Marrying Non-Asian Men." *The Cut,* 12 October 2018. https://www.thecut.com/2018/10/when-asian-women-are-harassed-for-marrying-non-asian-men.html, accessed 29.12.2018.

Ng, Emma K. *Old Asian, New Asian.* Wellington, NZ: Bridget Williams Books, 2017.

Ngan, Lucille Lok-Sun and Chan Kwok-Bun. "Two Prologues." In *The Chinese Face in Australia: Multi-Generational Ethnicity among Australian-born Chinese* edited by Lucille Lok-Sun Ngan and Chan Kwok-Bun. v-xiv. New York: Springer, 2012.

Niezen, Ronald. *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2003.

Moulin, Carolina. "Ungrateful subjects? Refugee protests and the logic of gratitude." In *Citizenship, Migrant Activism and the Politics of Movement*, edited by Peter Nyers and Kim Rygiel. 54-72. Routledge Research on the Global Politics of Migration. London; New York: Routledge, 2012.

Okamoto, Dina G. "Toward a Theory of Panethnicity: Explaining Asian American Collective Action." *American Sociological Review* 68 no. 6 (2003): 811-42.

Okamoto, Dina. and Mora, Christina. G. Mora. "Panethnicity." *Annual review of sociology* 40 (2014): 219-239.

Okamoto, Dina G. *Redefining Race: Asian American Panethnicity and Shifting Ethnic Boundaries*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2014.

Okamura, Jonathan Y. "Situational ethnicity." Ethnic and Racial Studies 4, no. 4 (1981): 452-465.

Okizaki, Carrie Lynn H. "'What are you?' Hapa-Girl and Multiracial Identity." *University of Colorado Law Review* 71, (2000): 463

Oliver, Pam. "Who Is One of Us? (Re)discovering the Inside-out of Australia's Japanese Immigrant Communities, 1901-1957." *Japanese Studies* 22, no. 3 (2002): 273-88.

Olzak, Susan. "Contemporary Ethnic Mobilization." *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983)**:** 355-374.

Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s,* 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Omi, Michael. "Asian-Americans: the Unbearable Whiteness of Being?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 55, no. 5 (2008): B56.

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. "Resistance is futile?: A response to Feagin and Elias." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 6 (2012): 1-13.

Ong, Aihwa. "'A Better Tomorrow'? The Struggle for Global Visibility." In *Flexible citizenship: the cultural logics of transnationality*, 158-181. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999.

Ong, Aihwa. "Introduction." In *Flexible citizenship: the cultural logics of transnationality*, 1-26. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999.

Orton, Marie. "Writing the Nation: Migration Literature and National Identity." *Italian Culture* 30, no. 1 (2012): 21-37.

Pacific Island Labourers Act 1902 (Commonwealth).

Padilla, Felix M. "On the Nature of Latino Ethnicity." *Social Science Quarterly* 65 no. 2 (1984): 651-664.

Padilla, Felix M. *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1985.

Pandian, Anand and Stuart McLean. *Crumpled Paper Boat: Experiments in Ethnographic Writing*, ProQuest, 2017.

Paolucci, Paul, and Margaret Richardson. 2006. "Dramaturgy, Humor, and Criticism: How Goffman Reveals Seinfeld's Critique of American Culture." *Humor – International Journal of Humor Research* 19(1): 27-52.

Park, Jerry Z. "Second-Generation Asian American Pan-Ethnic Identity: Pluralized Meanings of a Racial Label." *Sociological Perspectives* 51, no. 3 (August 2008): 541-561.

Povinelli, Elizabeth. *The cunning of recognition: Indigenous alterities and the making of Australian multiculturalism.* Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2002.

Probyn, Elspeth. *Outside belongings.* New York: Routledge, 1996.

R v Carter; Ex parte Kisch (1934) 52 CLR 221.

R v Wilson; Ex parte Kisch (1934) 52 CLR 234.

Rasmussen, Lilibeth Cuenca. "Absolute Exotic." lilibethcuenca.com, 2005. *http://www.lilibethcuenca.com/Absolute-Exotic*, accessed 06.06.2018.

Reed-Danahay, Deborah E. *Auto/ethnography: Rewriting the self and the social.* (Expectations in anthropology). Oxford; New York: Berg, 1997.

Research and Publishing Group of the New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage. "Race killing in Wellington's Haining St 24 September 1905." New Zealand History Nga koreo a ipurangi o Aotearoa, September 28, 2018. https://nzhistory.govt.nz/race-killing-lionel-terry-murders-joe-kum-yung-in-haining-st-wellington, accessed 29.12.2018.

Ringmar, Erik. *A blogger's manifesto: free speech and censorship in the age of the Internet*. London; New York: Anthem Press, 2007.

Ríos-Rojas, Anna. "Beyond Delinquent Citizenships: Immigrant Youth's (Re)Visions of Citizenship and Belonging in a Globalized World." *Harvard Educational Review* 81, no. 1 (2011): 64-95.

Robertson, Jennifer E. *Takarazuka sexual politics and popular culture in modern Japan*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1998.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*, London: Penguin, 2003.

Schechner, Richard *Performance theory*. London: Routledge, 1988.

Schechner, Richard, Victor W. Turner. *Between Theater & Anthropology.* ProQuest. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.

Sengmany, Som. "Re-Configuring the Diasporic and Indigenous in the Art of Zhou Xiaoping." In *Location Asian Australian Cultures*, edited by Tseen Khoo, 29-44. London; New York: Routledge, 2008.

Shin, Jean. "The Asian American Closet." *Asian Law Journal* 11, no. 1 (2004).

"Shipwreck Find Ends Mystery over Early New Zealand-China Tragedy." *Xinhua News Agency*, November 18, 2014. http://go.galegroup.com.helicon.vuw.ac.nz/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA390598165&v=2.1&u=vuw&it=r&p=ITOF&sw=w, accessed 01.02.2019.

Sinnott, Megan. "Korean-Pop, Tom Gay Kings, Les Queens and the Capitalist Transformation of Sex/Gender Categories in Thailand." Asian Studies Review 36, no. 4 (2012): 453-474.

Smith, Anthony D. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations.* New York, USA: B. Blackwell, 1987.

Somerville, Kara. "Transnational Belonging among Second Generation Youth: Identity in a Globalized World." *Youth and Migration Journal of Social Sciences* 10 (2008): 23-33.

Spitulnik, Debra. "Anthropology and Mass Media." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 22 (1993): 293-315.

Spoonley, Paul. "New diversity, old anxieties in New Zealand: the complex identity politics and engagement of a settler society." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38 no. 4 (2015): 650-661.

Statistics New Zealand. 2013 Quick Stats about culture and identity. http://archive.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-culture-identity/asian.aspx, accessed 01.11.2018.

Stephenson, Peta. "Finding Common Ground: Indigenous and Asian Diasporic Cultural Production in Australia." *Hecate* 27 no. 2 (2001): 59-67.

Stephenson, Peta. "New cultural scripts: Exploring the dialogue between indigenous and 'Asian' Australians." *Journal of Australian Studies* 27, no. 77 (2003), 57-68.

Stephenson, Peta. *The outsiders within: Telling Australia's indigenous-Asian story.* Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007.

Stevens, Catriona. "A Spatial and Organisational Analysis of Asian Panethnic Association in Perth, Western Australia." *The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 38, no. 1/2 (2018): 41-57.

Stoler, Ann Laura. "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (post) Colonial Studies." *Journal of American History* 88, no. 3 (2001): 829–865.

Strathern, Marilyn. "Out of Context: The Persuasive Fictions of Anthropology. In *Modernist Anthropology: From Fieldwork to Text Book*, edited by Marc Manganaro, 80-132. Princeton University Press, 1990.

Sturm, C. "Race as Nation, Race as Blood Quantum: The Racial Politics of Cherokee Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century." In *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma*, 52-81. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2002.

Sullivan, Thomas. "I want to be all I can Irish': the role of performance and performativity in the construction of ethnicity." *Social & Cultural Geography* 13 no. 5 (2012): 429-443.

Sydney Morning Herald. "Hanson turns on 'diseased' Africans", 7 December 2006. https://www.smh.com.au/national/hanson-turns-on-diseased-africans-20061207-gdozq2.html, accessed 06.01.2019.

Tammelleo, Steve. "Continuity and change in Hispanic identity." *Ethnicities* 11 no. 4 (2011): 536-554.

Tan, Carole. "'The Tyranny of Appearance': Chinese Australian Identities and the Politics of Difference." In *Location Asian Australian Cultures*, edited by Tseen Khoo, 65-82*. London; New York: Routledge, 2008.

Tao, Kim. "Populate or Perish: From 'white Australia' to Multicultural Nation." Signals, no. 107 (2014): 30-35.

Tillmann, Lisa M. "Friendship as Method." In *Solidarity: Friendship, Family, and Activism Beyond Gay and Straight*, by Lisa M. Tillmann, 287-319. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Trundle, Catherine. *Americans in Tuscany: charity, compassion and belonging*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2014.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *Friction: An ethnography of global connection.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Turner, Victor. *From ritual to theatre: The human seriousness of play.* New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982.

Turner, Victor. *The Anthropology of Performance.* 1st ed. New York: PAJ Publications, 1986.

Van Maanen, John. *Tales of the Field On Writing Ethnography.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Walker, Rebecca. "Black cool." *Ebony* 67, no. 5 (2012): 116.

Wang, Joan. "Race, Gender, and Laundry Work: The Roles of Chinese Laundrymen and American Women in the United States, 1850-1950." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 24, no. 1 (2004): 58-99.

Ward, Colleen. "Acculturation, identity and adaptation in dual heritage adolescents." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 30 no. 2 (2006), 243-259.

Weaver, Simon. "The 'Other' Laughs Back: Humour and Resistance in Anti-racist Comedy." *Sociology* 44, no. 1 (2010): 31-48.

Wesch, Michael. "An Anthropological Introduction to YouTube." *YouTube*, July 26, 2008. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPAO-lZ4_hU, accessed 02.02.2016.

White, Anna-Marie. "The Maui Dynasty: Confronting multiculturalism in contemporary New Zealand art." In *The Maui Dynasty* edited by Atholl Anderson, Tony Ballantyne, Brian Moloughney and Anna-Marie White. 35-55. Nelson, N.Z.: Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi O Whakatū, 2008.

Wingfield, Adia Harvey. "Comment on Feagin and Elias." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 6 (2013): 1-5.

Wong, Alison. "Pure Brightness: Conversations with Ghosts." *Griffith REVIEW* no. 43 (2014): [164]-178].

Wu, Frank H. "Embracing mistaken identity: How the Vincent Chin case unified Asian Americans." *Harvard Journal of Asian American Policy Review* 19 (2010): 17.

Yancey, William L., Eugene P. Ericksen, and Richard N. Juliani. "Emergent Ethnicity: A Review and Reformulation." *American Sociological Review* 41 no. 3 (1976): 391-403.

Yang, William, and Jacqueline Lo. "Image and Performance." *About Performance* 8 (2008): 125-139.

Yoon, Paul Jong-Chul. "'She's Really Become Japanese Now!': Taiko Drumming and Asian American Identifications." American Music 19, no. 4 (2001): 417-38.

Young Kim, Janine. "Are Asians Black?: the Asian-American Civil Rights Agenda and the Contemporary Significance of the Black/White Paradigm." *Yale Law Journal* 108 (1998-1999): 2385.

Zarrilli, P., R. Schechner, J. Macaloon and V. Turner, V. "Toward a Definition of Performance Studies, Part I". *Theatre Journal* 38, no. 3 (1986): 372.

Zhang, Eric. "Memoirs of a gay! Sha: Race and gender performance on RuPaul's Drag Race." *Studies in Costume & Performance* 1, no. 1 (2016): 59.

Zhang, Muqing, M. "Performing Blackness Won't Fill Our Asian-American Culture Deficit [OP-ED]". *Colorlines*, August 22, 2018. https://www.colorlines.com/articles/performing-blackness-wont-fill-our-asian-american-culture-deficit-op-ed, accessed 09.01.2019.