ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: SITES OF BELONGING, SITES OF
                                  EMPOWERMENT: HOW ASIAN AMERICAN
                                  GIRLS CONSTRUCT "HOME" IN A
                                  BORDERLAND WORLD

                                  Tomoko Tokunaga, Doctor of Philosophy, 2012

Directed By: Professor Barbara Finkelstein
                                  Department of Teaching and Learning, and
                                  Policy and Leadership

This ethnographic study explores the ways in which nine first, 1.5, and second generation Asian American high school girls imagine, search for, and construct home-like sites. The study revealed that "home" for the girls was not only the place where the girls sleep, their families reside, or the country from where they came. Instead, "home," was multiple, literal, and imagined spaces, places, and communities where the girls felt a sense of belonging, empowerment, community, ownership, safety, and opportunity. In order to examine the behaviors, meaning, and perspectives of these girls, I conducted participant observations, interviews, and focus groups at an Asian American youth organization as well as in the girls' homes, schools, and neighborhoods. I also had online communication with the girls and collected supplementary materials and sources.

The study revealed that the girls had creativity and improvisational skills to invent various "homes" as they linked the many worlds in which they lived. The girls carved

out multiple "homes"—through imagining belonging globally while building belonging locally. They imagined an expansive understanding of "home" in the deterritorialized world. They idealized their countries of origin, acknowledged the United States as a possible "home," portrayed a third possible homeland where they had never lived, and fashioned a pan-Asian consciousness. The girls not only imagined "homes" outside of their immediate view but also co-constructed a home-like community in their everyday lives. They named it the Basement Group, after the place where they hang out in school. They developed a group identity which honored five characteristics: 1) expansion of who is family to include friends, 2) pride in diversity and inclusivity, 3) celebrations of cultural fusion, 4) value of "natural" girlhood beauty, and 5) shared interest in Asian popular culture. They constructed a borderland community in which they could collectively celebrate and nurture their in-between lives.

This study illuminated the power and complexity of their lives in-between as well as expanded the terrains of agency that the girls possessed. The study also revealed intersectional differences among the girls. It provided lessons for youth organizations and schools to create spaces where immigrant youth can thrive.

SITES OF BELONGING, SITES OF EMPOWERMENT:
HOW ASIAN AMERICAN GIRLS CONSTRUCT "HOME" IN A BORDERLAND
WORLD

By

Tomoko Tokunaga

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2012

Advisory Committee:
Professor Barbara Finkelstein, Chair
Professor Francine Hultgren
Professor Seung-Kyung Kim
Professor Lisa Rose Mar
Professor Ryoko Tsuneyoshi

Dedication

For my parents and brothers who have sent me support from across oceans and many lands. Thank you always for being with me in my searching-for-home journey.

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

This ethnographic study explores the ways in which a group of first, 1.5, and second generation Asian American[1] high school girls (ages 13 to 17) imagine, search for, and construct home-like sites. "*Home*," as explored in this study, is not only the place where the girls sleep, their families reside, or the country from where they (or their parents) came. Instead, "home," for these girls, appear to be multiple, literal, and imagined spaces, places, and communities (Al-Ali & Koser, 2002; Bammer, 1994; Constable, 1999; Espiritu, 2003; George, 1996; A. Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Markowitz & Stefansson, 2004; Naficy, 1999; Tsuda, 2004; Wang, 2004) where the girls feel a sense of cultural and personal belonging, and empowerment. A sense of belonging for these girls could emerge at a school hallway where they spend time with their friends, somewhere in cyberspace, or in an imagined future home in another location.

The Asian American girls live their lives in-between multiple cultures, nation-states, languages, and traditions. For example, these girls come from homes where Tagalog, English, and Cebuano are spoken in the same conversation, where an altar with Buddha is next to a Christmas tree, where they watch Bollywood movies while reading

---

[1] I use the following definitions for immigrant categories and the use of Asian Americans. I define the first generation as foreign-born children who immigrated to the United States after the age of twelve, the 1.5 generation as foreign-born children who arrived in the United States before the age of twelve, and the second generation as U.S.-born children who were raised in the United States. I use the term "Asian American" as a socially constructed and political category (Kang, 2002; Lowe, 1996; Nomura, 2003). As Lowe (1996) discusses the "heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity" of Asian Americans, this group is very diverse and different among one another in terms of class, nation of origin, immigration status, generation, religion, language, gender, sexuality, etc. By using this term, I am not attempting to create metanarratives of Asian Americans or to essentialize their experiences. I use this term by taking "subjectless analysis" (Chuh, 2003, p. 9) and "thinking deconstructively" (Chuh, 2003, p. 147) about this population.

Japanese comic books. Like many immigrants and refugee migrants, they are border crossers who literally and metaphorically crossed multiple national and cultural borders which led them into the "borderlands," "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary"(Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 25). Growing up in-between multiple nation-states and cultures, the girls straddled a unique borderland positioning where "two or more cultures edge each other" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 19). These girls navigate around the various messages they receive from family, school, cultural traditions, and the mainstream societies in which they are embedded. They speak a mother tongue and English at home, English at school, and a hybrid language with their peers. They constantly negotiate what it means to be "a girl," both at home, in the larger U.S. society, and in their (or their parents') countries of origin. Located in-between, these girls are negotiating outsider and insider experiences, familiarity and unfamiliarity, tradition and change, places of origin and arrival, and the local and global, while carving out a place to belong.

While a few scholars have looked at the lives of Asian American girls and young women specifically, they have almost exclusively exposed the adverse circumstances that influence these girls' lives (DasGupta & Dasgupta, 1998; Espiritu, 2003; S. R. Gupta, 1999; S. J. Lee, 1996, 2001; S. J. Lee & Vaught, 2003; Smith-Hefner, 1993, 1999; Wolf, 1997). Studies have called attention to family pressures such as strict gender roles and expectations (Espiritu, 2003), body image struggles (S. J. Lee & Vaught, 2003), and model minority stereotypes (S. J. Lee, 1996) as primary forces in these girls' lives. This focus on structural inequalities is essential and places the spotlight on the struggles of an often overlooked, yet highly at-risk, population. Asian American girls and young women,

ages 15-24, have the highest suicide rates across any racial or ethnic groups (National Center for Health Statistics, 2003) and have the highest rates of depression of any racial, ethnic, or gender group in the United States (Schoen et al., 1997). Asian American teenagers have the highest rates of being victims of classroom bullying across any racial groups—54 percent compared with 31 percent of Whites, 38 percent of Blacks and 34 percent of Latino/as (Sheets, 2011). Understanding the constraints these girls experience is important to disrupt this pattern of depression, suicide, and bullying. Yet, it is equally important for scholars to spend equal time exploring the ways in which these youth develop the ability, knowledge, and skills to navigate structural inequalities. In order to explore their potential human agency, this study specifically explores sites in which these girls feel a sense of belonging, personal and cultural affirmation, and empowerment. I describe these sites as home-like, as they offer a glimpse into the dimensions of, and extent to which, cultural in-betweeness permeates the lives of these girls, especially when they feel a sense of belonging.

The exploration of home-like sites has the potential to illuminate how the girls negotiate and manage their lives in-between and to acknowledge the ways in which they serve as agents of change and as the creators of emerging cultural communities. Furthermore, this study has practical implications and suggests ways to support the development of immigrant youth organizations and schools where marginalized immigrant youth, specifically Asian American girls, who often struggle from perpetual outsider status, racialization, and hypersexualization (Espiritu, 2008; Lowe, 1996; Mazumdar, 1989; Takaki, 1998) can thrive.

This study uses ethnography to explore the deeper meaning, thoughts, and perspectives of Asian American high school girls between the ages of 13 to 17. I mainly focus on nine first, 1.5, and second generation Asian American girls –three Filipinas, three Vietnamese, two Chinese, and one Indian[2] –who participate in a community-based organization that targets low-income Asian American children and youth on the East Coast of the United States. The fieldwork mainly took place at this organization, where I conducted participant observations, interviews and focus groups during after-school programs, summer programs, and events. As I developed rapport with the girls, I also spent time with them in their neighborhoods, homes, schools, online, and had conversations with their families and friends.

Research Questions

The following research questions inform and guide this proposed study.

1. How do first, 1.5, and second generation Asian American high school girls imagine, search for, and construct "home"? What are some salient characteristics of these spaces?

2. What do their constructions of "home" reveal about the ways in which they navigate their lives in-between multiple traditions, nation-states, languages, ideologies, and cultures?

3. What do their constructions of "home" reveal about the ways in which they enact agency in the midst of adverse circumstances?

---

[2] In order to simplify, I purposefully did not use the term American after the name of each ethnic group.

The research questions focus on investigating the potential for new emerging in-between cultures, spaces, and identities the girls create. Postcolonial theorists such as Anzaldúa (2007) and Bhabha (1990, 1994, 1996) provide concepts that inform this study. They reject the dichotomous notions, for example, *here* or *there*, *us* or *them*, foreigners or native, and examine the possibilities of emerging cultural terrains that go beyond these binaries. Anzaldúa (2007) uses the concept of the "borderlands" to describe the complex lived experiences of people who are sandwiched between multiple cultures at the same time. The "borderlands," ambiguous, ambivalent, and contradictory cultural terrains, emerge when people cross literal and metaphorical "borders;" these borders create "a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 25).

Similarly, Bhabha (1990) uses the notion of "a Third Space" to describe the new creation of interstitial space. He argues, "cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211). The concept of a third space allows us not to locate people in either, for example, one nation state or another, one religion or another, one ethnic or racial identity or another, but instead explores the potential of new emerging terrains that may go even beyond the sum of two presumably binary concepts. These concepts give agency and power to this interstitial space and center people's in-between lives. By borrowing these concepts, this research attempts to unpack, illuminate, and deepen the understanding of the ways in which Asian American girls navigate their lives in-between multiple nation-states, cultures, and traditions.

In addition, this study pays close attention to potential human agency of Asian American girls. While traditional social scientists often dichotomize structural

constraints versus agency, recent researchers, specifically feminist scholars, have

attempted to complicate and nuance the notion of agency and have examined the

everyday experiences of individuals by taking the structural constraints into account

(Anzaldúa, 2007; Constable, 2007; Lister, 1997; Nakamatsu, 2005; Ong, 1999; Parker,

2005). These studies are important in that they do not overly romanticize agency as pure

agency and instead acknowledge how individuals enact various forms of agency within

the constraints of structural forces. This research assumes these girls have the potential

and sometimes the power to modify cultural traditions, shape their identities, create new

spaces, and negotiate structure and agency simultaneously.

     This research also takes an intersectional approach to understand the lives of these

girls. Distinctions between one's multiple identities cannot be parsed out; "there is no

point at which race is not simultaneously classed and gendered or gender is not

simultaneously raced and classed" (Dill & Zambrana, 2009, p. 205). In the case of the

lives of these girls, this concept can be extended to many other dimensions of identity

which go beyond class, race, and gender, such as ethnicity, immigration status, language,

and age. The concept of intersectionality adds complexity and fluidity to formerly race-

only, class-only, and gender-only approaches and allows for more complex and nuanced

understanding of individual and group experiences and structural hierarchies. An

intersectional approach allows this study to explore the "intragroup differences" (Dill &

Zambrana, 2009, p. 7) of Asian American girls and to characterize their diverse and

heterogeneous experiences. In this study, I am open to explore various types of identity

6

markers that impact the lives of the girls and to examine salient identities they possess as well.[3]

Literature Review and Significance of Study

While this study is related to a wide range of literatures, it is grounded in three relevant bodies of scholarly literature. First among them is the literature in the fields of Asian American studies, ethnic studies, cultural studies, women's studies, sociology, anthropology, and education that examine the experiences and identities of Asian American youth, specifically Asian American girls and women. The second group is the literature in the fields of immigration studies, transnational studies, diaspora studies, cultural studies, sociology, and anthropology that explore the concept of home for immigrants. The third group is the literature in the fields of education, cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, human geography, and media studies that explore various sites of educational study, specifically in-between spaces that are important for young people.

Literature on Identities and Experiences of Asian American Youth

This study draws on the literature that examines the experiences and identities of Asian American youth. There is a growing number of scholarly literature focusing on educational experiences of Asian American youth (K-12). Scholars have revealed academic achievement and educational attainment of diverse groups of Asian American students (Goyette & Xie, 1999; S. J. Lee, 1996; Lew, 2006; Um, 2003; Zhou & Bankston

---

[3] According to Collins (1998), intersectionality "references the ability of social phenomena such as race, class, and gender to mutually construct one another" (p. 205). Dill and Zambrana (2009) has argued that "intersectionality is more than a car crash at the nexus of a set of separate roads. Instead it is well understood that these systems of power are mutually constituted" (p. 280). Also see Crenshaw (1991a, 1991b), Dill and Zambrana (2009), Collins (1998), and McCann and Kim (2003) for further information on intersectionality.

III, 1998) and have attempted to complicate and challenge the model minority stereotype. Specifically, they have examined academic achievement by focusing on the performance of academically challenged students from specific ethnic groups (Kao, 1995; S. J. Lee, 1994, 1996, 2001; V. S. Louie, 2004; Ngo & Lee, 2007).

Studies like these refute the model minority myth and reveal the existence of Asian American young people who struggle academically due to low socio-economic status of their families which impacts the schools these youth attend (Lew, 2006; V. S. Louie, 2004), a lack of social capital (S. J. Lee, 2005; Um, 2003), and low expectations by teachers and counselors (Ngo & Lee, 2007; Um, 2003). However, very few of these studies have explored the ways in which these young people create cultures, identities, and sites of belonging (DeGuzman, 2006; J. Lee & Zhou, 2004; Lim, 2008; Maira, 2002). Among these few studies, J. Lee and Zhou (2004), for example, focused on youth culture of Asian American young people and revealed the ways in which diverse groups of Asian American youth created their own identities and culture. As these studies reveal, the educational experiences of Asian American youth are more complex than educational achievement and cannot be captured only by their academic performances. Broadening the scope of educational studies on Asian American youth beyond educational achievement may reveal sites of young people's human agency, power, and belonging.

In addition, this study attempts to generate a foundation of knowledge on the Asian American girls and young women's gender experiences which have not been explored extensively in the related fields. While some scholars have focused specifically on the lives of Asian American girls and young women, many of these studies are situated within larger studies in which girls are not the primary focus (Baolian Qin, 2009;

8

Espiritu, 2001; S. J. Lee, 2001; S. J. Lee & Vaught, 2003; Maira, 2002; Shankar, 2008; Smith-Hefner, 1993; Wolf, 1997; Zhou & Bankston III, 2001). Often criticized by feminist scholars, the experiences of girls cannot be understood as an "addendum," because these girls often remain in the margins and are seen as others in the male-centered narratives (Hune & Nomura, 2003; Shah, 1997). Nor can their experiences be captured as "corollary" of White girls' experiences through White feminist lens in the way women of color feminist scholars argue (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983). Bringing the experiences of Asian American girls to the center of the analysis allows for a creation of new, unique, and complex understanding of the lives of Asian American girls.

Furthermore, many studies on Asian American girls and young women often generate one-sided portraits of Asian American girls as primarily victims of structural inequalities. Studies have revealed family pressures such as strict gender roles and expectations (DasGupta & Dasgupta, 1998; Espiritu, 2003; S. R. Gupta, 1999; S. J. Lee, 2001; V. S. Louie, 2004; Maira, 2002; Ngo, 2002; Shankar, 2008; Smith-Hefner, 1993; Wolf, 1997), body images created by media and popular culture (Durham, 2004; S. J. Lee & Vaught, 2003; Maira, 2002), and the model minority stereotypes (Chhuon & Hudley, 2010; Kao, 1995; S. J. Lee, 1994, 1996, 2009; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Shankar, 2008) as primary forces in these girls' lives. In addition, studies on Asian American women have revealed the ways in which these women have long been "othered" in the United States— deemed perpetual outsiders and racialized, sexualized, and hyper-feminized simultaneously (Choy, 2003; Espiritu, 2008; Feng, 2002; Lowe, 1996; Mazumdar, 1989; Spring, 1997; Takaki, 1998; Tamura, 1994; Tong, 1994; Tuan, 1998; Wu, 2002; Zhou &

9

Gatewood, 2007). These scholars have made it clear that the intersection of sexism, racism, and xenophobia that impact the lives of Asian American girls and young women cannot be overemphasized. While these portraits reveal the constraints on Asian American girls' lives, they do not reveal or even imagine how these youth may also be social agents who can traverse and alter various cultural borders.

A tiny number of scholars have focused on sites of empowerment, belonging, and safety that these girls construct and maintain for themselves—sites that reveal how these youth navigate the intersections of systemic inequalities and human agency (Maira, 2002; Ngo, 2002; Shankar, 2008). For example, Maira (2002) examined how Indian American young women used bhangra remix music and hybrid fashion to mediate between the multiple cultures in which they were embedded. She also revealed how these youth enacted various strategies to navigate the relationship with their parents in terms of gender and sexuality. In addition, Ngo (2002) reconsidered the negative connotation towards early marriage among Hmong American young women and revealed how these youth used early marriage as a way to oppose structural constraints they experience in school and at home. As these studies illustrate, documenting the ways in which Asian American girls potentially serve as agents of social change and not just as victims of circumstances leads us to move beyond an objectification in which these girls are pitied and allows us to explore how they navigate structural constraints.

By examining the ways in which these girls build or experience sites of belonging and empowerment, this study moves beyond the common discussion of educational achievement of Asian American youth and acknowledges the interaction of structure and agency in the girls' lives. Centering the experiences of Asian American girls, this study

10

explores specific gender experiences of these young people by also taking an intersectional approach which acknowledges the role of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, immigration status, socio-economic status, among other dimensions of difference, and examines what it means to be "a girl" of Asian ancestry in the United States.

Literature on "Home" for Immigrants

This study also builds on the literature that explores the concept of "home" for immigrants. Group of scholars have complicated and destabilized the traditional notions of home as static and geographically bounded (e.g., house or homeland) by examining the ways in which migration impacted how people imagine, create, and experience home (Ahmed, Castañeda, Fortier, & Sheller, 2003; Al-Ali & Koser, 2002; Bammer, 1994; Judith Brown & Talbot, 2006; Casey, 1993; Clifford, 1994; Constable, 1999; Espiritu, 2003; George, 1996; A. Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Hage, 1997; Lesser, 2003; A. Louie, 2004; Lukose, 2007; Markowitz & Stefansson, 2004; Naficy, 1999; Norris, 1990; Parreñas & Siu, 2007; Roth, 2002; Siu, 2005; Tsuda, 2003, 2004, 2009; Wang, 2004).

According to these scholars, the notion of home is an ambiguous and ambivalent concept for immigrants who live across dynamic spaces and times. Home is no longer a fixed and stable place (e.g., homeland) where people can return, but it can be "plurilocal" (Rouse, 1991, 1996), a mobile home people carry on their back (Anzaldúa, 2007). Home is not preexistent, but immigrants can (re)create "home" in a new country, often foreign and alienating (Espiritu, 2003; Naficy, 1999; Norris, 1990; Tsuda, 2004; Wang, 2004). Home is not only a place where people feel "at home," secure, comfortable, stable, loved, and pleasant, but also a contentious site which reflect both "separation and commitment"

11

(Bammer, 1994, p. xiv) and "a place of violence and nurturing," or "a place to escape to and a place to escape from" (George, 1996, p. 9).[4] Home is a physical place, but it can be an imagined space where one can connect to through imagination, memories, myth, stories, and nostalgia as well (Espiritu, 2003; Mo & Shen, 2007; Naficy, 1999; Rapport & Dawson, 1998). Home can be a place, space, memory, and imagination, a fact that leads immigrants to feel "at home" in various locations (Al-Ali & Koser, 2002; Espiritu, 2003; A. Louie, 2004), or become "homeless" and feel a loss of a sense of home (Berger, Berger, & Kellner, 1973).

While various scholars have unpacked the concept of home for adult immigrants, there is a dearth of studies that focus on the meaning, negotiation, and creation of home for immigrant children and young people. Scholars often understand immigrant children as "objects" who do not have any autonomy or human agency in migration and passively inherit home constructed by the adults around them (Dobson, 2009). However, home for immigrant children and youth could be distinct and different from home for adult immigrants as the former are in the process of developing life-perspectives, envisioning a future, and establishing "secure yet flexible belongings" (Hébert, Hoerder, & Schmitt, 2006, p. 21). Based on common constructions of adolescence, immigrant youth may also deal with stages of negotiating social forces and freedom, dependence and independence,

---

[4] Similarly, feminist scholars Martin and Mohanty (1986) who analyzed Minnie Bruce Pratt's autobiographical narrative entitled "Identity: Skin Blood Heart" (1984) described how home could be a site of contention, ambiguity, and ambivalence. They have argued that one could feel "being home" and "not being home" simultaneously where one realizes that "home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even within oneself" (p. 196).

innocence and responsibility, which are all interconnected to the process of searching, imagining, experiencing, and (re)creating "home" (J. Lee & Zhou, 2004, p. 3).

The few studies that have explored constructions of home for immigrant children have shown a glimpse into the complex ways in which they negotiate and create home. Specifically, moving beyond sociological studies that examine some form of the assimilation of immigrant youth from their countries of origin to the new country (Kasinitz, 2008; Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, & Waters, 2002; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001; Waldinger & Feliciano, 2004; Zhou, 1997), transnational migration scholars have explored the ways in which immigrant youth live "simultaneously within and beyond the boundaries of a nation-state" (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004, p. 1006).

For example, Wolf (2002) discovered that second generation Filipino American youth experience "emotional transnationalism," struggling to inhabit in-between "home" (host society) and "Home" (country of origin), the imagined home of their family and relatives. As the concept of "transnational social fields" (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998) implies, these scholars have critiqued the dichotomous notion of countries of origin and new country and have theorized how immigrant youth experience their lives across multiple countries in which they are embedded (Espiritu & Tran, 2002; Fouron & Glick Shiller, 2001; Levitt, 2009; Levitt & Waters, 2002; Tokunaga, 2011a). Growing up in transnational social fields, home for these youth is no longer a single fixed place (their countries of origin) to which they can return.

While these studies have attempted to unpack and reconsider the meaning and process of constructing home for immigrant youth, they tend to focus more on the

structures of nation-states that impact their lives such as country of origin and host country. Although "home" could be an ancestral home, nation of origin, or a new settlement country, "home" for young people could also be specific and concrete spaces and communities, both literal and imagined, that they carve out in their daily lives. As immigrant youth who struggle growing up in transnational social fields, they may define, claim, practice and build multiple "homes" in their everyday experiences. This study explores multiple home-like sites, real or imagined, where Asian American girls feel some form of belonging.

Literature on In-Between Spaces for and by Young People

This study also draws on the body of literature that explores various in-between spaces, often outside of school and home. Scholars in the field of education have long focused on the role of school as a primary educational institution for young people. They commonly have understood the lives of young people in the two separate institutions of home and school and often have dismissed other various spaces "beyond the borders of schooling" that are meaningful to youth (Fine, Weis, Centrie, & Roberts, 2000). In-between spaces where youth navigate the borders between school and home are crucial spaces and sites where various forms of learning take place for these young people. As Weis and Dimitriadis (2008) state, "Thinking through the 'in between' allows us to understand the emergent and unpredictable nature of education in new ways" (p. 2307).

More recently, scholars primarily in the field of education have started to examine and theorize various in-between spaces, often out-of-school settings, that are important to the lives of young people (Dimitriadis & Weis, 2001; Fine et al., 2000; Heath, 2001; Kennelly, Poyntz, & Ugor, 2009; Reyes, 2007; Tokunaga, 2011b; Weis & Dimitriadis,

2008; Weis & Fine, 2000). According to these authors, community-based organizations (CBO) (Heath, 2001; Heath & McLaughlin, 1993; Reyes, 2007; Wong, 2008), community-based educational sites (Fine et al., 2000), and various public and private spaces, including schools and neighborhoods (Weis & Fine, 2000) are some important sites where young people learn, know, teach, create, and recreate identities.

For example, scholars have identified some spaces where young people feel safe and at home, such as a support group for teenage girls (Weis & Carbonell-Medina, 2000), "safe space," a support group for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) youth on college campuses (Barry, 2000), Boba cafes and cyber cafes for Asian American youth (Danico & Vo, 2004; DeGuzman, 2006). While these scholars have revealed some potential home-like spaces for youth, they often focus on a single out-of-school space that is visible and easy to locate. They rarely examine less structured in-between spaces, liminal or temporal, fleeting or prolonged, where young people create by themselves in their daily movements across various spaces and sites, among home, school, neighborhood, work, and others. As my previous study on the in-between spaces of Filipina immigrant youth in Japan revealed (Tokunaga, 2011b), these various in-between spaces the girls create in their daily lives may affirm their cultural hybridity, allow them to exhibit unique and nuanced forms of power and resistance and offer them comfort, happiness, and a sense of belonging and needs to be studied further.

A range of human geographers who study children and young people offer insightful findings on the meaning of various everyday spaces for children and youth (Aitken, 2001; Forsberg & Strandell, 2007; Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Holt, 2011; Kato, 2009; Matthews, Limb, & Taylor, 2000; Skelton, 2000; Skelton & Valentine, 1998;

Walker et al., 2009). These scholars valorize everyday spaces such as a street, playground, school, and home, "in and through which children's identities and lives are made and remade" (Holloway & Valentine, 2000, p. 11). Specifically, geographers of children and youth have focused on the meaning and role of public space such as streets for children and young people.

While scholars often suggest that public spaces could be a threatening and dangerous space for young people, recent geographers of children and youth have revealed the potential role of public space as an autonomous space where young people could potentially enact agency and resistance (Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Valentine, Skelton, & Chambers, 1998, p. 7). For example, Matthews et al. (2000) revealed that streets for a group of young people in England are similar to what Soja (1996) calls "third space," an ambiguous spatial construction "where young people can gather to affirm their sense of difference and celebrate their feelings of belonging" (p. 64). Skelton (2000) also claimed the importance of public space for working-class teenage girls' in Wales (e.g., spending time on the streets and engaging in community projects), because these spaces offer them comfort, encourage them to build friendships, and allow them to escape from domestic responsibilities. Although these scholars have gone beyond the traditional understanding of space and spatiality (e.g., home-school binary) and have examined various in-between spaces, which are meaningful to the everyday lives of young people, they often only focus on physical spaces and not on metaphorical, virtual, or imagined spaces.

As cultural theorists, feminist scholars, postmodernists, and scholars from other disciplines have argued the growing importance of the work of imagination and

deconstruction of spatially bounded social worlds (B. Anderson, 1983; Anzaldúa, 2007; Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 1990, 1994, 1996; A. Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; McLaren & Giroux, 1994; Soja, 1996), in-between spaces for young people could be both physical and imagined spaces. Indeed, a group of scholars have explored the ways in which popular culture and cyberspace offer virtual and imagined spaces and communities of belonging and empowerment for young people (Boyd, 2008; Davé, Nishime, & Oren, 2005; Desai, 2005; Hirji, 2010; Ito et al., 2010; LaBennett, 2011; Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009; Maira, 2002; Maira & Soep, 2005; Park, 2004a, 2004b; Vargas, 2009; Yi, 2009). For example, Park (2004b) revealed that Korean American youth who experienced alienation in the United States created an imagined pan-Asian community through consuming Japanese TV dramas. Similarly, Yi (2009) discussed how online activities allowed 1.5 generation Korean immigrant students to construct a transnational community and negotiate their identities. As these scholars argue, it is also important to further explore the ways in which digital media, popular culture, and cyberspace allow youth to create virtual and imagined "home" in their lives.

This study seeks to contribute to further the understanding of in-between spaces for young people, by describing multiple "homes," physical or imagined, public or private, past, present or future, where Asian American girls feel some form of cultural and personal belonging.

Overview of the Chapters

Chapter 2 presents the methodological choice of ethnography, description of the field site and the participants, fieldwork and ethnographic reflexivity, data analysis, and limitations of the study. Chapter 3 and 4 explore the ways in which the first, 1.5, and

17

second generation Asian American high school girls imagine, search for, and construct "home." Chapter 3 examines the ways in which the girls imagine belonging across, between and beyond multiple homelands in the deterritorialized world. Chapter 4 explores the ways in which the girls collectively build a home-like community in their everyday lives. Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion of the meaning and the process of constructing "home" for the girls. It also describes the way in which this study illuminated the complexity of their lives in-between, expanded the terrains of agency, and revealed intersectional differences. Lastly, I provide implications for future research and give educational recommendations to immigrant youth organizations and schools about the ways to create home-like spaces for immigrant youth.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Ethnography

This study uses ethnography to explore the behaviors, meaning, thoughts, and perspectives of nine first, 1.5, and second generation Asian American high school girls (ages 13-17) who live in a multi-ethnic suburb on the East Coast of the United States. By using ethnography as an approach, this study analyzes and interprets the culture of a group of these girls.

Ethnography, which has been central to anthropological investigations, is a methodology that aims for "cultural interpretation" (Wolcott, 1999, p. 68) – a study of culture. While there are wide-ranging definitions of culture,[5] I follow postcolonial scholars who understand culture in a fluid, complicated, and unbounded ways. As concepts such as the "borderlands" (Anzaldua, 2007) and "a Third Space" (Bhabha, 1990) indicate, these scholars interrogate the fixed and static notion of culture and emphasize the dynamic process of cultural production. Clifford (1986) explains, "If 'culture' is not an object to be described, neither is it a unified corpus of symbols and

---

[5] Scholars have defined culture in various ways (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, pp. 28-30). There is a group of traditional anthropologists who define culture as "the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior" (Spradley, 1980, p. 6). These scholars understand culture as a shared knowledge that people use to act and make sense of their behavior. Another group of anthropologists values a semiotic approach and has a broader concept of culture. Geertz (1973) explains, "As interworked systems of construable signs…, culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly—that is, thickly—described" (p. 14). Geertz describes culture as context that can be analyzed and represented through a "thick description." Then there is a group of cultural studies, postcolonial and postmodern scholars who understand culture in a more nuanced, complicated, and unbounded ways. Clifford (1986) argues that there is no such thing as a fixed culture and emphasize its partiality.

meanings that can be definitively interpreted. Culture is contested, temporal, and emergent" (p. 19). These scholars also value the contextual and historical aspects of culture –culture is transmitted over generations and is embedded in people's daily lives. Following these scholars, I understand culture as "the habits of heart, mind and association" which "is elusive and hidden, commonly outside the margins of individual awareness, and embedded in habits that are typically taken for granted" (Finkelstein, Pickert, Mahoney, & Barry, 1998, p. 9). By using ethnography as a methodology, this study attempts to make the cultural features of a group of Asian American girls partially "explicit and public" (Agar, 1996, p. 1).

This study distances itself from a positivist approach and borrows from contemporary ethnography, including critical and feminist ethnographies. While traditional ethnography aims to depict a holistic and comprehensive "true" representation of cultural groups, contemporary ethnography assumes that "ethnographic truths are inherently partial" (Clifford, 1986, p. 7). Following the contemporary ethnographers, the purpose of this study is not to depict "true" and "holistic" lives of Asian American girls but to show a glimpse into "partial truths" (Clifford, 1986) of their experiences through my own lens. Specifically, critical ethnography informs the methodological approach of my study. Critical ethnography problematizes social inequalities and attempts to empower and liberate marginalized populations (Carspecken, 1996; Thomas, 1993). By taking a "critical" approach, this study aims to magnify the potential human agency of marginalized Asian American girls who navigate structural constraints.

Contemporary ethnographical orientations, specifically feminist ethnography, is informative in examining "reflexivity" in conducting fieldwork and producing knowledge

(Behar, 1996; Bell, Caplan, & Wazir-Jahan Begum, 1993; Clifford, 1986; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus, 1998; Stacey, 1988; Wheatley, 1994; Wolf, 1996). There is a broad continuum of relative subjectivity that these ethnographers have brought to bear on the construction of ethnographer and participant relationships. Some value autobiographical interpretations and the use of confessional pieces (Behar, 1996; Kondo, 1990), while others, less attuned to subjectivity, produce more of a realist narrative. I situate myself somewhere in-between this spectrum and value reflexivity, but I write less in an autobiographical way. As Bettie (2003) explains about reflexivity in ethnography, I believe that it is important for ethnographers to "point to our own subjectivity, acknowledge that it undoubtedly shapes the story we tell, and–most importantly— recognize the fact of the power we wield, the power of interpretation" (p. 23).

Ethnography values "field-oriented activity" (Wolcott, 1999, p. 77). Ethnographers commonly go to their "field(s)" and conduct extensive participant observations and interviews during their fieldwork (Agar, 1996; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). They become immersed in people's everyday experiences as "intimate, long-term acquaintance in natural settings" (Wolcott, 2002, p. 34) is crucial in ethnography. Fieldwork allows ethnographers to see "from the inside how people lead their lives, how they carry out their daily rounds of activities, what they find meaningful, and how they do so" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 2). I attempt to partially capture "the incidental, trivial, mundane and often dull dimensions of (these) spatial practices" (J. Anderson & Jones, 2009, p. 299) by accompanying, observing, and having conversations with Asian American girls in different settings. Given the age of the girls, they may

21

have difficulty articulating their experiences of home-like spaces solely in interviews. Observing their "embodied and emotional practices" (J. Anderson & Jones, 2009, p. 299) may evoke perspectives that they are not aware of and may provide richer information on the ways they construct "home."

Sites of Study

The main participants of this study are nine first, 1.5, and second generation Asian American high school girls (ages 13 to 17) who participate in a community-based organization (CBO)[6] that targets low-income Asian American children and youth on the East Coast of the United States. I chose this organization among others because it mainly targets low-income Asian American students, has students from various ethnic backgrounds, and is one of the largest youth organizations that serve Asian American youth in its area. These characteristics of the organization allowed me to recruit diverse groups of Asian American girls and to also explore its potential role as an out-of-school setting for immigrant youth.

This non-profit organization[7] mainly serves low-income Asian American children and youth, from various nations of origin, including the Philippines, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, India, and Nepal, among others. The mission of the organization is to improve the lives of underserved Asian American youth by providing them social, academic, and life-skill support. The organization was established in 1990s to serve

---

[6] According to Weis and Dimitriadis (2008), community-based organizations (CBOs) are "not bureaucratic institutions, as (typically) are schools, but emergent and unpredictable ones. Such institutions draw on the strength of young people, working with particular adults on specific tasks, with both real risks and consequences in specific settings" (p. 2302).
[7] The organization is funded by private foundations, individual donors, corporate sponsors, etc.

primarily refugees from a country in Asia. As those immigrants moved to the suburbs

and there was a need from other Asian American communities, the organization

expanded its service to all Asian American children and youth in the greater metropolitan

area. As of 2009-2010, the organization has developed an array of programs, including

after-school programs and mentoring programs for more than 300 students (K-12) in the

larger community (Brochure of Asian American youth organization).

Within the various sites and programs of the organization, my focus is on the

after-school program offered at the public high school I call Maple High (pseudonym).

The program's aim is the intellectual, identity, and leadership development of the youth.

One full-time staff member, an Asian American young woman, runs the program twice a

week for about two hours, using one of the classrooms at Maple High. The program

serves approximately 15 to 20 students, nine of whom are the main participants of this

study. The majority of the students in the program are Asian, mostly Filipino, Chinese,

and Vietnamese but there are a few Latino/a, Black, and White students as well. While

the organization actively recruits low-income Asian American students, it also serves

non-Asian students who are interested in the programs.

Maple High, where the girls go to school, is located in a suburb adjacent to a large

urban center, which has recently experienced a large growth in its immigrant population.

This multi-ethnic neighborhood, which used to be a predominantly White middle class

community, has changed to a racially and ethnically diverse majority minority area,

specifically with a large influx of Latino immigrants. Latinos make up about 40% of the

total population in 2010—an approximately 65% increase in the past decade. The Asian

population has slightly increased since 1990 and was approximately 12% in 2010 (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

The rich diversity of this community is apparent when one walks in the downtown area of this neighborhood. There are various ethnic grocery stores, mom-and-pop restaurants, hair salons, nail salons, music shops, adjacent to each other, with signs written in different languages, including Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Ethiopian. There is also a local multicultural community center, which provides English classes, legal and immigration services, computer classes, business development programs, among others to recent immigrants in this community (Report of local multicultural community center, 2011).

Maple High reflects the demographic characteristics of the neighborhood and has a student population that is about 46% Latino/a, 22% Black, 20% White, and 8% Asian (Maple High profile, 2010-2011).[8] Approximately 40% of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch and about 8% of the students are enrolled in the English as a Second Language (ESOL) Program. The school was built in 1960s and enrolls approximately 1500 students from the area.

The nine Asian American girls who are the focus of my study come from different ethnic backgrounds, histories of family immigration, duration of stay in the United States, languages, religions, ages, and socio-economic status (see Table 1).[9]

---

[8] The school has a relatively small Asian population so the Asian American girls' experience may be very different from other Asian American girls enrolled in a school with a large Asian population.

[9] Due to the girls' concern of confidentiality and to protect their anonymity, I present the girls' background information collectively and not individually. I believe that

Table 1

Main Participants in My Study

Name	Grade	Age	Ethnicity	Country born	Immigration generations (Age of arrival)
Yin	9th - 10th	15	Chinese	China	1.5 generation (8 years old)
Nita	9th - 10th	14	Indian	United States	Second generation (US born)
Sierra	9th - 10th	15	Filipino	Philippines	First generation (15 years old)
Chelle	10th - 11th	13	Filipino	Philippines	1.5 generation (9 years old)
Giang	10th - 11th	15	Vietnamese	Vietnam	1.5 generation (10 years old)
Zullie	10th - 11th	16	Filipino	Philippines	1.5 generation (8 years old)
Mino	10th - 11th	16	Vietnamese	United States	Second generation (US born)
Gina	10th - 11th	15	Chinese	United States	Second generation (US born)
Thanh	11th - 12th	17	Vietnamese	Vietnam	First generation (13 years old)

Note. Names are pseudonyms that the girls chose for themselves. Ages reflect the girls' ages in March 2011.

Some girls recently immigrated to the United States retaining a strong memory of their places of origin while other girls were born and raised in the United States and have never visited their parents' countries of origin. Some girls' families have been in the United States for 20 to 30 years, with many of their relatives having immigrated to the United States and established and expanded their communities. Other girls' families are recent immigrants, mostly their mothers entering the United States as professionals, and are still in the process of bringing their family members to the United States from their countries of origin. Some girls are part of the wave of Vietnamese refugees to the United States following the end of Vietnam War in 1975. Yet another group of girls are part of the post-1965 immigrants whose families immigrated to the United States from the Philippines, India, or China to search for better economic opportunities. Many of their parents work in low-wage service jobs such as at hotels, nail salons, or grocery stores,

information on each girl's background is not crucial to understand the collective process of constructing "home."

while a few more privileged work as medical professions. Some girls solely use their mother tongue at home, while others live in bilingual homes where English is also spoken. Some identify as strong believers of Catholicism or Islam, following the religious traditions and rituals of their family, and others claim to be non-religious.

The girls are situated in similar as well as different historical and socio-political contexts (e.g., different experiences of immigration, relationships with their parents' countries of origin), which may affect differently how they imagine and construct "home." However, they all live in the same neighborhood, attend the same high school, participate in the same program offered by the Asian American youth organization, and share both their time and space. Because of this specific locality and their times with one another, the girls may be forging a collective consciousness and creating home-like environments. I attempt to explore the distinct and common contexts in which these girls are situated.

Besides the nine Asian American girls in my study, there are also "backstage actors" who are part of everyday lives of the girls. Over the course of my fieldwork, I have interacted with the girls' family members, their friends in and out of the school, staff and volunteers at the Asian American youth organization, and a number of students who participated in the Asian American youth organization.[10] Their perspectives helped me deepen and broaden the understanding of the experiences of my main participants.

---

[10] Since the main site of my fieldwork was at the Asian American youth organization, I met many students involved in the organization, including an additional 5-10 Asian American girls, 10-15 Asian American boys, a few Latino/a and Black boys and girls. Having conversations and observing them allowed me to broaden and deepen the understanding of youth culture of high school students in this area, the culture of the Asian American organization and also to situate the girls' experiences in a broader context.

Data Collection

Ethnography's strength is in taking a "multi-instrument approach" (Wolcott, 1999, p. 44) where multiple data collection techniques are used to explore the complex reality of people's lives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Wolcott, 1999). Following these ethnographers who value "triangulation" in collecting data, I took an array of data collection methods, including participant observations, interviews, focus groups, online engagement, and document collection.

Since the girls are not able to fully articulate their experiences of "home," using various data collection techniques allowed me to corroborate the findings and better understand the girls' experiences and perspectives. In addition, taking multiple data collection methods, rather than only interviews, provided me a way to buffer my imposition and to balance the etic and emic structure of my research. I did not attempt to structure my data collection around my preconceived concept of "home," rather was open to any related data derived from the multiple data-generating methods described below.

Participant Observation

My preliminary data collection began in September 2010 when I first visited a few of the after-school programs run by this Asian American youth organization. In January 2011, I became a volunteer at the after-school program at Maple High. As a program aid and a Japanese tutor (Maple High has Japanese language classes as one of its main language offerings), at times, I assisted the program coordinator with preparing and facilitating the program, taught Japanese to students in the program, and also had informal conversations with the staff and the students, including the Asian American girls in my study.

After I got to know the students in the after-school program, I asked individual Asian American girls who regularly attended the program if they had an interest in participating in my research. All the girls, except for a few who could not attend the program regularly due to their participation in sports team or their parents' restriction, agreed to be my main participants. Initially, I had ten Asian American girls but one girl moved during the early period of my fieldwork, so I ended up with nine girls as my main participants. In addition, as I interviewed the Asian American girls and got to know their peer groups, I realized the importance of talking with non-Asian students who are close friends with the Asian American girls in my study. Often the Asian American girls found it problematic that I only interviewed Asian American girls because they thought that non-Asian girls also shared similar experiences. Thus, in the middle of my fieldwork, I also recruited two Salvadorian girls, one Australian girl, and one Peruvian girl who were active members of the after-school program and were close friends with the Asian American girls in my research. They provided me important cultural and contextual information and insights to better understand the lives of the Asian American girls.

The main fieldwork took place during the regular after-school program of this organization where I volunteered from January 2011 to June 2012. I mainly conducted participant observations and "informal ethnographic interviews" (Agar, 1996), informal conversations which ethnographers have with the participants in natural settings. I also participated in weekend events and fieldtrips hosted by the organization such as local Asian American cultural events, Asian American festivals, barbeque lunches at the local park, sports events, and community service events. During the summer 2011, I attended and volunteered at their high school summer program two full days a week which took

place at a local community center. There I met a group of Asian American students from other high schools and local residents in the area such as Chinese American seniors who had club activities at the center with whom I was able to have informal conversations.

After I developed rapport with the girls in my study, I "hung out" with them, sometimes with a few girls together, in their neighborhoods, including the shopping malls, music stores, ethnic grocery stores, bubble tea shops, ice cream shops, ethnic restaurants, parks, public libraries, book stores, the community center, and the community college where they participated in summer academic programs. I also visited the homes of a few girls and met some of their family members and friends. "Hanging out" with the girls in their everyday spaces, and doing what Bettie calls "girl talk, the disclosure of emotional injuries and insecurities" (Bettie, 2003, p. 29), often allowed me to get important insights into these girls' experiences with friendships, romantic relationships, popular culture, cliques at school, family, etc. During my fieldwork, I jotted down notes as much as possible and after I left the field site, I wrote more developed field notes.

Interview

I also conducted two to five in-depth semi-structured interviews with each of the girls based on their availability and interest between March 2011 and August 2011. Early in the interview, I asked open-ended questions about such things as their families, immigration history, life story, school experiences, ethnic identities, gender expectations and roles, and media use. I also asked specific questions (examples below) that revolved around their experiences of home-like sites.

- When is your favorite time/moment on a normal day? Where are you? Who is with you? What are you doing?

29

- What are the spaces where you feel at home or comfortable or included or where you truly can be yourself? Please give me some specific places, times, and people with which you resonate. Why are these spaces comfortable to you?

- What are the spaces where you feel excluded or uncomfortable or disliked? Why? How are these spaces different from spaces where you feel comfortable?

Later in the interviews, I asked questions designed to further clarify and deepen some findings from previous interviews and participant observations. Sometimes, I conducted group interviews with a few girls to talk further in a group about some potential emerging themes. Group interviews often stimulate conversations among the participants and are specifically effective to young people, as they commonly talk more freely and expansively when their peers join them (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Group interviews allowed the girls to talk more openly and share their common experiences and opinions with each other specifically on their peer groups, romantic relationships, and popular culture. Most of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. I also conducted informal and formal interviews with staff at the organization to understand the contextual information, the community which the organization serves and to examine primarily the role of the organization in developing home-like communities for the students. I also had a number of informal conversations with the staff on how they viewed the students at the organization, including the girls in my study, which helped me deepen the understanding of the lives of the girls.

Focus Group

I also ran a focus group session, creating "who I am" collages, with ten girls, including non-Asian students during one of the after-school program sessions (1.5 hour) in June 2011. Referring to the "who I am" collage method that Luttrell (2003) and Vargas (2009) used with teenage girls in their studies, I ran an art workshop where the girls created a collage that represented themselves and later shared their collages with the group. Vargas (2009) argues the importance of this activity as it allows the adolescents to "articulate feelings and ideas that might not have been able to put into words" by creating "visual representation of their belonging" (p. 37). I brought various types of magazines—fashion magazines for teen girls, men, women, educational magazines, health magazines, popular culture magazines. Since some girls were a big fan of Japanese popular culture, I brought a few Japanese magazines, girls' fashion and popular culture ones as well. Some girls also brought downloaded images from the internet, favorite lyrics, or writings from home. Using various magazines, construction paper, origami, stickers, and other art materials, the girls created their own collage which reflected a glimpse of their various identities, nationalities, families, hobbies, favorite popular culture, etc. The collage, as a visual representation of their identities and belonging, sheds light on their navigation of their in-between lives.

Online Engagement

Online communication via Facebook, Skype, blogs, and e-mail was another way to deepen my understanding of the lives of these girls. As a number of scholars claim the importance of cyberspace and digital media in the lives of youth (Boyd, 2008; Ito et al., 2010; Yi, 2009), most of the Asian American girls in my study spent enormous amounts

of time online every day. In order to better understand their online and offline lives, I observed their use of the Internet as well as exchanged e-mails, chatted on Facebook, and Skyped with them.

I also created an online community group on Facebook with the girls to share photographs with the group and to communicate with each other while I went back to Japan for about a month during summer 2011. Since many of the girls were very interested in Japanese culture, I asked the girls to list all the things they wanted me to take pictures of in Japan. While I was in Japan, I took a number of pictures such as photos of a sushi restaurant, accessory shops, a *Washlet* (a Japanese toilet that has electric heat up seats and spray washing features), cell phone shops, *purikura* (photo sticker booth) shops, and karaoke stores, all of which the girls requested.

When I uploaded the pictures on Facebook, I asked the girls in return to take some pictures of their everyday lives and upload them on the group page. Some examples of the pictures the girls put online were photos of their favorite food and favorite shopping stores and restaurants. The girls actively commented on each other's pictures and asked questions. The group page became an online site or community for the girls to share and learn about their daily lives through pictures. As Murthy (2008) argues, "When considered alongside other data (e.g. interviewing), the sites can provide unique in-depth autobiographical accounts of scenes and respondents" (p. 846). Gathering photographs of the girls and having online communication with them became another important way to learn about their experiences of home-like sites.

Document Collection

       I collected supplementary materials and sources that revealed the context of the lives of Asian American girls in my study by visiting local community centers, government agencies, and exploring various websites. I reviewed broader community data such as census data, websites of high schools, school districts, community centers, local newspapers, and local governments that were informative of the demographics of communities, immigration histories of Asian populations in the United States and other immigrants. I also examined site specific artifacts such as newsletters, correspondence, websites, blogs, and photographs, which revealed the role of this organization in the lives of the girls. Finally, I collected artifacts that revealed the daily lives of these girls and their family histories such as photographs, poems, essays, artwork, letters, blogs, personal homepages, and social networking services sites. Specifically, some girls liked drawing and creating artwork so I asked the girls to share them with me. All of these sources allowed me to understand better the larger context in which these girls are situated, helped me develop my semi-structured and more formal interview protocols, and helped identify some potential home-like sites.

<div align="center">

Ethnographic Reflexivity

</div>

       During my ethnographic fieldwork, I attempted to be reflexive about my position as a researcher, and specifically thought about the power and privilege that I had over the girls in my study and constantly negotiated this "ambiguous insider/outsider position" (Kondo, 1990, p. 23). A number of researchers, including feminist, postcolonial, and postmodern ethnographers, have long discussed the methodological concerns and potential risks researchers have over participants and have argued the importance of the

ways ethnographers acknowledge their subjectivity and privilege in understanding, interacting, and negotiating relationships with participants (Agar, 1996; Behar, 1996; Bell et al., 1993; Bettie, 2003; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Stacey, 1988; Wheatley, 1994; Wolf, 1996). Following these researchers, I attempted to be aware of "a radical reflexivity that acknowledges that there is always a place from which we speak" (Bettie, 2003, p. 23).

My various identities, including race, ethnicity, immigrant status, length of stay in the United States, language, class, gender, age, among others impacted the ways the girls made sense of me, how I understood them, and the ways we built relationships.[11] I constantly reflected on my positionality and negotiated insider and outsider positions as different dimensions of my identities interacted with theirs. The girls and I shared an Asian identity intersecting with the same gender identity, which often enabled me to relate to our common experiences of being an Asian, or an Asian girl/woman in the United States. During my fieldwork at the Asian American youth organization, the youth never questioned my racial identity, and I was often seen as part of the organization, different from how non-Asian staff or volunteers were perceived. The girls and I often had conversations on similar experiences of having strict "Asian parents," who often have high expectations and gender restrictions towards daughters. We also talked about Asian stereotypes we encountered at school and in society.

While our common Asian identity was salient in our relationships, I was also aware of the privilege I had as a middle class Japanese citizen, the only Japanese person in the organization, and even at Maple High. The students were aware of Japan's high

---

[11] See Tokunaga (2009) for more detail about my autobiographical reflection.

status within the racial hierarchy in Asia and sometimes differentiated me from them, as most of their families were from "developing countries" in Asia. They sometimes envied my Japanese ethnicity, associating it with richness, economic, and cultural power, and often approached me to talk about Japan's advanced technology, Japanese popular culture, and Japanese language. I attempted to be aware of the unearned power I was given solely due to my nationality. Yet, the fact that many students in the organization were taking Japanese language classes at school and were a big fan of Japanese popular culture made it easier for me to build rapport with them. Many of the girls in my study and their friends called me "Tomoko-san" (a Japanese way to show respect) rather than pronouncing my name "Tomoko" with an American accent. I also used Japanese to communicate with a few students, which created somewhat of a unique bond.

I also navigated outsider and insider position in regards to immigrant status. I was born and mostly raised in Japan, but I also have lived abroad, spending three years in elementary school in the United States and nearly two years in middle school and high school in Indonesia. When I first met the girls, I had been in the United States for two and a half years, studying at the University of Maryland to obtain my Ph.D. Based on my life-long immigrant experiences, I was often able to connect with the girls and share the struggles of learning new languages, adapting to a new country, and being separated from family members who remained in the country of origin. Some girls often asked me about my family and friends in Japan and worried whether I was homesick being in the United States. Yet, in a different mode, some students occasionally distanced me by saying that I am more traditional Asian and not that Americanized. While I was seen as an outsider in this sense, I purposefully used my "foreigner status" to learn more about their lives.

Often the girls would "teach" me about popular American clothes, their favorite American food, popular American movies, TV shows, and music, and American slang.

As a Ph.D. student in her late 20s, I was specifically careful about the power and authority I had due to my adult status. Following the researchers who have discussed the methodological concerns when conducting fieldwork with children and youth (Best, 2007; LaBennett, 2011), I attempted to not overuse the power I had as an adult, for example, by not forcing the girls to talk about some issues that they were hesitant to share with me. Yet, as an Asian young woman, I was often mistaken by teachers and other adults for a high school student. Several times when I interviewed the girls at the library of Maple High, the teachers assumed I was a high school student and asked me to fill in the sign-in form.

The students also often mentioned to me that I looked very young, partially due to my small stature and casual fashion; I could "pass" as a high school student. Once when I was "hanging out" with a group of students in front of the local community center, the students told me that they often forget that I am an adult and do not feel awkward talking about personal things in front of me. While I was aware of the age difference, I attempted to be immersed in the teenage culture as much as possible. As Zullie, a Filipina girl in my study, said "you're like my diary now," some girls appreciated me for listening to their stories and some mentioned that they liked having conversations with me because "you (I) like learning about other cultures." I carefully negotiated my insider and outsider positioning, as well as reflected on the power differentials that existed between the girls and me.

As Mohanty (2003) argues about the importance of feminist solidarity, I critically

reflected on my standpoint and explored the ways in which I, with my own racialized,

gendered, and classed body, can create some form of solidarity with the girls, without

claiming power from a group that is already marginalized in the United States.

Data Analysis

The data analysis began during the initial period of my fieldwork and culminated

towards the end of the main data collection period when I coded all the field notes and

interview data. During my fieldwork, I constantly wrote "observer's comments"

(Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 123) in my field notes and transcribed interview data which

allowed me to explore some potential ideas and insights. The comments also helped me

see some themes and questions I wanted to explore in future fieldwork visits and

interviews. Throughout the data collection and data analysis, I re-read my data and

observer's comments, and wrote longer memos (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 161; Glaser

& Strauss, 1967), which became more of an analytic process as I developed my themes

and concepts.

After I finished the semi-structured interviews and the main part of my fieldwork,

I used the qualitative data analysis software *Atlas.ti* to code all the field notes and

interview data. The coding began with "open coding" then shifted towards "focused

coding" (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 143) as I (re)coded my data several times.[12] Using the

codes created with *Atlas.ti*, I made a network chart to see the relationship between the

---

[12] "Open Coding" is a type of coding in which "the ethnographer reads fieldnotes line-by-line to identify and formulate any and all ideas, themes, or issues they suggest, no matter how varied and disparate." "Focused coding" is another type of coding in which the ethnographer "subjects fieldnotes to fine-grained, line-by-line analysis on the basis of topics that have been identified as of particular interest" (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 143).

codes. The chart helped me show the connection between the codes and also generate and link more abstract categories and themes. Later in the data analysis, I wrote a few "integrative memos," which "explore(s) relationships between coded fieldnotes and to provide a more sustained examination of a theme" (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 162). Integrative memos allowed me to generate a cohesive idea and overall theme to organize my ethnography.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation to this study is that the girls in this study are a selected population who are all involved in the organization that primarily serves Asian American youth. All the girls chose to participate in this organization and actively maintained their membership. The organization is one of the home-like spaces for these girls, providing safety, empowerment, and a sense of belonging. It also provides a space where the girls could be with many other fellow Asian Americans and feel comfortable and proud of their Asian identities and roots. Given the role of the organization, the girls' experiences might be different from those of many other Asian American girls who are not involved in this type of organization. While this study is not intended to generalize to the entire Asian American girl population, it does provide an insight into their lives. I attempted to be attentive to the ways in which I depict the lives of this selected group of girls and carefully explored the role of the organization in the lives of these girls.

There are also methodological delimitations. The main fieldwork took place within the program run by the Asian American youth organization. While I shadowed some girls at homes and neighborhoods, I was not able to follow all the girls in different spaces mainly due to their schedule. The girls might have constructed home-like spaces

in their family home or neighborhoods where they spend time with their friends. In addition, while the program was held at Maple High after school, I could not observe the girls during the school day, which may have limited my understanding of their experiences during classes, relationships with teachers, or other students. In order to supplement the limits of observations, I conducted a number of interviews with the girls, including online communications and asked their experiences in multiple spaces. I also collected photographs, stories, artwork, and websites of interest to further deepen my understanding of their everyday lives.

Lastly, this study which focuses on sites of belonging and empowerment has some conceptual constraints. While the concept of "home" allows this study to capture moments of agency for Asian American girls, it is easy to romanticize the girls' agency and power and obscure their experiences of marginalization, discrimination, and oppression in their everyday lives. In order to mitigate this constraint, I attempted to pay attention to structural inequalities that shaped the girls' lives. Specifically, I focused not only on home-like sites but also on non-home-like sites in the girls' lives which allowed this study to illuminate the ways in which they navigate adverse circumstances.

Chapter 3: Imagining Belonging in the Deterritorialized World

The Asian American girls in this study straddled the borderlands, spaces where multiple cultures, traditions, languages, and nation-states collide. Their unique borderland positioning emerged from their literal and metaphorical national and cultural border crossing experiences. Due to this in-between positioning, the girls created an expansive and elaborate understanding of "home" in multiple homelands and beyond. The girls simultaneously 1) fantasized their places of origin[13] through their nostalgic childhood memories, 2) acknowledged the United States as a possible country to belong by imagining the difficulties of living in their countries of origin as an adult, 3) imagined a third possible homeland where they envisioned a bright future "home," and 4) fashioned an intricate pan-Asian consciousness where the girls felt some form of belonging through Asian popular culture. This chapter explores these four ways in which the girls imagined belonging in the globalized and deterritorialized world. By examining the process of their imagination, it also explores some characteristics of their ideal home.

"Life was Perfect in Vietnam": Longing for the Countries of Origin

The girls who inhabited in-between the United States and their places of origin utilized their childhood memories and/or their parents' memories and longed for the countries from which they immigrated. For some, their profound alienation and discontent towards their lives in the United States structured the memories of their countries of origin as an ideal home. Others were academically and socially comfortable in the United States and yet yearned for their countries of origin. For example, Chelle, a

---

[13] I say "countries of origin" or "places of origin" to mean either the country from which the girl herself or her parents immigrated.

13 year old 1.5 generation Filipina girl, described a strong sense of homesickness and a

longing for the Philippines. She often mourned the loss of the Philippines and would lie

on her bed at night and check the Facebook pages of her cousins and friends in the

Philippines. Facebook pictures reminded her of the close friends, school life, and leisure

activities she cherished.

> It was in the middle of the night…So I was looking through my cousins' pictures on Facebook through my phone. I was lying down already. So I was just like that's cool. She ran for like, you know how student government here is but there it's like chairman, vice chairman…So I ran when I was there…And then it was so much fun. It was really a fun experience. And I saw my friend, my best friend, she was dancing with them and everything. I really missed it so much. And I saw my cousins. She was a sophomore when I was there. I was a freshman. And when I saw her, she is a senior now. So I am like wow, time flew. So I looked at some pictures, how the activities in my old school went. I was like, oh my god, I was homesick….My [former] school [in the Philippines] has Facebook profile. And then they put everything in it…Oh my god I miss it so much, I miss it very much. So I just wanted to cry about it. Because I don't know. Last year I was fine studying here [in the United States], I was fine. But then I don't know, it happens so fast, I don't know how. It's like one day I was really happy here then I was just like bummed, I mean I am not sad that I am here. I just really want to experience what it's like in the Philippines more.

While Chelle had a community of friends in the United States and was very

successful in school, this did not lessen her yearning for the Philippines. She longed for

her school life in the Philippines where she had enjoyed school events, activities, student

government, and friendships. She had profound feelings of nostalgia, "fond

remembrance of things, people, or places past" (Winning, 1990, p. 255) towards her

country of origin. Through Chelle's fond memories of the Philippines, she imagined the

Philippines as a utopia where she felt a sense of community, pleasure, and comfort.

Chelle's love of her place of origin was not unique in this study. While a number

of scholars in transnational, diaspora, and immigration studies have rejected the binary

notion of countries of origin and arrival (Basch et al., 1994; Brubaker, 2005; Clifford,

41

1994; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998), the girls often relished this distinction. They often idealized their sites of origin by expressing views that were connected with pleasant and delightful feelings, while the United States was associated with a lot of negative emotions. For example, Zullie, a 1.5 generation Filipina girl, struggled in the United States, "It's just like that's (the Philippines) the only place I'm usually happy…And here (in the United States), it's just like depressing. Blah. Depressing." Similarly, Sierra, a first generation Filipina girl, commented that life was "all about fun in the Philippines but here [the United States], just live your life." The girls associated loneliness, sadness, and struggles with their lives in the United States which they did not imagine in their countries of origin. As Parreñas and Siu (2007) have argued that "diasporic affiliation to homeland (real or imagined) is very much inspired by the disidentification with the host society" (p. 15), the girls often expressed a sense of attachment to their places of origin by referring to the constraints in the United States. The girls' experiences of non-home-like aspects of their lives in the United States illuminated some characteristics of their ideal home in their countries of origin.

The girls who dwelled in-between their places of origin and the United States longed for their places of origin which offered 1) a sense of community both at home and in the neighborhood and 2) a liberating girlhood with mobility. Through their own and their parents' reminiscences, memories, and recollections, these girls yearned for a sense of community and mobility they understood as positive markers of their countries of origin.

Sense of Community at Home and in the Neighborhood

The girls who immigrated to the United States often described memories of a loving childhood in their countries or origin. These memories and experiences existed within the universe of caring families, extended family members, and familiar and loving neighbors. There were multiple strong social networks and connections in the girls' lives in their countries of origin, which rarely existed in the United States. Once they relocated to the United States, their family diminished in size as the nuclear family often immigrated while their extended family remained in their places of origin or immigrated elsewhere in the United States. The seclusion was not only from family, but neighbors as well. They often described their lives in the United States as solitary and isolated.

The girls reminisced about their intimate family time in their sites of origin where they had daily family dinners and regular conversations with their parents, which were difficult to have in the United States. In their places of origin, time was available to spend with family and their parents seemed more relaxed. Nita, a 14 year old second generation Indian girl, visited India a few times. Through these short visits and her parents' memories, she longed for the time when her family and relatives would sit at the table and talk, sharing a homemade dinner together every day. "Back home, we eat all the time together, always." She even called India "home," suggesting a deep attachment and warm sentiment to a country where she had never lived. She remembered the three days of wedding events with her family in India and how they had every meal together, "even breakfast." However in the United States, both of her parents worked until late at night so family dinner was a "once in a while thing." In a very melancholy voice, she emphasized that they had dinner at "separate time(s)." Similarly, Thanh, age 17, who

immigrated to the United States from Vietnam at the age of 13, reminisced about her family dinners. In Vietnam she spent every evening with her family "at the same table eating the same food at the same time." Her fond memories of this time together reflected a different reality in the United States where she commonly had dinner by herself as her parents came back home late from work.

The girls also yearned for regular family gatherings and events in their places of origin where their extended families came together. The girls were surrounded by caring family members as they often lived with a big family or their extended families lived nearby and frequent visits were common. Zullie cherished a family album which was filled with childhood pictures of her and her relatives in the Philippines. In the album were pictures that she loved, including photos of her sixth birthday party. Dressed in a beautiful white dress, these photos showed Zullie happy during this occasion where she was surrounded by her family and friends. These photos cemented and perhaps even further fueled her vision of the Philippines, as a place that fosters community, friendship, and family. In a sad voice, she noted, "At home I get depressed now because you're just like so lonely."

Similarly, Giang, a 15 year old 1.5 generation Vietnamese girl, cherished her warm memories of a "big field trip" where all her extended family members went to a beach together. They even had to take a bus due to the large size of her extended family. Sierra, a 15 year old first generation Filipina girl, shared with me her pleasant memories of two loving dogs she owned in the Philippines. Her dogs were an important part of her family in the Philippines. She remembers playing with the dogs, talking about the dogs with her family, and taking the dogs for a walk. However, she said with despair, "There

is no one who can take care of it [in the United States]." For Sierra, not being able to have a dog intensified her loneliness at home and provided further evidence that the United States was a place with a small family.

Some of the second generation girls also spoke longingly for time with an extended family. Mino, a 16 year old second generation Vietnamese girl who had never visited Vietnam, imagined her place of origin where she would experience a cohesive community with her extended family. She mentioned, "It would be really nice to visit Vietnam one day so that I could experience what it's like there and I could meet my grandma, my step grandpa, and my two cousins, and my uncle, and his wife." She often lamented how her house in the United States was "too quiet" and expressed a relentless solitude at home, "Each person has their own thing. We don't talk. We just don't talk at all." In contrast to their family lives in their countries of origin, the girls had a sense of loneliness and boredom at home in the United States as family size often diminished and family gatherings were a rare occasion.

The girls were not able to cherish the same intimate family time in the United States partly because their parents worked long hours. While many of the girls' families were middle class in their countries of origin, they became working class once they immigrated to the United States. This change in socio-economic status meant their parents needed to secure economic stability in the United States and so had to work long hours at the expense of the family time the girls cherished. Thanh lamented how her family changed after the relocation. In the United States, her parents worked long hours, including weekends and came back home late at night. "When I came here it felt like the family was - like the family kind of forgot about how family felt. Like how being with

family felt." The sense of loss around the changed family experience in the United States was so profound that Thanh described Vietnam as a "perfect" home.

> Life was perfect in Vietnam. It was fun….We didn't have anything to worry. Then when we came here, my grandparents watched my brother….but they are kind of cold, everybody works they put money to the rest of the family so we didn't get used to it. Especially I didn't. When we lived in Vietnam, my parents and we were close but now…I was shocked. The family was broken. This is not the family at all. The way they treated us. They don't care about me at all. This is not the family.

As this family immigrated to the United States, securing work and stabilizing their financial situation became the priority, which made Thanh feel a deep sense of sorrow around family relationships. Perhaps it was due to the parents' own dislocation and struggles to adjust to the life in a new country, the need to become financially secure, or the loss of material wealth, but overall this relocation lessened the quantity and quality of family time. The girls yearned for the days when their parents did not have to work long hours, prioritized time with family, and the line between work and home was clear.

Some girls' parents worked long hours in their countries of origin but their middle class status allowed them to hire maids, which contributed to a comfortable caring environment for the girls. Specifically, Filipina girls reminisced about the childhood days when their maids or babysitters took great care of them while their parents worked. Chelle described,

> And here it's the first time that I was home alone. In the Philippines I was never home alone. We had the maids… And like every time my mom and my dad would go to work, I had the babysitter, and I could just go over to my cousins' house any time I want. And here [in the United States], I have to be independent…

In the United States Chelle had to be responsible for herself while her mother worked, as there were no adults who could provide care and support for her. Zullie

compared the difference in treatment when she was sick in the Philippines versus the
United States.

> You have maids there. It's just stress free because people care about you. Like
> even if you're like a little sick, they think it's severe and they make you stay at
> home. They care for you. Here when you're even a little - like even when you're
> really sick, you go to school….It's like - and you're surrounded with people that
> love you and care [in the Philippines].

When she got sick in the Philippines, she was able to rest and cure her illness

because there were adults, including maids who cared for her. But in the United States,

her parents had busy jobs, their financial situation did not allow them to get outside

support, and they did not know the neighbors, which meant that there were no adults who

could take care of Zullie when she was ill. With a smile, she mentioned, "You get more

love there [in the Philippines]." For her, care and love meant that there was someone

who always cooked for her, listened to her stories, and continuously showed affection

towards her.

The girls not only longed for family time in their countries of origin but also

reminisced about an attachment to a network of familiar neighbors. They were

surrounded by people who they knew well, spoke the same language, and shared similar

cultural, ethnic, and class backgrounds. Yin, a 15 year old Chinese girl who immigrated

to the United States when she was eight, reminisced about her childhood days in China

living in a small village where "everybody in the village actually knows each other" and

most of the people in the village had the same last name. She said with a smile,

"Everybody is kind of like a part of a family." In her neighborhood in China, she was

able to treasure ethnic, linguistic, and cultural similarities among her neighbors.

However, in the United States, she struggled to create a sense of community in her

neighborhood because "I [she] completely don't [didn't] know who those people are." She had difficulty communicating with her neighbors due to language barriers as many neighbors in her multi-ethnic neighborhoods were also immigrants, such as Latinos who often only spoke Spanish. For her, familiarity and similarity among the neighbors were important factors of her understanding of a community, which made her comment that "in China there is more like a community sense." A sense of loneliness and isolation in the neighborhoods in the United States was a recurrent theme among the girls. They longed for their childhood days in their places of origin where they were able to treasure familial connection, homogeneity, and consistency in their neighborhoods.

The girls also imagined their countries of origin as a place of permanency and roots, where the United States was not. Thanh's metaphorical use of a "hotel" captures how she understood the United States as a transient place where building relationships and connections among people were impossible. She asserted with frustration,

> I just don't feel like living here [the United States]. Living my future years here..…I don't feel like I want to live here….People here is about themselves. All about themselves. It's like a country where you go there for a couple of years to get trained but it is not your home, this country is not your home. And the fact is there is nothing called American people. They are all immigrants from other countries. There is no origin. Like European they have thousands of thousands of history but America just 200 or 300 years. So this is a hotel, you go there and you spend some time and then you have to go back. That's what I feel.

For Thanh, the United States was not a permanent "home" because of its individualistic culture, heterogeneous people, and lack of long history. Interestingly, the fact that the United States is an immigrant country where the roots of Americans are diverse led her to reject the United States as a place she could live permanently. Thanh often expressed a strong sense of alienation and hostility towards American society, culture and people, specifically describing the lack of a collectivist culture where people

think about others and support each other. She had a strong immigrant identity and often shared with me discrimination she experienced and her struggles to adjust to life in the United States. She was fluent enough to talk in English but often spoke to me in Japanese as a secret code that no one would understand besides us so she could share her anger and frustration about Americans. In a sad voice she said, "I don't feel like myself here." She not only lacked a sense of community in the United States but also a sense of herself. She yearned for Vietnam where she imagined she would be welcomed and fully belong to the community. A sense of history, permanency, collectivist culture, and homogeneity were part of the girls' ideal notion of home.

Liberating Girlhood with Mobility

The girls reminisced about their liberating childhood in their countries of origin and described a life free from gender constraints. They expressed being carefree and having fun. They recalled spending enormous amounts of time outside playing, travelling from place to place, and having less domestic responsibilities. They believed they had some autonomy to decide their daily schedules, who to play with, where to go, and what to do. However, in the United States, they felt "stuck at home." The girls' movement was under their parents' surveillance due to concerns for the teenage daughters' safety and protection. Similar to a number of studies that revealed how Asian American parents control their daughter's sexual behavior and freedom (DasGupta & Dasgupta, 1998; Espiritu, 2003), the girls often complained about their parents' restrictions, including a strict curfew and prohibition to use public transportation. Unlike in their memories of a liberated childhood in their places of origin, the girls' bodies were closely and strictly monitored and policed by their parents.

The girls longed for the days in their countries of origin where they spent an abundant amount of time outside with their friends, which was different from how they spent time at home alone on the internet in the United States. Specifically, Filipina girls who had childhood memories in the Philippines and often returned to their countries of origin spoke about their different lives in these two locations. Zullie mentioned in a sad voice that her computer was her "baby" next to her I-pod because she was often online in her room with these technologies rather than spending time with her friends. Chelle and Sierra, who were close friends, reminisced about their childhood days in the Philippines where they enjoyed playing with their friends in their neighborhoods and beyond. When I visited Chelle's house, she showed me a big Mac desktop computer in the living room and explained about her use of computer as a symbol of restriction and immobility.

Chelle:	I love how our parents here, my parents are so really tight [uses her hands to show the tightness]. I mean I don't blame them. But in the Philippines, I would say we will be going out, and they would tell us to just text us every time you switch places…As long as it's not really really really late, it's ok. And it's not computer [in a sad voice, pointing out to the Mac computer].
Tomoko:	It's not computer? What do you mean?
Chelle:	Here, they would just stay inside and use the computer forever! In the Philippines, we are like texting, "Hey do you wanna go there? Do you wanna go over there?" It's active in the Philippines.
Tomoko:	But here you think you are going on computer every day, all day?
Chelle:	Yeah. All day.
Tomoko:	So what do you usually do? Do you go on Facebook?
Chelle:	Facebook, tumbler, blogging…I watch movies. In the Philippines, when you watch movies, it's like in theaters. I like how people bond in the Philippines.

While Chelle shared with me her favorite time using the Internet, engaging in Facebook and a number of websites, she also had negative emotions such as isolation, confinement, and sadness which she associated with her use of a computer. For the girls, their ideal home was where they were outside interacting and bonding with people and

50

having less control from their parents. Facing the computer or I-phone inside the house was nowhere near their desired home.

The girls reminisced about the days in their countries of origin where they believed they could take public transportation and move from place to place with their own will and autonomy. In the United States, their parents often forbade their daughters to use public transportation, which constrained their mobility.[14] Chelle and Sierra shared with me their fun memories of the Philippines where they took local vehicles and moved to various places. Chelle expressed,

> Even in the Philippines, they [my friends] are just 15 minutes away, we still get together…You can take jeepneys [ride-on taxis], tricycles [motorcycles with a sidecar]. And if you know the tricycle driver very well, "Hey, can I get it for free?" [in a tender voice laughing]…Yeah, I am guilty. Because our neighbor has a tricycle, so if they are going to the plaza, like downtown, I would be just be like "Hey are you going to the plaza?" and they would be like "Yeah" so I would just jump in the back.

In the Philippines, she was able to move to different places using these local affordable vehicles often owned by her neighbors and relatives. Her parents allowed her to take these means of transportation as they lived in a familiar neighborhood with geographical proximity. She said with a smile, "Philippines, everyone is connected. It is like a small town. Everyone knows you. Like my mom and my dad will trust me to walk in the town even though it is quite big." However, in the United States, their parents often prohibited them to use local public buses due to safety concerns and protection purposes. One girl even said in a frustrated voice, "My mom thinks that I will be raped if I take the bus." While it was not uncommon for high school students to take local buses

---

[14] None of the girls in my study drove a car. They either got a ride from their family members or took public transportation.

in this neighborhood, the girls' parents perceived public buses as unsafe spaces where the girls could interact in proximal distance with unknown local people. Having trust from their parents and being mobile were what the girls imagined as part of their ideal home.

The sense of restriction and immobility the girls felt in the United States was due to an intersection of age, race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, location, and possibly immigrant status, which all resulted in the parents' protection. These girls were not children, but rather teenagers, who reached puberty and perhaps were perceived to be sexually vulnerable, which resulted in a strict regulation of their movement and behavior by their parents. Also, the parents had to navigate unknown and unfamiliar contexts to raise their teenage daughters in the United States wishing them to be respectful, modest, and chaste women. For the parents, this multi-ethnic neighborhood which consisted of people from different ethnic, racial, class, religious, and perhaps most importantly, unknown cultural backgrounds, was not a safe place to raise their teenage daughters.

In reality, some girls felt unsafe walking in their neighborhoods as some men approached them and sometimes made sexual remarks. Chelle, age 13, shared with me her fear and discomfort of walking outside by herself as she sometimes encountered men who she felt looked at her if she was a sexual object. "It is just a scary feeling. Sometimes. People stare me up and down. Literally undressing me with their eyes." The girls' parents were aware of how gender and sexuality interacted differently in this new land.[15] However, they did not know how to engage with different relationships

---

[15] While the parents might not be familiar with academic discussion, they had similar views with the scholars who have discussed how Asian American girls and young women are racialized and sexualized in the United States (Choy, 2003; Espiritu, 2008; Lowe, 1996; Mazumdar, 1989).

across gender and sexuality. In order to protect their daughters from any possible danger, the parents often kept their daughters at home and monitored their behaviors and movements outside of the home. While these restrictions may have also occurred as the girls got older in their countries of origin, the girls viewed these new restrictions as something unique to their lives in the United States.

The girls also had domestic responsibilities in the United States, which intensified their perception of their places of origin as a liberating place where they were not bounded by housework. Intersections of class, age, gender, and family structure,[16] meant the girls were responsible for house chores and taking care of their younger siblings. As the oldest girl in her extended family, Thanh's parents expected her to engage in various domestic tasks. She went to her grandparents' house every day after school, looked after her young brother and her cousins, cooked dinner for her grandparents and then at night she went back home and prepared dinner for her own family. While she acknowledged how Vietnamese culture—greatly influenced by Confucius beliefs—values respect for and subordination to one's parents, she sometimes complained about her busy schedule where she had to balance her school work with the housework and had little leisure time. Their change in socio-economic status upon immigration also intensified Thanh's domestic responsibilities as her adult family members worked long hours. She was no longer an innocent child who could spend time outside playing but was expected to be a "family-oriented" (Espiritu, 2003, p. 160) adolescent girl who "through their unpaid

---

[16] Family structure seemed to be a salient identity that shaped the girls' experiences of domestic responsibility. The girls who had younger siblings had more domestic responsibilities (e.g. taking care of younger siblings, doing house chores, etc) than other girls who had older siblings.

housework and kin work…shoulder the primary responsibility for maintaining family closeness" (Espiritu, 2003, p. 162). It is possible that the girls' parents put more burdens on their daughters to complete domestic work as a means by which to control the daughters' time and maintain traditional values and culture such as family ties.

Similarly, as the oldest girl in her family, Chelle often took care of her younger brother and helped her mother with house chores as her mother worked long hours, which restricted her time to spend time with her friends. As the girls' families relocated to the United States and often their class status changed, the teenage daughters, specifically those who had younger siblings, became responsible for reproductive labor in their households, which ultimately restricted their freedom and mobility.

Their borderland positioning in-between their countries of origin and the United States allowed the girls to idealize their places of origin as "perfect" places in their imagination. Their solitary and constrained lives in the United States led them to draw on their nostalgic memories of countries of origin and create this imagined utopian place to belong.[17] Chelle's essay on home entitled "carefree days" shows a glimpse into the girls' ideal home discussed above where familiar and caring neighbors surrounded them, their parents trusted them and did not regulate their movement, and they could spend enormous amount of time playing with their friends in a safe neighborhood, all of which Chelle imagined the Philippines to be. She told me that she wrote this story around 2:30 am in the morning on her I-phone after she looked at the pictures of her cousins and

---

[17] Similarly, Appadurai (1996) has suggested that "the homeland is partly invented, existing only in the imagination of the deterritorialized groups" (p. 49).

friends in the Philippines on Facebook. "When I saw the pictures, it triggered something

inside me:"

<div align="center">Carefree days</div>

When you just let your imaginations take you to the wildest forests, to the highest towers and the most magnificent castles. Where your heart lights up when your feet touches the ground after that little twirl. Knowing it was successful, perfect and unflawed.

Those feet were just about to get lives of their own, began to wonder absently, not caring where it will end up or what it will touch. Just walking along the streets that you know so well, by heart, by its texture. Skipping from your house, with that bright smile etched across your face, going to that direction you know by heart.

"Angelina." A little voice roused up from your throat. Chubby little knuckles collided with the wooden door, that had a long slanted scratched caused by their plastic wands.

"Sierra is here, mommy. We'll just go play outside." A sweet, solid sound was heard under the crack of the door, followed by a loud click.

"Angelina! Let's go." They took each other hands, letting their wobbly knees support them, as they dashed from block, to block. Street to street. Garden to yard. The undisturbed wind wounded their soft hair, as they ran wild and free.

Angelina and Sierra walked absently, coming home from school. Every person passed, was rewarded by their sweet, sincere smiles.

"Jacob asked me out!" Sierra shrieked.

Their mile long legs sprinted up and down, both freaking out. Not caring about others' eyes.

Well, that's home. Seems like. Small town. A big town. A community. No matter what it is, the feeling of having to know each crack in the street, each daisies along the sidewalk and knowing how to get to people's houses was enough to feel the warmth of home inside your heart. The tiny things like the bushes that you used to hide in, every time your mom calls you for dinner, that old tree in the corner where you first held someone's hand or the lonely bench by the lamp where your break up had taken place.

For me, home is where you know you belong. Where you feel like unjudged by other people. Where you feel comfortable to be yourself. Where you feel accepted and lastly, where you feel that warmth of fire inside your heart, called love and happiness.

Home is where your childhood treasures are safely kept in. Home is the place to be yourself. Home is where everyone around you already accepts the tiny person, not even knowing who they gonna be. Home is where your heart is.

"Stay Here is Really Simple": Acknowledging the United States

While the girls often rejected the United States, they also acknowledged it as a possible "home." Specifically, they realized the possibilities of the United States when they experienced alienation during their visits back to their countries of origin and when they imagined the difficulties of readapting to their places of origin.

The girls acknowledged that the United States could be a better place to live as a woman. While the girls longed for what they believed as liberating childhood days with autonomy and mobility in their places of origin, they also were aware of strict gender policing through their experiences of returning to their countries of origin as adolescent girls. What it meant to be a "good girl" or "good woman" in their countries of origin in terms of their physical appearance, mannerism, or behavior often were more restrained than in the United States.

Zullie, who longed for her girlhood days in the Philippines, had fear, uncertainty, and discomfort of returning to her country of birth due to her racialized gender experiences there. When she went back to the Philippines, she was no longer a "good Filipina girl" but was criticized for her "deviance" in terms of her dress and behavior. She expressed her frustration, "When you are from America, they expect you to be this person that's like snobby or whatever. Terrible, I'm not like that." She became a victim of racialized, classed, and gendered stereotypes towards Filipina women in the United States and was marked as alien in her country of origin.[18] She also shared with me her uncertainty of narrow constructions of beauty standards in the Philippines.

---

[18] Zullie's alienating experience when returning to the Philippines is captured by Casey's (1993) discussion on "homecoming," "returning to a previously familiar place."

They're [girls and women in the Philippines] obsessed with making their skin white, making their hair straight, making yourself look like what you look on TV or on photo shop pictures. You don't need that. Like here [in the United States], I mean, some people are still like that. But I feel like more people understand being natural a little more.

As a teenage girl, Zullie learned the concept of "beauty standards" at school, from friends and media in the United States and felt uncomfortable of how constructions of beauty was more restricted in the Philippines. Among all the girls, Zullie was very sensitive to her physical appearance and girls' body image represented in the American media. She articulated her anxiety, "Yeah, I mean I get carried away because I'm insecure too, like I look at a magazine and I see these models that are like perfect body and they have the nice clothes and I'm just like, look ugly." While she struggled to negotiate racialized and sexualized body images of teenage girls created by popular culture and media in the United States,[19] she felt that she had more pressure to conform to an ideal female body image in the Philippines. Scholars have argued that partly because of the United States' colonization of the Philippines as well as post-colonial relationships, Filipinos have a colonial mentality where they value whiteness as a sign of beauty (Espiritu, 2003). Zullie, partially aware of the colonized beauty ideal and her sense of discomfort towards ideal female beauty standards in the Philippines, allowed her to acknowledge the United States can be a possible "home."

Nita also experienced strong gender policing when she visited India, which made her acknowledge the possibilities of the United States as a "home." As a second

---

(p. 294). He has argued that when people return to a familiar place they may experience it as if it were a place that they had never been.

[19] Similarly, scholars have argued that Asian American girls and young women struggle from body images created by media and popular culture (Durham, 2004; S. J. Lee & Vaught, 2003; Maira, 2002).

57

generation girl, she struggled in negotiating different constructions of girlhood she learned from her Indian parents and in the larger American society. Her parents, especially her mother, expected her to be a "good Indian girl," modest and chaste, moral and with proper mannerism, who retains traditional Indian culture, including gender roles such as completing house chores. As Espiritu (2003) discussed how "womanhood is idealized as the repository of tradition" (p. 160), Nita was expected to inherit cultural traditions from her parents, while none of those pressures were placed on her brothers. The pressure to conform to ideal Indian femininity culminated during her visits to India. She explained to me how her mother forced her to wear traditional Indian dress which she did not like as it was too "girly."

> And then like a couple times, like I tell my mom, "I can't wear it [traditional Indian dress]. I can't wear it." And she's like, "Come on, you're a girl. You have to wear it." I'm like, "I know I'm girl and stuff, but like come on, I'm just not comfortable." And she's like, "Come on, you have to be a girl. Show you're a girl." I'm like, "Okay."

Nita often distanced herself from girls who wore feminine styles of clothing and always wore large size t-shirts and jeans which she felt comfortable wearing. Her fashion was acceptable in American society but was strongly problematized in India. Out of frustration for the shockingly gendered expectations, she articulated, "I feel like I have to like change my whole personality just to be there." Her encounter of gender policing when she returned to her country of birth was so strong and rigid that she even had to change her understanding of self and identity. Pressures to conform to ideal femininity valued by her family in India led her to acknowledge how the United States allowed less gender conformity. The girls felt that broader constructions of beauty standards, less

pressure to conform to ideal femininity, and less rigid gender policing were important

characteristics of their ideal home.

The girls recognized the possibilities offered by the United States when they

imagined their future in their countries of origin, having to overcome the hardships to

readapt to their lives there. After a certain amount of stay in the United States, the girls

felt uncertain they could readjust to different political, social and economic systems,

schools, and networks of affiliation in their countries of origin. Even Thanh, who had a

strong sense of attachment to Vietnam and often was critical about her life experiences in

the United States, shared with me her uncertainty of returning to Vietnam, given its

political condition.

> Thanh: Yes, Vietnam is my home. But the fact is if I go back, I will have less chance to survive.
> Tomoko: Why?
> Thanh: Because all is about money. And if you don't have money, the society there is more complicated than here [in the United States]. You don't have freedom of speech. Everything you speak, you have to consider…Here, in America, it's simple…You can say whatever you say…So you don't think about it. It's freedom, so you lose the sense of reasoning, you lose the sense of considering…

When she imagined herself as an adult in Vietnam, she felt hesitation and

uncertainty to navigate different political and social systems in a communist country

where there were political corruption and censorship. She was already accustomed to a

democratic society where freedom of speech was encouraged, which made it difficult for

her to imagine a bright future in Vietnam. In addition, while she longed for her

childhood days in Vietnam where there was a sense of community, four years of stay in

the United States also led her to question the value of a collectivist culture there.

> Tomoko: Have you been back to Vietnam?

Thanh: No, if I go back…it will be the same. Hard. Stay here is really simple. Just stay, make money, have a family and live. When you get old, get the retirement, get money, social security, and you die. But in Vietnam, it is more complicated. You wake up and just stepping out of the house, you have to say hi to everybody. Think about what am I want to eat and even you go to work, sometimes people come in and you have to say what you are going to do. What should I do, what should I do and keep thinking about it. After a long day, it's stressful.

During her stay in the United States, she discovered the concept of independence as a valued trait in the United States. She learned to be responsible for her own life without relying on or supporting others. She began to realize that close social connection which was valued in Vietnam has its drawback. Her life there seemed to be "more complicated," difficult, and "stressful." For her, individualist and collectivist culture co-existed in her ideal understanding of home. While she often showed a strong sense of resistance towards the United States, she was considering applying for U.S. citizenship as it provided more economic and educational opportunities. By imagining her future in Vietnam and difficulties she may face upon her return, she acknowledged the United States as a potential place to live due to practical reasons such as legal status and economic security.

Giang also had anxiety of moving back to Vietnam as a teenager, after living in the United States for more than five years. She specifically shared with me her concerns about navigating a different high school life in Vietnam.

I don't know how at my age to be back in Vietnam right now. I don't know how…Cause we have different school system, and I guess I would have to make friends, maybe I would be bad or maybe I would be good. I am not sure.

Giang enjoyed her school life in the United States, surrounded by many friends and did fairly well academically. She compared herself to other Asian American girls

60

and said, "I am pretty glad to have this life. Because I know some people who have family issues, money problems, I'm glad that I don't have it." Accustomed to her school life in the United States, she felt uncertainty when envisioning a teenage school life in Vietnam. She recognized that another relocation would mean making a new community and learning a different school system, which led her to acknowledge the possibilities of the United States.

While the girls articulated how either their countries of origin or the United States could only be a possible "home," they sometimes complicated it by saying how each country had both possibilities and limitations. Chelle was aware of the dilemma of choosing either the Philippines or the United States as a place to live. She expressed the difficulty associated with her in-between positioning by explaining how the Philippines and the United States provided her both advantages and disadvantages.

> There is pro and con being in America and there are pro and con being in the Philippines. Because you can never find a place where everything is perfect. Trust me. Like let's say you are always early at school. You are always quick but you have to wait long. If you are late, you don't have to wait. But the teacher will hate you. Being in America, I have so much opportunities here, I have so much like I can go to amazing places that I can go to. But I don't have my family here like most of my family here. In the Philippines, I have most of my families, I have my friends, I grew up there, I know everyone except I don't have that much of opportunities there.

She deeply longed for her childhood life where she was surrounded by expanded family members and friends but simultaneously was aware of economic hardship in the Philippines. Life in the United States offered her economic security but she did not have most of her caring and nurturing families, relatives, and friends. Her straddling of two different worlds allowed her to acknowledge the complexity, perplexity, and hardship to discover places where she could feel a sense of belonging in the borderlands. Similar to

61

1.5 generation Filipina immigrant youth in Japan (Tokunaga, 2011a), Chelle weighed advantages and disadvantages of countries of origin and arrival and were "balancing their senses of safety, economic security, community, and cultural/linguistic affirmation across spaces to find, build, and imagine home(s) in borderlands" (p. 192). By juggling the possibilities and limitations of both countries, the girls acknowledged how the United States could also be a potential "home."

"I'm Definitely Going to Japan": Imagining a Third Possible Homeland

The girls not only imagined their countries of origin or acknowledged the United States as places to belong in the world. Some girls deployed their imagination skills and ability and created an ideal third possible homeland, where they could visualize a promising and hopeful future. The imagination can be a powerful tool, a kind of "staging ground for action, and not only for escape" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 7). The way they envisioned other nation-states, often foreign and unfamiliar, as a future "home," was not their passive enactment to escape from their difficult lives in the United States or from the impossibility of returning to their countries of origin, but was their active agency to manage their in-between positioning.

Yin, a Chinese girl, often dreamed of relocating to Australia, a country where she had never been but imagined to be a relaxing and peaceful place that she could feel a sense of community.

Tomoko:	Where do you think your future home is?
Yin:	I want to go to Australia. Everyone is friendly. I haven't been there. Atmosphere is…Everyone is helping each other. More a place where you don't have to face all those technology, etc. They have more relaxed time. I want that.

Yin was very studious, hardworking and always worked on her school assignments during the homework time of the after-school program. She often told me about her demanding advanced classes, the sheer amount of assignments she had, and how much time she spent every day to complete school work. While she was relatively successful academically, she often looked tense and shared with me the stress and pressure to do well she experienced in school. She had older sisters who attended high ranked universities which might have led her to internalize the academic pressure at home. She explained to me the reason she joined the after-school program of the Asian American youth organization, which implied the depth of her academic stress. "I have so many study times I need to do readings for AP classes so [I joined the organization so that] I have some time [during the program] to release pressures."

An imagined Australia provided her a sense of comfort, relaxation, and happiness where Yin envisioned herself not having to manage her daily stress. In her "who I am collage"[20] (a collage that represented how they saw themselves, see Chapter 2), she pasted a map of Australia with maps of China and the United States, which shows how much she felt connected to Australia (See Figure 1).

---

[20] To protect anonymity, I purposefully shielded the middle section of the collage where she wrote her name. On a yellow sheet of paper, she wrote her Chinese name in English in the middle and her American name above that. She also wrote her Chinese name in Chinese characters behind the mountains she drew.

Figure 1. Yin's "who I am collage."

She attached an image of an ocean in the back of the map of Australia "because…it looks calm and relaxed." The phrase "In Balance" was glued next to the map of Australia as she explained, "And then I also put a little balance. Because sometimes you get a lot of work and stuff and then you feel like you need to balance your family, friends, grades." She utilized her imagination skills and ability to feel a sense of relaxation and calmness in her imagined Australia where she did not have in her daily life in which she strived to be academically, socially, and economically successful in the United States. Her struggles in the United States led her to imagine a utopian country alternative to the United States or China where she could relax and feel comfortable. Since she had never been to Australia, she carved out dimensions of ideal home which were associated more with emotions and perceptions of what it could be—they were relaxation, peace, tranquility, calmness, comfort, leisure, and work/life balance.

Thanh was very sophisticated in searching for and imagining a third possible homeland where she could envision her and her family's prosperous future. She longed

for Vietnam but given the amount of sacrifice her parents made to exit Vietnam and start a new life in the United States, among other practical reasons, she said that moving back to Vietnam was not realistic. While she acknowledged the possibilities of the United States as a homeland, she often expressed her strong sense of alienation here. Situated in this ambivalent borderland positioning, Thanh created an imagined third homeland that was free from constraints that she had in Vietnam and the United States and were full of possibilities.

Thanh imagined Canada, a country she had never been, as a possible place which offered a sense of safety, community, and economic security for her family.

> I've been thinking of at least you know, I want to go to at least to Canada. Because Canada is very safe and – it's safe. It's just basically safe… in some cities you don't even have to close your door at night – to lock your door at night. I think it's a great thing. And they have free healthcare. It's just basically the same as the U.S., but safer and more benefit. So when my parents get old, I think it's a good thing to move them there.

For Thanh, thinking about a country where her family could have a safe and stable life was important. As the oldest child in her family, she was aware of "filial obligations" in Vietnamese families where "children were expected eventually to provide economic resources to parents and other family elders" (Kibria, 1993, p. 131). Therefore, when she imagined her family's happiness in the future, she preferred to relocate to Canada where she already had her relatives who could provide support, was safer, and had a better welfare system than the United States. In her mind, she imagined Canada was an ideal in-between country for her family that mitigated some of the constraints she had in Vietnam and in the United States and perhaps provided more.

Thanh also imagined Japan, another country where she had never been, but which she saw as a "dream" country. When I asked her where she envisioned herself 10 or 20

65

years in the future, she answered, "Dream is different from reality. Reality is Canada is the best, but for dream the best choice is – I'd like to go to Japan." For Thanh, Japan was a country of "individual dream" and not a "realistic" place to relocate considering her obligation to support her family, specifically her parents. She had concerns of bringing them to Japan as her parents do not understand Japanese and they might not "fit in" to Japanese culture. Because she desired to reside in the Tokyo area or other big cities she was uncertain if her parents could adjust to the rapidly changing cultures in these cities. But she articulated, "If I'm by myself I'm definitely going to Japan."

Thanh's dream of relocating to Japan was not naive. She had a deep affection for Japan and a strong desire and detailed plan to relocate and reside in Japan. She often happily shared with me her feelings, thoughts, and knowledge about Japan using a mix of English and Japanese, a language which she felt connected to. By taking Japanese classes at Maple High and through her personal interests in Japanese media, she became fluent in conversational Japanese, which enabled her to realistically envision her future in Japan. Thanh planned to graduate from a prestigious college in the United States, work in a multinational company, and then get transferred to Japan. She asked me for some suggestions to make her dream come true and even mentioned that she wanted to own an apartment or a house in Tokyo and live her life there. While her plan to relocate to Japan can be easily dismissed as a fantasy or a daydream, she was also aware of some constraints she might face in Japan, including profound xenophobia. When I asked her if she knew how the life of a Vietnamese was in Japan, she responded,

> The fact that of like if you are a foreigner, you stay foreigner forever in Japan. So I kind of back off a little bit. But thinking overall, eliminate all those, and thinking of the benefit, I still think Japan is a great place to go to.

As her statement of "foreigner forever" shows, she was partially aware of discrimination and racism immigrants experience in Japan, but she still envisioned Japan as a place to relocate. She had sophisticated knowledge and skills, including her Japanese fluency which enabled her to envision a bright future in Japan.

Her unique borderland positioning, her childhood days in Vietnam and her immigration experience to the United States, led her to imagine Japan as a country where she felt a sense of future belonging. She said, "I've been fancying [fantasizing about] Japan since I was in fifth grade." She already had a strong interest in Japan before relocating to the United States. As a girl in Vietnam, she was surrounded by multiple media messages that romanticized Japan as "more technology, more nice [nicer], more advanced" country than Vietnam. She articulated, "On TV, and in magazines, and in newspapers, books, it looks like the Japanese culture and the Japanese country is like something different from the current society [Vietnam] that I'm in, so." She still was saddened by the memory of not being able to visit Japan as part of a student trip during an elementary school summer program in Vietnam due to her health. Her vague dream changed into a more complex and sophisticated imagination of Japan after she immigrated to the United States.

Four years of her staying in the United States made her realize the cultural similarity of Japanese and Vietnamese culture, as both are lumped into the same racial category "Asian" in the American context. For her, Japan had more cultural similarity to Vietnam than to the United States, including values around a sense of community. She struggled to negotiate the individualistic culture valued in the United States, which furthered her idealization of Japan as a place where she could treasure a similar

environment to Vietnam.

> When you are living here [the United States] for a long time, you start to find that in America, they think about themselves before others they are kind of like all for one. But Japanese people are like one for all. They think about others first. They will consider if I do this, I will break up the community.

She often expressed her frustration and anger towards some of the students at Maple High who she thought of as "selfish" and not being thoughtful of others. Her resentment to what she understood as individualistic "American culture" further pushed her to idealize not only Vietnam but also Japan as a place where a sense of community would be cherished, whether or not that was a reality. She also bought into the hierarchical power dynamics among Asian countries as was clear from her statement "Japan is really the best country in Asia," which made her perceive Japan on top of the social hierarchy among Asian countries. Acknowledging both possibilities and constraints of Vietnam and the United States, she imagined Japan as an ideal in-between country which shared "Asian culture" with Vietnam but also the economic power that the United States had and Vietnam did not. Her imagining of Japan implies that a collectivist culture, a sense of community, economic security, and advanced technology are all important characteristics of what an ideal home is for her.

Her borderland positioning was mediated through her regular engagement in Japanese popular culture via the Internet. She lived in the world of "prominent diffusion of Japanese culture in the globalizing age" (Befu, 2001, p. 13) or what Igarashi (1997) called "Japanization." Electronic media can enhance the "work of imagination" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 3). For Thanh, her online engagement in Japanese popular culture seemed to fuel her imagination of Japanese people, culture, and society. Specifically, her

deep attachment to *Arashi*, a popular Japanese boy band,[21] further contributed to her

imagination of Japan as a possible future "home." Since she immigrated to the United

States, she had been a big fan of *Arashi*, passionately watching TV shows, dramas,

movies that *Arashi* performed in, and listening to their music on a daily basis. She

happily expressed, "I always hang out with *Arashi* on the computer." She, in fact, was

known as the "*Arashi* fan" at Maple High and followed most of the news on *Arashi*.

She was so deeply attached to *Arashi* that she even saw them as an ideal family

for her. She expressed, "I would like to have a family like *Arashi*." For Thanh, *Arashi*

had a relationship similar to "close brothers" where the members cared for and supported

each other and sometimes made "silly jokes" and had fun. While *Arashi* members were

her imagined family, they encouraged her when she struggled from her daily life,

including the hard time she went through when she had just immigrated to the United

States. "They empowered me… Even now whenever I have bad stuff happening, I just

go back to them…Because they are always like a family, which I lack. Because when I

came here my parents were really busy." A Japanese boy band which she encountered

via the Internet fueled a sense of a loss of family and community after she immigrated.

Through *Arashi*, she further imagined that people in Japan value family, neighbors, and a

sense of community.

Thanh not only engaged in *Arashi*-related entertainment individually but also

consumed, produced, and disseminated it as a collective, with a virtual Vietnamese

---

[21] *Arashi* (which means "storm" in Japanese), the boy band, was formed in 1999 and consists of five members who are in their late 20s and early 30s. Not only they are very successful and popular with their music but they also have regular TV shows and perform in dramas, movies, radio shows, commercials, etc. ("Arashi's bio," n.d.).

Arashi fan community she co-created.[22] Soon after she moved to the United States, she

formed an online fan group with approximately ten Vietnamese girls and young women

in various parts of the world, which later became a group with more than 100 members

from Vietnam, Japan, the United States, Australia, Europe, among others.[23] However

temporal or unstable the online community was, the fact that they were all Vietnamese

fans of *Arashi* enabled them to construct a virtual community of "geographically

dispersed coethnics" (Parreñas & Siu, 2007, p. 4).[24] They used social media such as

Yahoo messenger or Facebook to communicate with each other and collectively created

Vietnamese subtitles for movies and TV shows where *Arashi* members performed,

translated magazine articles where *Arashi* was featured and their lyrics into Vietnamese.

Thanh not only shared a common interest in *Arashi* but also was emotionally

attached to this community as she described as "I look for them as older siblings, who I

don't have, and who I wish for." She often shared personal problems with the oldest in

---

[22] Similarly, Sierra, first generation Filipina girl, also had an online home-like
community where she connected with fans of her favorite American singers and bands
such as *The Ready Set* (male vocalist of pop music) and *VersaEmerge* (American rock
band). She used Tumbler to communicate with her virtual fan community "from
different parts of the world" such as Scotland, the Philippines, and the United States.
[23] The fan group was a "community of consumers" (Huat, 2008, p. 86) and
producers of *Arashi*-related entertainment who were "widely dispersed across a
geographic space as distribution and market radius of the TV drama or artiste" (Huat,
2008, p. 86).
[24] Brubaker (2005) has suggested that there are three main elements that
constitute the concept of diaspora: 1) dispersion, 2) homeland orientation, and 3)
boundary-maintenance (pp. 5-7). The virtual community Thanh created was a
Vietnamese diasporic community given that the members of the community were
Vietnamese dispersed in the world, shared similar migrant experiences and forged a kind
of diasporic consciousness. Similarly, a number of scholars have examined different
diasporic communities in the world. See for examples, "black Atlantic diaspora" (Gilroy,
1993), Chinese diaspora (Siu, 2005), Filipino diaspora (Parreñas, 2001), South Asian
diaspora (Shukla, 2003), and "queer South Asian diaspora" (Gopinath, 2005).

the group, a "big sister" for Thanh, who lived in California. Her virtual Vietnamese female friends, specifically the ones who lived outside of Vietnam, shared similar immigrant experiences with Thanh, which allowed them to understand each other's daily immigrant struggles and to provide support. While Thanh was subject to gendered racialization in the United States, this virtual community allowed her to become one of "transnational subjects whose affiliations and loyalties reside in the interstices between nation-states" (Ang, 2007, p. 287).

Her virtual Vietnamese *Arashi* fan friends became an important source of her imagination of Japan as a future "home." Thanh learned about Japan, including Japanese popular culture to general Japanese society, politics, and culture from her virtual Vietnamese friends. While most of her virtual Vietnamese friends had never been to Japan, they collectively shared information on Japan, discussed, co-imagined, and co-created an idealized country Japan. Appadurai (1996) has argued the power of collective forms of imagination, "Fantasy can dissipate…but the imagination, especially when collective, can become the fuel for action. It is the imagination, in its collective forms, that creates ideas of neighborhood and nationhood" (p. 7). Through her engagement with *Arashi*, Thanh, with her virtual Vietnamese friends dispersed globally, collectively constructed an imagined homeland Japan, a country where they had no ethnic or ancestral roots or had ever visited.

Unlike how the girls imagined their countries of origin and the United States through direct experiences or proxy experiences, they imagined third possible homelands

mainly through media consumption. Living in the world of "mediascapes"[25] (Appadurai, 1996, p. 35), the girls were able to envision, dream, and fantasize about the possibilities of their lives in a country without any prior experiences.

"I Like to Be Asian Online": Creating a Pan-Asian Consciousness

The Asian American girls not only imagined multiple homelands as possible "homes" but also constructed an imagined "pan-Asian consciousness" which transcended the boundaries of nation-states. By inhabiting a border where multiple cultures and nation-states collide, the girls formed a "third space" where "cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211). Their pan-Asian consciousness was deterritorialized, ephemeral, and transient spaces where the girls felt some form of belonging based on their imagination of what Asia was, could be, and meant to them.

The girls created a pan-Asian consciousness through actively engaging with Asian popular culture online. In a globalized age where "the borderless circulations of popular culture" (Tsutsui, 2010, p. 3) are prevalent, the girls could easily consume various Asian entertainments almost at the same time as broadcasted in Asia and other parts of the world. While all the girls engaged in Asian entertainments, the second generation girls were more active and enthusiastic about consuming Asian popular culture than the first or 1.5 generation girls.[26] They actively consumed movies, TV shows, dramas, music, and

---

[25] Appadurai (1996) has described "mediascapes" as "the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information" and "the images of the world created by these media" (p. 35).

[26] Mino and Gina's preference of consuming solely Asian popular culture was different from how most of the first and 1.5 generation girls also consumed American popular culture. Yin, Sierra, Chelle, Giang, and Zullie all mentioned their favorite

anime from multiple Asian countries, including Korea, Japan, India, Taiwan, and China.

It was a "habit" for the girls as how Mino, the second generation Vietnamese girl,

declared, "Asian entertainment is like part of my lifestyle."

Mino was an expert in Asian entertainment; Yin characterized her as "Asian in

deep" and Giang named her as an "Asian dictionary." Specifically, Mino's favorite

entertainments were Indian movies, including Bollywood, Tollywood, and Kollywood, in

different Indian dialects (Hindi, Telugu and Tamil) and Korean boy band music. She was

deeply engaged in these Asian entertainments as she said, "When I wake up in the

morning, somehow like a song will pop up out of my head and I'm like, what the heck. It

always happens like that. It will be like a Korean or Indian song just pop up out of

nowhere in my head." Mino also enjoyed drawing sketches and creating artworks of her

favorite Japanese, Korean and Indian celebrities, boy bands, and musicians (See Figure 2

for her drawing of her favorite Indian actor in Bollywood films).

American TV shows, movies, celebrities, and music. In addition to the difference of
immigration generation category, the fact that three first generation and 1.5 generation
girls came from the Philippines also might have influenced their preference towards
American culture. Due to the United States' colonization and neo-colonial relationship
with the Philippines, the three Filipina girls were accustomed to American popular
culture and consumed it regularly before immigrating to the United States. Intersections
of generation category and ethnicity seemed to impact how these girls engaged in popular
culture and how that influenced their identity formation.

Figure 2. Mino's drawing of a Bollywood actor.

Her "who I am" collage shows how she felt a strong attachment to popular culture

from Japan (J-pop) (she glued a clip from a Japanese magazine which featured *Arashi* on

the bottom right side of the collage), Korea (K-pop), and India (See Figure 3). She also

represented herself in anime form with big and brilliant eyes, common of anime

characters, which implies how anime was deeply connected to her identity as well.

Figure 3. Mino's "who I am collage."

Gina, a 15 year old second generation Chinese girl, also enjoyed watching anime, Taiwanese dramas, and Korean dramas, among others. Specifically, anime was "a whole life thing" to her. She spent about eight hours during the weekends watching anime in her room on her computer.

The girls' engagement in Asian popular culture went beyond a leisure activity or hobby. It was a site where the girls searched for Asian roots, formed an Asian identity, and affirmed their cultural backgrounds.[27] Mino often happily told me how proud she was to engage in Asian popular culture and how it was connected to her Asian identity and belonging to a pan-Asia.[28]

> I think I feel that way, connected to the Asian entertainment because it's like part of who I am even though I'm not that specific kind of Asian, but I'm just like, you know, I have like that Asian pride, you know? I was like, you know, represent the Asians…

The Asian pride she mentioned was not indicative of the common understanding of Asian American pride but went beyond the boundary of the United States. As Mino explained, "It's like a pride like you're proud to be Asian, and you're proud of other Asians in Asia, representing who they are and all." She created a pan-Asian

---

[27] Scholars have stated the importance of media and popular culture in community formation and identity development of immigrant youth. Park (2004b) who conducted research on Korean American youth's consumption of Korean and Japanese dramas argued that the youth's active engagement in these popular cultures is "a sign of a formation of new type of community transcending national borders" and leads to a "development of a media-mediated pan-ethnic community in the US" (p. 292). Similarly, Desai (2005) revealed how Bollywood films provided "social belonging, familial connections, transnational ties, linguistic fluency, and cultural knowledge" (p. 62) to second generation South Asian Americans and allowed them to develop a South Asian identity and share "South Asianness" with South Asians in the diaspora.

[28] Similarly, Shiraishi (2007) explored the possibility that the shared passion towards and interest in anime and manga among Asian countries may lead to a previously undefined cultural connection, an emerging Asian cultural community.

consciousness and pan-Asian pride that she shared with Asians not only from the United

States but also from Asia. She added with a smile, "I am happy for Asian people!" Nita,

the second generation Indian girl, shared with me her drawing of an Asian girl (drawn

with a pencil in black and white) surrounded by many colorful Asian characters from

popular culture (See Figure 4).

Figure 4. Nita's drawing of an Asian girl.

Nita initially drew the Asian girl but she looked very "depressed," soaked in the

rain, so she later added many happy Asian anime characters around her drawing to "cheer

her up." The Asian characters gave life to the girl, which implies how Asian popular

culture was empowering and affirming for her.

The girls created a pan-Asian diasporic consciousness[29] by engaging in Asian

popular culture individually as well as collectively with other Asian youth in the world

whom they met online. Mino shared a similar interest in Asian popular culture with

many Asian young people throughout Asia, the United States, and Canada and regularly

had online communication with them via social media. She proudly showed me a list of

her Skype friends, mostly Asian girls and young women dispersed globally. She

sometimes Skyped with a Filipina friend in the Philippines whom she met on *Crunchy*

Roll, a website that broadcasts Asian entertainment and also offers an online community

for fans. She also had a Malaysian friend in Malaysia whom she met on *Puricute*, a

website where users can edit and arrange their photos similar to *Purikura* (a Japanese

photo sticker). Mino sometimes exchanged letters with her; held a video group talk via

Skype with her, her boyfriend and one of Mino's friends; and constantly shared her

personal life and common interest in Asian popular culture. Mino also had another

Cambodian female friend in Canada whom she met online and they often chatted on

Facebook. She had never met them before in-person but shared some form of Asianness,

Asian pride, and a sense of community with other Asian young people in the world.

These girls' unique in-between positioning, living in the United States and having

their roots in Asia, was an important contextual element of their active engagement in

Asian popular culture and creation of a pan-Asian consciousness. Specifically, for

---

[29] Parreñas and Siu (2007) have proposed the notion of "Asian diasporas" to "articulate an intellectual and political agenda that makes possible the forging of not only locally and nationally based alliances but also translocal and transnational coalitions across the globe" (p. 6). The pan-Asian diasporic consciousness the girls in my study created demonstrated the possibilities of Asian American girls as creators and mediators of unique and emergent Asian diasporas.

second generation girls who were born and raised in the United States and were exposed to the racial category and labeling of Asian American, the concept of Asia as a community seemed to be more familiar and imaginable. According to Park (2004b), "Based on pan-ethnic camaraderie, which is built on an imposed category called Asian American, the context for collective identification and affiliation often shifts from Korea/Japan to Asia/West, thereby rendering room for a new group formation." (p. 289). The girls, who were subjected to "racial formation in the United States" (Omi & Winant, 1994), seemed to be able to envision an expansive pan-Asian community that connected Asian people in Asia as well as Asians dispersed in the world. For the girls, differences among ethnic groups or nation-states within Asia were not that important. They adopted the imposed category Asian American and actively reappropriated it to form a new pan-Asian community which was not an *Asian American* community or *Asian community in Asia* but went beyond.

The girls lived in a multi-ethnic neighborhood with a small Asian population, which was another contextual element that drew the girls into Asian popular culture and imagined a pan-Asian consciousness. Specifically, for girls who had less transnational connections to their countries of origin, there was limited opportunity for them to connect with their ancestral roots in Asia. In order to manage their in-between, to be connected to American and Asian cultures at the same time, the girls seemed to actively consume Asian popular culture which was highly accessible via the Internet. While scholars have argued that recent Asian popular culture such as K-pop and J-pop became hybridized (Jung, 2011b; Shim, 2006) and "culturally odor-less" (Iwabuchi, 2004, p. 27), the girls seemed to perceive "cultural proximity" (Straubhaar, 1991) to Asian cultures through

engaging with Asian popular culture.[30] Consumption of Asian popular culture seemed to "fill the emotional and psychological void in their [the girls'] psyches" (Park, 2004b, p. 291) and fuel their desire and needs to develop their Asian identity and attachment to Asia.

Mino often complained to me that there was a small Asian population in her neighborhood and she wished to meet more Asian people. While it was difficult for her to affirm her Asian cultural backgrounds and identities in her everyday life, she felt empowered to be "Asian" when she engaged in Asian popular culture online with her virtual friends. She claimed in a very proud and confident voice, "I like to be Asian online at home." By watching various Asian entertainments online, decorating her YouTube account with a lot of Asian characters, Skyping with her virtual Asian friends, she felt "hyped-up" and attached to her understanding of what Asia was. Through individual and collective online engagement with Asian popular culture, the girls felt strongly that affirming their Asian identity and cultural backgrounds and having a sense of community with Asians in the world are important aspects of their ideal home.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

The Asian American girls who lived on the juncture where various national and cultural borders intersect created an expansive understanding of "home" in the deterritorialized world. They simultaneously longed for their places of origin through memory, acknowledged the United States as a possible "home" when considering the limitations of their countries of origin, imagined a third possible homeland where they

---

[30] Jung (2011a) has argued that K-pop has become culturally hybridized, mixing both Eastern and Western culture, to respond to diverse desires and needs from consumers in the world (p. 3).

envisioned a bright future, and fashioned a pan-Asian consciousness through engaging in Asian popular culture. These multiple "homes" co-existed in the girls' imagination. The girls sometimes claimed, in an essentializing, simplistic and binary way, what was "home" for them and what was not. Other times they had fluid and hybrid notions of "home." While the way the girls made sense of these "homes" could be seen as contradictory, it was not a contradiction for them. It was a fundamental part of their construction of "home" and their unique and indispensable way to manage their borderland positioning.

Their in-between positioning inspired the girls to expand their imaginative range where they could blur, (re)adjust, and (re)create the borders of pre-existing categories, including the boundary of nation-states. They reimagined the borders of their countries of origin which were full of possibilities, recreated the boundaries of an imagined dreamland and readjusted the boundaries of what they thought of as "Asia" or "Asian." They utilized their creativity and invented these multiple imagined "homes" in the globalized and deterritorialized world. Expanding the borders of traditional categories through imagination, illuminated the ways in which the girls enacted some forms of agency.[31] The girls actively developed *la facultad* (Anzaldúa, 2007), "a kind of survival tactic that people caught between the worlds, unknowingly cultivate" (p. 61), to imagine multiple possible "homes" in their navigation of a borderland world.

Through balancing the possibilities and constraints of these different "homes," the girls carved out some characteristics that composed their ideal home. Daily family dinner, regular conversations with parents who seemed more relaxed, extended family gatherings,

---

[31] Appadurai (1996) has examined the relationship between imagination and agency and has argued that "the imagination is now central to all forms of agency" (p. 31).

and events, perceived material wealth, familiar neighbors with similar cultural backgrounds, caring and loving adults, a sense of history, a collectivist culture, less parental control, a sense of trust from parents, playing outside with friends, and personal literal mobility were all crucial home-like characteristics that the girls identified in their places of origin. The girls appreciated a broader construction of beauty standards, less pressure to conform to ideal femininity, democracy, long-term economic security/potential, and educational opportunities which made the United States a possible "home" for them.

Their new third imagined homeland had home-like characteristics, including relaxation and peace, physical safety, economic security, a collectivist culture, and advanced technology. By engaging in Asian popular culture, the girls were able to affirm their Asian identity and cultural backgrounds and have attachment to Asian youth dispersed in the world, which resulted in a fervent pan-Asian consciousness. By juggling advantages and disadvantages of these "homes," the girls were able to illuminate some characteristics of their ideal home, which offered them a sense of belonging, comfort, and affirmation. The home-like characteristics the girls carved out in these multiple homelands and beyond were fluid, flexible and relative, which reflects a glimpse into their lives in-between.

While the girls enacted nuanced forms of agency through imagination, they also experienced multiple constraints and hardships. The borderland space could not be romanticized as it was not an easy place to inhabit. Sometimes it was painful, confusing, and isolating to manage this ambiguous in-between terrain. The girls yearned for their countries of origin when they remembered their warm childhood memories but struggled

when they returned to their countries of origin and faced a different reality from their memory. They rejected the United States when they felt a deep sense of isolation in their family's home but preferred the United States when they recognized less rigid gender policing than in their places of origin. They imagined their bright future in a third possible homeland but questioned the practicality of relocation when they thought of family obligations. The girls were able to envision all these possible "homes" but making sense of where they felt a sense of community, belonging, security, safety, or affirmation in these wide-ranging "homes" was complicated, confusing, and sometimes seemed unmanageable. The girls often struggled from having these options and the ability to compare, contrast, and juggle what each "home" provided and did not provide.

Furthermore, while their imaginations were limitless and globally formed, the girls were bounded by structural constraints, including legal status, immigrant status, and citizenship both in their countries of origin and the United States. Specifically, as children, they had less control and power to relocate to a country they desired to inhabit. When they preferred to return to their countries of origin or to move to a third possible country, they did not have full autonomy and independence to enact their plans without their families' support in addition to broader social, political, and economic restrictions. Unlike "parachute kids," children of global elite families who are highly mobile (Zhou, 1998), many of the girls were from working class backgrounds which made it difficult for them to easily move from one country to another. Also as girls from families that value tight family connections, they faced gender related family obligations, and expectations, which seemed to prohibit them from moving freely.

However, the girls found ways to build home-like communities within the worlds they inhabited in the United States. They implemented some of their understandings of an ideal home to establish a community with their friends in the basement of their high school. It was a community where they seemed to have more control, power, and autonomy. Chapter 4 explores the ways in which the girls collectively created a home-like community in their everyday lives.

Chapter 4: Building Belonging in Everyday Life

While the Asian American girls imagined expansive and elaborate "homes" in the deterritorialized world, they also collectively formed a home-like community in their daily lives. The girls constructed a new community which never existed before. It was different from the once familiar neighborhood communities in their countries of origin where they shared similar cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds with those around them. It was a departure from being surrounded by like-minded families and relatives who shared their "traditional language, culture, myths, mores, and manners" (Finkelstein, 1983, p. 308). It was different from the virtual Asian communities they developed with other Asian girls and young women dispersed in the world. It was a home-like community that the girls created by and for themselves in the basement of their high school. They named this community the "Basement Group."

The Basement Group constituted a kind of "global microcosm" (Finkelstein, forthcoming). It was racially and ethnically diverse, comprised of Latino, Asian, Black, and White youth. It was a "poly-vocal" (Finkelstein, forthcoming) community where the youth spoke two or more languages daily. It was a religiously diverse group, including students who were atheist, Catholic, Buddhist, and Muslim. It was a mix of girls and boys and of different age groups. It was a group of youth from different social class, ranging from some who were eligible for Free and Reduced Meals to others who were middle class. The group also consisted of a number of national border crossers who dwelled in-between multiple nation-states. Most of the students in the group (and/or their parents) had immigrated to the United States from various countries in Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Europe. Some students moved back and forth between the United

States and their countries of origin. Others were returnees who spent some time

elsewhere and moved back to the United States. Some students were born in another

country and were adopted by a family in the United States. It was a community where

they built harmony in the midst of difference.

This chapter explores the ways in which the Asian American girls collectively

formed, created, and fashioned a community which they all called "home" within the

confines of their high school. Identifying this space and forming a group identity became

fundamental to their construction of a home-like community. This chapter examines how

the girls 1) carved out a home-like space in the school basement hallway, and 2)

developed a distinct group identity that made the community home-like.

"We Dominate the Basement!": Carving Out Home-Like Spaces

The Asian American girls carved out multiple home-like spaces in their daily

movements across various sites, including school, their community-based organization,

and their neighborhoods. Some girls shared an interest in creating arts in their visual art

classes at Maple High. Others enjoyed the time walking back home from school with

their peers, sometimes making stops at the nearby mall, Asian grocery stores, and fast

food restaurants. Still others treasured the time on the school bus going back home when

they chatted with their friends, read their favorite novels, or listened to their favorite

Asian music. A few girls looked forward to their weekends when they could make a

short trip to a nearby urban area with their close friends to watch movies, have lunch,

often at fast food restaurants such as *McDonald*'s or *Chipotle*, and have frozen yogurt for

dessert.[32] While there were a variety of home-like spaces the girls carved out in their everyday lives, they often gathered at the corner of the basement hallway at Maple High. In this out of the way space, they actively formed a community which they could and did call "home."

The girls were part of this community which they created by and for themselves and named it the "Basement Group," "Basement Crew," or "Downstairs Group" as they gathered at the corner of the basement hallway of Maple High during lunch.[33] The community began with seven members—six Asian American girls, including Giang, Mino and Gina and one Latino boy who all went to the same middle school—and in two years, it grew to a group of about 25 students. Giang, Mino, Gina, Sierra, and Chelle were part of the core members of the group and Yin, Nita, and Zullie also sometimes spent time with this group in the basement.[34]

---

[32] Multiple spaces that were not home-like for the girls also existed. The girls often talked about some classes at Maple High in which they could not connect with the teacher, or other students. In these classes, the girls were often subjected to model minority stereotypes – the expectation for Asian students to be smart and high achieving – which made them feel upset, uncomfortable and even angry. Chelle explained about her pressure to do well academically at Maple High, "Honestly, I feel pressured to be perfect because I'm Asian."

[33] Maple High has an open lunch system so the students can sit anywhere in the school to have lunch.

[34] The girls who were not the core members of the Basement Group also had their favorite spots to spend time with their friends at school, specifically during lunch. Yin sat near the "bridge" on the second floor of the school with her friends during lunch. Thanh enjoyed walking around the school hallway and outside with her close Chinese friend and also gathered with a group of her friends in front of the entrance door of the gym after school. Zullie often sat in front of her locker in the school hallway with her friends during lunch time and told me that if she returns to Maple High ten years later, she would definitely come back to "this spot" to remember the precious and warm high school memories.

One day, during the after-school program sponsored by the Asian American youth

organization, Giang took me to the basement hallway where this group congregated every

day and showed me their favorite spots to spend time. When I asked Giang her favorite

place to spend time with her friends, she explained in an exciting voice:

Giang: The most comfortable place is the basement.
Tomoko: Basement?
Giang: Yeah, like right here [underneath the stairwell of the basement of
             the school and near the backdoor exit]. This area.
Tomoko: Do you sometimes sit around here?
Giang: We come here but we stand over there but we talk more over there
             [pointing out to the basement hallway near the door of the
             Japanese classroom]…With a whole group of people that…
Tomoko: So you like this kind of space?
Giang: Yeah, we like this. We are like the Basement Group [in a strong
             and delightful voice]!
Tomoko: Why Basement Group?
Giang: Cause it's the same people coming downstairs to the basement and
             we just started hanging out together. And it's becoming a big
             group. Each year people just join in and it's getting bigger.
Tomoko: So when do you come? After each class or during lunch?
Giang: It's like the habit thing for everyone. After fourth period, come
             down here when lunch starts, like when you want to look for
             someone, and you know that they would be downstairs.

The girls and their peers gathered at the corner of the basement hallway near the

door of the Japanese classroom[35] before school and during lunch every single day. Some

sat at the corner of the basement hallway, next to the door of the Japanese classroom.

Others sat in front of the student lockers. A few sat underneath the stairwell, by the

backdoor exit which was "empty," hidden and more "private." They engaged in various

activities in these spaces during lunch time. They shared their lunches, talked, made

jokes, teased each other, gossiped, and laughed. They hugged each other, danced

---

[35] There were a few language classrooms in the basement and the Japanese
classroom was located at the end of the basement hallway.

together, ran, sang, texted, made calls, listened to music, and did homework. The girls

often told me how "loud" they were in the basement and were often "kicked out" by the

teachers. They had to move places and "spread" several times but they always came back

to their favorite spot— the corner of the basement hallway. While they were subject to

supervision by teachers and staff, the girls with their friends enacted some forms of

agency and re-appropriated this school space. They carved out a less structured "in-

between space" where they felt a sense of community, ownership, joy, and empowerment.

The corner of the basement hallway was where they could maintain invisible yet

high boundaries to protect and build their community. They established clear borders

that "define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them" (Anzaldúa,

2007, p. 25). The basement hallway was a "dim" (in Gina's words) and narrow space

where they could gather comfortably and in secret. It was a less congested space where

they could occupy and own the space they desired without fighting with others for space.

It was a safe, "segregated" and "isolated" space where they were less vulnerable from

other people's stares such as the security guards and teachers' eyes, mean girls'

judgmental eyes, and flirting boys' eyes. It was a less regulated space where they could

be "loud" and be themselves. It was a space where they were known, understood, and

valued by their peers.

The basement hallway had characteristics that other spaces at Maple High did not

have. Savannah, a Salvadorian girl who was a member of the Basement Group and a

close friend of many of the Asian American girls in my study, explained how the "Main

Street," the main hallway near the entrance of the school, was "packed" and the cafeteria

was "lonely and dark." Savannah understood the cafeteria as "dark" even though it was

spacious and bright during the day due in part to its multiple windows, especially when compared to the basement which did not have any windows and was a confined space. Also, for Savannah "Main Street" was too crowded with students (many of whom the girls labeled "jocks") even though it was more spacious than the basement hallway due to the high ceiling. She sometimes felt "scared" walking in this main hallway as some students "gave [her] a look." She was more vulnerable to other students' eyes in these spaces. The size and the amount of light in these spaces did not matter. These spaces were congested, anonymous, and alienating without a familiar community in which she could feel a sense of belonging. No matter how dim, narrow, and far from the center of the school campus, the basement hallway allowed the girls to comfortably occupy a space with their peers. Proud to be in the basement, the Basement Group actively chose to own this geographically marginalized space as was clear from how Gina happily claimed, "We dominate the basement!"

The after-school program of the Asian American youth organization was another home-like space where the Basement Group could gather and spend time together. Twice a week, after school, approximately 15 to 20 students would gather for two hours at a classroom at Maple High and participate in the program run by an Asian American program coordinator. Most of the girls of the Basement Group were the core members of the after-school program. Many of their friends in the Basement Group also sometimes joined the after-school program. The overlap of the members of the Basement Group and the after-school program made two different spaces share similar group identity.

The organization used a classroom at Maple High which was not home-like during the school day for the girls. However, a classroom, after school, protected and

supervised by the program coordinator, was a temporal cocoon for the girls. The after-school program was a "second family," an intimate community, which transformed the classroom into a comfortable space. Unlike the structured and bureaucratic school system, this community-based organization had some freedom and leeway where they could align their programs to the students' lived experiences.[36] The staff often asked the students to suggest activities and events they desired to have during the program and provided free time where the students could gather and hang out. I often saw the girls, including Yin, Nita, Gina, Giang, Mino, Meli, and Savannah, form a small girls' group near the door of the classroom. In this group, the girls had snacks, drew pictures, helped each other with school assignments, watched YouTube clips of their favorite bands, and shared their personal stories, including romantic relationships, similar to how they interacted in the basement. As a volunteer, for nearly two years, of this after-school program, I often joined this group of girls and we often talked about Japan and the Japanese language, shared our common interest in Asian popular culture, and immigrant experiences.

As the girls and their peers carved out home-like spaces at school, they developed a community identity that distinguished them from other social groups in their school. The community they created had a distinct group identity that had five main characteristics, which I discuss in the next section.

---

[36] A number of scholars have argued the importance of community-based organizations (CBO) as sites that can value and integrate the knowledge, ability, and strength that young people bring into their programs (Fine et al., 2000; Heath, 2001; Heath & McLaughlin, 1993; Reyes, 2007; Weis & Dimitriadis, 2008; Wong, 2008). These CBOs are also "in-between spaces," out of school and home spaces, where these youth could perhaps feel a sense of belonging.

Creating Distinct Group Identity

The girls' description of the Basement Group always started with "we." They actively defined the contours of their community by identifying who they were as part of a group. At the same time, they dis-identified themselves from other social groups at Maple High by defining who they were not. The girls formed a group identity that honored five main features: 1) expansion of who is family to include friends, 2) pride in diversity and inclusivity, 3) celebrations of cultural fusion, 4) value of "natural" girlhood beauty, and 5) shared interest in Asian popular culture.

"We are Like a Big family": Reconstructing a Family

The girls developed a group identity that had family-like characteristics. They often used family metaphors to describe the members of the group and transformed their friends into family members. Many of them assigned kinship terms (e.g., sister, brother, father, cousin, uncle) to their basement friends on their Facebook page. Chelle delightedly described her basement friends as "all the guys in there are like my big brothers. I love them so much. All the girls are like my big sisters. I am like the baby." As the youngest in the group, her basement friends took great care of her, which led her to see them as older siblings. Mino felt they shared a sense of community, closeness, and familiarity, which made her claim that the group was similar to her ideal family. "Everyone is connected. We are like a big family. We are close to each other. We know each other a lot. It is like a family thing." Mino created a family-like community out of a diverse population with different cultural backgrounds. Because she loved her basement friends so much, she created a collage of various pictures of the group for her

wallpaper on her laptop. She smiled every time she turned on her laptop and saw the group on her screen. She had tremendous affection and felt bound to this community.

The girls reproduced a form of intimate family time that many had in their countries of origin. They fashioned time with their peers to compensate for the lack of the family time in the United States.[37] Similar to family time in their places of origin, the girls ate together, shared personal stories, and regularly spent relaxing time together. Mino compared her experience at home, where she often felt lonely and isolated, to how she felt a sense of community at school where she could connect with her basement friends. "At home I'm quiet because my house is quiet. I don't have anyone to communicate with… So I'm like just be in my room, online. But I communicate with a lot of people here [at school] and [I can] be who I am in school most of the time." For Mino, the Basement Community provided more than a friendship. It affirmed her identity and a sense of self, which was sometimes difficult to acknowledge at home.

Not only did the girls share "family time" with their peers but they also emotionally and physically supported each other. The girls listened to each other, cared for, and gave advice when their friends had problems with family, friends, or romantic partners. They celebrated together when their friends had birthdays and won prizes and awards. They provided emotional support when their friends were being anxious, nervous, or depressed. They also helped each other when their friends needed support with their school assignments and projects. Like their ideal family, the girls and their peers took great care of their friends collectively, as Chelle explained, "We would team

---

[37] See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the contrast in family time in their homelands and in the United States.

up to help someone." While school space was often alienating, the girls felt a sense of

comfort, community, and care in their family-like community. Chelle had a vivid

memory of how her friends in the Basement Group provided family-like support to her

and Sierra when they performed (they played guitars and sang songs) in an international

talent show at Maple High.

> It's more like a family… We treat each other like a family, oh trust me… Specially, when *ate* Sierra [*at*e means elder sister or girl/woman who is older than the speaker in Tagalog] and I performed, they came, I almost cried because [a Vietnamese boy in the group] and [another girl], I think, they came to backstage. I was practicing so hard my fingers were aching and *ate* Sierra was singing and they were like "You guys need to relax. You gotta relax your fingers and you gotta rest your voice." So we did that and we were just like massaging our shoulders. They were like "You guys can do this, you guys are great"… It's just amazing.

The Basement Group provided Chelle and Sierra emotional and physical support

and care similar to what a family commonly provides. Before their performance, their

friends came to the backstage to calm them down as they were becoming nervous. Their

friends comforted their tense bodies, lessened their stress level, and encouraged them to

believe in their talents. Their attentive, affectionate, and thoughtful encouragement, care,

and support allowed the girls to feel a sense of interdependence, bonding, and

connectedness with this Basement Community.

The Group seemed to claim a sense of unity as a family-like group during the

talent show. While they commonly gathered at the basement hallway, which was an

invisible and hidden space in the school, in the auditorium during the performance the

Basement Group was highly visible and present. I was able to attend the show the year

after Chelle told me the story and watched the performance surrounded by the Basement

Group. They dominated the first three rows of the school auditorium and sat in front of

the middle section of the stage. During the performance, when Mino came to the stage to perform a Bollywood dance and Chelle and Sierra appeared with their guitars to sing some songs, the Basement Group became really loud and excited, screamed their names, shouted supportive words, and clapped and waved their hands. Some even stood up in the middle of the show and took pictures of their friends performing. By cheering loudly as a collective when their friends performed, the group seemed to express their tight bonds to the audience. While it can be dismissed as common forms of cheering among teenagers, it seemed to be one of their strategies to declare their existence as a cohesive family-like community.

"We are Diverse!": Claiming Pride in Diversity and Inclusivity

Diversity was a crucial feature of their group identity. While the group initially consisted of mostly Asian American girls, it later became a heterogeneous community with students of different races, ethnicities, gender, religions, languages, and classes. The girls actively promoted diversity in their community by sophisticatedly including and excluding potential members of the group.

Specifically, the girls were proud of the racial and ethnic diversity of the Basement Group. While some scholars have argued that the formation of racially segregated groups is crucial in the forming of youth identities (Tatum, 1997), the girls appreciated how their group was racially and ethnically "mixed." Savannah explained, "We don't have one person. We have every kind of person." They distanced and distinguished themselves from other visible social groups at Maple High which were often segregated by race, ethnicity, or class. According to the girls, there was a group of students called "Theater Kids" who were mostly White seniors with a few Asian and

94

Black students. There was an "ESOL Group" which consisted of mostly Latino

immigrant students who created their own closely knitted clique. The girls also identified

an "Asian Corner," a narrow ethno-centric group comprised of mostly Asian students

who often gathered near the stairs of the second floor. The girls differentiated themselves

from the Asian students in the Asian Corner by criticizing how they self-segregated

themselves in a small Asian clique and often did not include other races. The girls were

clear why they did not hang out with the Asian Corner students, as Mino explained, "We

don't hate them [Asian Corner students], we can't get along with them, cause we are

different, cause we are diverse. We like being very diverse." By policing and criticizing

the homogeneity of other social groups, the girls proudly declared the diversity in their

group.

The girls also preferred racial and ethnic diversity in the after-school program.

While the organization targeted low-income Asian American youth, the girls often

actively invited their non-Asian friends to the program, which made the racial and ethnic

composition of the program more diverse. Chelle happily claimed, "You don't have to be

Asian to join!" They were eager to diversify these communities and were proud of the

racial/ethnic differences they embraced.

The girls valued diversity not only in their friendships but also in their romantic

relationships.[38] The Basement Group was open to interracial dating, which was not very

common in other social groups. There were a few interracial couples in the group. Some

---

[38] The Basement Community was a decidedly heteronormative space. No girl in
my study identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning. In my year with the students,
I rarely heard any discussions of LGBT issues or queer sexualities.

girls dated Latino, Black, and Asian boys.[39] They actively differentiated themselves from Asian Corner girls who only dated "Asian guys," mostly Asian boys in the Asian Corner Group. Unlike other groups, the Basement Community had pride in cross-racial dating.

As a group that valued diversity, they championed some form of inclusivity. They often proudly mentioned how they were "open" and "welcome[d] anyone" who wanted to join the group. They distanced themselves from other social groups, specifically "popular" groups which had high boundaries and exclusive homogeneous group memberships. Zullie criticized the "Main Street Group," a group of students who sit in the main hallway at Maple High, most of whom she described as people who think they are "high, mighty and popular" and "exclusive." She avoided the main hallway as much as possible, "I don't like to sit there because most people who sit there are judgmental people….They look down at people who don't look good…It's really stupid." She explained how the Main Street Group evaluated and judged styles of dress, appearances, and behaviors of other students, which made her feel uncomfortable, unpleasant, and even angry. In Zullie's eyes, these "popular" group students had hierarchical understandings of students at Maple High and excluded people who did not fit into or meet their norms.

In contrast to these "popular" groups, Chelle emphasized that the Basement Group did not "judge" each other based on their social identities, values, interests, or personalities and "respect[ed]" each other's differences. Savannah delightfully said, "I'm

---

[39] Scholars have argued that many Asian families have difficulties in interracial dating or marriage (DasGupta & Dasgupta, 1998; Espiritu, 2003). While some girls' parents valued intraracial dating, the girls were open to interracial dating.

more comfortable [downstairs], 'cause I feel like the people here, they'll accept people fast." Acceptance, non-judgmental openness as well as diversity were the words that I heard the girls reiterate when defining or explaining this community.

Specifically, the Basement Group welcomed nomads—students who did not belong to any social groups or who did not have "a place to sit." The Basement Community often functioned as a shelter for newcomers to Maple High, students who wanted to escape from their social groups, or students whose group had broken down. Savannah and Meli, two Salvadorian girls, explained how Giang, one of the starting members of the Basement Group, invited them to the group and also how they welcomed their Peruvian friend Silvia, who had just arrived to the school.[40]

Savannah:	Cause our friend Silvia, you know Silvia?
Tomoko:	Yeah, yeah.
Savannah:	Yeah, she didn't - she was new to the school and we were like come sit with us.
Meli:	Yeah.
Savannah:	And she started sitting with us and now we're really close with her.
Tomoko:	Oh, that's so nice.
Savannah:	See, so we invite people…
Meli:	Yeah.
Savannah:	If you have, like, no friends, come sit with us, 'cause we'll accept you.
Tomoko:	Yeah.
Meli:	Or if, like, I had a point I had sat with other people during ninth grade and just like that group just, like, kind of broke.
Tomoko:	Yeah.
Meli:	And then, so, like, where am I gonna sit? So, I had been talking with Giang.
Savannah:	That happened to me too…

---

[40] The Salvadorian girls often mentioned about their experiences of being discriminated against by some teachers and students at Maple High. As Latina girls, they seemed to be vulnerable to racialized, gendered, and classed stereotypes at Maple High. The Basement Group was where these girls rarely experienced discrimination and could feel comfortable.

Meli:	I was like, Giang, I don't have a place to sit.
Tomoko:	Yeah.
Meli:	And, like, she's like, oh, you can come sit with us in the basement. So, I started going down to the basement.

The Basement Community actively provided a community for students who did

not belong to a permanent clique. The basement hallway was a safe space for nomads,

some seeking a place to belong and others who were marginalized from other groups.

Many of these new members of the group stayed in the basement, and thus enlarged the

size and the diversity of the Basement Community every year. The girls did scrutinize

and evaluate other social groups and were likely not to invite students who were part of

racially segregated groups or "popular" groups to join them. However, despite these

elements of exclusivity, they proudly claimed their inclusive features, especially to

integrate students who were marginalized at Maple High. The Basement Group that

valued diversity had inclusive feature to maintain the boundaries of their community.

"We are Gonna Get a Little Bit of Both!": Celebrating Cultural Fusion

Celebrating cultural fusion was another crucial feature of the Basement

Community. The diversity of the members of the Basement Group seemed to lead to

promoting cultural fusion in the group. The girls as a collective celebrated their ability to

fuse cultures, including scrambling languages, mixing and trading foods, and shuffling

and blending different types of music. Chelle happily explained how the Basement

Group was "mixed" by saying, "It's a good thing. Because we are gonna get a little bit of

both. It's the best of both worlds."   The girls valued mixing multiple cultures as they

believed they learned and acquired more. They rejected traditional monocultural ideas or

practices and appreciated the crossing and blending of cultural boundaries.

The girls had a profound interest in learning and teaching languages, creating

hybrid languages, and speaking multiple languages with their peers. They often mixed words from diverse languages, including Spanish, Japanese, Korean, and Tagalog in their English conversation with their peers. They sang birthday songs for their friends in English, Spanish, Japanese, Tagalog, and more. Specifically, since many of them were taking Japanese at Maple High and watched Japanese anime regularly, they often used Japanese words in their conversations with their peers and wrote Japanese words and their names in Japanese on their binders, black boards, sketchbooks, Facebook pages, and YouTube profiles.

Interestingly, despite the lack of Japanese students at the school, Japanese, being the only Asian language provided at Maple High, the students would sometimes use Japanese words to represent diverse Asian languages. Sometimes they would suggest having an "Asian talk" which meant to talk in a mix of Japanese and English, or, at times, greeting a visitor to the program by saying *konnichiwa* (hello in Japanese) rather than saying hello in English. They seemed to intentionally use Japanese, a language none of them spoke at home or in their communities, and appropriated as a hybrid language to share their Asianness or their interest in Asian culture. They seemed to be liberated and empowered to collectively fuse languages.

Some girls talked with each other in "a border tongue" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 77), a mix of multiple languages in one conversation, one sentence and one word. Filipina girls, including Chelle, Sierra, and Zullie specifically were sophisticated in speaking in *Taglish*, a mix of Tagalog and English. They were proud of and felt comfortable using *Taglish* as it was deeply connected to their identity. Some girls were multilingual and used different languages on different occasions.

99

Thanh was fluent in Vietnamese, her mother tongue, English, Japanese, and

Chinese. She comfortably switched back and forth from Japanese to English when

talking to me. When her Vietnamese male friend who also knew some Japanese was with

us, she talked to him in a mix of Vietnamese and Japanese and simultaneously conversed

with me in a mix of Japanese and English. When Thanh and I were talking, the girls

often surrounded us and actively listened to Thanh smoothly and sophisticatedly switch

multiple languages at the same time. Thanh was deeply respected by the girls for her

multilingual ability. The Basement Group was where the girls did not have to speak only

in one language but was where linguistic hybridity was affirmed, encouraged, and

celebrated.

The group enjoyed tasting, sharing, and blending foods from various countries

and regions. Like many immigrants, the girls valued the ethnic food they often ate at

home as it was a symbol of their family traditions, ethnic backgrounds, and countries of

origin.[41] However, they also enjoyed tasting other ethnic foods and often shared,

disseminated, and celebrated the diversity of food consumption in the basement. During

lunchtime in the basement, they exchanged home-made lunches such as sandwiches,

Pupusas, sushi, Chinese and Vietnamese noodles, Indian fried rice, and school lunches

distributed at the cafeteria. They celebrated their friends' birthdays or end of finals by

having hybrid potluck gatherings where they would bring their favorite foods and snacks,

including chocolate chip cookies, *Choco Pie* (Korean chocolate cake), cupcakes, potato

chips, *Pocky* (Japanese chocolate coated sticks), *Hi-Chew* (Japanese candy), and *Nutella*.

---

[41] Scholars have argued that food is deeply connected to immigrants' homelands, ethnicity, identity, and constructions of home (Haiming & Lianlian, 2009; Rabikowska, 2010; Vallianatos & Raine, 2008).

They enjoyed walking through American, Latino, and Asian sections of the local grocery stores, informing their friends of their favorite foods and often purchased ethnic foods that they had not eaten before. They loved visiting their friends' houses to taste their friends' mothers' home-cooked traditional meals. Collective consumption of diverse foods was a crucial way to celebrate their cultural hybridity in the basement.

The Basement Group was eager to engage in popular culture from multiple countries ranging from Asia, Latin America, the United States, and Europe. While some were more enthusiastic about Asian popular culture, they were proud to consume popular culture from around the world. Meli described their broad interest in popular culture by comparing it to the Latino clique at Maple High. "They don't like things of other cultures as much as we do. Like, they'll stick to, like, Spanish music and then, like, American music and that's pretty much it. Yeah." During the after-school program, the girls often gathered around the classroom computer and watched YouTube clips of their favorite American rappers as well as Korean boy bands and girl bands, Japanese and American rock bands, British boy bands, Bollywood singers, and others interchangeably. They talked animatedly about American TV shows such as *House* and *Glee* and Korean dramas such as *Rooftop Prince* or *Boys over Flower*, as what they often did in the basement. They took pride in expanding their interest in various popular cultures and were empowered to share together as a group.

The girls not only consumed popular culture from different parts of the world, but also produced their own hybrid version. Specifically, they enjoyed creating a mix of songs that resembled a "patchwork" in which they pieced together parts of diverse songs they felt a connection to. One afternoon, during the after-school program, a group of

101

girls were brainstorming ideas to create a short music video clip. Surrounded by a group of girls, Savannah and Meli were listing a number of songs the girls wanted to include in the video, which ranged from K-pop, J-pop, J-rock, music from the Philippines, Nepal, Thailand, Taiwan, and China to different types of American songs (e.g., instrumental, rock and pop). Savannah told me that one of the girls would create a mix of all these songs and edit it into one song. They even planned the order of the songs, which was to have an Asian song and an American song one after the other—purposefully giving equal air time to both America and Asia. It was their own version of an "Asian American" hybrid song that visualized their values in fusing diverse cultures. They had skills, knowledge, and ability to create their own fusion song that expressed the multiple worlds they occupied.

The girls who dwelled in-between multiple cultures formed a community that embraced and collectively affirmed plural and hybrid cultures. They rejected holding a single and traditional culture perhaps reflecting the idea that "rigidity means death" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 101). By celebrating cultural fusion in their group, the girls actively created new cultural scripts which represented the in-between worlds they occupied.

"We are Like Natural Beauty is Beauty": Constructing "Natural" Girlhood Beauty

Yet another distinguishing feature of the Basement Community was the encouragement of a particular version of girlhood, including styles of dress[42] and values, surrounding romance and achievement. The girls formed a community that valued "natural" girlhood beauty.

---

[42] Scholars have argued that girls' styles of dress and appearance often become markers of group identity and distinguish one group from another (Bettie, 2003; Olsen, 1997).

102

The girls in the basement dressed in a girl-like or child-like "natural" style. Many of the girls in the Basement Community wore no or little make-up, often wore comfortable and relaxed clothes such as t-shirts, jeans, sneakers, and carried book bags. The girls sometimes wore t-shirts, sweatshirts, and accessories that featured Japanese anime characters such as *Hello Kitty*, *My Melody*, *Pokémon*, and *Domo* that "branded with the *kawaii* [cute] aesthetics" (Janice Brown, 2011, p. 6).[43] Some carried purses, pencil cases, I-phone cases, cell phone straps, stationaries, and key holders that featured the anime characters they saw as cute.

The femininity they performed could be referred to as "modest," was often contrasted to the dress of their peers, and seemed to purposefully have a constrained sexual expression, similar to what Bettie (2003) called a "school-sanctioned version of femininity." Their styles of dress aligned not only with school values but also with their parents' values—modest and restrictive. Mino described how her mother liked the way she and her friends dressed compared to how other types of Asian American girls who chose hyper-sexualized styles, "Well usually mom will, like, [say] 'I'm glad you're not like those sassy diva Asian girls… [or like the Asian girls who] started wearing those short skirts and tank tops, and wearing purses, wearing makeup, piercings [when they entered high school]." Rather than hyper-sexualized adult women's fashion, the girls in the basement felt comfortable with adolescent girlhood styles that the school and their parents valued.

---

[43] Janice Brown (2011) has suggested that one feature of Japanese popular culture is *kawaii* aesthetic (cuteness) which implies "sweet and child-like" (p. 6). Similarly, Tsutsui (2010) has argued that cute style in Japanese popular culture means "childishness, vulnerability, smallness, and sweetness" (p. 20), as it is symbolized in the *Hello Kitty* character.

The girls often policed and distanced themselves from girls in other cliques who performed different versions of femininity. Mino could not imagine herself in the Asian Corner Group as she thought that Asian Corner girls embodied hyper-feminine adult-like Asian fashion and styles. According to Mino, Asian Corner girls were "cute Asian girls," which meant:

> You wear make-up, [are] skinny and wear cute clothes like Asian style like Korean clothing style…I know some of them order clothes from Korea. They are fashionable…They are pretty much popular.

In contrast to the relaxed and child-like style of Basement Group girls, the Asian Corner girls' dress, fashion, and style were adult-like and hyper-feminine, which made Mino feel uncomfortable. Some of the Asian Corner girls shopped not only in the United States, but also online and purchased clothes, dresses, shoes, and fashion goods directly from South Korea. While none of them were Korean, they dressed themselves to meet the ideal adult female beauty standards and body image valued in South Korea. Mino explained to me that some of their fashion and style were similar to Korean idols, girls' bands groups, and actresses who she saw in the media.

Conforming to such an idealized South Korean femininity was not what the girls in the Basement Group wanted. Mino said in a firm voice, "We are like, 'natural beauty is beauty.' We don't care about make-up. What is the point of wearing make-up?" As explained in Chapter 3, the girls also understood natural beauty as an American standard—the idea that in the United States there would be more room for "natural" female beauty than in Asia. Mino's claim of natural beauty implies an intersectional analysis of femininity that the girls valued. It was an intersection of class (rejecting the wealth of the Asian Corner girls who could buy from South Korea), age (girlhood rather

than womanhood), nationality (American rather than South Korean) and sexuality (modesty rather than hypersexualization). By making an intersectional analysis and rejecting styles of girls in other groups, the girls in the Basement Group constructed and declared their ideal version of adolescent girlhood—a working class, American, and desexualized girl.

Similarly, Savannah, Meli and another Salvadorian girl in the after-school program, who later joined the Basement Group felt "comfortable" in this Basement Group as they did not have to follow the conventional hyper-sexualized Latina femininity which was often required among groups of Latina students whom they called "the little Hispanic people crew." In these Latino Groups, the girls embodied highly racialized and sexualized femininity, including wearing heavy make-up, tight clothes and skirts, and having long and stylish hair. For the Basement Group, comfortable, child-like clothing and *kawaii* clothes were the standard.

The girls also appreciated particular values surrounding romance and achievement in the basement. Unlike how girls often feel pressure from their peers to value romance over academic achievement as what Holland and Eisenhart (1990) called "educated in romance," the girls in the basement were not pressured to prioritize romance over studying. The girls were allowed to be or were praised to be "smart." In the basement, they often celebrated some girls' academic success. A number of girls were not in romantic relationships but also were not teased or isolated due to being single. Latina girls felt uncomfortable being in Latina cliques which forced the girls to engage in heterosexual romance and not to have high educational aspirations. In order to escape from intense racial, gender and class policing in these groups, multiple Latina girls joined

the Basement Group which allowed them to be girls who valued academic success. The Basement Community was where the girls rarely experienced strict gender policing around romance and academic achievement.

"We All Have an Asian Passion!": "Asianizing" through Asian Popular Culture

The Basement Group shared a common interest in Asian popular culture, which was another fundamental characteristic of the community. The girls formed an "Asianized" community where the members had various levels of interests in and knowledge on popular culture from Asian countries, specifically from Japan and Korea.[44] Savannah, a Salvadorian girl, happily claimed, "I guess we all have, like, an Asian passion." Similarly, Mino who was a big fan of Asian popular culture, described this as "most of the people I know [in the Basement Group] are into Asian stuff. Even though they are not Asian they still like Asian stuff." [45] She was proud of their shared interests in and high values on Asian popular culture despite the group's diverse ethnic backgrounds. She distanced herself from Asian Corner students who she explained as, "they don't really talk about Asian things like how we do."

The girls and their peers collectively consumed and disseminated Asian popular culture in the basement. They played *Pokémon* and *Naruto* video games on *Nintendo DS*, read manga (Japanese comic books), listened to their favorite K-pop, J-pop, J-rock music

---

[44] The group's engagement in Asian popular culture was part of the recent global dissemination and flow of J-pop and K-pop in the world (Iwabuchi, 2002; Jung, 2011b; Tsutsui, 2010).

[45] While the Basement Group members actively engaged in Asian popular culture, there were other students at Maple High who had interest in Asian popular culture and read manga, watched anime, listened to K-pop, among others. Mino said that Maple High had "Asian fanatics," big fans of Asian popular culture. Specifically, anime was popular among some students at Maple High and the school even had an anime club.

on their I-phones, MP3, and I-pods. They exchanged information about their favorite

Korean, Japanese, Indian, and Taiwanese dramas and movies; free websites where they

watched and listened to Asian entertainment and read manga; and concert information of

their favorite Korean boy bands. Specifically, the girls actively engaged in K-pop in the

basement. Hybridized characteristic of K-pop, a mix of Western popular culture such as

hip-hop, R & B, and Asian popular culture, seemed to attract this group (Jung, 2011a;

Shim, 2006). Meli happily described how she and her Mexican friend would practice

dance movements from Korean boy bands in the basement hallway.

> Meli: Sometimes, like, me and her, we get up and start running around the [basement] hallway and we just, like, start, like –
> Savannah: We're random.
> Meli: Yeah, we really are. And then, like, one day, I think I started dancing in the middle of the [basement] hallway and she was trying to teach me the *Heartbreaker* [a name of the song] dance from *G-Dragon* [a member of the *Big Bang*, a Korean boy band].

As they practiced K-pop dances in the basement, the girls, a mix of White, Black,

Latino, and Asian American girls, often practiced Korean boy band dance movements,

like those of the *Big Bang* or the *Super Junior* during the after-school program. They

would often gather around the computer, watch the same video clips on YouTube

repeatedly to learn the dance movements, and teach each other. By listening and dancing

to K-pop music collectively, the girls seemed to feel a sense of unity, affection, and

attachment to what they understood as Asian culture. Different from how the Asian

American girls consumed Asian entertainment at home by themselves or with their

virtual friends, collective consumption with their friends in their daily lives seemed to be

culturally affirming and empowering.

The girls not only consumed Asian popular culture but also enjoyed producing it

through drawing anime characters such as *Pokémon*, *Domo*, and various *Shojyo* manga

(comic books targeted towards girls) on blackboards, posters, sketchbooks, notebooks,

and birthday cards. Whenever they had to create posters or ornaments for events of the

Asian American youth organization (e.g., holiday parties, community service events,

birthday parties, etc.), they usually drew these cute anime characters. Often Mino and

Nita, who were good at art, took a lead in drawing and other students helped them color

them. While Mino and Nita enjoyed drawing anime characters individually, they seemed

to treasure the moments when they made art with their friends. By collectively creating

this artwork, the girls seemed to feel a sense of empowerment and affirmation of their

interests and connection to Asian culture.

In addition, the girls sometimes drew anime characters on each other's arms and

hands. One day Mino and her basement friends wrote words and drew pictures on Meli's

arms, hands, and legs. Mino wrote "*kawaii*" (cute) in Japanese and also drew a cute

animated rabbit face which she called an "Asian face" since it looked like what the girls

determined to be "Asian" (See Figure 5), on Meli's arm.

Figure 5. Mino's drawing of "Asian face."

108

Mino marked the body of Meli, her non-Asian close friend, with what she felt most connected to—an anime character and Japanese language. While doodling on Meli's arm might be seen as a trivial thing, it seemed to be Mino's small yet important strategy to claim and visualize her profound interest in Asian culture.

The Basement Group also branded themselves with products of Asian popular culture, specifically anime goods. The members of the group often wore t-shirts and carried products such as phone case, cell phone straps, dolls, key chains, and stationaries of anime characters such as *Pokémon*, *Bleach*, *Domo*, *Hello kitty*, *Super Mario*, and *Dragon Ball Z*. It was "cool" for them to dress in and carry these goods.[46] They called them "Asian stuff" (e.g., "Asian t-shirts," "Asian purse," "Asian pens," "Asian pencil pouch") and often said to each other "that's so Asian!" or "you are so Asian!" half-jokingly when they saw their peers with these products. For example, when Mino went to the mall with Gina and saw a cute *Hello Kitty* necklace at one of the stores, she got so excited that she "rubbed it on [her] neck." Gina responded to Mino with a smile, "You are so Asian!" The act of loving a *Hello Kitty* necklace in this way marked her as Asian. By using these Asian claims in the group, they seemed to emphasize their pride, affection and enthusiasm towards Asian popular culture. It seemed to be their nuanced strategy to collectively affirm their fascination and high value towards their understanding of Asia as cool.

---

[46] Tsutsui (2010) has argued that the rise of Japanese popular culture such as anime and manga contributed to the image of "Cool Japan" and soft power. As part of this "Cool Japan" movement, the Basement Group seemed to perceive these Japanese anime goods as "cool."

The group sometimes went to nearby American malls and Asian grocery stores[47] together to browse or/and purchase these products (See Figure 6). The girls treasured the memory of a day when the entire Basement Group walked to the nearby mall after school and "hung out" at stores such as *F.Y.E.* and *Hot Topic*,[48] pockets of places where they sell cute anime goods. Chelle said with a smile, "I love[d] it. And then we just walk[ed] around. Like, I didn't even need to buy anything because I felt content just going out with my friends." Chelle was able to truly be herself by browsing in the stores with her friends.

The Basement Group enjoyed walking in the stores by "touching, testing, or playing with the merchandise [anime products] while browsing" (Kato, 2009, p. 58) and taking pictures of themselves with these products. In the pictures, some boys were wearing head bands and hats and holding toy swords from *Naruto* (Japanese manga), another group of boys were wearing hats of *Sonic* characters, while some girls were trying on *Hello Kitty* hats and t-shirts. They were smiling, laughing, and looked happy. They branded themselves with amine products sold in American malls to fulfill their interests in Asian popular culture. While going to malls and purchasing anime goods might be dismissed as typical American teenage behavior,[49] they were strategic in buying

---

[47] Asian grocery stores in the girls' neighborhood had small Asian sections where they sold cute Asian products from Japan (such as *Hello Kitty* stationaries), Korea and China. Savannah described these Asian sections as "Japanified" as it carried a lot of *kawaii* products.

[48] An American retail store which sells clothing, accessories and merchandise related to popular culture and music ("About Hot Topic," n.d.).

[49] Chin (2001) has argued that "commodity consumption is a central feature of life in the United States" (p. 7).

and using these specific products, which reflected the material culture of their group and which claimed and celebrated their interests in Asian culture.

Figure 6. "Asian products" sold at the mall.

Some Asian American girls seemed to play an important role in "Asianizing" the Basement Group, inviting fans of Asian popular culture to join the group and transforming their peers into fans of Asian popular culture. The girls not only engaged in Asian popular culture individually, but also actively circulated information to their friends in the basement. Specifically, Mino seemed to be a key informant of Asian popular culture in the basement. She often lent her manga collections to her friends, explained about various Korean boy bands and their songs to her peers, and gave cute Asian goods for birthday gifts to her friends. She sometimes went to a nearby mall, Asian grocery stores, the public library, and book stores with her friends and informed

them of these pockets of places in the neighborhood where they had Asian products.[50]

She regularly posted and shared YouTube clips of her favorite K-pop music on Facebook

so that her peers could "keep up with new K-pop songs."

The girls deeply respected Mino's knowledge of and interests in Asian popular

culture and were aware of her impact on the group's engagement in Asian entertainment.

Meli told me how she became a big fan of K-pop through Mino, saying half-jokingly,

"K-Pop is Mino's fault." Giang also happily exclaimed, "Spread the Asian culture!" to

Mino when Mino provided detailed information on various Korean boy bands to her

friends. By "Asianizing" her friends in the basement, Mino seemed to create a

community where Asian culture was visible and celebrated. A shared interest in Asian

popular culture in the basement seemed to allow her to affirm her Asian cultural

background, roots, and identity. While some Asian American girls seemed to have a

great impact in Asianizing the group, other youth also shared their knowledge on Asian

entertainment with their peers. They collectively fostered and nurtured interests in Asian

popular culture, which became an important feature of the Basement Group.

Summary

The Asian American girls collectively formed a home-like community in their

everyday lives which they named the Basement Group. Carving out a space in the school

---

[50] As Mino sometimes did with her friends, one day she took me to her favorite
mall in her neighborhood and showed me her regular shopping routine which was to visit
pockets of places where they sell cute Asian goods. She first took me to a store where
they sell a lot of cute Asian stationaries and accessories such as *Hello Kitty*. Then she
took me to the *F.Y.E.* where she knew exactly where they sold DVDs of Asian martial
arts, anime, and various anime character goods. She also showed me the *Hot Topic* store
she frequented. She later took me to her favorite bubble tea shop where she enjoyed
spending time as she thought that drinking bubble tea was a very Asian thing to do.

basement hallway and forming a group identity were fundamental ingredients that composed this community they all called "home." Dim, narrow, less congested, segregated, and far from the center of the school campus were crucial home-like characteristics of the basement space. The five main features of the group identity—reconstructions of family, pride in diversity and inclusivity, celebrations of cultural fusion, value of "natural" girlhood beauty, and shared interest in Asian popular culture—allowed the girls to feel a sense of belonging, ownership, community, and empowerment in the group. They carved out these home-like characteristics by comparing with non-home like spaces and other social groups at Maple High which they could not connect to. The girls actualized some of their ideal home (see chapter 3) in the Basement Group, such as having family time, valuing natural beauty, and nurturing interests in Asian popular culture. They also incorporated some new characteristics that they did not imagine in their multiple homelands and beyond—they promoted diversity and celebrated hybrid and plural cultures in the group.

The girls invented this culturally congested borderland space, which magnified their lives in-between multiple nation states, cultures, languages, identities, and traditions. It was "where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 19). The Basement group was where the girls could appreciate, own, and celebrate their in-between positioning with other border dwellers who also occupied multiple cultural borders. They were not forced to choose a single language, culture, ethnicity, or tradition but were encouraged to promote cultural hybridity and create new cultural scripts that expressed their in-betweenness. As a group

of borderland dwellers, they attempted to diversify the community, talked in hybrid and plural languages, shared diverse foods, created hybrid songs, and broadened their interests in multiple popular cultures.

While they preferred hybridity, plurality, and diversity in the group, the girls also valued specific cultural norms, including high value on girl-like cute (*kawaii*) styles and strong interests in Asian popular culture. It was crucial for the girls to affirm their Asian cultural backgrounds by engaging in Asian popular culture as well as celebrating multiple and hybrid cultures. Embracing roots and encouraging hybridity were both essential for the girls to manage their in-between lives.[51] The girls often described "randomness" as one feature of the Basement Group. They often claimed proudly and excitedly, "We are random!" According to the American Heritage dictionary, "random" means "having no specific pattern, purpose, or objective" ("Random,"n.d.) Randomness was the word that did not force them to think in a single, linear, logical, or rational way to describe the group. Randomness was a rejection of homogeneity. It seemed to capture the complexity and messiness of the community where the border dwellers inhabited together.

While the girls experienced some discrimination and marginalization in their daily lives, they exerted nuanced agency to construct a home-like community with their peers. As a collective, they actively chose and positioned themselves in the school basement hallway, reconstructed a family-like community, diversified the community, celebrated

---

[51] Similarly, Maira (2002) who has examined the youth popular culture practices of second generation Indian American adolescents has argued that their everyday lives were complicated and could not be captured within the binaries of authenticity and hybridity. Maira has suggested that the "second-generation youth, indeed all individuals, are able to draw on models of personhood that are based on stability and authenticity of cultural elements in some situations and to embrace identities that emphasize fluidity and multiplicity in other moments" (p. 195).

cultural hybridity, affirmed values on natural beauty, and "Asianized" the community. In their microcosm where they had more control and autonomy, they were able to be creative and build a community that they desired. Unlike how they often felt isolated and lonely at home (see Chapter 3), they seemed to be empowered, affirmed, and liberated when they shared foods with their friends, danced to K-pop songs, created artworks as a group, and talked in a hybrid language with their peers. A collective formation of the community was an essential factor of their constructions of "home."

While the Basement Group seemed to be a home-like community for the girls, it could not be overly romanticized. The in-between space they carved out at Maple High was not a permanently safe and stable space. In the basement, the girls were subject to teachers' and school staff supervision. They sometimes had to move places or had to control their behaviors and noise level. While the girls claimed how the Basement Group was a family-like community, some students made new friends in other groups and left the group. The Basement Group was not a cohesive and fixed community but an ephemeral, fleeting, and loosely formed group where students continuously came and went. While the girls were proud of the openness and inclusivity of the group, they sometimes policed and alienated students in racially segregated groups or "popular" groups. They were purposeful in forming an emerging home-like community where they could collectively feel a sense of belonging, empowerment, and affirmation. It was their skillful enactment of *la facultad* (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 60) to navigate their lives in the borderlands, spaces where multiple cultures, traditions, languages, and nation-states all collide.

Chapter 5: Lessons and Messages from Borderland Dwellers

The Asian American girls had sufficient creativity and improvisational skills to invent home-like spaces and communities as they linked multiple cultural worlds in which they were brought up and lived. "Home" for these girls was dynamic, expansive, and wide-ranging. Sometimes the girls imagined "home" in their countries of origin through nostalgic memories of their childhood. Other times they searched for "home" in another location where they imagined a bright future. At still, other times, the girls constructed "home" in the school basement hallway where they could gather with their friends and celebrate diversity and cultural hybridity. The girls carved out these multiple "homes"—through imagining belonging globally, often without regard to national borders, while building belonging locally—in their navigation of their lives in-between.

The girls' borderland positioning, in-between multiple literal and metaphorical national and cultural borders, facilitated their ability to imagine an expansive understanding of "home" in the globalized world. They simultaneously idealized their countries of origin, acknowledged the United States as a possible "home," imagined a third possible homeland where they envisioned a bright future, and fashioned a pan-Asian consciousness which went beyond the borders of nation-states. Through balancing the possibilities and limitations of these different "homes," they carved out home-like characteristics, including daily family dinner, personal mobility, homogeneous neighborhood community, and a broader construction of beauty standards.

The girls not only imagined "homes" outside of their immediate view but also co-constructed a home-like community locally in their everyday lives in the United States. They named it the Basement Group, after the place where they hang out in school. They

developed a distinct group identity that honored five main characteristics: 1) expansion of who is family to include friends, 2) pride in diversity and inclusivity, 3) celebrations of cultural fusion, 4) value of "natural" girlhood beauty, and 5) shared interest in Asian popular culture. In forming their Basement Community, they used some of the home-like characteristics that they imagined globally and also incorporated new characteristics such as valuing diversity and hybridity. They constructed a borderland community in which they could collectively affirm, celebrate and nurture their in-between lives with fellow borderland dwellers.

The girls created these expansive "homes" where they could feel a sense of belonging, empowerment, community, ownership, safety, and opportunity, which were all crucial components of their ideal home.[52] It was where they felt a sense of power and strength and acknowledged their ability, knowledge and skills to imagine, think and act what they desired. It was a world where the girls felt a sense of community with people who were similar (not necessarily ethnic/cultural backgrounds but also interests and values) and familiar and cared for each other. It was where they felt a sense of ownership as they affirmed their origins, built roots, and took pride in their community. It was where they felt safe, relaxed, and comfortable being surrounded by familiar and loving adults who took great care of them. It was where they could envision promising and encouraging future as young women.

---

[52] Similarly, Hage (1997) has described home as a composite of four different feelings which are security, familiarity, community, and a sense of possibility (pp. 102-104).

117

Contributions to the Field

The exploration of home-like sites for Asian American girls revealed an array of previously unnoted features of the lives of border crossers. The girls' lives 1) illuminated the power and complexity of their lives in-between, 2) expanded the terrain of what agency means and looks like for Asian American girls, and 3) revealed intersectional differences among the girls.

Illuminating Lives In-Between

This study deepened and complicated the understanding of the ways in which immigrant girls navigate their lives in-between multiple traditions, nation-states, languages, ideologies, and cultures. The Asian American girls who literally and imaginatively crossed national, cultural, and identity borders were thrust in the borderlands, in-between spaces where multiple borders collide. They stood at this cross-section where they imagined their lives in multiple homelands, spoke hybrid languages, celebrated plural cultural traditions, and navigated various constructions of girlhood and childhood.

For these girls, there were both the possibilities and limitations of inhabiting the lives in a borderland world. The girls developed abilities to imagine multiple possible "homes" globally and juggled the advantages and disadvantages of what each "home" offered. Oftentimes, they rejected the idea of the United States as a "home" and yearned for their lives in their countries of origin. The rejection of the United States was connected to a deep sense of isolation and loneliness at home with their families and in their communities in the United States. This frustration and sadness about the United States led them to long for the tremendous sense of family and community in their

countries of origin—shared meals, more present parents, caring neighbors, common language, and a sense of safety. At the same time as they yearned for the homogeneity and its comfort and safety in their countries of origin, they valued and celebrated the diversity in their school in the United States.

While they missed the freedom that girlhood in their countries of origin provided, they also had an understanding of strong gender policing in their places of origin and appreciated how there was an appreciation of "natural" female beauty in the United States. At other times, they nuanced and complicated their statements and acknowledged their in-between status and envisioned imagined "home" in various locations. They were flexible in making these multiple and seemingly contradictory statements simultaneously—a process of weaving together those aspects of their past, current, and imagined future lives that seemed to be most affirming, empowering, and liberating for them. Their in-between positioning allowed the girls to develop this type of sophisticated skills to imagine, create, and juggle multiple potential "homes" in the deterritorialized world.

The girls were very aware of imagination as a skill and also took pride in their abilities to celebrate and affirm hybridity, difference, and diversity in their daily lives. Specifically, they valued celebrating their in-between experience with other borderland dwellers at their school. They enjoyed forming a community with diverse members who had different cultural backgrounds, talking in hybrid and plural languages, sharing multiethnic foods, and shuffling and creating fusion songs. Not having to conform to traditional monocultural ideas or practices was often liberating. For the girls who dwelled the lives in-between, it was comfortable, fun, and empowering to occupy this

119

culturally congested borderland space, especially one where they had a sense of power, ownership, and safety, with their peers.

While the girls highly appreciated their in-between positioning, they also acknowledged the constraints of occupying this ambiguous terrain. Sometimes it was confusing for them to make sense of whether the United States or their countries of origin was better for their constructions of girlhood—the girls' movement was strictly restricted in the United States but they did not experience intense gender policing as they did in their countries of origin. At other times it was difficult for them to acknowledge economic and educational opportunities they had in the United States while experiencing isolation, marginalization, and discrimination here. Sometimes it was disappointing for them to realize that they had little autonomy or control to relocate to other countries while they could imagine vividly their bright future in their countries of origin or in a country of their dream. By standing on this intersection where multiple nation-states collide, the girls not only appreciated the opportunities they had but also had to navigate the hardships.

The girls managed this in-between positioning by sometimes claiming, in a very essentializing, rigid and binary way, what was "home" and what was not "home" (e.g., "The Philippines is my home," "The United States is a hotel," "I'm definitely going to Japan"). While there were multiple contextual and intersectional factors that shaped their lives, the girls sometimes intentionally erased the complexity and ambiguity and created an innate difference among various "homes." This type of clear, strong, and binary declaration was sometimes necessary for the girls to lessen their pain and struggles of navigating their in-between positioning. When they asserted binaries, they seemed to be

able to declare strongly what they desired at that moment which was not possible when they attempted to explain their complex feelings and thoughts associated with their borderland lives. While scholars theorized in-betweenness to disrupt binaries of identity, space and culture, this finding showed how binary and dichotomous thinking is sometimes necessary for people who inhabit the lives in-between. Scholars may want to shed light on some possibilities of binary thinking when exploring the ways in which people navigate the lives in a borderland world.

Specifically, this study suggests that scholars engaged in transnational, diaspora, and immigration studies who have rejected the dichotomous notion of countries of origin and arrival (Basch et al., 1994; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998) should reexamine the potential of immigrants' rigid and binary thinking. While immigrants dwell in the transnational social fields, they may sometimes need to accept or affirm this binary distinction (e.g., countries of origin vs. countries of arrival) to manage their borderland positioning.

Furthermore, while the girls celebrated diversity, inclusivity, and hybridity with their peers, they also struggled with speaking different languages and being surrounded by people with different cultural, ethnic, and class backgrounds in their neighborhoods. Sometimes the girls strongly desired to be with people who share similar cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds. In order to be connected to their Asian roots, cultural backgrounds, and identities, the girls immersed themselves in Asian popular culture, created virtual "Asian communities," and "Asianized" their friends. The girls developed the ability, skills, and knowledge to celebrate the possibilities of their lives in-between as

well as to manage the constraints of inhabiting the ambiguous and ambivalent borderlands.

Expanding the Terrains of Agency

This study revealed a much broader terrain of agency for immigrant youth, including Asian American girls that was only tangentially discovered in traditional studies. Specifically, this research challenged many of the studies on Asian American girls and young women which have generated one-sided portraits of these girls and young women as victims of structural inequalities.

This study has attempted to complicate and expand the terrain of agency that the girls possess. As scholars have discussed, the lives of Asian American girls in this study were shaped by various social forces, including social, political, and economic structures, racialization and sexualization, family immigration context, financial situations, immigration status, gender expectations and roles, model minority stereotypes, and alienation at school. However, within these structural constraints, the girls actively exercised various forms of agency—subtle to overt, conscious to unconscious, and imagination to enactment—in their everyday lives. The agency they enacted was much more complicated and nuanced than previously considered. Specifically, the ways in which the girls employed the power of imagination and created emerging communities illuminated their enormous portions of agency.

The girls exercised agency through using the power of imagination. While they were subject to multiple structural inequalities, they transcended constraints and expanded their imaginative power. The nostalgia the girls had in relationship to their countries of origin seemed not to be a mere escape from their daily struggles but their

enactment of subtle forms of agency. By utilizing memories and idealizing their

countries of origin, the girls were enacting a critique of their lives in the United States as

adolescent girls. Using memory of their childhood days, they were able to determine

what kind of happiness, comfort, and pleasure they sought. In addition, the girls

exercised agency to create an imagined future "home" in another location and a pan-

Asian consciousness where they could virtually connect with multiple Asian cultures at

once. The media can have a powerful role in facilitating people's imagination

(Appadurai, 1996; Morley and Robins, 1995), and the girls actively engaged in digital

media, cyber space, and popular culture to imagine a sense of belonging in the globalized

world. However temporal, internal, or invisible they were, these imaginations allowed

them to manage their struggles and to feel some form of belonging and empowerment in

their lives.

　　　The girls also expressed agency through creating an emerging community in their

daily lives. While the girls sometimes struggled from alienation, model minority

stereotypes, strict border policing by other students, and a bureaucratic school system

with rules and regulations, the girls found ways to carve out an in-between space in the

school basement hallway during lunch and recess, an in-between time during the school

day. In this less structured space and time with other borderland dwellers, the girls were

empowered to be creative and co-form a community that they desired. The girls

collectively used strong and powerful language to define the contours of the Basement

Community (e.g., "we dominate the basement!" and "we all have an Asian passion!").

They emotionally and physically supported each other, dressed in a girl-like "natural"

style, created hybrid songs and carried anime products as a group. It was where Asian

roots and hybridity were both encouraged and celebrated, which magnified their lives in the borderlands. In this minute, tiny, hidden, and fleeting space, the girls exercised enormous amount of agency to forge a community where they could feel a sense of personal and cultural belonging in the midst of multiple structural constraints. Often education scholars overlook these temporal and liminal spaces which youth carve out for and by themselves. However, this study revealed the possibilities of these in-between spaces as sites where we could learn about young people's needs and desires and their potential agency to navigate their daily struggles.

The ways in which the girls employed the power of imagination and created a home-like community in their daily lives also challenged an abiding assumption in migration literatures: that immigrant children are passive objects who inherit "home" constructed by the adults around them. The Asian American girls in my study had knowledge, ability, and skills to imagine, search for and construct "home" in their daily lives. They created multiple literal and imagined home-like spaces and communities where they could feel a sense of belonging, empowerment, community, ownership, safety, and opportunity. It is important to explore the potential of these immigrant children as "home" creators in the globalized world.

Revealing Intersectional Differences

This study illuminated more complexity in the lives of Asian American girls than previously explored and revealed relatively unexplored dimensions of identity that shaped the girls' experiences. Often scholars in the United States focus on race, gender, and class (and possibly sexuality) as salient identities when taking an intersectional

124

approach.[53] While the girls shared the same race and gender, other identity categories

such as immigration generation and the racial/ethnic make-up of schools and

communities contributed to the intra-differences within the group.[54]

There were differences as well as similarities in the ways the girls imagined their

countries of origin. Specifically, immigration generation, duration of stay in the United

States, transnational ties (e.g., number of visits back to their countries of origin, the

amount of communication with their family and friends in their places of origin, etc.),

socio-economic status, and ethnicity all seemed to contribute to how the girls constructed

memories and understanding of their places of origin. The six first and 1.5 generation

girls had more vivid memories of their places of origin and more strongly longed for their

lives there than the second generation girls. The three second generation girls idealized

their countries of origin mainly through parents' memories or through visits but seemed

to be less eager to return. The two second generation girls did not even know the family

immigration history or the lives of their parents before immigrating to the United States.

Among the six first generation and 1.5 generation girls, the Filipina girls

specifically had very strong attachment and longing towards their countries of origin.

They often reminisced about their intimate family time surrounded by extended family

---

[53] Grewal and Kaplan (1994) have argued that "in debates within the United
States, for example, it is important to examine the ways in which race, class, and gender
are fast becoming the holy trinity that every feminist feels compelled to address even as
this trinity delimits the range of discussion around women's lives" (p. 19). They have
suggested the importance of exploring the intersections of identity categories.
[54] Scholars who have examined the lives of Asian Americans have emphasized
the importance of exploring diverse experiences of this group. For example, S. J. Lee
(2006) has suggested the significance of exploring complex experiences of Asian
American students by paying attention to the ways in which multiple identities intersect
with each other. She specifically focused on how class, ethnicity, generation, and gender
impacted educational achievement of Asian American students.

members and loving neighbors and longed for their childhood days when they enjoyed full mobility. They seemed to live in a neighborhood in the Philippines where their extended family members lived close to each other and where there was a strong community, which might have led to their nostalgic feeling towards the Philippines. They also regularly returned to the Philippines while none of the other girls had been back to their countries of origin after migration to the United States. The Filipina girls' families were recent immigrants (and some of their family members were yet to reunite) who came as professionals and had relatively higher socio-economic status than other girls, which might have facilitated their regular visits.

Furthermore, the three second generation girls seemed to be more eager to imagine and claim a pan-Asian consciousness than the first and 1.5 generation girls. It is possible that because the second generation girls were born and raised in the United States, lived in a multi-ethnic neighborhood with a small Asian population, and had less transnational ties to their countries of origin, there was less opportunity for them to connect with their ethnic and cultural roots. In order to claim their sense of roots in the globalized world, the girls imagined broader terrains of belonging in a pan-Asian world.

Their pan-Asian consciousness was also related to their engagement in Asian popular culture. The second generation girls were more active in consuming popular culture from Asian countries while the first and 1.5 generation girls consumed a mix of Asian and American popular culture. Specifically, among the six first and 1.5 generation girls, the three Filipina girls seemed to have different preferences in popular culture. The Filipina girls were more knowledgeable and had a keen interest in American popular culture than Asian popular culture. Due to the United States' colonization and neo-

126

colonial relationship with the Philippines, the Filipina girls seemed to have actively engaged in American popular culture before relocation. They were more accustomed to American culture and had higher English proficiency than other girls, which may have facilitated their engagement in American popular culture. Immigration generation, transnational ties, ethnicity, and language all seemed to impact the girls' imagination of pan-Asia and consumption of popular culture.

This study showed the complex ways in which relatively unexplored dimensions of identities intersected with each other and shaped the experiences of Asian American girls.

Implications

Implications for Future Research

This study provides a few implications for future research. First, this study suggests that existing literature should move beyond an objectification where marginalized immigrant youth are pitied, instead, should magnify their potential human agency. By focusing on home-like sites for Asian American girls, this study crafted a new picture of Asian American girls as agents of cultural change and creators of emerging communities. While it is important to explore structural inequalities that constrict the lives of immigrant youth, examining sites of human agency allows us to acknowledge what is possible, doable, and imaginable for these youth in navigating the structural constraints. By taking this approach, scholars could learn from the youth about their needs and abilities to manage their struggles. This study suggests scholars should reimagine and rethink of the ways they understand the lives of marginalized immigrant youth and create new kinds of narratives about this population.

In addition, this research suggests scholars should expand the focus and shed light on relatively unexamined dimensions of identities and explore the intra-differences of Asian American girls. While this study contributed to a dearth of literature that explores the experiences of Asian American girls, it focused on a specific group of girls. They are relatively recent immigrants from the Philippines, Vietnam, China, and India who live in a multi-ethnic suburb of the East Coast where there is a small, but significant, Asian population. It is possible that the girls in my study have very different experiences than, for example, a group of girls in a major metropolitan city in the East Coast, a rural area in the mid-U.S. or the West Coast with its large Asian population. In order to deepen the understanding of this heterogeneous population, scholars may want to further conduct research on a various group of Asian American girls and explore how different identity categories such as location, regional differences, nations of origin, generation, sexuality, language, and religion shape their unique experiences. Asian American girls' experiences are not only impacted by race, gender or class. Scholars should move beyond these common examined identities and expand the terrains of dimensions of identity.

This study also points to another emphasis that needs further development: the potential role of popular culture and cyber space in the development of identity and should continue exploring the ways in which young people engage with them in their daily lives. While education scholars often dismiss popular culture or media as a leisure activity or hobby for young people,[55] this study revealed the powerful role they had in the

---

[55] However, there is a group of scholars who recently have explored the possibilities of the use of cyber space and popular culture in the lives of young people

girls' lives. It was a site for community building, identity formation, creation of a transnational consciousness, and celebration of cultural and linguistic hybridity.

In order to shed light on the role of popular culture and cyber space, methodological adjustments are also suggested. This research suggests ethnographers explore both online and offline lives of young people and examine what impact popular culture and media have in their everyday lives. As I conducted online data collection within my fieldwork, ethnographers may also want to have online communication with youth via social media such as Facebook, Skype, blogs, and e-mails and observe young people's use of the Internet. I recommend scholars maximize the advantages of technology advancement and become more creative in collecting data online. Sharing drawings, pictures, poems, and stories through the use of personal websites, blogs, and social networking sites are a few examples.

Lastly, this research suggests that transnational, migration, and diaspora studies scholars conduct multi-national multi-sited ethnographic study on constructions of "home" for Asian immigrant youth in multiple locations. As the concept of "Asian diaspora" implies, scholars recently have argued the importance of research that explores the global connections, associations, and relationships among Asian immigrants dispersed in the world (Parreñas & Siu, 2007). The Asian American girls in my study may have multiple similarities as well as differences in constructing "home" compared to other groups of Asian girls in different countries. My previous study on the construction of "home" by Filipina immigrant girls in Japan (Tokunaga, 2008, 2011a, 2011b) revealed multiple

(Boyd, 2008; Desai, 2005; Hirji, 2010; Ito et al., 2010; LaBennett, 2011; Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009; Maira, 2002; Maira & Soep, 2005; Park, 2004a, 2004b; Vargas, 2009; Yi, 2009).

commonalities with the ways in which Asian American girls in this study created "home." For example, both groups of girls had power of imagination to envision their bright future in a third possible homeland and carved out in-between spaces in their daily lives which valued cultural hybridity. By using multi-sited ethnography which allows researchers to detach from places and examine "deterritorialization of culture" (Weißköppel, 2009, p. 253), scholars can further deepen and broaden the concept of "home" for Asian immigrant youth dispersed in the world.

Educational Recommendations

Beyond the scholarly dimensions of this study, the exploration of the lives of Asian American girls provides useful lessons for youth organizations and schools to create spaces where immigrant young people can thrive.

Youth organizations and schools may want to create a culture that encourages and celebrates cultural and linguistic hybridity which magnify the borderland lives of immigrant students. When young people do not feel forced to choose a single culture, tradition or language, they potentially could be more creative and empowered to create home-like spaces. Some examples that may promote hybridity are: 1) encourage students to use multiple and hybrid languages, 2) co-organize cooking sessions or pot-luck gatherings where each student brings their favorite multi-ethnic foods and snacks and share with others, 3) assist youth to create their own videos of fusion songs and ideas, and 4) encourage students to organize international and/or multi-ethnic days where they could celebrate their cultural diversity and hybridity. For example, students could perform their favorite dances and songs, organize fashion shows that represent their hybrid cultures, and present artwork in various styles. While potlucks and international days organized

130

by adults can project cultures in abridged and problematic ways, student led and organized events have their value.[56] In addition, in order for youth organizations to promote cultural hybridity, they should not be fully exclusive in recruiting participants (e.g., in terms of race, ethnicity, and race). Young people may learn more and may be more able to celebrate differences and hybridity with diverse members.

While youth organizations and schools should encourage hybridity, they should also affirm ethnic/racial identities of immigrant youth without creating essentializing notions of identity. They could co-organize workshops and events where students could learn about their ethnic and ancestral roots and feel proud of their cultural backgrounds while also allowing for hybridity. Specifically, immigrant young people who have less connections or transnational ties to their (or their families') countries of origin may appreciate more of these opportunities. Some examples are: 1) provide art workshops such as "life story map: finding our roots & routes" where students interview their family and community members, create a map of their life story [from birth to where they are now], and share with others. This type of activity may reveal their (or their families') experiences in their countries of origin, their understanding of immigration and community history, family, school, and friendship experiences, 2) provide workshops where youth could collectively watch movies, dramas, or listen to music that represent their ethnic/cultural backgrounds and discuss their reactions, and 3) connect with immigrant youth organizations or schools in the countries where immigrant students

---

[56] Multicultural educators have criticized that schools often teach cultural diversity in a superficial way such as celebrating holidays and heroes and have argued the importance of going beyond celebrations (E. Lee, Menkart, & Okazawa-Rey, 1998).

came from and nurture online communities (e.g., organize Skype sessions and create websites or blogs where students in both locations could communicate with each other).

Lastly, educators who work with immigrant girls, including Asian American girls may want to co-create a home-like community where they could gather, share their thoughts and experiences, and support each other. As adolescent immigrant girls, they may have unique experiences, including relationships with parents, negotiating multiple constructions of girlhood, managing body image pressures, and beauty standards. Providing opportunities where the girls could openly talk about these issues in a safe environment would allow them to express their daily struggles as well as share their skills, ability, and knowledge to manage these constraints. For example, female educators could co-organize regular gatherings and workshops with the girls where they could explore their in-between lives, gender related issues, envision possibilities in their future as adult women, and develop a sense of pride in their heritage, among others.

Summary

The Asian American high school girls who crossed literal and metaphorical borders imagined, searched for, and constructed multiple "homes" in their global imaginations and their everyday lives. Sometimes these "homes" were expansive and dynamic spaces they imagined in the deterritorialized world. Other times they were minute and hidden in-between spaces they carved out in the school basement hallway. Still other times they were temporal and fleeting virtual communities they created with other Asian youth dispersed in the world. However liminal or wide-ranging, fleeting or prolonged these "homes" were, the girls had ability, skills, and knowledge to construct "homes" in the midst of constraints. These "homes" were where the girls felt a sense of

132

belonging, empowerment, community, ownership, safety, and opportunity, which all composed their ideal notion of home.

While the girls carved out various "homes," they negotiated tradition and change, outsider and insider experiences, familiarity and unfamiliarity, places of origin and arrival, and the local, and global. The ways in which the girls constructed "home" was never detached, separated, or disconnected from their lives in-between multiple nation-states, cultures, and traditions. It was the process of creating "home" that illuminated their navigation of the lives in a borderland world. Chelle, a 13 year old Filipina girl, shared with me her dream home. Chelle's idea of a future "home" partially captures the girls' values, appreciation, and the reality of their lives in the borderlands.

Tomoko:	If you were to build a home, what language do you want to speak?
Chelle:	I wanna use just *Taglish*. I don't want to be uptight or I don't wanna be really laid back. I just want to be in the middle….
Tomoko:	How about food?
Chelle:	Aww…food…that's a good one! I would say Sundays, would be you can eat whatever. If I am in the mood of something, I would just cook whatever. But through the week, I would say, every other day will be the Filipino food and every other day would be Western food.
Tomoko:	Oh my god! So you want both?
Chelle:	I want the best of the both foods!

Like Chelle, I too want the best of both worlds. In reflecting on Chelle's desire to further blend her various cultures, beliefs, and languages, I realize that my scholarly journey on exploring how immigrant girls understand and experience "home" has just begun. In this study, I used the concept of "home" as a way to capture and describe those spaces where the girls felt a sense of belonging and empowerment. This focus on "home" was a conceptual tool that allowed me to discover new sites of hope and possibility in the

133

lives of Asian American girls. While I was able to illuminate multiple sites of agency

and resistance for the girls, I also acknowledge that this focus contained the possibility of

unintentionally obscuring the nuance, complexity and ambivalence in their lives. I do

think it is important to explore both the possibilities and constraints of how home-like

sites function as they reveal or obscure the lived experiences of the girls. This is

particularly important to prevent inadvertently creating essentialized notions of "home"

or essentialized understandings of Asian American girls' lives.

Moving forward in my ethnographic research with immigrant girls throughout the

world, I would like to further complicate, challenge, broaden, and open up the concept of

"home," particularly as I explore its hybrid components. How do these girls understand

the passage of time in their "homes" (from single moments to broad ruptures)? When

and how might their "homes" (e.g., the Basement Group and their online communities)

move from being nurturing, empowering, and safe spaces into less culturally affirming

spaces? When do their literal and figurative "homes" become sites of contention,

violence, fear, sadness and/or disempowerment? Why and how does this happen? Could

the girls simultaneously feel "at home" and "not at home?" If so, how do the girls

navigate the inevitable multiple dimensions of "home?" In an attempt to further explore

the lives of the girls who dwell on and around the borders between various cultures,

languages, and identities, my critical and reflexive ethnographic endeavors will continue.

References

About Hot Topic. (n.d.).   Retrieved October 17, 2012,

from http://community.hottopic.com/content/about-hot-topic

Agar, M. (1996). *The professional stranger: An informal introduction to ethnography* (2nd ed.). San Diego: Academic Press.

Ahmed, S., Castañeda, C., Fortier, A.-M., & Sheller, M. (Eds.). (2003). *Uprootings/regroundings: Questions of home and migration* (1st ed.). Oxford; New York: Berg.

Aitken, S. C. (2001). *Geographies of young people: The morally contested spaces of identity*. London; New York: Routledge.

Al-Ali, N. S., & Koser, K. (2002). *New approaches to migration?: Transnational communities and the transformation of home*. London; New York: Routledge.

Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso Editions/NLB.

Anderson, J., & Jones, K. (2009). The difference that place makes to methodology: Uncovering the 'lived space' of young people's spatial practices. *Children's Geographies, 7*(3), 291-303.

Ang, I. (2007). Beyond "Asian diasporas." In R. S. Parreñas & L. C. D. Siu (Eds.), *Asian diasporas: New formations, new conceptions* (pp. 285-290). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Anzaldúa, G. (2007). *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

Anzaldúa, G., & Keating, A. (2002). *This bridge we call home: Radical visions for transformation*. New York: Routledge.

Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Arashi's bio. (n.d.).   Retrieved October 17, 2012, from http://www.jpopasia.com/group/arashi/

Bammer, A. (1994). *Displacements: Cultural identities in question*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Baolian Qin, D. (2009). Being "good" or being "popular": Gender and ethnic identity negotiations of Chinese immigrant adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 24*(1), 37-66.

Barry, R. (2000). Sheltered "children": The self-creation of a safe space by gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. In L. Weis & M. Fine (Eds.), *Construction sites: Excavating race, class, and gender among urban youth* (pp. 84-99). New York: Teachers College Press.

Basch, L. G., Glick Schiller, N., & Szanton Blanc, C. (1994). *Nations unbound: Transnational projects, postcolonial predicaments, and deterritorialized nation-states*. New York: Gordon and Breach.

Befu, H. (2001). *Hegemony of homogeneity: An anthropological analysis of "Nihonjinron."* Melbourne; Portland, OR: Trans Pacific Press.

Behar, R. (1996). *The vulnerable observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Bell, D., Caplan, P., & Wazir-Jahan Begum, K. (1993). *Gendered fields: Women, men, and ethnography*. London; New York: Routledge.

Berger, P. L., Berger, B., & Kellner, H. (1973). *The homeless mind: Modernization and consciousness* (1st ed.). New York: Random House.

Best, A. L. (2007). *Representing youth: Methodological issues in critical youth studies*. New York: New York University Press.

Bettie, J. (2003). *Women without class: Girls, race, and identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bhabha, H. K. (1990). The third space. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference* (pp. 207-221). London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London; New York: Routledge.

Bhabha, H. K. (1996). Culture's in-between. In S. Hall & P. Du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 53-60). London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Boyd, D. (2008). Why youth (heart) social network sites: The changing place of digital media in teenage social life. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Youth, identity, and digital media* (pp. 119-142). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Brown, J. (2011). Re-framing "kawaii": Interrogating global anxieties surrounding the aesthetic of 'cute' in Japanese art and consumer products. *International Journal of the Image, 1*(2), 1-10.

Brown, J., & Talbot, I. (2006). Making a new home in the diaspora: Opportunities and
dilemmas in the British South Asian experience. *Contemporary South Asia, 15*(2),
125-131.

Brubaker, R. (2005). The 'diaspora' diaspora. *Ethnic & Racial Studies, 28*(1), 1-19.

Carspecken, P. F. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical
and practical guide*. New York: Routledge.

Casey, E. S. (1993). *Getting back into place: Toward a renewed understanding of the
place-world*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Chhuon, V., & Hudley, C. (2010). Asian American ethnic options: How Cambodian
students negotiate ethnic identities in a U.S. urban school. *Anthropology &
Education Quarterly, 41*(4), 341-359.

Chin, E. (2001). *Purchasing power: Black kids and American consumer culture*.
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Choy, C. C. (2003). *Empire of care: Nursing and migration in Filipino American history*.
Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Chuh, K. (2003). *Imagine otherwise: On Asian Americanist critique*. Durham: Duke
University Press.

Clifford, J. (1986). Introduction: Partial truths. In J. Clifford & G. E. Marcus (Eds.),
Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography (pp. 1-26). Berkeley:
University of California Press.

Clifford, J. (1994). Diasporas. *Cultural Anthropology, 9*(3), 302-338.

Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. E. (1986). *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of
ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Collins, P. H. (1998). *Fighting words: Black women and the search for justice*.

    Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Constable, N. (1999). At home but not at home: Filipina narratives of ambivalent returns.

    Cultural Anthropology, 14(2), 203.

Constable, N. (2007). *Maid to order in Hong Kong: Stories of migrant workers* (2nd ed.).

    Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Crenshaw, K. (1991a). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black

    feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist

    politics In K. T. Bartlett & R. Kennedy (Eds.), *Feminist legal theory: Readings in*

    law and gender (pp. 57-80). Boulder: Westview Press.

Crenshaw, K. (1991b). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and

    violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(6), 1241-1299.

Danico, M. Y., & Vo, L. T. (2004). "No lattés here": Asian American youth and the cyber

    café obsession. In J. Lee & M. Zhou (Eds.), *Asian American youth: Culture,*

    identity, and ethnicity (pp. 177-189). New York: Routledge.

DasGupta, S., & Dasgupta, S. D. (1998). Sex, lies, and women's lives: An

    intergenerational dialogue. In S. D. Dasgupta & H. Ahmed-Ghosh (Eds.), *A*

    patchwork shawl: Chronicles of South Asian women in America (pp. 111-128).

    New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Davé, S., Nishime, L., & Oren, T. G. (2005). *East Main Street: Asian American popular*

    culture. New York: New York University Press.

DeGuzman, J. P. R. (2006). Beyond 'living la vida boba': Social space and transnational,

    hybrid Asian American youth culture. *Amerasia Journal, 32*(2), 89-101.

Desai, J. (2005). Planet Bollywood: Indian cinema abroad. In S. Davé, L. Nishime & T. G. Oren (Eds.), *East Main Street: Asian American popular culture* (pp. 55-71). New York: New York University Press.

DeWalt, K. M., & DeWalt, B. R. (2002). *Participant observation: A guide for fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Dill, B. T., & Zambrana, R. E. (2009). Critical thinking about inequality: An emerging lens. In B. T. Dill & R. E. Zambrana (Eds.), *Emerging intersections: Race, class, and gender in theory, policy, and practice* (pp. 1-21). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Dimitriadis, G., & Weis, L. (2001). Imagining possibilities with and for contemporary youth: (Re)writing and (re)visioning education today. *Qualitative Research, 1*(2), 223-240.

Dobson, M. E. (2009). Unpacking children in migration research. *Children's Geographies, 7*(3), 355-360.

Durham, M. G. (2004). Constructing the "new ethnicities": Media, sexuality, and diaspora identity in the lives of South Asian immigrant girls. *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 21*(2), 140-161.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Espiritu, Y. L. (2001). "We don't sleep around like White girls do": Family, culture, and gender in Filipina American lives. *Signs, 26*(2), 415-440.

Espiritu, Y. L. (2003). *Home bound: Filipino lives across cultures, communities, and countries*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Espiritu, Y. L. (2008). *Asian American women and men: Labor, laws, and love* (2nd ed.). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Espiritu, Y. L., & Tran, T. (2002). "Viet Nam, Nuoc Toi" (Vietnam, my country): Vietnamese Americans and transnationalism. In P. Levitt & M. C. Waters (Eds.), *The changing face of home: The transnational lives of the second generation* (pp. 367-398). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Feng, P. X. (2002). *Screening Asian Americans*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Fine, M., Weis, L., Centrie, C., & Roberts, R. (2000). Educating beyond the borders of schooling. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 31*, 131-151.

Finkelstein, B. (1983). Exploring community in urban educational history. In D. Ravitch & R. K. Goodenow (Eds.), *Schools in cities: Consensus and conflict in American educational history* (pp. 305-321). New York: Holmes and Meier.

Finkelstein, B. (forthcoming). Teaching outside the lines: Education history for a world in motion. *History of Education Quarterly*.

Finkelstein, B., Pickert, S., Mahoney, T., & Barry, D. (1998). *Discovering culture in education: An approach to cultural education program evaluation*. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation.

Forsberg, H., & Strandell, H. (2007). After-school hours and the meanings of home: Re-defining Finnish childhood space. *Children's Geographies, 5*(4), 393-408.

Fouron, G. E., & Glick Shiller, N. (2001). The generation of identity: Redefining the second generation within a transnational social field. In H. R. Cordero-Guzmán,

R. C. Smith & R. Grosfoguel (Eds.), *Migration, transnationalization, and race in a changing New York* (pp. 58-86). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

George, R. M. (1996). *The politics of home: Postcolonial relocations and twentieth-century fiction*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Gilroy, P. (1993). *The black Atlantic: Modernity and double consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Gopinath, G. (2005). *Impossible desires: Queer diasporas and South Asian public cultures*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Goyette, K., & Xie, Y. (1999). Educational expectations of Asian American youths: Determinants and ethnic differences. *Sociology of Education, 72*, 22-36.

Grewal, I., & Kaplan, C. (1994). *Scattered hegemonies: Postmodernity and transnational feminist practices*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gupta, A., & Ferguson, J. (1992). Beyond "culture": Space, identity and the politics of difference. *Cultural Anthropology, 7*(1), 6-23.

Gupta, S. R. (Ed.). (1999). *Emerging voices: South Asian American women redefine self, family, and community*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Hébert, Y. M., Hoerder, D., & Schmitt, I. S. (2006). *Negotiating transcultural lives: Belongings and social capital among youth in comparative perspective*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Hage, G. (1997). At home in the entrails of the west: multiculturalism, 'ethnic food' and migrant home-building. In H. Grace, G. Hage, L. Johnson, J. Langsworth & M.

Symonds (Eds.), *Home/world: Space, community and marginality in sydney's west* (pp. 99-153). New South Wales: Pluto Press.

Haiming, L., & Lianlian, L. (2009). Food, culinary identity, and transnational culture: Chinese restaurant business in Southern California. *Journal of Asian American Studies, 12*(2), 135-162.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (3rd ed.). London; New York: Routledge.

Heath, S. B. (2001). Three's not a crowd: Plans, roles, and focus in the arts. *Educational researcher, 30*(7), 10-17.

Heath, S. B., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1993). *Identity and inner-city youth: Beyond ethnicity and gender*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Hirji, F. (2010). *Dreaming in Canadian: South Asian youth, Bollywood, and belonging*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Holland, D. C., & Eisenhart, M. A. (1990). *Educated in romance: Women, achievement, and college culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Holloway, S. L., & Valentine, G. (2000). *Children's geographies: Playing, living, learning*. London; New York: Routledge.

Holt, L. (2011). *Geographies of children, youth and families: An international perspective*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge.

Huat, C. B. (2008). Structure of identification and distancing in watching East Asian television drama. In B. H. Chua & K. Iwabuchi (Eds.), *East Asian pop culture: Analysing the Korean wave* (pp. 73-89). Hong Kong; London: Hong Kong University Press.

Hune, S., & Nomura, G. M. (2003). *Asian/Pacific Islander American women: A historical anthology*. New York: New York University Press.

Igarashi, A. (1997). From Americanization to "Japanization" in East Asia? *Journal of Pacific Asia, 4*, 3-20.

Ito, M., Baumer, S., Bittanti, M., Boyd, D., Cody, R., Herr- Stephenson, B., . . . Tripp, L. (2010). *Hanging out, messing around, and geeking out: Kids living and learning with new media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Iwabuchi, K. (2002). *Recentering globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Iwabuchi, K. (2004). *Feeling Asian modernities: Transnational consumption of Japanese TV dramas*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Jung, S. (2011a). K-pop, Indonesian fandom, and social media. *Transformative Works and Cultures, 8*. Retrieved from http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/289/219

Jung, S. (2011b). *Korean masculinities and transcultural consumption: Yonsama, Rain, Oldboy, K-Pop idols*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Kang, H. Y. (2002). *Compositional subjects: Enfiguring Asian/American women*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Kao, G. (1995). Asian Americans as model minorities?: A look at their academic performance. *American Journal of Education, 103*(2), 121-159.

Kasinitz, P. (2008). *Inheriting the city: The children of immigrants come of age*. New York; Cambridge, MA: Russell Sage Foundation; Harvard University Press.

144

Kasinitz, P., Mollenkopf, J. H., & Waters, M. C. (2002). Becoming American/becoming New Yorkers: Immigrant incorporation in a majority minority city. *International Migration Review, 36*(4), 1020-1036.

Kato, Y. (2009). Doing consumption and sitting cars: Adolescent bodies in suburban commercial spaces. *Children's Geographies, 7*(1), 51-66.

Kennelly, J., Poyntz, S., & Ugor, P. (2009). Special issue introduction: Youth, cultural politics, and new social spaces in an era of globalization. *Review of Education, Pedagogy & Cultural Studies, 31*(4), 255-269.

Kibria, N. (1993). *Family tightrope: The changing lives of Vietnamese Americans*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kondo, D. K. (1990). *Crafting selves: Power, gender, and discourses of identity in a Japanese workplace*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

LaBennett, O. (2011). *She's mad real: Popular culture and West Indian girls in Brooklyn*. New York: New York University Press.

Lam, W. S. E., & Rosario-Ramos, E. (2009). Multilingual literacies in transnational digitally mediated contexts: An exploratory study of immigrant teens in the United States. *Language and Education, 23*(2), 171-190.

Lee, E., Menkart, D., & Okazawa-Rey, M. (1998). *Beyond heroes and holidays: A practical guide to K-12 anti-racist, multicultural education and staff development* (1st ed.). Washington, DC: Network of Educators on the Americas.

Lee, J., & Zhou, M. (2004). *Asian American youth: Culture, identity, and ethnicity*. New York: Routledge.

Lee, S. J. (1994). Behind the model-minority stereotype: Voices of high- and low-achieving Asian American students. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 25*(4), 413-429.

Lee, S. J. (1996). *Unraveling the "model minority" stereotype: Listening to Asian American youth*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Lee, S. J. (2001). Exploring and transforming the landscape of gender and sexuality: Hmong American teenaged girls. *Race Gender and Class, 8*, 35-46.

Lee, S. J. (2005). *Up against whiteness: Race, school, and immigrant youth*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Lee, S. J. (2006). Additional complexities: Social class, ethnicity, generation, and gender in Asian American student experiences. *Race, Ethnicity & Education, 9*(1), 17-28.

Lee, S. J. (2009). *Unraveling the "model minority" stereotype: Listening to Asian American youth* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Lee, S. J., & Vaught, S. (2003). 'You can never be too rich or too thin': Popular culture and consumer culture and the Americanization of Asian American adolescent girls and young women. *Journal of Negro Education, 72*, 457-466.

Lesser, J. (2003). *Searching for home abroad: Japanese-Brazilians and transnationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Levitt, P. (2009). Roots and routes: Understanding the lives of the second generation transnationally. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies, 35*(7), 1225-1242.

Levitt, P., & Glick Schiller, N. (2004). Conceptualizing simultaneity: A transnational social field perspective on society. *International Migration Review, 38*(3), 1002-1039.

Levitt, P., & Jaworsky, B. N. (2007). Transnational migration studies: Past developments and future trends. *Annual Review of Sociology, 33*(1), 129-156.

Levitt, P., & Waters, M. C. (2002). *The changing face of home: The transnational lives of the second generation*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Lew, J. (2006). *Asian Americans in class: Charting the achievement gap among Korean American youth*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Lim, S. J. (2008). Asian American youth culture. *Jornal of Asian American Studies, 11*(2), 211-228.

Lister, R. (1997). *Citizenship: Feminist perspectives*. Washington Square, NY: New York University Press.

Louie, A. (2004). *Chineseness across borders: Renegotiating Chinese identities in China and the United States*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Louie, V. S. (2004). *Compelled to excel: Immigration, education, and opportunity among Chinese Americans*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Lowe, L. (1996). *Immigrant acts: On Asian American cultural politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Lukose, R. A. (2007). The difference that diaspora makes: Thinking through the anthropology of immigrant education in the United States. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 38*(4), 405-418.

Luttrell, W. (2003). *Pregnant bodies, fertile minds: Gender, race, and the schooling of pregnant teens*. New York: Routledge.

Maira, S. (2002). *Desis in the house: Indian American youth culture in New York City*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Maira, S., & Soep, E. (2005). *Youthscapes: The popular, the national, the global*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Marcus, G. E. (1998). *Ethnography through thick and thin*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Markowitz, F., & Stefansson, A. H. (2004). *Homecomings: Unsettling paths of return*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Martin, B., & Mohanty, C. T. (1986). Feminist politics: What's home got to do with it? In T. De Lauretis (Ed.), *Feminist studies, critical studies* (pp. 191-212). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Matthews, H., Limb, M., & Taylor, M. (2000). The 'street as thirdspace'. In S. L. Holloway & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Children's geographies: Playing, living, learning* (pp. 63-79). London; New York: Routledge.

Mazumdar, S. (1989). General introduction: A woman-centered perspective on Asian American history. In Asian Women United of California. (Ed.), *Making waves: An anthology of writings by and about Asian American women* (pp. 1-22). Boston: Beacon Press.

McCann, C. R., & Kim, S.-K. (2003). *Feminist theory reader: Local and global perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

McLaren, P., & Giroux, H. A. (1994). *Between borders: Pedagogy and the politics of cultural studies*. New York; London: Routledge.

Mo, W., & Shen, W. (2007). Home: A feeling rooted in the heart. *Children's Literature in Education, 38*(3), 173-185.

Mohanty, C. T. (2003). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Durham; London: Duke University Press.

Moraga, C., & Anzaldúa, G. (1983). *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color* (2nd ed.). New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press.

Murthy, D. (2008). Digital ethnography: An examination of the use of new technologies for social research. *Sociology, 42*(5), 837-855.

Naficy, H. (1999). *Home, exile, homeland: Film, media, and the politics of place*. New York: Routledge.

Nakamatsu, T. (2005). Complex power and diverse responses: Transnational marriage migration and women's agency. In L. Parker (Ed.), *The agency of women in Asia* (pp. 158-181). Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic.

National Center for Health Statistics. (2003). *Health, United States, 2003*. Hyattsville, MD: US Public Health Service.

Ngo, B. (2002). Contesting "culture": The perspectives of Hmong American female students on early marriage. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 33*(2), 163-188.

Ngo, B., & Lee, S. J. (2007). Complicating the image of model minority success: A review of Southeast Asian American education. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(4), 415-453.

Nomura, G. M. (2003). On our terms: Definitions and context. In S. Hune & G. M. Nomura (Eds.), *Asian/Pacific Islander American women: A historical anthology* (pp. 16-22). New York: New York University Press.

Norris, C. (1990). Stories of paradise: What is home when we have left it? *Phenomenology+Pedagogy, 8*, 237-244.

Olsen, L. (1997). *Made in America: Immigrant students in our public schools*. New York: New Press.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York: Routledge.

Ong, A. (1999). *Flexible citizenship: The cultural logics of transnationality*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Park, J.-S. (2004a). Korean American youth and transnational flows of popular culture across the Pacific. *Amerasia Journal, 30*(1), 147-169.

Park, J.-S. (2004b). Korean American youths' consumption of Korean and Japanese TV dramas and its implications. In K. Iwabuchi (Ed.), *Feeling Asian modernities: Transnational consumption of Japanese TV dramas* (pp. 275-300). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Parker, L. (2005). *The agency of women in Asia*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic.

Parreñas, R. S. (2001). *Servants of globalization: Women, migration and domestic work*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Parreñas, R. S., & Siu, L. C. D. (2007). *Asian diasporas: New formations, new conceptions*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Pratt, M. B. (1984). Identity: Skin blood heart. In E. Bulkin, M. B. Pratt & B. Smith (Eds.), *Yours in struggle: Three feminist perspectives on anti-Semitism and racism* (pp. 11-63). Brooklyn, New York: Long Haul Press.

Rabikowska, M. (2010). The ritualisation of food, home and national identity among Polish migrants in London. *Social Identities, 16*(3), 377-398.

Random. (n.d.). *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*,

   from http://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=random

Rapport, N., & Dawson, A. (1998). *Migrants of identity: Perceptions of home in a world
   of movement*. Oxford; New York: Berg.

Reyes, A. (2007). *Language, identity, and stereotype among Southeast Asian American
   youth: The other Asian*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Roth, J. H. (2002). *Brokered homeland: Japanese Brazilian migrants in Japan*. Ithaca:
   Cornell University Press.

Rouse, R. (1991). Mexican migration and the social space of postmodernism. *Diaspora,
   1*(1), 8-24.

Rouse, R. (1996). Mexican migration and the social space of postmodernism. In D. G.
   Gutiérrez (Ed.), *Between two worlds: Mexican immigrants in the United States*
   (pp. 247-263). Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources.

Rumbaut, R. G., & Portes, A. (2001). *Ethnicities: Children of immigrants in America*.
   Berkeley; New York: University of California Press; Russell Sage Foundation.

Schoen, C., Davis, K., Collins, K. S., Greenberg, L., Des Roches, C., & Abrams, M.
   (1997). The commonwealth fund: Survey of the health of adolescent girls.
   Retrieved from http://www.commonwealthfund.org/Content/Publications/Fund-
   Reports/1997/Nov/The

Shah, S. (1997). *Dragon ladies: Asian American feminists breathe fire*. Boston, MA:
   South End Press.

Shankar, S. (2008). *Desi land: Teen culture, class, and success in Silicon Valley*.
   Durham: Duke University Press.

Sheets, C. (2011, November 1). Asian American students are targeted by bullies, *International Business Times*. Retrieved from http://www.ibtimes.com/asian-american-students-are-targeted-bullies-364068

Shim, D. (2006). Hybridity and the rise of Korean popular culture in Asia. *Media, Culture & Society, 28*(1), 25-44.

Shiraishi, S. (2007). Popular culture and East Asia. In J. Nishikawa & K. Hirano (Eds.), *Creation of East Asian community no.3: International mobility and social change* (pp. 203-226). Tokyo: Iwanami.

Shukla, S. R. (2003). *India abroad: Diasporic cultures of postwar America and England*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Siu, L. C. D. (2005). *Memories of a future home: Diasporic citizenship of Chinese in Panama*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Skelton, T. (2000). 'Nothing to do, nowhere to go?': Teenage girls and 'public' space in the Rhondda Valleys, South Wales. In S. L. Holloway & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Children's geographies: playing, living, learning* (pp. 80-99). London; New York: Routledge.

Skelton, T., & Valentine, G. (1998). *Cool places: Geographies of youth cultures*. London; New York: Routledge.

Smith-Hefner, N. J. (1993). Education, gender, and generational conflict among Khmer refugees. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 24*(2), 135-158.

Smith-Hefner, N. J. (1999). *Khmer American: Identity and moral education in a diasporic community*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Smith, M. P., & Guarnizo, L. (1998). *Transnationalism from below*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Soja, E. W. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Spring, J. H. (1997). *Deculturalization and the struggle for equality: A brief history of the education of dominated cultures in the United States* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Stacey, J. (1988). Can there be a feminist ethnography? *Women's Studies International Forum, 11*(1), 21-27.

Straubhaar, J. D. (1991). Beyond media imperialism: Assymetrical interdependence and cultural proximity. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 8*(1), 39.

Takaki, R. T. (1998). *Strangers from a different shore: A history of Asian Americans* (Updated and rev. ed.). Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Tamura, E. (1994). *Americanization, acculturation, and ethnic identity: The Nisei generation in Hawaii*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Tatum, B. D. (1997). *"Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?" and other conversations about race* (1st ed.). New York: Basic Books.

Thomas, J. (1993). *Doing critical ethnography*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Tokunaga, T. (2008). Educational expectations and aspirations of Filipina newcomer students [Firipinkei Nyukama seito no shinroishiki to shouraitenbou: Jyuyouna tasha to rainichi keii ni chakumoku shite]. *Journal of Intercultural Education Society of Japan, 28*, 87-99.

Tokunaga, T. (2009). *The continuing discovery of places 'in-between': Tomoko's pathways to a 'borderland consciousness'*. unpublished paper, University of Maryland, College Park.

Tokunaga, T. (2011a). 'I'm not going to be in Japan forever': How Filipina immigrant youth in Japan construct the meaning of home. *Ethnography and Education, 6*(2), 179-193.

Tokunaga, T. (2011b). Learning from the in-between spaces of Filipina immigrant youth in Japan. *Research Connections: An Annual Publication from the Consortium on Race, Gender and Ethnicity*, 12-15.

Tong, B. (1994). *Unsubmissive women : Chinese prostitutes in nineteenth-century San Francisco*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Tsuda, T. (2003). *Strangers in the ethnic homeland: Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Tsuda, T. (2004). When home is not the homeland: The case of Japanese Brazilian ethnic return migration. In F. Markowitz & A. H. Stefansson (Eds.), *Homecomings: Unsettling paths of return* (pp. 125-145). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Tsuda, T. (2009). *Diasporic homecomings: Ethnic return migration in comparative perspective*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Tsutsui, W. M. (2010). *Japanese popular culture and globalization*. Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies.

Tuan, M. (1998). *Forever foreigners or honorary whites?: The Asian ethnic experience today*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Um, K. (2003). A dream denied: Educational experiences of Southeast Asian American youth. Washington DC: Southeast Asian Resource Action Center. Retrieved from http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~sasc/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/A-Dream-Denied.pdf.

United States Census Bureau. (2010). State & county quick facts, from http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html

Valentine, G., Skelton, T., & Chambers, D. (1998). Cool places: An introduction to youth and youth cultures. In T. Skelton & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Cool places: Geographies of youth cultures* (pp. 1-32). London; New York: Routledge.

Vallianatos, H., & Raine, K. (2008). Consuming food and constructing identities among Arabic and South Asian immigrant women. *Food, Culture and Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 11*(3), 355-373.

Vargas, L. (2009). *Latina teens, migration, and popular culture*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Waldinger, R., & Feliciano, C. (2004). Will the new second generation experience 'downward assimilation'?: Segmented assimilation re-assessed. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 27*(3), 376-402.

Walker, M., Whyatt, D., Pooley, C., Davies, G., Coulton, P., & Bamford, W. (2009). Talk, technologies and teenagers: Understanding the school journey using a mixed-methods approach. *Children's Geographies, 7*(2), 107-122.

Wang, H. (2004). *The call from the stranger on a journey home: Curriculum in a third space*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Weis, L., & Carbonell-Medina, D. (2000). Learning to speak out in an abstinence-based sex education group: Gender and race work in an urban magnet school. In L. Weis & M. Fine (Eds.), *Construction sites: Excavating race, class, and gender among urban youth* (pp. 26-49). New York: Teachers College Press.

Weis, L., & Dimitriadis, G. (2008). Dueling banjos: Shifting economic and cultural contexts in the lives of youth. *Teachers College Record, 110*(10), 2290-2316.

Weis, L., & Fine, M. (2000). *Construction sites: Excavating race, class, and gender among urban youth*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Weißköppel, C. (2009). Traversing cultural sites: Doing ethnography among Sudanese migrants in Germany. In M.-A. Falzon (Ed.), *Multi-sited ethnography: Theory, praxis and locality in contemporary research* (pp. 251-270). Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Wheatley, E. E. (1994). How can we engender ethnography with a feminist imagination?: A rejoinder to Judith Stacey. *Women's Studies International Forum, 17*(4), 403-416.

Winning, A. (1990). Homesickness. *Phenomenology+Pedagogy, 8*, 245-258.

Wolcott, H. F. (1999). *Ethnography: A way of seeing*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Wolcott, H. F. (2002). Ethnography? or educational travel writing? In Y. Zou & E. T. Trueba (Eds.), *Ethnography and schools: Qualitative approaches to the study of education* (pp. 27-48). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Wolf, D. L. (1996). *Feminist dilemmas in fieldwork*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Wolf, D. L. (1997). Family secrets: Transnational struggles among children of Filipino immigrants. *Sociological Perspectives, 40*(3), 457-482.

Wolf, D. L. (2002). There's no place like "home": Emotional transnationalism and the struggles of second-generation Filipinos. In P. Levitt & M. C. Waters (Eds.), *The changing face of home: The transnational lives of the second generation* (pp. 255-294). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Wong, N. W. (2008). 'They see us as resource': The role of a community-based youth center in supporting the academic lives of low-income Chinese American youth. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 39*(2), 181-204.

Wu, F. H. (2002). *Yellow: Race in America beyond Black and white*. New York: Basic Books.

Yi, Y. (2009). Adolescent literacy and identity construction among 1.5 generation students: From a transnational perspective. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication, 19*(1), 100-129.

Zhou, M. (1997). Growing up American: The challenge confronting immigrant children and children of immigrants. *Annual Review of Sociology, 23*, 63-95.

Zhou, M. (1998). "Parachute kids" in Southern California: The educational experience of Chinese children in transnational families. *Educational Policy, 12*(6), 682-704.

Zhou, M., & Bankston III, C. L. (1998). *Growing up American: How Vietnamese children adapt to life in the United States*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Zhou, M., & Bankston III, C. L. (2001). Family pressure and the educational experience of the daughters of Vietnamese refugees. *International Migration, 39*(4), 133-151.

Zhou, M., & Gatewood, J. V. (2007). *Contemporary Asian America: A multidisciplinary reader* (2nd ed.). New York: New York University Press.