

## The Racial Landscape of Social Networking Sites: Forging Identity, Community, and Civic Engagement

BRENDESHA M. TYNES,\* ELIZABETH L. GARCÍA,\*\* MICHAEL T.  
GIANG,\*\*\* AND NICOLE E. COLEMAN\*\*\*\*

*Abstract: This study examines how adolescents and emerging adults forge identity, community, and civic engagement in public discussions online. Using forty-eight race-related group sites from Facebook and MySpace, this study outlines the reasons groups formed and the discourse practices in which participants engaged. Thematic analysis revealed that group formation revolved around the expression and exploration of identity, creating racial safe havens, education, advocacy, and general discussions about race and race-related issues. Within a given group site's*

---

\* Brendesha M. Tynes is an assistant professor of educational psychology and African American studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research focuses on the role of the Internet in adolescent and emerging adult development with special attention to online victimization, racial identity, intergroup interaction, psychosocial and educational outcomes, and Internet safety.

\*\* Elizabeth L. García is currently a doctoral student in the Child Development Division in the Educational Psychology program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests include racial and ethnic identity and discourse in media, self-concept, and peer sexual harassment and bullying.

\*\*\* Michael T. Giang is currently an assistant professor of psychology at Mount Saint Mary's College in Los Angeles, CA. He received his Ph.D. in psychological studies in education from the University of California and a M.A. in general experimental psychology from California State University. His research interests include peer harassment, acculturation, ethnic identity, and the Internet as a context and tool for identity development.

\*\*\*\* Nicole E. Coleman is a M.Ed. student in school counseling at Loyola University in Chicago. She is interested in the mental health of underrepresented youth in urban areas.

*discussion forum threads, participants' discourse centered on topics such as racial/ethnic pride, heritage, diversity/hybridity, community issues, historical events, and the nature of racism. In addition, participants posting in the discussion forums engaged in racial/ethnic self-categorization, information sharing, policing media for racist infractions, and political organizing. Findings suggest that social network sites and their affordances provide this generation with a unique opportunity to engage in complex discussions about race with those expressing divergent views, those who are similarly positioned, as well as those that are more advanced and culturally sensitive. Despite the presence of online racial discrimination, groups on social network sites are important tools that empower youth to construct identities that counter dominant discourses about underrepresented groups. They also allow group members to become powerful political forces that collectively can help to reshape aspects of the American racial landscape, as was the case with social media more broadly in the 2008 presidential election.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Although in the early stages of its proliferation the Internet was lauded for its potential to erase race, more than a decade of research has now debunked this myth (Bailey 1996; Brock 2009; Byrne 2007; Glaser, Dixit, and Green 2002; Kendall 1998; Nakamura 2002; Tynes, Reynolds, and Greenfield 2004; Tynes 2005). To the contrary, scholars note that many of the social ills that are associated with race offline are recreated in online contexts (Burkhalter 1999; Daniels 2009). For example, 71% of Black adolescents witness online racial discrimination experienced by same race or cross-race peers (Tynes et al. 2008, 566–67). At the same time, the Internet offers an unprecedented amount of opportunities for positive discourse about race often not found in face-to-face settings (Tynes 2007; Tynes, Reynolds, and Greenfield 2004, 673–74). Individuals from disparate parts of the U.S. and around the world can engage in intergroup dialogue, discuss community issues (Byrne 2007, 327), activism (Pickerill 2003), and civic engagement (Bers and Chau 2006; Cassell et al. 2006; Youniss et al. 2002).

Participants can also forge racial and ethnic identity online. Unlike in previous generations, a simple mouse-click now grants access to an infinite amount of information about an ethnic group's language, music, history, culture, and traditions (Tynes, Giang, and Thompson

2008). Online discussion boards, chatrooms, blogs, social network websites, and instant messaging are also available for social and informational exchanges about what it means to belong to a racial or ethnic group. Often under the umbrella of anonymity, Internet users can write about their experiences, post questions, and provide feedback about topics related to their ethnic group on websites. However, few scholars have extensively theoretically or empirically explored the development of racial and ethnic identity on the Internet, particularly in social network sites (SNSs), one of the most commonly used Internet contexts for adolescents and emerging adults (Lenhart and Madden 2007).

The present research addresses this gap in the literature by examining race- and ethnicity-related dialogue among adolescents and emerging adults on SNSs. As online communities have grown in popularity and influence, SNSs have become a primary site for communication and identity formation among adolescents and emerging adults (Romm, Pliskin, and Clarke 1997; referencing “virtual communities”; boyd 2007, 119; boyd and Heer 2006). SNSs are “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (boyd and Ellison 2007, 211). A central aspect of SNSs is the creation of group pages, which allow participants from around the world to convene around a particular topic, issue, event, or cause. The moderator creates the group profile, including a description of the group’s purpose. Members make contributions by posting photos, articles, videos, and event notices, writing on the group’s wall, and contributing to discussion boards or forums. The group pages are a prime site to explore racial and ethnic identity as group membership is often multiracial and participants post divergent perspectives in discussions on racial topics.

Using Erik Erikson’s (1968, 91–141) theory on identity development as the foundation, the development of ethnic identity may be thought of as a dynamic, changing process over time and context, wherein people explore and make decisions about the role of ethnicity in their lives. Erikson believed that an achieved identity is sought through the processes of: (1) exploration, or seeking out different potential identity choices, and (2) commitment, or adhering to one or more sets of goals, values, and beliefs (*ibid.*). A period of exploration and experimentation with an identity typically precedes any commitment or decision about a particular identity. A number of researchers have adapted this approach to numerous racial and ethnic identity development models and measures (e.g., Cross 1971, 15–27;

Kim 1981; Atkinson, Morten, and Sue 1983; Helms 1990, 9–32; Marcia 1980; Phinney 1990, 1992, 1993).

While research remains sparse, studies have found links between the Internet and ethnic identity from this developmental perspective. Tynes, Giang, and Thompson's (2008, 462) online survey of 228 ethnically diverse adolescents showed that the majority (68%) of participants had at least a few daily intergroup interactions, and that on average, most (81%) spent between one and five hours talking to other ethnic group members online. In addition, reported experiences with online racial prejudice were linked to higher levels of ethnic identity (as measured by Phinney's Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)) for ethnic minorities, but were found to be non-significant for multiracial and White participants (Tynes, Giang, and Thompson 2008). To compliment this quantitative study, more qualitative research is needed on how racial and ethnic identities are expressed in online settings. In addition, scholars critical of existing psychological and developmental models have noted that identity development is situation specific, (Sellers et al. 1997, 805–06) and that ethnic identity can change on a daily basis (Yip and Fuligni 2002, 1569).

The quantitative, self-report measures often used in racial and ethnic identity developmental literature do not account for the ways that identity processes are negotiated in day-to-day interaction. In theorizing on identity in relation to cyberspace, we draw from communications scholars Mitra and Watts, (2002, 480) who argue that the Internet is a "discursive space" and call for a textual/discursive/rhetorical analysis that focuses on the voices of participants in a given online community. As do these authors, we apply the concept of *voice-as-dialog*—wherein discourse communities are forged through utterances and receipt of those utterances—to discourse in SNSs (ibid.). Identity in this sense is not located solely within the individual, but is interactionally achieved.

As Drzewiecka and Nakayama (1998, 21) note, "identity is never a finished product, it is dynamic and fluid and constituted in interactions . . . identity and ethnicity are both co-created in communication which means that ethnic identity is constantly re-created, it is flexible and evolving rather than static and fixed." In addition, traditional power relations are disrupted such that marginalized groups are empowered to become agents in forging their own sense of self and achieving other goals. Mitra and Watts (2002, 489) further note that online "power is related to the eloquence of the voice, the way in which a voice can link itself to other voices and in combination garner power."

These propositions are evident in research that has focused on race and identity. Specific foci have been on how traditional Japanese discourse practices are subverted for those that are more context specific (Matsuda 2002), how the Internet creates a space to resist and challenge dominant discourse (Chan 2005; Ismail 2008; Kvasny and Hales 2010), as well as how the Internet provides a safe space for immigrants to find a voice (Mitra 2006). Several analyses of Black<sup>1</sup> students recount their use of the Internet for identity and validation. Although many Blacks often have to mask their blackness in predominantly White face-to-face settings, research indicates that Black students can create “safe houses” on the Internet in which they freely speak African American English, for example, without fear of reprobation from Whites or standard English speakers (Knadler 2001; Redd 2003). In Kvasny and Hales’ (2010) recent study of an online discussion forum for people with African ancestry, the authors found that the major topics of conversation included references to ethnic identity (ethnicity, culture, and heritage), racial identity, blended heritage, pride, proper terminology, and birth/origin/nationality. One important finding was that there was no single Black identity but a more blended conception of self, particularly among Blacks in the U.S.

Other race-related studies have focused on community and civic engagement. We define civic engagement broadly; it includes a range of activities that are aimed at improving the public sphere both online and offline, including advocacy, participation in youth organizations and groups, protesting for an important cause (Younis et al. 2002), community service, writing, information sharing and civic discourse (Bers and Chau 2006; Sunstein 2001). One study of eleven- to seventeen-year-olds found that the creation of a virtual city called “Zora” could foster civic actions and civic discourse, including participants’ discussion of the definition of, and possible solutions for, racism, discrimination, and social structure (Bers and Chau 2006). In addition, in an intergroup dialogue of 3,000 youths from more than 139 countries, being elected a delegate was dependent on one’s ability to synthesize the opinions of others, confirming the theoretical position that identity, goals, and power are achieved through interaction and eloquence of the online voice (Cassell et al. 2006).

The race-related research specifically focused on SNSs includes an investigation of the nature of discourse and civic engagement on BlackPlanet (Byrne 2007). Byrne found that a great deal of discourse was centered on important community issues and that education,

---

<sup>1</sup> In this Article Black will be used in most cases to denote those from the continent of Africa, as well as those of African descent across the Diaspora.

slavery, racism, AIDS, voting, and justice were discussed most frequently (*ibid.*, 331). The present study builds on Byrne's research by exploring discourse on racial identity in addition to community and civic engagement using data from two additional SNSs used by Blacks and other racial/ethnic groups. This study also extends Byrne's most recent work, an analysis of what individuals teach each other about race and ethnicity on dedicated racial/ethnic SNSs such as AsianAvenue, BlackPlanet, and MiGente (Byrne 2008, 15). Although Byrne provides insight into the nature of discourse about race on SNSs, these sites are race-specific. Individuals may mobilize around racial issues and concerns differently in intergroup and intragroup settings and in different Internet contexts. In light of the increasing importance of SNSs as settings for intragroup and intergroup discussion, we explore why individuals form groups and the discourse practices they engage in while participating in these groups. Group profile descriptions and discussion forum threads and images from Facebook and MySpace are the focus of the analyses.

## II. METHOD

### A. RESEARCH SITE

The data for this study were collected online from October 2007 through May 2008 using online group pages from two SNSs: MySpace and Facebook. These sites were chosen because of their popularity. At the time of data collection, Facebook was becoming one of the most heavily trafficked Internet sites, with over 132 million active users (Smith 2008) and MySpace was the leader in the number of unique visitors to a site (Higginbotham). These figures will have changed rapidly by the time this Article is published, considering as of July 2010 there were 500 million users on Facebook (Facebook). Both sites provide ample intragroup as well as intergroup discussions.

All of the groups in the analysis were similar in structure, in part because of the nature of the two online SNSs. In order to set up a group, an administrator must input the group name, type, description, contact information, location, and public/private status. In addition to this basic structure, there are specific cultural practices around group formation on each site. On Facebook, most groups specify a unifying cause or event in their description. In establishing such a unifier, administrators typically provide evidence from recent newspaper articles or recount an incident—for example, the St. Joe 6, a case in which six Black high school students were threatened in a letter that surfaced at a high school. Facebook administrators often provide

specific details about what the group is designed to do, such as to encourage activism or provide a forum for discussion of current issues. MySpace administrators also state the purpose of the group, but the descriptions are generally less detailed. Groups in both sites also state who is invited to participate (e.g., people who hold particular values or who belong to a particular racial/ethnic group) and set forth their rules of engagement, such as being respectful of other peoples' opinions. Group administrators may also take it upon themselves to remove posts that violate the terms of the SNS, such as posts including online racial discrimination. Lastly, administrators often give an indication of the types of activities group members will engage in, such as imploring members to sign a petition.

Additionally, within each group, members can add discussion forum topics to which all members can respond. Once a discussion forum topic is posted, it is available for everyone to view and respond to when the group is open to the public. One topic and its responses constitute a single thread within the group discussion forum.

## B. GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Black, White, Latino, and Asian participants were represented in the discussion forum dialogue on the group pages used in this study. Groups ranged in size from as few as fourteen members to more than 41,000. Although it is difficult to determine ages of the participants, many on MySpace reported being between fifteen and early twenties. On Facebook, participants could be placed in a general age bracket by determining whether they belonged to a college or a high school network. Research has shown that in some instances, teens online claim to be older than they actually are, so it is possible that there are younger participants in the sample (Gross 2004, 643).

## C. PROCEDURE

In order to select the group pages for analysis, researchers conducted keyword searches on Facebook and MySpace for the terms "African American/Black," "White," "Latino," "Asian," "racism," "racism + campus," and "racism + high school," as well as four terms signifying current issues with racial dimensions: "Jena 6," "affirmative action," "immigration," and "Barack Obama." For each keyword search, a total of 119 to 500-plus group profiles were located and forty-eight group pages were then randomly selected from these searches. Of the forty-eight randomly selected group pages, nineteen group pages were chosen from the search for ethnic group names.

Sixteen were randomly selected from the various “racism” keyword searches and eleven from the keyword searches of current racial issues. In addition, two group pages pertaining to racist-themed parties at colleges were selected. Random selection was conducted by generating random digits from the random digits function of Microsoft Excel. The group page corresponding to each random digit was copied and pasted into a Microsoft Word file if there was at least one discussion forum thread or wall post containing the keyword. However, there were no limitations on the number of discussion forum threads or members on each group page. Once group pages were randomly selected, the contents of each site were copied and pasted into Microsoft Word documents. If the contents of a group page exceeded fifty Word document pages, only the first fifty pages were included in the analyses.

#### D. ANALYSIS

The three stages of thematic analysis as outlined by Boyatzis (1998, 35–37) were followed to respond to the question of why groups formed and what types of racial and ethnic identity discourse topics and practices can be found in SNSs. Those stages include Stage I—deciding on sampling and design issues; Stage II—developing themes and a code; and Stage III—validating the code (*ibid.*). Steps for developing inductively driven themes were followed (during stage II) (*ibid.*, 35–36). The first author read and reread the data and reduced the raw information by labeling the group profile descriptions and the discussion forum threads (*ibid.*, 36). After reviewing multiple examples of each labeled topic, the researcher developed the central codes of the purpose of group formation and discourse topics and practices through abstracting the commonality across themes (*ibid.*). A description and examples for several of the twenty-five themes (five for purpose of group formation; twenty for discourse topics and practices) appear in the results section.

Once these themes were delineated, the first author, along with a research assistant, coded 20% of the group profile descriptions and discussion forum threads to establish interpreter reliability in identifying the twenty-five central themes in Stage III. Reliability was assessed using the kappa statistic, with scores ranging from 0.6 to 0.9, being considered moderate to almost perfect (Viera and Garrett 2005, 362). The research assistant coded the remaining data.



### III. RESULTS

Thematic analysis of group profile descriptions and discourse samples of discussion forum threads was conducted to determine the nature of group formation in SNSs and to explore discourse topics and practices that take place in intra- and intergroup discussions online. Of the forty-eight group profiles, twenty (41.67%) focused on African Americans/Blacks, nine (18.75%) on Latinos/as, four (8.33%) on Asians/Asian Americans, three (6.25%) on Anglo Americans/Whites, and twelve (25%) were multicultural sites. The forty-eight group sites included 388 discussions. Five reasons for group formation were found among the forty-eight group site descriptions. Twelve discourse topics and eight practices were identified in the 388 discussions. The prevalence of each discourse topic and practice are shown in tables 1 and 2, respectively.

The main themes that emerged in the data closely paralleled the unifying causes or purposes around which groups were formed. These included heritage/identity exploration and expression (33.33% of groups), establishing racial safe havens and solidarity (6.25%), advocacy and organizing (47.92%), education (12.5%), and general discussions of race/ethnicity and related issues (22.92%). A sixth theme, relationships, was represented in the search for profiles but not in the random selection. These categories were not mutually exclusive; groups could serve one or more of these purposes.

Within the context of these larger functions for each group, participants engaged in race-related discussions and a number of discourse practices. The first four topics focused on identity and included the following subheadings: (1) group identity-characteristics, defined as attributes, attitudes, and behaviors of a given racial/ethnic group, including language and physical features; (2) racial/ethnic pride; (3) heritage; and (4) diversity/hybridity. The remaining topics were broadly focused on community and civic engagement. They included (5) race-related current events, (6) community issues, (7) historical events, (8) heroes and holidays, (9) human/civil rights, (10) the nature of racism, and (11) relationships. A final topic was created for all dialogue that was not related to race: non-race-related general discussions (table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Prevalence of Discourse Topics across All Discussion Forum Threads*

Topic	Prevalence
Group Identity-Characteristics	9.02%
Racial/ethnic pride	10.57%
Heritage	5.41%
Diversity-Hybridity	8.51%
Current events-race related	17.78%
Community issues-race related	16.75%
Historical events-race related	15.21%
Heroes and holidays	5.67%
Human/civil rights	4.64%
Nature of racism	20.62%
Relationships	1.80%
General-non-race related	27.06%

Within the discussion of each of the topics, there were particular tasks that participants aspired to accomplish with their dialogue. We have termed this work “discourse practices” for the purposes of this Article (table 2). They include racial/ethnic self-categorization, racial/ethnic categorization of others, connecting with others (e.g., active attempts to connect with other members of in-group, romantic relationships with in-group, interracial dating, and friendship), social support, information sharing, policing/exposing media for racist infractions, online racial discrimination (e.g., threats of violence, stereotyping, insults and racial epithets, and legitimizing racial hierarchy), and political action and organizing (e.g., posting letters and petitions, planning protests/boycotts; a clear distinction is made between action in this case and talking about action in community issues, current events, etc.).

Table 2  
*Prevalence of Discourse Practices across All Discussion Forum Threads*

Topic	Prevalence
Self-categorization	9.02%
Other categorization	13.92%
Connecting with others	1.29%
Social support	2.06%
Information sharing	51.29%
Policing/exposing media	19.85%
Online Racial Discrimination	
Threats of violence	0.77%
Stereotyping	4.12%
Insults/racial epithets	6.44%
Legitimizing racial hierarchy	0.77%
Political action/organizing	6.70%

For comparative purposes and in order to more closely examine the nature of discourse on SNSs among Blacks, Latinos/as, and Asians/Asian Americans, the prevalence of select discourse topics and practices was examined (table 3). Specifically, of the 163 group discussion forum threads on the twenty sites that focused on Blacks, community issues and the nature of racism were among the most prevalent topics. Among the 106 discussion forum threads on the nine sites that focused on Latinos/as, racial pride was the most common discourse topic. Of the twenty discussion forum threads across the four group sites that focused on Asians/Asian Americans, cultural characteristics, racial/ethnic pride and heritage were most commonly discussed. Information sharing was the most common practice for all three groups followed by policing and exposing racism and stereotypes in the media (the Internet included) for Blacks. Political action and organizing was between 5%-10% for all groups.

Table 3  
*Prevalence of Discourse Topics and Practices by Racial Group*

Topic	Prevalence		
	Blacks	Latinos/ as	Asians/Asian Americans
<i>Discourse Topics</i>			
Group Identity	4.90%	5.66%	35.23%
Racial/ethnic pride	9.20%	11.32%	25.56%
Heritage	3.07%	5.67%	25.07%
Community issues-race related	17.18%	2.83%	5.11%
Nature of racism	19.02%	3.77%	15.74%
<i>Discourse Practices</i>			
Information sharing	52.15%	50.00%	35.49%
Policing/exposing media	22.70%	7.55%	15.81%
Political action/organizing	6.75%	10.38%	5.39%

Discourse topics could stand alone in a given thread, but most included multiple topics simultaneously. Most representative examples of select discourse topics are included below. These examples highlight the fact that racial identity, community, and civic engagement are developed through interaction on the Internet.

Individuals' heritage or family history and migration patterns were among the least discussed discourse topics of Blacks and Latinos, but figured prominently among Asians. The following example is taken from one of the largest Facebook groups in the sample, called "Love to Be Asian!"<sup>2</sup> The group had 17,914 members, and this thread regarding group heritage alone included over 200 posts. One participant noted:<sup>3</sup>

I saw someone else that claims royal blood. Me too, on my mom's side. Dad's side is a family of doctors. All from Guangzhou...not really sure where, but Dad's side of family went down to Vietnam to help them fight the Dutch, and mom's side went down during the Communist takeover.

<sup>2</sup> Group names have been changed to protect individual group members.

<sup>3</sup> All quotes are written here exactly as they appeared on each of the group sites, with any original errors retained.

The participant first positions herself in the dialogue by aligning her identity and heritage with that of another participant. This connection gives her the authority to post, and her remaining statements substantiate her claim of belonging to an Asian group. She also buttresses her group belonging by displaying her knowledge of her heritage, albeit limited. She goes on to note cultural characteristics of Asians and her racial pride: "S'all good though, still full - asian and the benefits ie food, being 100% cool, speaking a shizzle load of languages and getting discounts where if you speak the language they like you! AZN PRIDE!" More important than the ethnic hierarchy within the Asian community was being "full" Asian, which was associated with positive characteristics such as speaking several languages and being cool. Many participants, as in this post, posited essential notions of ethnic group membership and practices.

While many participants felt it was important to be labeled under homogenous pan-ethnic categories, the notion of racial hybridity was also valued, primarily in the Latino (6.6% of discussion forum threads) and Asian groups (25%). Participants often responded by saying "interesting mix" or "cool" when people reported being part German or Irish as well as Asian or Latino. Some Latinos claimed that their mixed Indian, Spanish, and African heritage made them unique. Other group members acknowledged and valued within-group diversity. For example, on the "Stop the Violence Initiative" Facebook group, a Latino college student defines identity by explaining that Latinos have a variety of names, including "Hispanic" and "La Raza." He then goes on to describe the complexities of identity politics:

The issue of identity politics will persist and never be resolved. Identity is a matter of historical interpretation, acceptance and personal preference. I personally advocate people to identify with their individual cultures, countries of origin, and to understand the importance of tracing their ancestry. Therein lies their true identity. Some will choose to identify themselves by political, cultural, regional, or racial terms. Each person has that entitlement. We should never impose concepts on others they do not wish to embrace. Inclusivity is the key. Exclusivity only serves to further the objective of those seeking to divide us. As we evolve as a people and get to know more of our true identity, all these names will be replaced by others more accurate and true to ourselves.

Unlike in the previous post, this student warns against essentialist, one-dimensional conceptions of identity that do not take into account the various ways Latinos define themselves. At the same time he seems to suggest that Latinos' evolution as a people is, in fact, tied to the discovery of a "true" self based on ancestry. This self-representation would include definitions that come from within and thus do not serve as a source of division the way current terms do.

Blacks discussed racial pride more than group identity-cultural characteristics and diversity-hybridity. In a number of instances they did so within the context of discussing community issues. In the example below from the "Smart is the New Black" group discussion on MySpace, female and male Black participants, Participants A and B, respectively, discuss Black self-hatred and Black-on-Black violence:

A: Why does it seem that an alarming majority of black people hurt their own people more than other ethnic groups do? I truly believe how black men and black women treat each other, relationship wise, is terrible. I also find it sad how black women treat each other. The factors are ridiculous stemming from jealousy to skin color. What are your perspectives of this ugly side of self hatred and hatred against others within our communities? Of course, I believe it stems from slavery.

B: We are not the only ones. Sadaam Huesien, Mao Tse Tung, Kim Yun Il, Adolf Hitler, and many other leaders of their countries have been responsible for massive genocides within their borders. I think African Americans get the publicity. The media puts us out there so that they don't have to look at themselves. The old "At least we are not as bad as them" syndrome.

I'm not saying that it doesn't exist, but I am saying as a people, we are not as bad as they tell us we are . . . .

I guess what I am trying to say is I love black people. We need to rise up, we have been rising up (go Obama, lol). But one of their strategies to keeping us from reaching our fullest potential is to get us "chasing our own tail".

A: I only wish we represented ourselves in more than just sports and (gasp) music videos. Most other ethnic groups pool together. Let's own some banks and gas stations . . . .

B: We do, however, our stereotypes and failures are magnified far more than any other race, hence the belief that we have to be twice as good as our white counterparts in order to succeed. Media outlets do not help with our fight for positive progression.

Participant B provides specific evidence to counter the argument that Black self-hatred is especially virulent, citing Saddam Hussein and other dictators. He uses analogy and counterfactual argument (which suggests that a factor is absent from the assertion), two subcategories of genuine evidence in Kuhn's (1991) taxonomy of argumentation skills. Participant B goes on to contend that the media are responsible for magnifying the worst in Blacks and therefore perpetuating negative stereotypes. He further argues the importance of reading and decoding media images through the presentation of multiple historical and contemporary examples. Together the two negotiate the meanings of media representations of Blacks as myth or reality.

Group leaders used the main page of the group to spark conversation. The Facebook example below includes both current and historical events from "Southerners Rise, Confederacy Fall." In explaining the unifying purpose of the group, the administrator presents multiple perspectives on the issue of whether to fly the Confederate flag:

Here on the University of Texas Campus we have 4 statues of former confederate officials, including Robert E. Lee, and the confederate president Davis. I think that this is a disgusting abomination, and that we, as southerners should stand up against all forms of honor given to those men that fought against the Union . . . . Some call the confederacy and it's flag a symbol of heritage. My family, as I regret to say, were white southerners since that time, but I have no pride in saying that they supported slavery, and racism.

Not only does the administrator who wrote this profile description anticipate potential arguments about the Confederate flag and statues, he also includes analogies to make his points. He goes on to use the

analogy of cursing in front of a grandmother as offensive and disrespectful to show how both context and characteristics of individuals are important in determining appropriate race-related behaviors. Given the historical significance of the Confederate flag as a symbol of hate for Blacks, the administrator argues against refashioning the flag for pride in heritage purposes. He also admonishes others to forge a more positive identity by finding other symbols and practices that positively represent the South.

Participants on group profiles use the discussion forum as a means to discuss identity and the nature of racism, as a nineteen-year-old Anglo American's post to "Blacks Rise!" on MySpace illustrates. He questions why the White pride groups or safe havens are being deleted while similar groups for other ethnicities are left online. He asks, "How can there be black groups? when every White group i have been in gets deleted cause its racist?" Another White or Asian (it is unclear from his photo) male responds, "cuz black groups are the minority and they are hated, unlike Whites who are not suppressed and those 'White groups' only look to further their race and eradicate all other ones, which by the way is evil. good thing for black groups." Another Black person adds to the conversation by explaining that this is a White majority society so White pride is equated with White supremacy. A White person responds, "its another double standard i think. it shouldn't matter whether it be white/black/yellow/red or whatever pride, as long as it doesnt promote racism it should be allowed." Also frustrated with the explanations provided, another participant adds, "click your heals three times and go back to Africa." Amidst the blatant display of racial insult and insensitivity, more culturally competent participants were able to model for others in the forum how to think about what they perceived to be discriminatory practice against Whites.

## A. DISCOURSE PRACTICES

### 1. SELF CATEGORIZATION/IDENTIFICATION

Negotiation of identity took place collectively within the online groups as participants attempted to categorize themselves and others. For example, an Asian participant wrote: "i don't know if i truly count as asian but i'm 1/4 filipino, 1/4 chinese and 1/2 persian. i guess its up to you guys to decide lol. i like to think i am." Group members interactionally determined what constituted being Asian and who could call himself an Asian. For example, some South Asian group



participants struggled to prove their “Asianness” and constantly had to assert that they too were Asian.

Similarly, a sixteen-year-old, from the “Young People Against Racism” site responded to another person’s question about whether or not they agreed with interracial dating and relationships:

im mixed white and puertorican so if it wasn't for interracial i would [not] be here. But what i have noticed mainly on the Internet is that you can be yourself to someone and you can be like best friends. But when they might like see my Myspace or my pics there like “I didn't know you were black” lolim not even black. Alot of people will not like you because your not what they though you were for one reason or another. I cant say how many times poeple change after realizing i wasnt “white” even though i am by blood. I'm cool with anyone you know and it doesn't change when i see there race cuz i know i liked them for who they are not what they are. What i love the most is when people think im white because i act that way i gusse and they just freak out when they see me. Its like ok im half white and p.ricanim brown on the outside and white in the inside lmao but hey i cant help the way i look yaknow :/

This participant argues that the Internet context allows him to be his true self and to make friendships based on who he feels he is on the inside. He can be free to speak like a White person even though his skin is brown. Interestingly, the authenticity that he feels is temporary, lasting only as long as his images are not visible online. The friendships he builds based on this identity also dissolve with the discovery of his physical features.

## 2. INFORMATION SHARING

The most common practice participants engaged in is information sharing, often in the form of an article either from the news or research, links to other sites, etc. One high school student found an article on college admission to Princeton and the experiences of Asian Americans (Golden 2006). The article states: “Though Asian-Americans constitute only about 4.5% of the U.S. population, they typically account for anywhere from 10% to 30% of students at many

of the nation's elite colleges. Even so, based on their outstanding grades and test scores, Asian-Americans increasingly say their enrollment should be much higher . . ." (ibid.). The article goes on to discuss Mr. Jian Li, a freshman at Yale University who filed a complaint at the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights against Princeton University (ibid.). He believed the University discriminated against him because he was Asian after reading an article "by three Princeton researchers concluding that an Asian-American applicant needed to score 50 points higher on the SAT than other applicants to have" similar chances of being admitted to an elite university (ibid.). The information in this article can empower Asians who have suspected that they were not accepted to particular organizations because of their racial group and those who may have been unclear about college rejections. As participants amass similar articles, they compile a repository of strategies for how to proceed when group members face discrimination. Armed with empirical evidence, group members now have recourse when these experiences arise.

### 3. POLITICAL ACTION AND ORGANIZING

Much of the political action in the groups researched in this study centered on anti-racist activism and political organizing. This was perhaps not surprising in light of the plethora of racial incidents and issues that emerged in 2007–2008, including racially tinged presidential campaigning, the controversial charges brought against six Black high school students in Jena, Louisiana, and a rash of hanging nooses and racially themed parties across the country. In Facebook's "Students to Elect Barack Obama" group, students attempted to get others to sign a petition to sway Democratic superdelegates on Barack Obama's behalf in the spring of election year 2008:

You've probably heard about the "superdelegates" who could end up deciding the Democratic nominee. The superdelegates are under lots of pressure right now to come out for one candidate or the other. We urgently need to encourage them to let the voters decide between Clinton and Obama—and then to support the will of the people. I signed a petition urging the superdelegates to respect the will of the voters. Can you join me at the link below?

[http://pol.moveon.org/superdelegates/?r\\_by=-9030291-OyaWMd&rc=paste](http://pol.moveon.org/superdelegates/?r_by=-9030291-OyaWMd&rc=paste)  
Thanks!

Exactly how many people followed the link and signed the petition is impossible to determine, but the fact that this group was one of the most popular groups in our sample, with more than 22,000 members, suggests that it was a powerful force on the Facebook site. The group was a multiracial, multi-aged coalition of Obama supporters. It produced an extensive amount of political discourse, and while many of the groups geared to high school students had fewer members and in some cases less dialogue and civic engagement, the mixture of adolescents and emerging adults in this group produced over 400 pages of discussion about the topic and multiple instances of organizing events and political activities.

In addition to letters and petitions, types of civic engagement promoted by the groups included attending protests and organizing or supporting boycotts. The Internet, of course, has become a prime tool for event organizers of all stripes to reach thousands or even millions of people across the country, and publicity on SNSs is emerging as a key aspect of this outreach. When organizers planned the Great American Boycott, a one-day nationwide strike by immigrants in 2006, their outreach included publicity on the Latino MySpace group “Raza!”

Latinos, immigrants, and supporters across the country took a day off school and work to participate in demonstrations of more than one million in cities across the country from Los Angeles to New York. Teens were actively engaged in the protests, arguably because of their widespread use of technology and SNSs. Not only do these conversations and subsequent action serve as a unifying force for Latinos across the country, but they also forge a positive sense of self and equality for all members of the group. Not only does online interaction connect participants to a common purpose, but the act of working toward shared goals may create and foster positive collective identities that counter prevailing stereotypes.

#### 4. ONLINE RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Various forms of online racial discrimination were evident in the discourse, including threats of violence, stereotyping, insults, racial epithets/hate speech, and statements legitimizing racial hierarchy. These practices were in many instances contested with anti-racist activism both by those with differing viewpoints and by the targets of

these remarks. For example, racial theme parties have occurred on college campuses across the country (Mueller, Dirks, and Picca 2007, 319), and photos are placed online. The parties are typically given a title such as “Tacos and Tequila” or “Thug Holiday,” that signals a particular racial/ethnic group or groups. Attendees are expected to arrive in costumes depicting the target community and to perform stereotypical gestures, walking styles, and activities seen as typical of that group. Racist props for such performances may include a padded or tissue-papered bottom to mock the shapeliness of Black women’s buttocks.

These performance parties and the posting of the performance through images provide participants with opportunities to engage in what has been called a “ritual of rebellion,” a temporary release from having to abide by acceptable social norms of behavior, much as occurs on Halloween (Gluckman 1973; Mueller, Dirks, and Picca 2007, 319–20, 332). Partygoers are able to mock racialized others under the guise of play while simultaneously reinforcing racial hierarchy. In online discussions from the two groups, many posts highlighted the playful aspect in calling for mild or no punishment for the offenders. They argued against taking offense at the performance and advised Blacks to laugh it off because it was play. They further suggested that Blacks were overreacting in taking offense and that racism would not exist if people would stop complaining about it. Other participants, however, focused on getting people to see these stereotyped performances as offensive, such as by critiquing the ways in which the students chose to characterize Blacks (with black paint rather than brown as most Blacks are).

Although the posting of the racist images evoked strong cognitive and emotional reactions, it also afforded a prime opportunity for peer-teaching and learning. A student from Mississippi State University entered the “We Are Against Racial Theme Parties” group on Facebook for the express purpose of gaining intergroup understanding and viewing the incident through the lens of the target group.

I’m not making excuses since I’m sure many were there for ugly purposes. I’ve never been to an actual ghetto-themed party, but I have to been to Halloween and costume parties, where a few friends of mine would be dressed as black characters, but like I said I didn’t realize that was offensive. I guess I’m wondering is it always offensive or was it more so because of the MLK holiday? Like I said earlier I don’t mean to offend

anyone, just to learn, so be patient with me if I say anything offensive to you and just explain why it is so.

Participants who post messages such as this might receive an explicit response to their questions or they may glean a response from those modeled in the discussions. Peer teaching and learning provided participants with ways to reframe and reshape local practices through an understanding of how others on a national and even global level view race-related behaviors. It also helped participants to move beyond superficial aspects of racial groups, as they are often taught in traditional school settings, to critical reflection and meaningful engagement.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

This study sought to address the dearth in research on the nature of racial discourse in SNSs. Thematic analysis revealed that the purposes of group formation on SNSs include advocacy, education, heritage and identity exploration, creation of racial safe havens, and general discussions of race. Within the groups, participants are provided with unique opportunities to engage in complex and sometimes difficult discussions about race. The affordances of the sites, including the ability to post links to articles, often provide curriculum, and in some cases, a toolkit for developing intergroup understanding, in-group attitudes, and individual and collective actions to take on behalf of the group both online and offline. The group discussions, profile descriptions, and images provide space for participants to model and explicitly teach ways to interact around racial issues. In addition, the access to spaces that facilitate community organizing and links to actual petitions, for example, give participants power to effect change and potentially reconfigure aspects of their racial climates locally and nationally.

Not only does participation in race-related SNS group sites have implications for social cognition such as perspective taking ability (Tynes 2007), but interaction with online peers involved the use and potential development of academic skills such as argumentation. Participants provided key components of sound arguments including providing genuine evidence in the form of analogies and counterfactual arguments (Kuhn 1991). In doing so, they presented

historical facts to make specific points about identity and community issues.

This study showed the utility of a *voice-as-dialog* approach to studying identity and civic engagement online. Similar to existing studies both offline and online, identity is negotiated in dialogue with others (Rockquomore 2002; Kvasny and Hales 2010). Moreover, SNSs provide a space for youth to define themselves outside dominant discourses that may disparage them. Participants in the study shared information, discussed community issues, and mobilized themselves using SNSs as a tool. Results of this study are a departure from Byrne's research that found that Blacks had a "why bother" attitude about taking action on the community issues they discussed (Byrne 2007, 332–33). The deliberations about political issues that are argued to lead to civic engagement (Min 2007, 1380–82) in face-to-face settings were evident in MySpace and Facebook. The political action of participants in this study was not found on BlackPlanet, suggesting that the online context of these discussions plays a critical role.

Discourse topics and practices of participants, including historical and current events, community issues, racial pride, cultural characteristics, self-identification, and political action may have distinct expressions on the Internet that differ from offline settings. For example, participants may be allowed to forge what they consider a true or authentic racial identity in online settings but be constrained in offline settings. In forging their identities online, participants are aided and perhaps emboldened by Internet contexts and online peers to ask important questions and to engage in critical dialogue. Studies of offline settings, in contrast, often find that youth feel uneasy about broaching sensitive topics such as race (Bolgatz 2005, 3–4).

Contrary to much of the developmental literature—which has used self-report quantitative measures to assess identity—that has shown that ethnic identity is less salient for Whites (Phinney 1992), the *voice-as-dialog* framework used in this article showed that the construction of a positive identity was just as important to White American youth as for adolescents and emerging adults of color. The Internet provides an important outlet for these discussions for White youth as they may not be given these opportunities in offline settings. This is in spite of the fact that scholars have warned about the potential tension and dangers of allowing White youth to feel as though they have no ethnic identity while people of color have their identities buttressed, albeit sporadically (e.g., with Black and Latino History Month) in classroom settings (Macdonald et al. 1989; Rattansi and Phoenix 2005, 107). White youth may feel slighted and/or threatened, though every month is White History Month. If not

explicitly taught about White privilege, and if positive, anti-racist White identities are not cultivated, an even greater rise in hate crimes may be expected, as evidenced in the rise in hate crimes concomitant with President Barack Obama's campaign and election (SPLC 2009).

Unlike recent research showing that online racial discrimination is common, these types of experiences accounted for an unusually small percentage of race-related discourse in the group pages (Tynes, Reynolds, and Greenfield 2004). This is because group leaders often take the responsibility of policing their sites for violations of group (and SNS) rules, often including avoiding racist language. Though the percentages were small, negative experiences such as these have been associated with depression and anxiety in members of the target group (Tynes et al. 2008).

Future research should further explore the negative impact images and text may have on psychological adjustment, as well as explore a large sample of individual profiles to build on this study's findings. Future research should also explore a larger sample of group sites and how participating in group dialogue over time may impact participant perspective taking ability. In addition, as many studies have shown online experiences to impact and be impacted by offline experiences, it would be important to know how racial discourse—and potentially online racial discrimination—impacts perceptions of school racial climate.

## REFERENCES

- Atkinson, Donald R., George Morten, and Derald Wing Sue. 1983. *Counseling American Minorities: A Cross Cultural Perspective*. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers.
- Bailey, Cameron. 1996. "Virtual Skin: Articulating Race in Cyberspace." In *Immersed in Technology: Art and Virtual Environments*, edited by Mary Anne Moser and Douglas MacLeod, 29–50. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Bers, Marina Umaschi, and Clement Chau. 2006. "Fostering Civic Engagement by Building a Virtual City." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 11 (3): 748–70. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00034.x.
- Bolgatz, Jane. 2005. *Talking Race in the Classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Boyatzis, Richard E. 1998. *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- boyd, danah. 2007. "Why Youth Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life." In *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media*, edited by David Buckingham, 119–42. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- boyd, danah m., and Nicole B. Ellison. 2007. "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13 (1): 210–30. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x.
- boyd, danah, and Jeffrey Heer. 2006. "Profiles as Conversation: Networked Identity Performance on Friendster." *Proceedings of the Hawai'i International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS-39)*. Kauai, HI: IEEE Computer Society.
- Brock, André. 2009. "Life on the Wire: Deconstructing Race on the Internet." *Information, Communication & Society* 12 (3): 344–63.



- Burkhalter, Byron. 1999. "Reading Race Online: Discovering Racial Identity in Usenet Discussions." In *Communities in Cyberspace*, edited by Marc A. Smith and Peter Kollock, 60–75. London: Routledge.
- Byrne, Dara N. 2007. "Public Discourse, Community Concerns, and Civic Engagement: Exploring Black Social Networking Traditions on BlackPlanet.com." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13 (1): 319–40. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00398.x.
- . 2008. "The Future of (the) 'Race': Identity, Discourse, and the Rise of Computer-Mediated Public Spheres." In *Learning Race and Ethnicity: Youth and Digital Media*, edited by Anna Everett, 15–38. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Cassell, Justine, Kim Ferriman, David Huffaker, and Dona Tversky. 2006. "The Language of Online Leadership: Gender and Youth Engagement on the Internet." *Developmental Psychology* 42 (3): 436–49.
- Chan, Brenda. 2005. "Imagining the Homeland: The Internet and Diasporic Discourse of Nationalism." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 29 (4): 336–68. doi:10.1177/0196859905278499.
- Cross, William E., Jr. 1971. "The Negro-to-Black Conversion Experience." *Black World* 20 (9): 13–27.
- Daniels, Jessie. 2009. *Cyber Racism: White Supremacy Online and the New Attack on Civil Rights*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Drzewiecka, Jolanta A., and Thomas K. Nakayama. 1998. "City Sites: Postmodern Urban Space and the Communication of Identity." *Southern Communication Journal* 64 (1): 20–31. doi:10.1080/10417949809373115.
- Erikson, Erik H. 1968. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Facebook. "Timeline," accessed December 26, 2010, <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?timeline>.

- Glaser, Jack, Jay Dixit, and Donald P. Green. 2002. "Studying Hate Crime with the Internet: What Makes Racists Advocate Racial Violence?" *Journal of Social Issues* 58 (1): 177–93.
- Gluckman, Max. 1973. *The Judicial Process Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia)*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Golden, Daniel. 2006. "Is Admissions Bar Higher for Asians at Elite Schools?" *Wall Street Journal*, November 11–12, A1, A5.
- Gross, Elisheva F. 2004. "Adolescent Internet Use: What We Expect, What Teens Report." *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 25 (6): 633–49.
- Helms, Janet E., ed. 1990. "An Overview of Black Racial Identity Theory." In *Black and White Racial Identity: Theory, Research, and Practice*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Higginbotham, Stacey. "December comScore Data Leaves MySpace in the Cold," last modified January 14, 2008, accessed February 15, 2011, <http://gigaom.com/2008/01/14/december-comscore-data-leaves-myspace-in-the-cold>.
- Ismail, Amani. 2008. "To Counter and to Resist: Cyber Discourses of Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad." *Global Media Journal (Mediterranean Edition)* 3 (1): 35–49.
- Kendall, Lori. 1998. "Meaning and Identity in 'Cyberspace': The Performance of Gender, Class, and Race Online." *Symbolic Interaction* 21 (2): 129–53.
- Kim, Jean. 1981. "Processes of Asian-American Identity Development: A Study of Japanese American Women's Perceptions of Their Struggle to Achieve Positive Identities as Americans of Asian Ancestry." PhD diss., University of Massachusetts, <http://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations/AAI8118010>.
- Knadler, Stephen. 2001. "E-Racing Difference in E-Space: Black Female Subjectivity and the Web-Based Portfolio." *Computers and Composition* 18 (3): 235–55.
- Kuhn, Deanna. 1991. *The Skills of Argument*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Kvasny, Lynette, and Kayla D. Hales. 2010. "The Internet, Black Identity, and the Evolving Discourse of the Digital Divide." In *The Handbook of Research on Overcoming Digital Divides: Constructing an Equitable and Competitive Information Society*, edited by Enrico Ferro, Yogesh Kumar Dwivedi, J. Ramon Gil-Garcia, and Michael D. Williams, 260–76. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference. doi:10.4018/978-1-60566-699-0.ch014.
- Lenhart, Amanda, and Mary Madden. 2007. "Social Networking Websites and Teens: An Overview." Pew Internet and American Life Project. Last modified January 7, 2007, [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/198/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/198/report_display.asp).
- Macdonald, Ian, Reena Bhavnani, Lily Khan, and Gus John. 1989. *Murder in the Playground: The Burnage Report*. London: Longsight Press.
- Marcia, James E. 1980. "Identity in Adolescence." In *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, edited by Joseph Adelson, 159–87. New York: Wiley.
- Matsuda, Paul Kei. 2002. "Negotiation of Identity and Power in a Japanese Online Discourse Community." *Computers and Composition* 19 (1): 39–55.
- Min, Seong-Jae. 2007. "Online vs. Face-to-Face Deliberation: Effects on Civic Engagement." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12 (4): 1369–87. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00377.x.
- Mitra, Ananda. 2006. "Towards Finding a Cybernetic Safe Place: Illustrations from People of Indian Origin." *New Media and Society* 8 (2): 251–68.
- Mitra, Ananda, and Eric Watts. 2002. "Theorizing Cyberspace: The Idea of Voice Applied to the Internet Discourse." *New Media and Society* 4 (4): 479–98.
- Mueller, Jennifer C., Danielle Dirks, and Leslie Houts Picca. 2007. "Unmasking Racism: Halloween Costuming and Engagement of the Racial Other." *Qualitative Sociology* 30 (3): 315–35. doi:10.1007/s11133-007-9061-1.

- Nakamura, Lisa. 2002. *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet*. New York: Routledge.
- Phinney, Jean S. 1990. "Ethnic Identity in Adolescents and Adults: Review of Research." *Psychological Bulletin* 108 (3): 499–514.
- . 1992. "The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure: A New Scale for Use with Diverse Groups." *Journal of Adolescent Research* 7 (2): 156–76.
- . 1993. "A Three-Stage Model of Ethnic Identity Development in Adolescence." In *Ethnic Identity: Formation and Transmission Among Hispanics and Other Minorities*, edited by Martha E. Bernal and George P. Knight, 61–80. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Pickerill, Jenny. 2003. *Cyberprotest: Environmental Activism Online*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Rattansi, Ali, and Ann Phoenix. 2005. "Rethinking Youth Identities: Modernist and Postmodernist Frameworks." *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research* 5 (2): 97–123.
- Redd, Teresa M. 2003. "'Tryin to Make a Dolla Outa Fifteen Cent': Teaching Composition with the Internet at an HBCU." *Computers and Composition* 20 (4): 359–73. doi:10.1016/j.compcom.2003.08.012.
- Rockquemore, Kerry Ann. 2002. "Negotiating the Color Line: The Gendered Process of Racial Identity Construction Among Black/White Biracial Women." *Gender and Society* 16 (4): 485–503.
- Romm, Celia, Nava Pliskin, and Rodney Clarke. 1997. "Virtual Communities and Society: Toward an Integrative Three Phase Model." *International Journal of Information Management* 17 (4): 261–70.
- Sellers, Robert M., Stephanie A. J. Rowley, Tabbye M. Chavous, J. Nicole Shelton, and Mia A. Smith. 1997. "Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity: A Preliminary Investigation of Reliability and Construct Validity." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 73 (4): 805–15.

- Smith, Justin. 2008. "Tracking Facebook's International Growth by Country." Inside Facebook. Last modified July 29, 2008, <http://www.insidefacebook.com/2008/07/29/tracking-facebooks-2008-international-growth-by-country>.
- SPLC (Southern Poverty Law Center). 2009. "Hatemongers Poised to Exploit Obama Election, Tough Economic Times." Last modified January 29, 2009, <http://www.splcenter.org/news/item.jsp?aid=361>.
- Sunstein, Cass. 2001. *Republic.com*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Tynes, Brendesha. 2005. "Children, Adolescents, and the Culture of Online Hate." In *Handbook of Children, Culture, and Violence*, edited by Nancy E. Dowd, Dorothy G. Singer, and Robin Fretwell Wilson, 267–90. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- . 2007. "Role-Taking in Online 'Classrooms': What Adolescents are Learning About Race and Ethnicity." *Developmental Psychology* 43 (6): 1312–20.
- Tynes, Brendesha, Lindsay Reynolds, and Patricia M. Greenfield. 2004. "Adolescence, Race, and Ethnicity on the Internet: A Comparison of Discourse in Monitored vs. Unmonitored Chat Rooms." *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 25 (6): 667–84.
- Tynes, Brendesha M., Michael T. Giang, and Geneene N. Thompson. 2008. "Ethnic Identity, Intergroup Contact, and Outgroup Orientation Among Diverse Groups of Adolescents on the Internet." *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 11 (4): 459–65.
- Tynes, Brendesha M., Michael T. Giang, David R. Williams, and Geneene N. Thompson. 2008. "Online Racial Discrimination and Psychological Adjustment Among Adolescents." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 43 (6): 565–69.
- Viera, Anthony J., and Joanne M. Garrett. 2005. "Understanding Interobserver Agreement: The Kappa Statistic." *Family Medicine* 37 (5): 360–63.

Yip, Tiffany, and Andrew J. Fuligni. 2002. "Daily Variation in Ethnic Identity, Ethnic Behaviors, and Psychological Well-Being Among American Adolescents of Chinese Descent." *Child Development* 73 (5): 1557-72.

Youniss, James, Susan Bales, Verona Christmas-Best, Marcelo Diversi, Milbrey McLaughlin, and Rainer Silbereisen. 2002. "Youth Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century." *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 12 (1): 121-48.