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Assimilation, Social Network Sites and Asian Stereotype: Understanding Chinese-American Teenagers in Austin

APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor: ______________________________
Joseph Straubhaar

____
Madhavi Mallapragada

Assimilation, Social Network Sites and Asian Stereotype: Understanding Chinese-American Teenagers in Austin

by

Gejun Huang, B.A.

Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents who have financially, emotionally, and spiritually supported me throughout my journey of studying abroad since the very beginning.

Also, this thesis is dedicated to my friends who will bid farewell to campus lives and embark on their career tracks. Best wishes to them that could have an everlasting enjoyment of learning and thinking in the future.

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Abstract

Assimilation, Social Network Sites and Asian Stereotype: Understanding Chinese-American Teenagers in Austin

Gejun Huang, MA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

Supervisor: Joseph Straubhaar

Given the increasing number of younger immigrants from China, we have noticed diversified performances of Chinese-American teenagers based on the age they come to the U.S. This thesis thus examines three specific aspects—assimilation, social network site (SNS) use, and reaction to Asian stereotype—of Chinese-American teenagers living in Austin, regarding intraethnic differences between and among different clusters of this cohort as the second generation immigrant. By employing semi-structured interviews conducted with teenagers who have respective immigrant history and family background, a wide array of patterns about assimilation, SNS use, and reaction to Asian stereotype are traced and analyzed alongside demonstrating outlines and traits in terms of different generation clusters (1.25ers, 1.5ers, 1.75ers and 2.0ers). A total of ten Chinese-American teenagers, aged from 15 to 18, are recruited and interviewed through snowball approach, allowing for the surface of intraethnic variations on the aforementioned aspects. Preliminary discussions are made to tease out how these three aspects are intertwined.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The surging influx of Chinese immigrants and the mounting number of American-born Chinese in recent years have been reshaping the grand demographic picture of immigrants in the U.S. For the flows of legal permanent residents and naturalized persons in 2010, Chinese-born people account for 7.9% of the total amount of the former and 4.2% of the total amount of the latter (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2013). Also according to the 2010 United States Census, Asian Americans constitute 5.6 percent of American total population in which Chinese represent the largest ethnic group of Asian (3.79 million) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Given its phenomenal demographic presence, there are great many studies regarding Chinese American in various fields and disciplines. (see Chen,2000). Several striking topics correspond to the emerging socio-cultural tensions between the perspectives of assimilation and preservation: how can Chinese Americans dedicate their efforts to integrating into the American mainstream sphere but meanwhile sustaining their social and cultural traditions. When being applied to the area of media studies, such concerns become more specific about media's interventions in either exacerbating or alleviating these processes, particularly getting complicated due to the unprecedented development of media technology.

According to the recent Pew research centered on social media use (Lenhart, et al. 2010), teens (age 12-17) and young adults (age 18-29) were proven to excel in adoption and utilization of digital technologies than any other age groups. Especially by using social network sites (SNSs) and other social media, they creatively engage in virtual

interactions and duplicate their real-life communications online. However, the assumed "tech-savvy Asian" picture that is fashioned and propagated through mass media or commercial advertisings remains problematic, involving Chinese Americans who usually fall into this stereotyped image . On one hand, the younger generation of Asian American group is "almost entirely omitted from research on youth and youth culture in the United States " (Lee & Zhou, 2004; p.9) when compared to other racial or ethnic minorities (e.g. African Americans and Hispanics), let alone Chinese Americans in particular. Oftentimes their digital life is depicted in line with the prevalent "self-sufficient" and "model minority" scenarios. On the other hand, mostly because of the disparate media environments in China and the U.S., we speculate that American-born Chinese teens differ from those who are born in China and immigrated recently in using digital technologies. This concern gives a rise to an intra-ethnic contrast about social media use based on their respective ethnic backgrounds and acculturation processes.

We hence come up with a twofold approach towards exploring Chinese-American youth and media technologies. First, their integration into the American mainstream society, as well as their inception and growth of self-identity, is pivotally ascribed to the general image of Chinese immigrant experience at the broad sociocultural level in the U.S., but also varies due to their individual background and family trajectory about immigration and resettlement. Second, they increasingly relate themselves to media technologies which provide alternative channels for real-life social interactions, meanwhile emerging new stages for presences of and debates on Asian stereotypes. Therefore, with the consistent angle throughout this study that caters to both the

American-born and the Chinese-born teenagers, we propose three major research questions in the following:

- RQ1: What are the demographic features and family cultures of Chinese-American teenagers who currently live in Austin? And how do these factors contribute to their respective assimilation experiences?
- RQ2: How do they understand, adopt, and utilize SNSs according to their individual purposes about self-disclosure, networking, and other social needs?
- RQ3: Do they bring in new pieces and bits of Asian stereotypes? And how do they cope with the stereotypes on SNSs given their real-life approaches?

Given our concerns, this thesis focuses on teens and young adults (age 15-18) of both the American-born and the Chinese-born living within Austin city limits. By analyzing their intra-ethnic and interracial communications done through on- (i.e. social media) and offline (i.e. school and family) channels, it investigates the extent to which their virtual socializations resonate to the real-life situations, their online interpretations of Chinese/Asian ethnicity that are involved in this process, and their social- and culture-driven strategies about social media use.

We unfold the discussions by the following structure and organization. The first part provides a detailed discourse on methodology, ranging from the sampling to the description of subjects. To the second we address the nationwide presence and trends of Chinese immigrants in the U.S., but also highlight how such a demographic movement collide with the situated assimilation process of our interviewees in Austin. The third part then delves into mapping out the differences between the American-born and the Chinese-born in understanding, adopting and utilizing social network sites. The fourth part particularly caters to their appropriation of and reaction to Chinese/Asian stereotypes under either on- and offline circumstances, which in turn reveal their understanding of

Chinese/Asian ethnicity. And the final part draws concluding remarks based on previous discussions. A list of limitations is also placed to spur further studies in the future.

Chapter 2 introduces the methodology and explains the instruments lying behind. The methodology employed in this thesis is the semi-structured interview divided over two sections during a 1-2 hours meeting. The majority of interview questions is drawn from the course " Ethnographic & Qualitative Interview" that is instructed by Professor Joseph Straubhaar, meanwhile heeding previous works centered on Asian-American and Chinese-American youth (Everett, 2008; Lee & Zhou, 2004; Zhou, 1997). The source of participant covers American-born Chinese teens, as well as Chinese-born teens that identified as immigrant. All of them are Austin residents, and their age scope is from 15 to 18 that meet the supposed frequent social communications within family and school. We worked through the current members of Travis Christian Assembly and Austin Chinese Church to find appropriate participants to interview. Given their help we also worked through snowball chains to interview other non-church related participants. In total, we have done 10 interviews which are all qualified for further analysis. Besides, we provide detailed descriptions about their demographic features (e.g. gender, SES of parents).

Chapter 3 presents the history of Chinese immigration since mid-20th century. Rather than tracing back to the earliest flock of Chinese immigrant in late 19th century, here we begin with year 1965 (Bailey, 2001), which was a watershed to reshape the consensus impression of Asian immigrants due to the reform on immigration policies (Zhou, 2009). While, instead of exhausting every aspects of this historical trajectory, we

mainly focus on discussions revolving around the younger generation of Chinese Americans along with their situated living space (e.g. Chinatown) (Zhou & Logan, 1989; Zhou, 1995). In general, there are several critical factors, such as local ethnic enclaves, language schools, and ethnic entrepreneurships, which more or less contribute to the growth and acculturation of this age cohort (Zhou, 1997). However, we notice the limited amount of study pertains to investigating the late newcomers from China (e.g. the parachute kids). Besides, the booming growth of Chinese immigrant population is partially attributed to supports from local ethnic community—there is no longtime established Chinatown or Chinese neighborhood like those in Los Angeles and New York City. We alternatively realize the growth of this ethnic group is provoked and consistently nurtured by the well-developed high-tech industries in Austin. By and large, such an industry-driven environment leads to the confluence of middle and upper-middle Chinese families, thus providing social, economic, and cultural capitals (see Bourdieu, 1986) in high quality which are accessed and leveraged by their children. In this vein, we shed light on the significance of this family-based ethnic environment with regard to the high-tech backdrop of Austin, and those exact environmental influences revealed by youth daily lives.

Chapter 4 maps out and analyzes those participants' social network site (SNS) use under tangible social circumstances. Home and school are usually the major loci to implement communicational and socializing behaviors via on- and offline channels for Chinese-American youth. However, according to research done by many media scholars (e.g. boyd, 2007), we notice teens on social media demonstrate the trend of prioritizing

the social relationships in real-life situations over friending with stumbled-upon online strangers. Therefore, at least for our interviewees, we argue their online social activities do not occur beyond the existent social circles. Moreover, several interesting aspects of intra-ethnic and intra-racial communication drew our attention. For home, the intergenerational transmission of ethnic identity is a critical channel, wherein either the acquisition of Chinese ethnic capitals from parents or the dual cultural process of ethnic socialization is applicable and frequently conducted (Chen, 2000). For school, the standard education leads to a homogenous cultivation of language and social behaviors. Coupled with cultural proximity (Straubhaar, 1991) among Asian immigrants, this process results in the pan-ethnic Asian identity which dilutes Chinese ethnicity (Kibria, 2002). Put together, we discuss how social media become the intersection of their on- and offline communication regarding their social needs and racial/ethnic expressions.

On the other hand, we notice how transnational media use experiences weigh in daily lives of the Chinese-born youth. Considering the enhanced informational flows brought by global media (Hesmondhalgh,2002; Tomlinson,1999), Chinese-born youth are enabled to sustain their information sources and social networks in China by using Chinese social media. Their experience leads to a differentiated media consumption pattern which focuses more on topics like diaspora and transnationalism. We incorporate analysis that based on their experience for the purpose of enriching the picture of Chinese-American media use with a regard to intra-ethnic difference.

Chapter 5 investigates the tension between immigrant stereotypes and SNS use among Chinese-American youth. Like ethnic minority adults, youth are known to be

somewhat constrained by the stereotypes of immigrants in either school or family environment, which could lead to problematic issues (e.g. self-identity). By contrast, social network sites (SNSs) provide alternative perspectives to understanding how ethnic minority youth interacts with immigrant stereotypes, and there have emerged some prospective ideas about how ethnic minority youth leverage SNSs to smooth over stereotypes. While for Chinese-American youth, the SNS-enabled improvement of their ethnic images is possibly dampened due to the recent influx of Chinese immigrants. In this vein, we unfold the analysis in a twofold way. First, we do not simply tease out the historical trajectory of Asian stereotypes that account for generational consistency in transferring the stereotypes among Chinese-Americans. We step forward to focus on Chinese-born newcomers, pinpointing and interpreting a set of discrepancies about the stereotypes. Second, due to the differences between them, we focus on both Chinese-born and American-born youth to interrogate their apprehension and reaction regarding Asian/Chinese stereotypes on SNSs.

Chapter 6 recaps and interlaces all major findings in previous chapters. More importantly, we list several methodology limitations which hinder the possible in-depth arguments about key issues in this study, and argue the necessity of focusing on cultural perspective and comparison studies in order to prompt future works.

Chapter 2: Methodology

In this study, we employ the semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative information and data for further analysis. This approach means our interviewees were given the freedom to lead the interviews despite a basic topic guide was provided. During the process, interviewees could modify the questions or initiate new concerns along how they best saw fit and provocative (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). Each interview is divided over two sections during a 1-2 hours meeting. In the first section, a list of suggested questions about general immigrant experience and culture was provided. The majority of questions is drawn from a questionnaire used in a project for the course "Ethnographic & Qualitative Interview" (lecture, reading, and class discussion) by Professor Joseph Straubhaar. We aimed to cover not only the basic aspects of our interviewees (like demographic feature and social circle), but the current status of their families as well. At the very beginning, interviewees were asked with "grand tour" questions about their demographic information (e.g., age, education, daily activity) in the U.S. (applicable to the American-born) or across two countries (applicable to the Chinese-born). From there the dialogues evolved into topics about their family backgrounds (e.g., job, education, culture) and parent-children interaction along the immigrant history, then inquiring their social networks that occurred in and out school. Last we questioned their individual experience about interracial and intraethnic communications and conflicts. An example of related questions is in the following:

1. Where were you born in China?
2. What did your parents do before immigrating to the U.S.?
3. Why did they decide to resettle the family in the U.S.?

4. What is level of your education, and what is your current (potential) major or interest?
5. What is your level of bilingualism proficiency (English/Chinese)?
6. Which language used mainly in your family for parent-child communication (English/Chinese)?
7. Have you been involved in a Chinese group, community or organization?
8. Do you have any intimate Chinese-American or Chinese immigrant friends? If yes how many?
9. Have you accepted any kind of home education about Chinese culture? And what is your favorite part?
10. What is your personal images of Chinese-American and Chinese immigrants in the U.S.?
11. Do you think yourself as an exemplary case of assimilating into American mainstream society?
12. Have you ever accentuated/downplayed your Chinese ethnicity under certain circumstances?
13. Have you ever been caught in any occasions about biased attitude/behavior toward Asian, especially Chinese group, in the reality? If so, how did you cope with these occasions.

The second section aimed at depicting respective pictures of interviewees' digital consumption. First of all, our interviewees were questioned to provide a descriptive sketch about social media use. We attempted to figure out the exact platforms and according use patterns throughout their experience as a social media user. Then we asked about the specific purposes and usages about social network sites (SNS) regarding their on- and offline social networks in general. And finally, we questioned whether the interracial and intraethnic communications and conflicts revealed their counterparts on SNS. An example of related questions is in the following:

1. Do you once or currently engage in any kind of social media (collaborative projects like Wikipedia, blogs and microblogs like Twitter, content communities like Youtube, SNSs like Facebook, virtual game worlds like World of Warcraft, and virtual social world like Second life)?
   --If yes, what is the frequency and locus of enjoying these technologies? And by which way (i.e., PC, mobile phone) to use them?
   --If not, why do not you use them?

2. What do you usually do based on social media use?
3. Do your family members also use these technologies?
4. How do you evaluate the importance of social media in regular American life?
5. Are you friending with Chinese-American or Chinese immigrant people via social media regardless relationships in the reality?
6. Have you ever engaged in any online Chinese group, community or organization via any kind of SNS?
7. What is the language you pick for social media use?
8. Have you stumbled upon any information about Chinese ethnicity when using SNS? And how do you evaluate it?
9. Have you planned to feature your online profiles with elements in term of Chinese ethnicity?
10. Have you ever been caught in any occasions about biased attitude/behavior toward Asian, especially Chinese group, when using SNS? If so, what was your strategy to overcome it?

For the purpose of this study, we interviewed Chinese-American teenagers living in Austin with their families. Here the confine of this aged ethnic group is not tight since we deliberately incorporated teenagers who was not born in the U.S. The age scope of sampling is from 15 to 18. The goal is to reveal frequent online social activities via various social media platforms, as well as their adequate knowledge and skill about social media given their relatively long period of experience. The interviewees were chosen through a snowball approach. Based on my personal relationships with key members in Travis Christian Assembly (TCA, a Chinese-run Christian Church located in Northeast Austin), we firstly drew interested participants from the church's youth group. Then at the end of interviews they were asked to refer appropriate interviewees from their own social circle other than church. Finally we have 10 teenagers who participated in this study, and conducted interviews in two waves—from October 2013 to November 2013 and from February 2014 to March 2014—according to the interviewees' preferred time schedule.

The snowball method can facilitate the sampling process by rendering a wide variety of potential interview subjects; also it lowers the risk of having too many participants who belong to one niche community (i.e., one specific church's youth group), which usually results in redundant or homogenous information about networking given such a confined locus for social activities. In detail, among the interviewees Andrew, Cathy, George, John, Lily and Sam are from the same church group. At least they already know each other well as they have regular engagements in church activities together. Anna and Vivian were referred by Sam because of the same school they attend. Isabella and Laura were located through Lily's family network as her parents know their parents. These participants have no clue about knowing each other well told in the interviews. To better display the outcomes from interviews and facilitate further arguments, we provide the following figure in purpose of showing each interviewee's basic demographic information.

Name[1]	Age	Gender	Birthplace	Current School	Parents' highest education
Andrew	16	Male	Kaohsiung, Taiwan[2]	Liberal Arts and Science Academy (LASA)	PhD
Anna	17	Female	Xi'an, China	Westwood High School	Master
Cathy	18	Female	Taipei, Taiwan	McNeil High School	PhD
George	15	Male	Austin, Texas, USA	Liberal Arts and Science Academy (LASA)	Master
Isabella	17	Female	Alabama, USA	Liberal Arts and Science Academy (LASA)	Master
John	16	Male	Austin, Texas, USA	Westwood High School	Bachelor
Laura	17	Female	Austin, Texas, USA	Liberal Arts and Science Academy (LASA)	PhD
Lily	16	Female	Qingdao, China	Liberal Arts and Science Academy (LASA)	PhD
Sam	17	Male	Beijing, China	Westwood High School	PhD
Vivian	16	Female	Chongqing, China	Westwood High School	Bachelor

Table 1: Overview of Demographic Information

[1] In order to protect the privacy and confidentiality of our interviewees, we use pseudonyms throughout this study.

[2] We also include those have parents migrated from Taiwan and identify themselves Taiwanese because of the cultural and linguistic proximities between China and Taiwan.

Chapter 3: Being Chinese, Being American: Assimilation in Family and Ethnic Community Contexts

Today, to many Americans, it is common to realize how young people extensively use and relate themselves to digital technologies in realms of knowledge production, communication and creative expression. In this case the general American youth are assumed to obtain more visibility and voice through those digitalized channels, but nevertheless this population "has been historically subject to a high degree of systematic and institutional control in the kinds of information and social communication to which they have access" (Everett, 2008; p.ix). Besides that, the nationwide discussions about digital divide shed light on how the development of information and communication technology (ICT) in the U.S. is intertwined with racial and ethnic issues that "divides are byproducts of old inequalities, digital technology is intensifying inequalities, and new inequalities are appearing" (Van Dijk, 2005; p.6). Therefore, before the in-depth investigation over Chinese American youth's digital lives, we argue the necessity to understand the constraining environments wherein they conduct information transactions for their social and cultural needs.

In this chapter we highlight two social contexts: family and ethnic community. These two locales, to some extent, present environmental frameworks that guide and shape teenagers' consumption and production of information, and more importantly, in tandem with their ethnoracial backdrop and adaption process. Here the topic of assimilation requires appropriate examinations. Unlike the limited academic attention paid to this ethnic group during the late 20th century (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997),

recently there are many studies dedicated to exploring specific aspects of Chinese American youths' assimilation (e.g., Okubo et al., 2007; Rivas-Drake et al., 2008; Mistry et al., 2009). But we notice the majority of studies in this field focus on samples and cases in Asian-heavy areas where the local Chinese family and community falls into traditional patterns (Zhou & Logan, 1989). In this chapter, by beginning with the demographic discourse on Chinese immigration, we attempt to illustrate how our interviewees fit into the traditional assimilation process of Chinese Americans but also reveal their unique pattern with respect to the racial/ethnic circumstances in Austin.

THE PROVOCATIVE DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE: A BRIEF REVIEW OF PRE- AND POST-1965 CHINESE IMMIGRATION

Along the history of Chinese immigration since the earliest group of Chinese labor (*huagong*) came into the U.S. around the early 19th century[3], the Chinese American community has sustained an immigrant-dominant status that primarily the first generation immigrants constitute this ethnic group rather than the second or the third generations (Zhou, 2009). However, this demographic pattern did not turn out to be warranted until the reform on immigration policy in 1965.

Before 1965, like other Asian ethnic groups, Chinese were severely inflicted with legal bias and social discrimination that prevailed in the U.S. toward their immigration efforts. To be worse, the unjust treatments they received were aggravated as the fermenting ubiquitousness of the mainstream anti-Chinese sentiments and racial attacks,

[3] Between 1800 and 1850 it was estimated to have 320,000 Chinese emigrated to other countries or areas, and 6 percent of them came to Hawaii and mainland of the U.S.

which culminated in the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1917. This legal exclusion therefore resulted in a noticeably downward population of Chinese immigrants with a historical low of 5,000 in the 1930s (see Zhou, 2009; p.45); and even when the act was repealed in 1943, this migrant trend did not even bounce back till two decades later.

The Immigrant Act of 1965 "provided the first real reform of immigration policy in the twentieth century" (Wong, 1986; p.153). Regarding its impacts, essentially the immigration preference over national origins was no longer centered on European countries but shifted to an arguable equality to every country with the same quota of annual immigrants. To the Chinese this act prompted more significance as it successfully reversed the decreasing influx of Chinese immigrants and shrinking geographical concentration of Chinese Americans (Zhou, 2009). Numerically speaking, the amount of Chinese immigrants admitted to the U.S. gradually embarked on a stable and sound growth after that watershed. By the same token, Chinese immigrants become more graphically dispersed in choosing where to work, study and dwell than the conventional images of being "lumped-together" in certain areas like New York city or California. The recent census statistics have confirmed this prospective trend. In 2011, the Chinese (not including Taiwanese) population reached 4 million as the largest Asian group in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). And for the total number (591,711) of Chinese immigrants between 2000 and 2009, it almost doubles the Chinese immigrants population (342,058) in the 1990s and is three times more than that (170,897) of the 1980s (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2013). In addition, we have noticed the surging population of Chinese American in cities out of California like Austin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) that

more or less reconfigures the local racial/ethnical landscape, which is largely indicated by the newly-developed Chinatown in North central Austin (see Tsui, 2014).

This phenomenal demographic change, on the other hand, boosts the number of children raised in families that are led by the first generation of Chinese immigrants. From 1994 to 2012, the number of immigrant children who were members of first generation remain relatively stable over the years (range from 3.6 to 4.7 million); but the percent of those whose birthplace is China remarkably increased from 1.1 to 5.1. But by contrast, the contemporary growth of the second generation was not that striking yet (CT Databank, 2013). Interestingly, the dividing line between the first and the second generation has become blurred since the proliferating amount of foreign-born immigrant children (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Given the advent of "parachute kids"—who are dropped off to pursue their educations in the U.S. but without the physical presence of their parents (Tsong & Liu, 2009; Zhou, 1998)—and other similar under-aged immigrant groups, many scholars have put efforts in recalibrating age scopes for each immigrant generation and redefining implications for the generational differences. In the following part, we will touch upon the phrase "new second generation" together with related arguments on the adaption process for Chinese immigrants. The more important is to see whether these theories are apt to interpret the immigrant experience and culture of our interviewees.

EXPLORING NEW SECOND GENERATION

Flows of immigrants can be categorized into different generations in the U.S. Immigration scholars commonly use the term of first generation to define persons who are born and socialized in another country but immigrated as adults (Rumbaut, 2004). By contrast, the second generation refers to the U.S.-born and U.S.-socialized children of foreign-born parents (Gans, 1992; Rumbaut, 2004). The post-1965 immigration to the U.S. has resulted in a vibrant picture of adult newcomers (first generation), so is for the group of their children (second generation). But this concept fails to articulate young immigrants who have arrived in the U.S. before their adulthood. The absence of precise categorization then led to the idea of *new second generation*.

In many studies, the new second generation turns out an encompassing title for the entity of non-white young people from families that composed by foreign-born immigrants from developing countries (Farley & Alba, 2002; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Schmid, 2001; Zhou, 1997;). Despite the inconsistent usage of this phrase, generally it consists of two major generation clusters: the second generation and the one-and-a-half generation, the latter characterizes the children who neither fully belong to their home country nor host society (Rumbaut, 1991).To achieve a better coverage over our interviewees, we resort to Rumbaut's (2004) interpretation of new second generation, a labeling system to classify immigrant youth based on whether their migration occurred

during early childhood (ages 0-5, 1.75er), middle children (6-12, 1.5er), or adolescence (in their teens, 1.25er).

So in this study we argue the overarching concept for the new second generation of Chinese American consists of four generation clusters: 1.25er, 1.5er, 1.75er and 2.0er (those are American-born). Accordingly, we present the following table to illustrate what generational categories our interviewees fall into.

	1.25er	**1.5er**	**1.75er**	**2.0er**
Name	Anna Vivian	Cathy	Andrew Lily Sam	George Isabella John Laura

Table 2: Different Generation Clusters for Our Interviewees

ADAPTING TO THE U.S. THROUGH ASSIMILATION

It is commonly known that like their immigrant parents, Chinese American youth must undertake the process of integrating into their American surroundings. In this vein, the usual formula to observe and evaluate this process is assimilation theory that has dominated sociological thinking above immigration in the U.S. since 1920s. There are three major assumptions, as Zhou (2009) epitomized, central to the classical perspective of assimilation: "(1) that there is a natural process by which diverse ethnic groups come to share a common culture and gain equal access to the opportunity structure of the host society; (2) that this process entails the gradual abandonment of old-world cultural and

behavioral patterns in favor of new ones; and (3) that this process, once set in motion, moves inevitably and irreversibly toward assimilation" (Zhou, 2009; p.4-5).

Thus we assume within this assimilation process, Chinese American youth ought to reveal their sociocultural attempts in demonstrating the adherence to basic tones of mainstream America and the detachment from typical rhymes of Chinese life. One of our interviewees, Isabella, partially acknowledges this point that:

> "I mean, there is huge range of Chinese American people. There are like extremely Asians, they don't understand American cultures. There are completely integrated Chinese Americans, like second generation here, they are just completely American".

However, such a transition may turn out to become exclusive to American-born youth rather than applicable to the whole range of aforementioned new second generation. Several recent studies shift the focus on Chinese-born young immigrants and highlight their predicaments in sociocultural adaption to the U.S. For instance, Yeh and colleagues (2008) point out that the low level of intercultural competency of Chinese immigrant high school students is associated with a wide array of factors, including English proficiency, family responsibilities, and so forth. Kim and colleagues (2011) also reveal that to Chinese-born immigrant teenagers there are not only academic issues in American schools, but also about financial hardship, intergenerational conflicts and psychological distress at their own and family sides. Anna describes some intragroup difference regarding this concern:

> "For those who come here to go to elementary school, they usually speak better English and have a better sense in engaging extracurricular activities…But you can still tell they are not as local as American-born kids but only show a better level of adaption. And some of them are not that good, they can't live in the ways

> they want. For those come to take middle school, I don't really know anyone else besides me. For those come at high school ages, they are trying hard to merge into America unlike me, half-minded to take on it".

These anomalies to our assimilation-driven assumption give a rise to another perspective of this theory—segmented assimilation. In an early studies, Portes and Zhou (1993) pinpointed the disjunction between classical assimilation viewpoint and the adaption reality of post-1965 immigrant children, and thus summarized several distinctive yet under-studied patterns of adaption:" one of them replicates the time-honored portrayal of growing acculturation and parallel integration into the white middle-class; a second leads straight in the opposite direction to permanent poverty and assimilation into the underclass; still a third associates rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and tight solidarity" (p.82). Drawing on that, Zhou (2009; 1997) maps out two large sets of factors: the context of exit and the context of reception[4]. The theory of segmented assimilation thus hinges on the interactions between these two sets of factors, as Zhou (2009) articulates,

> "predicting that particular contexts of exit and reception can create distinctive ethnocultural patterns and strategies of adaptation, social environments, and tangible resources for the group and give rise to opportunities or constraints for the individual, independent of individual socioeconomic and demographic characteristics" (p.7).

Of course, not every item accounts for the assimilation process of Chinese immigrant children. Oftentimes they lack the significant connections to the Chinese sociocultural sphere that involves their parents, but on the other hand, their understanding

[4] The context of exit covers a number of factors pertinent to pre-immigration status, such as attained socioeconomic (SES) status at home country and motivations for immigration. While the context of reception is more centered on factors that are situated in host society like racial stratification, government policy, labor market and public opinion.

and enactment of assimilation are predicated on local community, family environment, educational institutions and other aspects of individual surroundings (Zhou, 2009). In addition, those who have richer experience of living in China may reveal nuanced or even differentiated approaches of assimilation. We thus foreground the perspectives of family interaction and community support to inspect to which extent they affect the assimilation of our interviewees with respect to different generation clusters.

What we know about their families: socioeconomic status and family culture

The context of family is critical to immigrants' assimilation process. Based on antecedent studies, Foner (1997) summarized that family-based networks can not only prompt and facilitate the migration process, but also assist in finding jobs in the U.S. Moreover, family per se breeds strategies and collects supports that are tailored to its included members in purpose of survival, adaption and social mobility (Zhou, 1997). However, some immigrant families do not feature these perspective attributes as included members are less adaptable to become adjusted to significant aspects of American society (e.g., language, culture, economy) (Gold, 1989). In other words, there is no homogenous pathway to the construction or reconstruction of immigrants' family lives in the U.S. Each family has its own contextualized interplay between the culture, structure and agency that yields assimilating synergies on family members (Foner, 1997).

For Chinese immigrant families, they are distinguished from other ethnic minority groups (mostly African-American and Hispanic families) given their enormous reputation of professional success in high-paying industries and start-up entrepreneurships (Zhou,

2009; Sanders & Nee, 1996). Besides, they are frequently depicted as a whole, featuring concepts and norms (e.g. filial piety) in line with the conventional image of Asian-heritage parenting pattern, which highlights a set of modified Confucian values such as filial piety and education-oriented parentage (Juang, Qin & Park, 2013).The younger generation from those families is thus supposed to enjoy a solid and rich living condition, and behave in accordance with traditional Chinese cultural values. But meanwhile we have observed atypical trends: they could come from an economically disadvantaged family that restricts the way they grow up (Kim, Wang, Deng, Alvarez & Li, 2011); or interestingly, they are provided more room for autonomy and more exposure to Western elements (Lieber, Fung & Leung, 2006). Given these divergences, we first inspect how the role of our interviewee's families is conditioned or reshaped due to their socioeconomic status.

Socioeconomic status as cornerstone

Socioeconomic status (SES) is one of the most crucial aspects of a family context since it underwrites the quality of children's living pattern and education opportunity. In academic research, it is interpreted as educational attainment, occupational specialization, and parity in earning (Walters & Jiménez, 2005). As Zhou (1997) argued, typically wealthier immigrant families convey a higher level of SES as they have the financial capacity and in-class advantage to settle down and blend in suburban middle-class communities, where they usually locate good schools. By contrast, the poorer families are forced to dwell in declining urban areas and are associated with disadvantages in all

aspects of daily life. With the disappearing presence of mixed-income neighborhoods, a recent report shows that the U.S. communities, and Austin in particular, are increasingly stratified by the average income level of the residents (Zehr, 2014). Because we conducted most interviews at interviewees' homes, their house location turn out a straightforward indicator of SES in this study.

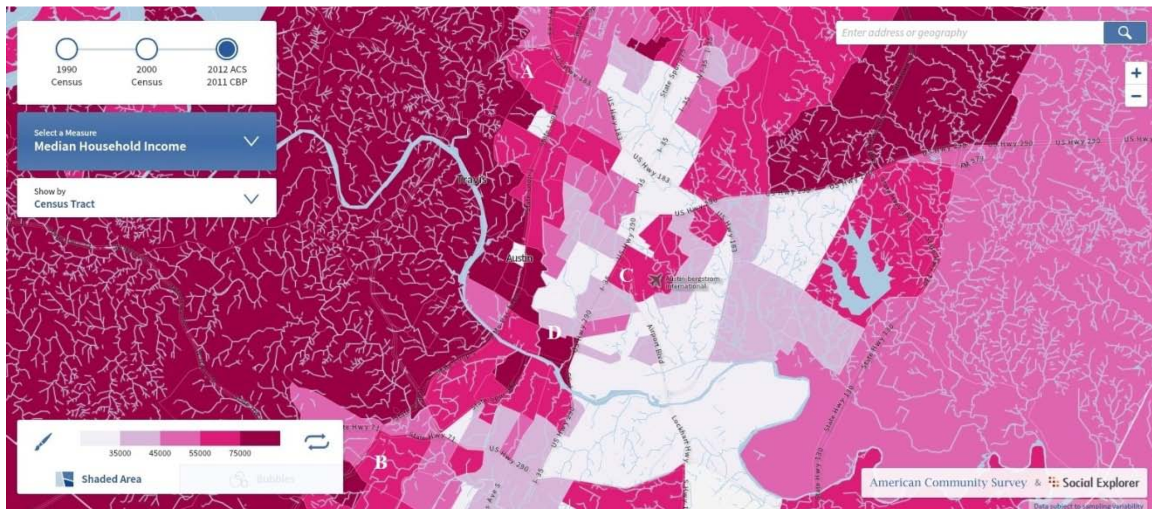

Illustration 1: Median Household Income of Austin in 2012[5]

Household income has been a prevalent and handy measurement to gauge SES in sociology and other fields over last decades (Krieger, Williams & Moss, 1997). The above graph illustrates the distributions and differences of median household income of Austin. Obviously it reveals a stark eastward graduation of income level from the highest in the west to the lowest in the east. Most of our interviewees are lumped together in areas or communities (A and B) that west of central Austin (D), the rest alternatively dwell in the east side (C). Despite the geographical dispersion, these areas feature levels

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5 This is a screengrab of data graph with marks done by author, retrieved from http://www.census.gov/censusexplorer/censusexplorer.html

of household income arguably in line with standards of middle or lower middle class (ranging from 45,000 to 75,000)[6]. Therefore, at least we can estimate our interviewees occupy family backgrounds that associated with middle or lower middle class communities.

To achieve a better interpretation of SES, we also questioned our interviewees about their parents' current job conditions.[7] Generally speaking, a high-paying job opportunity not only improves a family's financial capability and living standard, but also broadens access to or increases chances for better social resources and social network based on the superior job prestige (Van Der Gaag & Snijders, 2005). Like every racial/ethnic group in the US, Chinese immigrants also reveal a palpable intra-group divide regarding job opportunities. For a large number of Chinese immigrants, especially those who depend on community support, they lack the prerequisites (e.g. high English proficiency and necessary job skill) for jobs with high anticipated salary but alter to low wage industries eventually (Zhou, 2009). But meanwhile there is a growing number of Chinese immigrants with remarkable edges in education and job competency, through which they manage locating and obtaining good job opportunities afterwards.

According to our interviewees, most families have at least one parent who falls into the latter pattern. To be specific, the majority of their jobs is pertinent to well-paid positions, such as software engineer, in prestigious technology companies like Dell and

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[6] Here we resort to the income class categorizations proposed in *Which Income Class Are You?*, retrieved from http://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0912/which-income-class-are-you.aspx.

[7] We did not directly ask their parents' income because it is not an usual parent-children conversational topic in Chinese families.

Intel. This situation is majorly ascribed to the rapid development of high-tech industry in Austin, which "tends to pull people toward technologically oriented education as well as training for the new jobs the sector creates" (Rojas et al., 2012; p. 9). And for parents whose jobs are not related to information technology, they also occupy decent jobs in fields of financial service and biochemical industry, or are self-employed, such as running a start-up business. Overall, each family has a stable avenue for feasible income, hardly can we tease out a striking income disparity given the similar job conditions among our interviewees' parents.

Therefore, we find each of our interviewee seems to be free from economic difficulties and involved in competent education that is secured by family's SES. Beyond that, we extrapolate that more resources in either social or economic dimension they occupy to leverage on smoothing their individual assimilation process.

Does Chinese culture still matter at home?

Second, cross-cultural experience is pervasive in Chinese immigrant families. This usually provokes conflicts, coping and reconciliation due to "vulnerabilities associated with parents' foreign birth, bicultural and intergenerational conflicts, and differences between parents and children in the pace of acculturation" (Zhou, 2009; p. 187). Basically this kind of parent-children interaction projects an emphasis on cultural inheritance through parents' expectations in line with Chinese cultural values. Such a cultural cultivation, on the other hand, facilitate children's adjustment to host society's cultural realm (Kurtz-Costes & Pungello, 2000). Because of children's adaptation to the

American mainstream by default, their rebellion against their Chinese heritage is evitable but usually pacified given balancing efforts about Chinese and American cultures from both parent and children sides. We have also noticed polarized phenomena in Chinese immigrant families, either the tiger parenting (Chua, 2011) or the widening cultural alienation (Baolian Qin, 2006), that jeopardize the cultural equilibrium between parents and children and further intensifies their relationship, causing problematic process of children's assimilation to the U.S.

In this study, we doubt how Chinese culture accounts for parent-children interaction that influences children's assimilation process. Due to the constraints and focus of our interviews, it is impossible to exhaust every aspect like parents' cultural orientations. Instead, we aim at the children's side to understand their autonomy and involved position, and indirectly capture their parents' attitude and effort. We question their knowledge about Chinese culture, especially the part about parent-children relationship, and cultural acquisitions under family circumstance.

For the American-born group, most of them, but John in particular, demonstrate a relatively low level of knowing Chinese culture. Their understanding is restricted to basic social etiquette (e.g. greeting elders with respect titles) and history learnt through school, but nonetheless has no engagement in profound parts in terms of art, tradition and so forth. Partially it is ascribed to a low level of individual autonomy. For instance, Isabella shared her story of quitting Chinese dance when she was at the stage of "your China is lame, I'm American", echoing the situation that American-born immigrant children often believe American culture is more sophisticated and arresting (Chiang-Hom, 2004). By

contrast, John surprised us during the interview since his familiarity with intra-ethnic difference about raising children between families from the north and the south of China. One major factor contributing to such a knowledge disparity is parents' attitudes or endeavors to impart or share Chinese culture. Most parents of the American-born are either, like George describes, "very hard to connect with, they don't like opening up willingly" or embark on the Western routine that become highly tolerant with children's choices between cultures of homeland and host society. Laura share her dad's opinion about parentage, which is rife among our interviewees' responses:

> "He rarely pressures me to keep me doing better. He has this mentality like, as long as you learn from like what kind of you job you can earn a lot of money, after you really have that amount of money you can use that money to do what you want to do. But he will be disappointed if I get a B or something".

Given both patterns, these interviewees perceive less self-exposure to Chinese culture, particularly the traditional parentage in family environment. By comparison, John's parents subtly share the knowledge through daily conversations and immerse him into their talks, creating a space for receiving and digesting Chinese culture without enforced pressure.

The situation among the Chinese-born immigrant children is more stratified. To some extent, Interviewees in term of 1.75ers are akin to the American-born group regarding knowledge about Chinese culture because their memories of living in China (or Taiwan) are too vague to establish solid association with their ethnocultural backgrounds. They naturally consider themselves as normal Americans, making parents' role pivotal in reestablishing their children's connection to Chinese culture. Take a brief comparison:

Andrew regarded his Chinese culture limited because at home, he was not "really exposed to that kind of things unless it's the culturally picked up", while Lily revealed better knowledge given "being at with my parents and they talk about it sometimes". Interviewees in term of 1.5ers demonstrate the cultural familiarity at a further level[8], saying the emotional ties to homeland because of previous living experience. Cathy shared how she was taught with Chinese (Taiwanese) history and social etiquettes by her aunt and parents, as well as her outspoken love about Taiwan that "I really have pride for this country, I would be happy for its accomplishments". And last, interviewees in term of 1.25ers have no issue with Chinese culture as their longtime immersion in Chinese context before immigration. Because their parents are also recent newcomers, at home they behave as almost the same as they were still in China. Nonetheless, they emerge into the imperative of being American, as Vivian tries hard to "incorporate into their society and accept their culture…there is a lot of things need to take and learn slowly". So in spite of their own problems in the same process, parents of 1.25ers have to switch their responsibilities for the purpose of facilitating children's cultural adaption to American side.

Put together, to the majority of our interviewees, the significance of Chinese culture is dissipated as the dwindling importance to learn and understand such knowledge in American context; also their parents accommodate themselves to children's needs that negotiate enforcing expectations or requirements in line with conventional family values. A possible explanation for this situation is that most parents obtained their higher

[8] This might not be a generalizable conclusion since only one interviewee falls into this generation cluster.

education degrees in the U.S., their educational experience and ideologies have been reshaped and modified in accordance with Western values. But in the meantime, Chinese culture still calls for attention whenever a smooth parent-children interaction takes place, likewise in some broader social contexts like Chinese community.

The role of rising Chinese community in Austin

To immigrants in the U.S., it has been recognized that the existence of a solid ethnoracial community is indispensable to their process of assimilation. In an early study, Fitzpatrick (1966) underlined the risk of social disorganization for immigrants when they enter an unfamiliar land, thus "they need the traditional social group in which they are at home, in which they find their psychological satisfaction and security, in order to move with confidence toward interaction with the large society" (p.8). In the vein of assimilation, the immigrant community therefore functions as a beachhead into the host society, providing its involved members a sheltered space to buffer adaption difficulties and enhance agency for integration.

Furthermore, in the perspective of social organization, an immigrant community can be understood as an organizational entity with miscellaneous displays of exterior form and internal structure, which are essentially dependent on "the migration process, the opportunity structure in the host society, and the characteristics of the immigrant community" (Schrover & Vermeulen, 2005; p.826). For either general pattern or individual case, the community-driven influences on assimilation are synergies based on interplay between these three sets. Chinatown, oftentimes an organizational social

presence, is a vibrant reification of Chinese community that documents the historical trajectory of local Chinese immigrants and their descendants; also it turns out to be a systematic hub of economic, civic, sociocultural and religious services centering on local Chinese community. Antecedent studies have analyzed the formation, growth, and characteristics of Chinatown through grand overviews and situated inspections (e.g. Chinatowns in Los Angeles and New York City) (Zhou, 1995, 2009; Zhou & Kim, 2001, 2006a, 2006b; Zhou & Logan, 1989). For the younger generation, they are proven to become integrated into the local ethnic networks through community engagements, and meanwhile draw supports and obtain benefits in different areas.

Many studied instances took place in the old Chinatowns, which are geographically bounded and feature hierarchical social structure to manage community members and affairs (Zhou & Kim, 2006b). Regarding their assimilation, teenagers are usually supported, given the enclave's rooted kinship or birthplace ties but also obligated to make contributions in return. By contrast, the Chinatown and Chinese community in Austin give rise to an untraditional pattern. Even though the population of Chinese immigrants accounts for the largest portion of Asians in Austin, and has kept strong growth over past years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), the Chinatown is not a monolithic symbol of local Chinese community. Rather, it advertises a commercial diversity in term of a more pan-Asian concept—"Chinatown center was developed by Cambodians, is anchored by a Vietnamese tenant and hosts Chinese and Korean-owned restaurants" (Tsui, 2014).

In our interviews, both the American-born and Chinese-born teenagers revealed scant connections or relevance to Chinatown. The most frequent activities they mentioned were “shopping in MT market (a local Asian market)” and “dining in Asian restaurants”. As for their major ethnocultural activities, like attending Chinese school or after-school cultural programs, they occur in places that are “distant from Chinatown and dispersed within Austin “as Lily and George described. More interestingly, Chinatown is not even a noticeable part to their understandings of Chinese community in Austin. They rather highlighted the “small” and “tight”, two staple attributes told from John’s viewpoint:

> “Chinese community here is very nice you know. We have churches around here, we are very strong. We are a strong community. So a lot of Chinese people in Austin know each other since it’s only 1% of the population right. So we have things in common, we go to the common store as an Asian market. We go to TCA, Austin Chinese community got a lot of communities with Chinese school”.

So where do they obtain community supports other than Chinatown, since it is not a sensitive area on their radars? Of course, the aforementioned educational institutes are essentially Chinese business: both patrons and owners are local Chinese, indicating community supports about teenagers’ needs of supplementary education (Zhou & Kim, 2006a). Besides that, we questioned our interviewees to realize whether they are personally involved in or related to any Chinese or Asian exclusive groups or organizations outside school. Membership in ethnoracial group or organization can be a straightforward invitation to community supports, yet none of them reported such a social attachment but merely the Chinese church among those who have religious lives. In this case, church transcends its inborn religious functions that ease immigrants’ struggling

assimilation based on religious belief and practices (Hirschman, 2004). Regarding community support, it serves as a platform for social networking and information exchange (Zhou & Kim, 2006b), through which our interviewees draw helps, advices, funds and psychosocial satisfactions catering to different needs. For instance, Cathy, George and Andrew all spoke highly of the church youth group they attend regularly, wherein they forge and enhance intraethnic relationships to ensure a certain amount of available social resources within Chinese community. John even specified that he was funded by his godmother form the same church circle. While this church-based community support is more common among the American-born and the Chinese-born who immigrated early (1.5ers and 1.75ers). Especially for recent newcomers, their perceived community supports are irrelevant to church. Neither their parents or themselves have continuous connections with church or any other religious institute. Alternatively, family and school are major vehicles that offer and reinforce resources for their assimilation needs, arguably overlapping with community support given Chinese-born parents, who are directly involved in the community, and a Chinese-dominant circle of schoolmates.

Although the focus of our interviews limits delving into the aspect of community support, at least we capture several basic tones of this scenario. Overall, the local Chinese community presents an unconventional embodiment of their presence and culture. Chinatown gives way to ethnic institutes and organizations that are scattered around within Austin, resulting in a sense of decentralized sources of community support among our interviewees. And church plays a big role that substitutes for Chinatown, a

confluence of various community supports, to teenagers who have religious backgrounds. Moreover, here also surfaces an intraethnic difference that recent Chinese-born immigrant youth reveal a different focus on or approach to community support rather than church.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter we briefly examined the role and significance of family and Chinese community contexts with respect to assimilation theory. Since the emergence of the new second generation that in consistent with post-1965 immigration trend, it is problematic to continue with a classical assimilation perspective to interpret the sociocultural adaption process of Chinese American teenagers.

Given our interviews, we found it is hard to claim a striking diversity among our interviewees' family's socioeconomic status. At least, most of them live in decent communities and occupy well-paid jobs, both of which indicate an acceptable family SES to ensure the security and smoothness of children's assimilations. Although all these families are endeavoring towards an appropriate cultural environment for assimilation concern, there is a stratified outcome of cultural interactions between parents and children in term of different generation clusters. Most 2.0er families lack substantial emphases on Chinese culture from both the parent and children sides, henceforth the home atmospheres featuring Chinese elements to a less degree. While the 1.75er, 1.5er, and 1.25er families reveal the graduation of children's closeness with their homelands: the later they immigrated to the U.S., the more they feel bonded with Chinese culture. On the other hand, 1.25ers are faced with more pressure about assimilation for their limited knowledge about American culture, which preconditions their focus on learning and being American. This stratification is also applied to children's perceived levels of

community support with respect to individual involvements in religious institution. In this study, the majority of American-born teenagers prime their Chinese church as main source of community support[9]. By contrast, less Chinese-born teenagers identify their dependence on church to draw supports from Chinese community. They instead resort to their families and Chinese cohorts at school which can fulfill their assimilation needs. Besides, these generation-driven diversities are also affected by the unique industry emphasis (the concentration of high-tech companies) and Chinese ethnic landscape (the pan-Asian Chinatown) in Austin.

Regarding their demographic feature, another interesting finding here is that regardless of the aforementioned differences in terms of SES, family cultural atmosphere, and community support, almost all of our interviewees attend the two best high schools in Austin—Liberal Arts and Science Academy (LASA) and Westwood High School[10]—which even bear nationwide reputation (Ward, 2013). This homogeneity in selecting quality educations, however, cannot be fully articulated here due to the absence of discussions that centered on school experience. Also, we are unable to realize how our interviewees get embedded in and avail themselves of the American educational system (mainly high school) for the purpose of successful assimilation. Because we did not initially set up goals for investigating the relationship between educational obtainment and digital media use, it would be problematic for us to develop related discussions with a scant amount of supportive anecdotes and opinions from our interviewees.

[9] This argument may lose its validity if we recruit more teenagers out of church.

[10] See Figure 1.

Chapter 4: Interpretation, Adoption and Usage of Social Network Sites

If we claim that contemporary society meets the inexorable rise and expansion of digital technologies, teenagers are more witnesses at the frontline than other social strata. Their superiority at knowledge, access, employment and exploitation about various technological platforms can be epitomized by the touted title "digital native" (Prensky, 2001a; 2001b), which foregrounds teenagers' well-rounded embeddedness into digitalized living circumstances. This optimistic discourse however has provoked many critical debates due to its homogenous depiction of how young people are associated with a greater level of digital literacy (Buckingham, 2010[11]). For instance, Bennett and colleagues (2008) suggested a calmness on digital native arguments in term of moral panic that "proclaim a profound change in the world, and pronounce stark generational difference" (p.782). Also, by analyzing a nationwide survey conducted in Britain, Helsper and Eynon (2010) were concerned with the undue generalization of teenagers' preference, skill and use of digital technologies regardless of different socio-demographic backgrounds at individual level. Given the inequality pinpointed by the concept of digital divide, the propaganda of the digital native should not overshadow the technologically disadvantaged in-group teens which are ascribed to a wide array of non-technology determinants, including race and ethnicity as well.

The pervasiveness of social media, particularly social network sites (SNSs), gives a rise to related research regarding our concern. According to a recent Pew report about

[11] Buckingham's discourses about digital literacy leapfrog the typical fields of information or technology; he rather addresses the significance of cultural understanding about digital media.

teenagers and social media (Madden et al., 2013), for example, there was a relatively high portion of teenagers (81%) who primed Facebook as the online profile they used most often. Besides that, teenagers were more prone to share identity and communication information through such digital platforms than they did in the past. While to date the focus and discussion about racial/ethnic differences are scant and under-developed given Ahn (2011) contended that "race remained a significant predictor of SNS usage, but in non-obvious ways" (p.159). In this situation Asian teenagers, especially those associated with East Asian heritages (i.e., China, Japan, Korea, etc.), are either neglectfully compounded with other ethnic minorities for their minor demographic representations; or categorized in line with White cohorts due to their taken-for-granted richness in technological obtainments.

Thus, continuing with the angle of the new second generation, we attempt to correct and amend the aforementioned misunderstanding or knowledge gap about the relationship between Chinese-American youth and SNSs based on our interviews. First, we shed light on their individual viewpoints toward the notion and norm of SNS with regard to authoritative interpretation from academia. Second, we present a descriptive sketch about their daily SNS use patterns. And third, we take a look at the significance of on- and offline network with paying attention to different purposes for using SNS.

WHAT IS SNS? MAPPING OUT TEENAGERS' UNDERSTANDINGS

Given the contemporary prevalence of SNS, most youth are motivated to expand their daily communication from real-life situations to cyberspaces. In most instances,

SNS technologies facilitate youth social needs by their sophisticated online services, and snowball their user cohorts at fast pace. Before elaborating the underneath mechanisms, it is important to apprehend the concept and traits of SNS in general.

So, what is SNS? Over the last decade, there were many studies dedicated to resolving this question. For instance, Gross and colleagues (2005) focused on SNS profile which is "a representation of their [selves] (and, often, of their own social networks)—to others to peruse, with the intention of contacting or being contacted by others" (p.71). Livingston (2008) argued SNS "enable communication among ever-widening circles of contacts, inviting convergence among the hitherto separate activities of email, messaging, website creation, diaries, photo albums and music or video uploading and downloading" (p.394). Among these efforts, boyd and Ellison are the leading figures in defining SNS as web-based services that "allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (boyd & Ellison, 2008; p. 211). Coupled with that, they delineated a broad sketch of SNS types regarding their historical development (see Figure 1; p.212), a broad array of well-known platforms (e.g. Facebook, Myspace, Youtube, Twitter) were included. So, does such a broadly cited definition[12] in academia resonate with the personal understandings of SNS from our interviewees? To be clarified, the reason to propose academic interpretation is not just providing a solid theoretical ground, nor are we anticipating our interviewees can fully capture this abstract yet systematic definition.

[12] According to Google Scholar (an academic search engine), this piece has been cited over 5000 times.

On the other hand, we are more interested in realizing how Chinese-American youth in different generation clusters portray SNS in mundane language, to find emerging unmitigated ideas from the user perspective which support or even challenge the widely credited scholarship.

The American-born group of interviewees has the commonality in accentuating communication aspect of SNS. Among their respective descriptions, the word "communication" was the most frequently mentioned to initiate the discourses, like what John addressed:

> "It's the extremely fast way for people to communicate with each other. You can find anybody you want on Facebook like a second you can add my friend and talk to me online, share your pictures and share your life. That's what humans are, we are social animals, we are designed to communicate with each other, learn about each other's days through lives you know".

While, barely we observed any other positive attitude or compliment about SNS than this kind of remarks; alongside, we noticed these teenagers conceived of several byproducts. For instance, Isabella admitted the significance of SNS as "a way for the world to contact each other" but yet "the recently and more idiotically". In the same vein of dissatisfactory, Laura criticized the anonymous climate of certain SNSs (e.g., Tumblr) because "there is a lot of dirty words going around as well".

By contrast, the opinions of the Chinese-born group are pretty diversified, even in the same generation cluster we observed differentiated emphases. For 1.25ers, Andrew advocated the personal disclosure on SNS that "it's a lot about how you need and how you are different from other people like you post status and you post pictures…it shows your diversity and uniqueness than normal people". Lily was more concerned about

privacy since using SNS "could be probing into someone's life, a lot of people share a lot about their lives…it feels like the privacy line is [blurred]". Sam pointed out the convenience raised by SNS that "it's a place to see other people without meeting them in person". But for 1.5ers, Cathy surprised us with answering "no, can you explain" when we tried to realize her understanding of SNS. Fortunately, she unfolded her ideas as we brought in Facebook and Twitter, the platforms she was familiarized with. And for 1.75ers, Anna's ideas resembled those of the American-born that focus on communication needs, while Vivian admitted the must-have status of SNS to youth because "everybody chat stuffs on there, like asking for help about homework".

To better gauge their understandings, we questioned their ideas regarding the significance of SNS to the whole American society and general Americans. The American-born group did not downplay the integral existence of SNS to all walks of life in American society, although they revealed admonishing viewpoints that young people were prone to become unduly absorbed into using SNSs. Similarly, most Chinese-born teenagers took heed of the negative consequences brought by SNS overuse, like Lily who was worried about the decrease of physical contact:

> "I think it takes away a lot of real human interactions, and it kind replaces that in that way. It's a lot easier to talk to someone on social media than that in person 'cause you have more time to think what you gonna say and like reacting stuff."

Nevertheless, 1.25ers demonstrated the least unease indicating such symptoms. Their responses instead aimed at the philosophy of "being similar to others by using SNS" because "on social network sites you can meet and friend a lot of people, otherwise you have no idea what other people are doing…it's just normal to have SNS account" (Anna).

Put together, our interviewees did not picture SNS beyond or against boyd and Ellison's ideas. To the interviewees, communication is the most tangible facet of SNS, and also the encompassing term that matches various social needs, which are achieved through virtual interactions (e.g., chat, share, tag) on SNS. Intriguingly, these negative comments and remarks overrun on expected acknowledgements of SNS's significance based on its durable popularity among teenagers. To some extent, SNS can be depicted as a networking platform but backfires on its "networking" benefits. Moreover, we can still observe variations in understanding SNS among our interviewees in term of different generation clusters. The American-born teenagers have similar interpretations of SNS that revolve around communication needs, while the Chinese-born teenagers demonstrate their focus on aspects, such as self-disclosure and privacy, rather than communication. This diversity is probably attributed to the ethnical backgrounds and environments we discussed in last chapter, but the causal effects cannot be articulated unless we tease out their specific use of SNS in daily contexts.

A Walkthrough of Teenagers' SNS use pattern

Many qualitative studies have proved that how young people perceive and interpret SNS is critical to their specific SNS adoptions (e.g., boyd, 2007; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009; Ito et al., 2010; Raacke & Bonds-Raccke, 2008). Since our interviewees have shared respective apprehensions of SNS, we tentatively hypothesize a generalization of SNS use by Chinese-American youth. At the baseline, SNS serves as a communication tool for facilitating social purposes, henceforth the extension of interpersonal connections

which already occurred in real-life situations (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009). In the meantime, Chinese-American youth keep themselves distant from intensive SNS use, probably resulting in less frequency of SNS activities, plain approaches to self-expressions via SNS, and even persistent log-off from SNS accounts. To achieve a better argument that reflects the intra-ethnic differences regarding SNS use pattern, we delve into illustrating their daily routines or strategies about employing SNS in the following steps.

What SNSs do/did they use?

To begin with, we focus on our interviewees' SNS experience in choosing what platforms to use throughout their school years. They were asked to reveal the specific SNSs they currently use in line with their SNS understandings, and if applicable, those they have abandoned for certain reasons. Here we questioned them about all the social media platforms instead of SNS alone because the boundaries between different types of social media is becoming slippery (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), it would be hard to guarantee that teenagers can manage to distinguish SNS from other popular social media technologies like Whatsapp or Instagram. While in this part of discussion, we basically contend that Facebook and Tumblr (Duggan & Brenner, 2013) should be termed under a loosely-confined scope of SNS, so is Twitter given its perceivable networking potential argued by Kwak and colleagues (2010).

2.0ers				1.75ers			1.5ers	1.25ers	
George	Isabella	John	Laura	Andrew	Lily	Sam	Cathy	Anna	Vivian
Facebook Gmail Maple Story*[13]	Facebook Youtube Tumblr	Gmail Facebook Youtube Tumblr Twitter*	Reddit Tumblr Twitter* Youtube	Facebook Gmail Instagram Tumblr Pinterest Youtube	Facebook Tumblr Instagram	Tumblr Facebook Gmail	Instagram Facebook Gmail Tumblr	Facebook Twitter Youtube QQ[14] Weibo[15]	Facebook QQ Youku[16] Youtube Weibo Twitter*

Table 3: Overview of Social Media Use[17]

The figure above lists the specific social media platforms that our interviewees use or have used before. As Madden (2013) suggested, it might be too assertive to claim the waning interests toward Facebook among Chinese American youth. At least, among these interviewees, Facebook still holds its popularity since the majority of our interviewees (9 of 10) have active accounts. Still, a great volume of accounts does not necessarily lead to an agreed-on preferred use. By following their concern about SNS addiction, many of them expressed Facebook enthusiasm to a lesser degree. For instance, Lily was not attached to Facebook even though she checked her profile daily:

> "I just don't enjoy it very much. I like the app maybe I can see what people are up to that I haven't really seen for a long time, from like elementary school and different campuses stuff. I like that you can keep in touch. But I also just feel like a lot of time is a waste of time".

[13] MapleStory is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game, launched in America on May 11, 2005.
[14] QQ is the most popular instant messaging software in China.
[15] Weibo means the Chinese word for "microblog", usually refers to Sina Weibo (新浪微博)
[16] Youku is a video hosting site that offers online streaming service.
[17] The item with asterisk means the interviewee no longer uses this social media platform.

Tumblr not only reveals a relatively high penetration among our interviewees (6 of 10), but also draws substantial attention that diversifies their SNS use other than Facebook. Some teenagers, like Isabella, announced their "digital migration" from Facebook to Tumblr although they were still newbies to that flourishing cyberspace. She further explained this use trajectory:

> "because I'd like to follow a lot of political art magazines, you know that type of stuff. I think if you look at it right it's a beautiful way for sharing ideas because you can contact with literally something across the world. [For example] there is one guy does like food blogs, 'cause he does business or something to travel around the world, and he likes to post pictures about food around the world and that's really cool".

Meanwhile we observed certain aversions toward Tumblr from the non-user side. John disregarded Tumblr as SNS because "you just share pictures, kind like Instagram, they are stupid".

For Twitter, we originally anticipated a likely growing tendency of its diffusion among young people as antecedent empirical studies have implied (Junco et al., 2013; Lenhart et al., 2010; Madden et al., 2013), but nevertheless we found the opposite. Many interviewees did not tell any experience about using Twitter, for those who once touched upon it the length of their total usage could be ephemeral—Laura just made attempts for three days and stopped afterwards, Vivian likewise has "created a Twitter account but rarely used, so just let it go". Such an absence of active engagements in Twitter goes in line with a general Asians' disinterest in using Twitter, which was indicated by a pretty low level of Asian distribution of the total Twitter users in the U.S (Mislove et al., 2011).

Aside from these well-known SNS platforms, we were surprised and confused when our interviewees mentioned Gmail. We thought they probably mistook Google Plus as Gmail because the formal has been integrated into the latter's user interface. However, it turned out that they literally talked about Gmail due to its fulfillment of social communicational behaviors: chatting with friends through emails. This idea echoes with the basic tone of their SNS understandings that mentioned above. Another provocative finding is the preservation of using Chinese-based social media for 1.25ers. Alongside their increasing use of American social media (e.g., Facebook, Youtube)[18], they still kept involved in trendy social media in China. For instance, Anna did not use Weibo until she came to the U.S., and thought Weibo was more interesting than Twitter as she "friended some people on there [Weibo]..can't understand the content posted on Twitter".

Therefore, Facebook seems to be the mostly adopted SNS platform among our interviewees, yet the fear of SNS addiction drains its appeal to them. Tumblr shows its increasing popularity that stirs more teenagers' investment of time and money but along with negative attitudes. Twitter, unfortunately, lapses into the embarrassment of having no active users. As for Gmail and Chinese social media, obviously the former lacks the strict technical eligibility to be considered as SNS; but the latter items are worth inclusion in discussions that revolve around use purpose and personal network, which are the issues we will unfold later.

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[18] They did not have any regular use of American social media because most of them were (are) banned in China.

When, how, and where do they use SNS?

Given what we have found, Facebook and Tumblr show relatively high penetrations among our interviewees. Before moving to next step, it is important to briefly map out these two platforms. Facebook was created in 2004, in 2012 it reached over one billion active users (Fowler, 2012) and still maintains this robust trend[19]. Basically, Facebook users can create and customize their own profiles, (de)friend other users, establish and join groups, exchange messages, and update status. To date, much of the existing academic research on Facebook has focused on identity expression, privacy setting, social network and social capital across off- and online situations (e.g., boyd, 2008; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008). Tumblr was launched in 2007, and has hosted over 180 million blogs (personal profiles) by April 2014[20]. Unlike Facebook, Tumblr advocates more on its microblogging services that enable users to post or upload multimedia contents to a short-form blog. Therefore, many academic studies on Tumblr have focused on interactions between blog content and audience, such as issues of online fandom (e.g., Hillman, Procyk, & Neustaedter, 2014).

Admittedly, with their selections of SNS platforms, at most we can depict a sketch of their digital consumption without vivid layers of detailed use information. In order to explicate the cause-and-effect link between their SNS understanding and exact

[19] According to the statistic report from Statistic Brain (http://www.statisticbrain.com/facebook-statistics/), Facebook gained 1.3 billion monthly active users by the end of 2013.
[20] This data is daily updated and can be retrieved through http://www.tumblr.com/about

SNS use patterns, as a second step we aim at investigating use frequency, means of access, and locales about using SNS with respect to different generation clusters.

The American-born teenagers have their routine use of SNS on computers after school. Usually it turned out a continuous and long timespan as John stated:

> "75% of my time. 'cause when I get home, pull off my computer, just start looking at things, having fun and surfing the website through the rest of the day. That's my life".

To them, "4 hours for everyday use" (George) seems to be a benchmark for average length of total SNS or social media usage, while Isabella provided extreme cases:

> "I mean recently I have been busy so it's mainly like at the healthy hours at night, which I hope I can get better hours on social media 'cause I'm getting home at 8 more recently. I just like wait there not do homework. I just like go to Internet till 2 o'clock in the morning, that's not healthy".

Also there exists the multitasking of doing homework and enjoying SNS. Laura has become used to this process so that she caters to both homework and active performances on Tumblr "at home…until going bed". Interestingly, we notice some divergent use patterns about Facebook. For instance, Isebella described her use was "barely much…what I do is very passive, I'm not really involved in it and just look at it". By contrast, John termed himself as ardent Facebook user because "whenever I'm not busy, I'll stay at my computer and just look at my Facebook every 10 minutes".

Likewise, many Chinese-born teenagers said their SNS use mostly occurs after school. However, with the convenience brought by mobile devices (e.g., smart phone), among them we observe more sporadic use of SNS at home rather than a certain amount

of regular time. Some of them take advantage of limited morning time before going to school, as shown in Andrew's use habit:

> "I think it's when we have free time at hand so we just take out phones and check out. When I wake up sometimes I take out my phone like "Oh how's everybody doing", it's just like at times to see what anyone else is doing".

Others prefer to distribute their SNS use into different time slots, finding intervals between and among school assignments or prior issues at home. Vivian shared a typical plan regarding that approach:

> "Regularly I check [Weibo and Facebook] after back home from school, also check a while since my parents cook dinner. Then I log on [Weibo and Facebook] after finishing my homework and keep using until I go to bed. For me this is more like a leisure that helps me released from homework a bit".

By the same token, the engagement invested in Facebook varies from person to person, barely reflecting obvious cues for a further generalization on their belonged generation clusters. On one hand, there were salient apathies toward Facebook: Cathy reported merely 4 times a day to check Facebook, matching her thoughts of non-necessity to use Facebook as she once deactivated her account for half a year:

> "Because there was no use of getting on, and people really need to contact me, and people told me near the school, so I just come back on [Facebook]".

Similarly, Anna did not conceal her dislike about Facebook during the interview, which then resulted in a lower frequency of daily visits to her profile:

> "Actually I don't really like Facebook and Twitter or stuffs like them. It would be fine if you are a celebrity [to post stuffs], but normal people like my teachers always post topsy-turvy things or trivialities".

On the other hand, Facebook was proven to raise active uses within the Chinese-born group as Lily concluded:

> "I think a lot of people would like if you hear someone doesn't have a Facebook it would still be shocking that doesn't have a Facebook. [And] I think a lot of Asians [Chinese] are like pretty involved in social media…I don't know if that will be super active, but they are all participating in it".

Notwithstanding the distinctness in term of different generation clusters, the use frequency, means of access, and locales are closely interlaced given the aforementioned statements of SNS use. An obvious commonality is having SNS consumption at home in computer-mediated ways. This situation is mainly due to the rigid regulations on social media that are enacted in school. For all the schools where our interviewees currently attend, they block Internet access to almost every type of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Tumblr), also seemingly intercept phone signal that prevents students from going online via smart phones. On the other hand, as Livingston and Bober (2006) suggested that "relying on parents to implement consistent, effective regulation within the home is problematic" (p.15), our interviewees indicated few or no home policies about SNS use from their parents. Besides, the occupation of smart phone preconditions whether they can broaden their pathways to SNS. Not all of our interviewees have a smart phone. For instance, Laura said she did not have a smart phone because "it's just like I never really need one". Isabella also had no access to a smart phone because "my mom won't give it, which I probably can't get rid of it if I did have one for a while". As a result, those with smart phones, like Andrew whom we mentioned above, are prone to demonstrate a flexible time schedule to check their SNS profiles, whereas the have-nots just embrace the computer as the most reachable approach to SNS adoption.

We yet lack solid evidence to generalize how the Chinese-American teenagers' understanding about SNS is associated with their exact SNS use. For each generation cluster, in-group variations on SNS use outshine the expected homogeneity. In addition, it seems that their use frequency, means of access, and locales about using SNS are more shaped and determined by objective environments (i.e., regulations on SNS at school and home) and conditions (i.e., device ownership), meanwhile lead to few clues that parallel the passive use pattern we suggested. That is to say, even though our interviewees stay wary about adopting and utilizing SNS, their actual use patterns lean toward being engaged, frequent or even obsessive. If so, can we convincingly argue that there is a divorce between their SNS understandings and exact SNS use?

LEARNING THE PURPOSES OF SNS USE IN NETWORK PERSPECTIVE

Another crucial perspective we have not examined are their purposes or orientations of using different SNS platforms (i.e., Facebook and Tumblr). As we argued above, meeting personal or social needs in term of communication activity can evolve into the generic purposes for our interviewees, but this viewpoint turns out to be one-sided as we have omitted investigating technological features which exert tremendous influence over SNS adoption (Hargittai, 2007).

Basically, regular SNS performances (e.g., posting and commenting) result in an ego-centered social connectedness with high transparency of identity information (boyd, 2007). Teenagers who get involved in this context can easily map out their own networks as well as their friends'. Besides, such a digitalized socialization hastens the conventional

process of forming up social impressions, which is facilitated by the homophily phenomena—friends on SNS tend to become more similar than being randomly chosen (Thelwall, 2009). For instance, through Facebook profiles, Lauren pointed out how to realize the specific racial/ethnic group where other youths are involved:

> "when you see a picture saying Asian most the time it's like a huge group of Asian. 'cause I also notice a lot of my friends from college too like basically when you go into any profiles you will see the majority of their friends will be whatever ethnicity they are.

Other than this basic aspect, as the rapid development of digital technologies and inflating appetite of teenagers' social needs, SNS is growing complicated regarding the services that centered on impression management and friendship performance, networks and network structure, relations between online and offline social networks, and privacy (see boyd & Ellison, 2008).

In detail, these items are revolving around self-disclosure but varying in different settings and functions. First, the impression management and friendship performance straightforwardly relate to teenager's identity construction. Most accessible and easy-to-use functions, including blog, comment, photo upload, link share, status writing and friend list, are classified into this perspective. They are regarded as the direct cues of self-identity that matter to both the self-images that youth present and people they friend. Second, the networks and network structure makes efforts to draw out youth personal social relationships that are reflected by certain visible indicators (e.g., the data and analysis generated by in-site apps) and the subtle ones (e.g. defriending activity) seen through online interactions. Therefore other people can grossly estimate the social

networks youth are involved in and positions they occupy within. Third, the relations between online and offline social networks enable teenagers to duplicate and further enhance their existing relationships online, meanwhile exploring the possibilities to friend strangers with acceptable standards. For instance, assisted by the Global Position System (GPS), the feature to display “where I am” coalesces the reality of actual geographic position and the virtuality of social nets. Also, the number of "mutual friends" renders a cue to measure the potential of establishing friendship with strangers. These features eventually spur the pleasure travelling between two spaces that hinges on extent to what they can be bridged. Last, the privacy setting could be understood as the regulation set by SNS to trim and polish teenager's identity by screening-out useless, unfriendly, and risky relationships, at the same time it privileges desirable people and sources in order to consolidate intentional self-disclosures.

Intriguingly, as Livingston (2008) suggested that “older teenagers tended to favor a plain aesthetic that foregrounds their links to others, expressing a notion of identity lived through authentic relationships with others” (p.407), neither the American-born nor Chinese-born teenagers demonstrate tremendous efforts put into impression management on SNS. To them, the overall use of social media is fundamentally task-oriented, and SNS platforms are no longer the primed approaches to presenting themselves online. Especially for those who are active on Instagram, as Andrew suggested, SNS has become on par with this kind of emerging technology about self-presentation that ”a lot about how you need and how you are different from other people, like you post status and you post pictures…shows your diversity and uniqueness than normal people”. Similarly, the

privacy aspect was barely discussed since only a few of our interviewees spell out their anecdotes and opinions of regulating their online exposure. Cathy was the only person sharing her effort on "hiding my album and deleting my profile pictures" because she did not think "the whole world needs to see my pictures everyday".

Compared to these services related more to presenting self, the rest which revolve around network, both online and offline, account for major threads of their use purposes. Essentially, the layout of SNS friends (i.e. Facebook friend list) open window for network inspections. According to the interviews, most of their friend lists reflect the core part of their social relations—close schoolmates, best friends throughout life, and peers from the same church group—due to SNSs' propensity to "maintain relations as people move from one offline community to another" (Ellison et al., 2007; p.1164). Particularly to those who have regular religious lives, these layers of social network are usually overlapped in the offline world, amplifying the importance of friendship performance on Facebook that caters to interpersonal connections within their existing networks (Ellison et al., 2007; Hargittai, 2007), such as those at church. In light of similar concern, 1.25ers reported themselves continue using Chinese SNS (e.g., Weibo) regardless of the time difference between China and the U.S. For instance, Vivian admitted the hardship to contact friends through Weibo, but she did not quit using this platform because "we are all good friends, they won't abandon the friendships since I go abroad". Moreover, their friend lists on Facebook are lengthy since they have friended people in terms of acquaintances met under different circumstances (mainly from school). John briefly explained this phenomenon:

> “That’s what anybody else does. Why not, let’s have more friends. I don’t really see a reason behind it. I add them maybe I actually know their names, I really like [to] learn more about them. That’s why I add [these people]”.

Unlike Facebook’s transparency to network information, Tumblr stands in line with an anonymous climate, which elevates the threshold for realizing the coherence between on- and offline network status from our interviewees. For instance, we initially assume Isabella would have a Tumblr network that resembles her real-life social circles. Although she admitted the prevalence of having Tumblr accounts among her friends, she did not friend them on Tumblr:

> “Yes, but mine is anonymous so I don’t share with anyone. I know a lot of my friends are on Tumblr, a lot of them into the insane side of Tumblr where they just got obsessed with celebrity things or like that…they talk about it constantly”.

Here we argue that such a virtual environment can also boost its penetration among teenagers and assist their maintenance and enrichment of social relations. The conception of *mediated public* (boyd, 2007) applies to articulating the environment that SNSs display to youth, wherein their communications are largely facilitated by traits attached to mediating technologies: persistence, searchability, replicability and invisible audiences (see boyd, 2007). That is to say, in an environment where youth can gather publicly through mediating technology, their bodies of flesh are recoded into" immortal" figures on Tumblr, and their conceptions about geographical and temporal barriers are blurred to surface the accessibility of locating others. Informational spirals thus encompass youth that make it harder to differentiate the copy and the origin of their online images, also veil identities of guests who pay a cyber-visit merely by mouse clicks and keystrokes. These features obviously establish the cornerstone for a new set of interactional protocols

about networking in an anonymous context. Especially compared to the physically confined and parentally curtailed *unmediated public* (boyd, 2007), this set of protocol empowers teenagers on SNSs to freely act out their personas without usual constraints, and weave their interpersonal connections with the digitalized identity-mask and friendship-accessibility. More importantly, the teenagers who use Tumblr have integrated this platform into everyday socialization. They not only follow each other's profile like friending on Facebook, but also translate the content of virtual interactions on Tumblr into vibrant pieces and bits of real-life networking efforts. For instance, Isabella and Laura took advantage of popular conversations on Tumblr to strengthen existent networks by preserving the rapport of "conversational topics", and exploring new online connections with people who share the same interests.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter we illustrate how Chinese-American youth interpret, adopt, and use SNS based on our interviewees' responses. Even conceding each of them demonstrated individual approaches to these three aspects, there are some salient commonalities worth our attention. In general, their understanding of SNS is more associated with communication purposes along with critical viewpoints regarding possible byproducts of undesired addiction. However, this vigilant interpretation does not prompt discreet use patterns as their autonomy and agency are outweighed by technological and social factors. Their active engagements in SNS (Facebook and Tumblr) predominantly hinge on accessible devices (computer and smart phone) and

circumscribing environments (school and home), as well as the networking demands toward old and new social relations. Regarding different generation clusters, both the American-born and the Chinese-born groups show restricted conditions of accessing to SNS at school, while they do not have such confinements imposed by their parents at home. This situation leads to their intensive use of computer after school to log on their SNS profiles and conduct SNS-based online interactions. One generational difference here is that for the Chinese-born teenagers, their SNS use patterns show more diversities in access as more of them, than the American-born teenagers, employ mobile devices (i.e., smart phone) to obtain flexible approaches to using SNSs. For the concern of networking across on- and offline realms, despite the differences of feature and service between and among different SNS platforms, both the American-born and the Chinese-born groups reveal their knowledge and experiences about using SNSs (including the Chinese-based SNSs) to manage the coherence between the their on- and offline social circles, meanwhile exploring new friendships based on their own interests.

Chapter 5: Chinese American Youth and Asian Stereotypes on Social Network Sites

The stereotypes of immigrants are understood here as virtually automatic and simplified mental images of a certain race/ethnic group (Chang & Kleiner, 2003). They are critical to understand native-born citizens' judgments about what is desirable or unexpected immigration, but nevertheless are not always true in reality. Like ethnic minority adults, youth are known to be somewhat constrained by such impositions in either school or family environment, which could lead to problematic situations about their self-identity, social networks, academic performance and psychological well-being (Kim, et al,.2011).

Beyond the most visible sites in the societal sphere, such as family and school, social network sites (SNSs) provide alternative perspectives to understanding how ethnic minority youth interact with immigrant stereotypes. One of these perspectives is online self-depiction that denotes customized identity on SNSs. The implications of "bricolage" (Weber & Mitchell, 2008) attempt to encapsulate understandings of such a performance—an improvised construction or creation based on whatever materials that SNS users have at hand. It highlights the resonance of youth's creativity with digital technologies, and leads to an ongoing profile construction that actively coordinates online identities' pieces and fragments based on interactions with the "digital and non digital world, involving physical, psychological, social and cultural agents" (p.43). In this vein, there emerge some prospective ideas about how ethnic minority youth leverage SNSs to smooth over stereotypes, which are partially corroborated by Grasmuck et al. (2009).

They demonstrate that intensive investments in the construction of minority self-disclosures on Facebook can enhance online-depiction and self-conception of ethnic minority college students.

While for Chinese-American youth, the SNS-enabled improvement of their ethnic images is possibly dampened due to recent influx of Chinese immigrants: in 2012, 41.6% of legal permanent residents were from Asian countries, in which people from China (except Taiwan) alone accounted for 19% as the largest ethnic group (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2013). Particularly, the number of school-age children and youth is expected to grow markedly as its notable percentage of total Asian immigrants in 2000 (see U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2004). In other words, not only the longtime established stereotypes probably continue to plague youth cohorts (Kao, 2000; Trytten et al., 2012; Yee, 1992), but also other emerging difficulties brought by an increase in Chinese-born youth which might lapse into new pieces and bits of stereotypes.

Given the articulated "new second generation" (Rumbaut, 2008) [21] that encompasses levels of generational cohort ranging from 1.25er to 1.75er, this chapter attempts to analyze the tension among Chinese-American youth between immigrant stereotypes and SNS use in a twofold way. First, this chapter does not simply map out the historical trajectory of Asian stereotypes that account for generational consistency in transferring stereotypes (e.g. Asian youth are inflicted by “model minority” as their parents). It steps forward to focus on Chinese-born newcomers, pinpointing and interpreting a set of discrepancies to shatter the homogenous pictures. Second, given the

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Note[21]: We have discussed the notion of this phrase in Chapter 3.

discrepancies, this chapter addresses both Chinese-born and American-born youth to interrogate their apprehension and reaction regarding stereotypes on SNS.

RELATING CHINESE-AMERICAN YOUTH TO ASIAN STEREOTYPES: THE INCEPTION AND TRANSFORMATION

A review of the stereotypes and social context

Generally speaking, racial/ethnic minority youth convey loosened connections to their ancestral and cultural origin, but feel prone to conduct self-assessment and welcome evaluation done by others based on endorsed standards in the new country (Zhou, 1999). Actually they cannot avoid some prevalent and crystalized stereotypes applied to their racial/ethnic neighborhoods, communities and social strata. Also, either the expectations or the discriminations that meet them are cultivated from past historical discourse and the social context of the U.S. (Zhou, 1999).

In the perspectives of public consensus and governmental policy, Chinese immigrants were regarded as undifferentiated from other Asian immigrant groups during the late 19th to early 20th. The majority of them were typically poor and uneducated, comprising a sizable presence of working class people alongside intrusive physical appearances and cultural values conflicting with the American mainstream (Ngai, 2004). Various anti-Asian exclusion laws, especially the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1917 (Ngai, 2004, see p.18), were not abolished until World War II that once confined the extent of upward social mobility that Asian immigrants could achieve (e.g., restricted job markets,

uneven business policy). They even stigmatized the overall racial/ethnic group with lack of aptitude for acculturation or Americanization, as well as disqualification for being naturalized as American citizen. These biased implements resulted in a slow population growth and a belittled and distorted image of Asian groups in the U.S., but were eventually redressed in light of the repeal of discriminatory laws, and immigration law reform in 1965 that prompted new waves of Asian immigrants (Bailey, 2001).

A striking characteristic of post-1965 Asian immigrants is the diversity of national and cultural origins. Besides policies like the Hart-Celler Act of 1965, immigrations were galvanized by the global economic reconstruction, robust economy in Asia and the Vietnam War (Zhou,1999). While this watershed was followed with intra-racial discrepancies that fell into a bifurcating stratification prevailing in Asian immigrant-dense areas like California: immigrants from China mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Vietnam are much more preferable than those from Cambodia and Laos (Ong, 1996). In this vein, the advent of "model minority" (Choi & Lahey, 2006) has particularized Chinese immigrants alongside Japanese, Korean, Indian and others who have industrious, well-behaved, and successful lives in common. It therefore has led to Asian profiles grossly depicted as "being self-sufficient, in that they take care of their own problems within the family or the community" (Choi & Lahey, 2006).

Behind this acknowledgment, there looms the negative "perpetual foreigner" that stems from the dichotomous Black-White framework incited by the discriminatory history, in which Caucasian-Americans predominated as the superior racial group while African-Americans turned out inferior and incapable to bridge the difference (Bailey,

2001; Kim et al., 2011). This notion actually recurs the pre-1965 biased and discriminatory attitudes toward Chinese immigrants. As Kim's (1999) articulation on how Asian Americans are racially triangulated in relations to Blacks and Whites, the U.S. mainstream society, which is synonymous to dominant whiteness, could classify Chinese immigrants into inherently inassimilable foreigners. Because of the Chinese ethno-cultural practices they preserve and highlight, their assimilating efforts are still considered markedly differentiated from western notions regardless their achievements in integrating into the white sphere (Zhou, 2009).

Intra-ethnic difference to break the stereotype

Contemporary public opinion tends to examine the second generation of Asian immigrant with the touted model minority. One of the most controversial topics is the "geeky" and "nerdy" stereotype which are enforced on Asian youth to encapsulate their higher academic achievements in term of white-collar professions or highbrow cultures. Sam acknowledges it without hesitation:

> “We are smart… We are good at math. We are good at violin and piano. The typical style which I find is very true. And, we are good at grades, we work very hard.”

Indeed such an epitomizing approach complements the ideal paradigm of assimilation and caters to the education-heavy tradition of the Chinese family, but it overshadows foreign-born immigrants who have struggling academic performance (Kim et al., 2011). Even spending four years in the U.S. already, Anna still feels pressured when her classmates ask for homework help:

> "Actually I don't do well at school, so I can't help them most time. But I'm not dare enough to admit that…[They come to me for help] because I'm not talkative and I'm Asian… And I'm wearing glasses."

Likewise, those teenagers who are good at areas, like English, history and literature that usually dominated by the White peers, face pressure from both in- and out-group sides. For instance, Andrew also encountered imposed expectations of good grade in math and science, but he comparatively prefer areas in term of liberal arts:

> "I really dislike math 'cause I hate how the fact that it always only has one answer. Like in the real world, there is not just one answer to solving things; I did multiple answers and any answer can stand out, and the answer can be defended. So that's the reason I enjoy more".

In purpose of avoiding misrepresented and homogenous reiterations, this part interrogates assimilatory issues of both American-born and Chinese-born immigrant youth in the following aspects.

First, there are troubles in picking up English or Chinese to fulfill bilingualism to expected levels. Traditionally, the bilingualism of Chinese-American youth is believed to contribute pivotally to their "successful stories" in terms of academic performance (Mouw & Xie, 1999). Given the assumed flexibility to switch between two linguistic mediums, they are suggested to occupy easier access to explore their parent's ethnic and cultural capital rather than lingering over the monolingual counterparts (Bankston and Zhou, 1995), and the transitional effort to bridge a language gap (either English or Chinese) regarding family communications (Mouw & Xie, 1999). Cathy, who left for the U.S. around eight-year-old, enjoys speaking Chinese with her parents:

> "We speak Mandarin Chinese most time, about 70 percent, and 30 percent we speak English, the easiest stuff. But most time my mom just wants me to speak

> Mandarin… It's because she says that it's easier for her, and Mandarin language like mom always uses with me, like using when you can so you can't lose it. And I want to speak Mandarin too because it's such a powerful language, I don't wanna lose Mandarin."

In this vein, the immigrant youth group is usually tacitly homogenized with the same bilingual proficiency, whereas relatively low level of English-language or Chinese-language ability exists as truth. For the American-born, purposes of speaking Chinese is constrained to family communication and certain circumstances. As they grow up, we notice its significance is usually surpassed by the imperative of speaking English to expand social connections with native speakers. For instance, unlike his fluent English, Sam shows some difficulties in communicating in Chinese. Despite the necessary occasions to speak Chinese, he gives a rise to speaking English:

> "Sometimes I speak Chinese with my parents, but right now I mostly speak English at home. For my friends at church, most of them also speak English, that's why our youth group is called English group."

While for newcomers, English is more understood and learnt as a second language to pave the initial steps for being acculturated to the U.S. (Gordon, 1964). However, in school context, Chinese-born immigrant youth could still feel unease and frustrated to establish network with non-Chinese students (Yeh et al., 2008). Vivian gets bogged down in a confined social circle at school because of her limited English proficiency:

> " Every time they [native classmates] come to talk to me I don't understand what they mean, so I have to ask them to repeat. But I don't understand even they repeat for me, and then they lose interests in talking with me. They think it bothers them a lot, they don't want to explain everything very slowly. So even some of them are my friends, we rarely talk because of my poor English."

Such difficulties are closely associated with the fear of native speakers' mockery and discriminatory attitudes toward the awkward English speaking with a nonstandard American accent (Kim et al., 2011). They imply those students that they are still labeled as a permanent "linguistic others" (Shankar, 2011) in accordance with the aforementioned notion of perpetual foreigner.

Second, in contrast to our conventional understandings, they are less inclined to reflect how they are burdened with stereotypes. Asian stereotypes, such as model minority, have been widely understood to put undifferentiated double marginalization on both American-born and Chinese-born immigrant youth (Asher,2009). That is to say, these images subject the younger generation to a hegemonic white standard of objectivity and absolutely moral evaluation of achievement. So we probably can still observe the generational consistency in portraits of perpetual foreigners that applied to this youth group regardless their achievements in and out of school.

However, neither American-born nor Chinese-born immigrant youths present an overt concern about how their social life is inflicted by stereotypes. Cathy have perceived how the Asian stereotypes influence the basic rhythm of intra-racial/ethnic communication at school, but instead of criticizing and venting, she merely ascribes this problem to the ignorance she dislikes:

> “Actually you always get Asian stereotypes in high school, from white people or from Mexican, or from black people. They like to make serious stereotypes all the time, like shouldn’t them be smart, or like shouldn’t you apply to this school cause you are Asian, or shouldn’t you be whatever or speak this language. But for me I honestly care less, well I think you are ignorant, I don’t have to be heard by your opinion because you are ignorant about such a large group. Race, as well,

> you can't walk out to the world and halve the idea, like magnify such a large group but everyone is so vary. So for me I don't need to take personally."

Besides, George raised the viewpoint in accordance with the "melting-pot" racial scenario in the U.S. regarding his unnecessity to fight against Asian stereotypes:

> "I think we are in America now in which people like other people, so there is not that much difference between Asian Americans and Americans. It's just like Asian Americans have sort of added bonus of being Asian. Also, we go to church, and we preach like, or we were not that preaching but know that treating people as other people. We don't have discrimination against anyone, I don't see like done anything differently from white person".

Other than personal perspective, the size and density of racial/ethnic groups they belong to at school largely contribute to their carefree opinions or attitudes toward stereotypes. All the schools that our interviewees attend have a substantial group of Asian, its pervasive display on campus collectively reinforce a strong presence of Asian along with the group solidarity as how Vivian highlights that:

> "Because we have a lot of Asians at school, and they [non-Asian schoolmates] have get used to that. So there is no biased attitude or even discrimination against us."

More interestingly, they do not embrace the rigidity to differ themselves from white youth that delineates the contour of perpetual foreigners. They instead embrace inter-racial/ethnic communications by diversifying the presences of their race/ethnicity-based groups. Such efforts, therefore, dilute the youth perceptions of stereotype and soften its impacts to some extent. For his youth group in TCA, Sam enjoys the relationships with non-Asian/Chinese youth who also participate:

> "I am in an open-minded society. And here is like, we are Asians, we are with white people, we joke about white people like "oh my god, he's not Asian, our cast is not Asian". Otherwise we have Hispanic church here in Sunday evening, we don't really discriminate against everybody. And we have white kids."

Put together, Asian stereotypes have the roots with respects to antecedent historical experience and social changes. Chinese immigrants are imposed with depictions (i.e. model minority) given their efforts of being acculturated and assimilated to the U.S., meanwhile such images subtly enforce them to adopting status of perpetual foreigner. For Chinese-American youth, they also confront the same problems brought by Asian stereotypes, whereas the intra-ethnic differences provoke more specific concerns rather than a monolithic understanding. On one hand, the stereotype of bilingualism misrepresents the respective acculturation processes of American-born and Chinese-born immigrant youths, though the latter are worse affected for their limited English proficiency. On the other hand, also a more thought-provoking finding given our interviews, both groups are seemed to become less inclined to reflect how they are burdened with stereotypes. They either rely on personal agency or group solidarity, or alternatively embark on inter-racial/ethnic communication to set aside this concern.

ANALYZING ASIAN STEREOTYPES ON SNSS

Depicting Asian ethnic identity on Facebook

As we argued in last chapter, impression management is critical to teenagers' general SNS use as a direct revelation of multifaceted persona that includes the self-identified belongingness to a certain racial/ethnic group. Although most interviewees turned out not impassionate about depicting themselves on SNSs, we were still interested in realizing the extent of which they pay attention to ethnic identity online.

First of all, we define ethnic identity under a sociological framework. According to *identity theory*, the formation of identity depends on the way in which the self objectifies and categorizes itself in relation to other social categories, and meanwhile resorts to social comparison in purpose of demarcating in- and out-group (Stets & Burke, 2000). Similarly, when referred to as *social identity theory,* this twofold process is interpreted as not only the relations between social structure, structure of self, and social behavior, but also the dynamics residing in this process that affect social behaviors (see Stryker & Burke, 2000).

In this context, ethnic identity can be also understood based on individual perspectives, but meanwhile heeding the locale, group or community where they occur. Beyond the component statement corroborated by a number of articles, which argue ethnic identity constitutes part of social identity, there have emerged diverse approaches to defining ethnic identities varying due to specific aspects such as belonging, commitment, and shared values and attitude (Phinney, 1990). Despite the absence of an agreed-on definition, one of the most salient commonalities of this body of literature is the considerable attention paid to the social structure. The group is the frequently discussed network structure that enables foregrounding both internal and external dynamics revolving around intra- and inter-ethnic distinctions. The shared definitions of ethnic difference are arguably associated with how a person identifies himself/herself with a particular ethnic group or being identified by others (White & Burke, 1987). Romanucci and De Vos (1995, p.24) reinforce this focus more culturally by claiming how ethnic members are associated with a certain group that "the ethnic identity of a

group consists of its subjective, symbolic and emblematic use of any aspect of a culture, or a perceived separate origin and continuity in order to differentiate themselves from other groups."

So another strand is centering on the group, the meso-scope of network structure in contrast to the individual perspective. Here the understanding of a group particularizes ethnic identity that we attempt to look into. A group can be defined " by an attribute or as a specific collection of individuals to whom we can literally point" (Christakis & Fowler, 2009), while it is perceivable that ethnicity can account for establishing a group to a large extent. Especially for ethnic minorities, the formation of a group tends to result from a process of self-perceived inclusion with respect to ethnic commonalities such as religion, language, place of origin, and economic base (Romanucci & De Vos, 1995). The language of *homophily* better explains this phenomenon. Homophily acts as an interpersonal norm, indicating "a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people" (McPherson, et al., 2001, p.416). Such a notion also stretches itself to encompass a wide array of relationships including those based on race and ethnicity. Generally speaking, homophily is classified into baseline and inbreeding terms, both of which are related to ethnic groups given a large body of empirical studies (see McPherson et al., 2001). As a result, the tactical approach to read an ethnic identity within an ethnic group requires more than foci on demographic variables (e.g. size and location) and historical discourses (e.g. prejudice and stereotype). Actually, we must pay attention to actions that happen by chance (e.g. cross-ethnic relationships) in the meantime.

Considering the relations between online and offline social networks, we assume that on Facebook, Chinese-American youth have to inherit and operate the old-school system of ethnic identity, adapting or adjusting themselves to an online ethnic group in accordance with their realities. But they comparatively become much more autonomous in selective exposure of the selves under a less restrained circumstance, and their individualized approaches might result in disparate attitudes toward relations between ethnic identity and stereotypes.

Among our interviewees, Cathy and John are the only teenagers who have put efforts to picturing their ethnic information on SNS. The big motivation lying underneath is their pride and fondness above their racial heritage and homeland culture. Cathy elaborated her Facebook profile with Taiwanese features. Oftentimes she changes profile picture and updates personal information in purpose of showcasing her ethnic identity to the virtual public on Facebook:

> "I will include where I lived in, like lived in Taichung, Taipei, and my language is Mandarin and English, or my profile picture would be in Taiwan…(that is) not like tourism, it will be pretty, you can tell them in Taiwan."

In a similar vein, John portray his Facebook profile with representative Chinese elements in the U.S, such as martial arts or Bruce Lee, which are also stereotyped to conclude Chinese culture:

> "It's cool, it's me doing a no handed cartwheel. I've done wushu, I decided to do wushu so I learn a lot about kongfu tricks or stuff.. 'cause American people think Chinese can beat you in a fight. That's a stereotype we can kick everyone's butt… I [also] have a picture of Bruce Lee represents my culture".

By contrast, most of these teenagers leave alone expressing themselves with Chinese features. For example, Sam has not thought about decorating his profile to become more Chinese, nor posted up any specific stuffs about Chinese culture. Likewise, Anna does not pay much attention to portraying herself on any other SNS besides Facebook. Without incorporating Chinese elements, the only related attempt she has done is replacing her previous cartoon profile pictures with real-life ones due to the concern of college applications. Like the aforementioned discussion on task-oriented social media use, Vivian probably indicates a general philosophy behind why our interviewees heed ethnic identity to a less degree:

> "I just upload some regular photos. Because I think Facebook is only a platform used for chatting, and sharing my life stories with my friends. I don't need to get those Chinese stuffs on purpose. And all my Facebook friends know I'm Chinese, and they know me quite well, why should I'm bothered with these Chinese things?"

Therefore, we observe the bifurcated attitudes or approaches that Chinese-American youths' hold towards Asian stereotype based on their depictions of ethnic identity on Facebook: to one end, a small portion of our interviewees have implemented online depiction of Chinese ethnicity through their Facebook profiles; to the other end, the majority of our interviewees barely have had the motivation or intuitive to decorate their online profiles with Chinese elements. This finding, however, cannot be fully understood just based on their own efforts or disregards. Here emerges the necessity of looking into the social group (i.e. ethnic group and community) they are currently involved in, which requires attention paid to "the others" rather than "the selves". Alternatively, for this concern, we assume their perceptions of and reactions to

stereotype-related information that post up on SNSs by others outweigh their own efforts about ethnic identity on SNSs, and we will discuss it in the following part.

Do Asian stereotypes matter on SNSs?

Regarding discussions centered on stereotype and SNS, there surfaces an intersection of both strands. We may suggest not only the general Asian stereotypes (i.e., model minority and perpetual foreign) can be reproduced on SNS and perceivable to Chinese-American youth, but also the intra-ethnic difference can prompt different reactions to online presence of stereotype.

Interestingly, their responses somewhat echo with this assumption, but challenge it at the same time. Here we revisit the major aspects of stereotype argued above. First, the conventional understandings of Asian stereotype are still visible to Chinese-American youth on SNS. Sam confirms that those "geeky" and "nerdy" depictions of his ethnic cohort do exist, but he personally downplays their influences with ease:

> "About Chinese people? They are not like serious stuff. One time I posted up an article about how Chinese sort of fall behind American high schoolers. Like we must get our students to work harder, but that's a joke about stereotype."

While such pieces of information are more propagated and amplified on Tumblr, and Isabella felt uncomfortable about this situation:

> "I think racially, first of all Tumblr is like other liberal place, but still, it's very weird about Asian. You can't ever joke about any other race but you can joke about Asians. Because people think Asian do not really care about it, and like sometimes I don't even care. I sort distance myself from those jokes, sometimes I don't take it personally. But Asians like people they are making fun of them because the stereotypes for Asian are necessarily negative. People think Asians are very smart and successful, but they think as long as it's a positive thing you

> are allowed to assume that stereotype. It's also very stressful because sometimes I'm not successful and I'm not very good at math".

For the most of Chinese-born teenagers, they perceive less about Asian stereotypes on SNS. Vivian has not stumbled upon any specific information pertinent to those images. Anna, being slightly different, has a few experiences regarding that issue but intends to not take it seriously because "I think there are [stereotypical depictions], but those are kind of stuffs that make fun of Chinese people or China…they are very very rare".

Second, the bilingualism stereotype does not stretch itself to cloud SNS language pattern. Admittedly, what language (i.e., English and Chinese) they choose or prefer for SNS use is largely congruent with their language habits in real lives. While the online language is less associated with the serious topics (i.e., academic performance and social networking) troubling them in offline contexts. So they are faced with less exterior anticipation or pressure but rendered more flexibility and autonomy to conduct online interactions in the other less known language. Cathy explains how she inputs Chinese, and what are the specific online situations for using English or Chinese:

> "I know how to type Mandarin, but I need zhuyin. On my phone I can type Chinese 'cause there is the keypad. Also I know how to use pinyin, but I'm not good at that. So I do type Chinese…[for language use] most time just English. Everyone understands English… If I know someone can't speak English or if there is some slang, so you just have to type Chinese."

Even for Chinese-born youth who are frustrated with using English in offline contexts like school, this problem is not that palpable on SNS as Vivian argues about her online language use:

> "Both Chinese and English I use on SNS…[I use them] half and half. Because when I chat with some of my Chinese friends, they like mixing Chinese with English from time to time. Also I just use English to chat with my American friends."

Third, other than their disregarding attitude, there is no solid evidence to convincingly indicate how Chinese-American youth respond to or interpret online Asian stereotypes. Nor there is anything about how they put efforts to mitigate disadvantaged images or propagate desired ones on SNSs. Anna ascribes these absences to a problematic situation she cannot deal with:

> "I don't think it's necessary to argue or dispute about those [stereotypical] stuffs with Americans. Because even I state my ideas they are not inclined to believe, and that really irritates me a lot…That's not to say Americans won't change, but it's extremely difficult. Because everyone surrounding me holds the same idea, and there is no other people can stand out to argue an opposite ideas that challenge them as what I can do. So even though I say no, not any of them will support me."

Therefore, we might be able to argue SNSs can convey the online presence of Asian stereotype as we suggest. However, Chinese-American youth on SNS do not necessarily continue with their offline performances regarding Asian stereotypes. Either the Chinese-born or the American-born becomes less inclined to touch on or project that issue on their SNS profiles or get it tackled via their SNS interactions.

This offline/online disjuncture further drives us to map out possible reasons behind it. On the one hand, SNS, especially Facebook, is probably not the cyberspace that foregrounds individual exposures to Asian stereotype. Although Tumblr conveys the presences of racial jokes that centered on Asians, to our interviewees they barely incite something perceivably related to serious discussions on Asian stereotype but just fun.

That is not to deny the potential of SNS that enables Chinese-American youth to showcase the truth, or vent their disagreement or disputation about Asian stereotypes. Actually, functions and services centered on impression management and friendship performance can be leveraged by youth to express their opinions. But most materials that incur youth perceptions of stereotype are not the original contents on SNS; instead they are reposted from other online sources, and the volume of them is quite meager. For instance, Cathy pinpoints that so far she has only encountered a few videos about Asian stereotype on SNS are traced back to video sites like Youtube[23].

Coupled with that, youth usually employ a task-oriented view to adopt SNSs. In general, as how Ito et al. (2010) claim, youth's interaction with various digital technologies can be summarized into two participatory causes: the *interest-driven* and the *friendship-driven*. Based on that, youths demonstrate an upward trajectory of participatory genre which contains the "hanging out", the "messing around", and the "geeking out" phases (see Ito et al., 2010). For SNSs, the bottom level of hanging out corresponds to youth basic intentions that to get together for chatting and sharing. While this level concurs with youths' desires of using SNSs to a large extent, because they expect no more from those platforms than satisfying basic socializing purposes. In other words, some SNSs, such as Facebook, are not functional platforms for them to plunge into discussions about Asian stereotypes. If that is necessary, they otherwise prefer more deliberate cyberspaces like personal blog as what Cathy suggested:

[23] In this study, Youtube is not included under the umbrella of SNS.

> "But when I strongly feel about it, I'll post it on my blog… Because it's too casual on Facebook, people who read my blog would take me seriously. But on Facebook everything was just like, you scroll".

On the other hand, the virtual environment of certain SNSs tend to socially constrain youth self-agency of online expression rather than the empowerments mentioned above. This concern strikingly directs to youth experience on Facebook, where their online friend lists are usually the virtual versions of offline social networks. Likewise, despite the anonymous environment of Tumblr, teenagers can realize the contents post on Tumblr which are integrated into their social life under offline circumstances. In this vein, themselves or their friends barely attempt to raise attention towards Asian stereotypes. These images are mostly considered as racially/ethnically sensitive topics, which can potentially impede and undermine both their on- and offline socializations. So for Chinese-American youth, such socially shaped tensions eventually result in an ostensible "colorblind" environment of SNS as how Sam wraps up his interview:

> "I feel like when think about how we use social networking sites, I don't think people really care if you are Chinese, or if you are white, you are black or whatever. They really see what you are, so race is not much of identity other than like "I am Chinese". Sometimes I face those stereotypes that Chinese people get mad, and occasionally people say stuffs like that. Otherwise it should not be the part of problem very often."

Concluding Remarks

This chapter begins with examining the historical discourses of Asian stereotypes, and arguing a retooled approach of how we can correctly realize the relations between

Chinese-American youth and Asian stereotypes. Here the intra-ethnic difference is underscored due to the coexistence of American-born and Chinese-born groups, and this brings in a complicated image about Asian stereotypes that consists of both commonalities and divergences. For the commonalities, both the American-born and the Chinese-born teenagers do not bear a high proficiency of bilingualism, or an obvious demonstration of behaviors and opinions against the Asian stereotypes in their daily lives. For the divergences, from person to person, our interviewees have personal interpretations of how contemporary Chinese-American youth cling to the longtime established Asian stereotypes. Besides, the earlier they immigrated to (or born in) the U.S., the higher possibility of exposure to the Asian stereotypes they can have.

More importantly, these findings do not lead to an exact counterpart of this complicated image on SNSs as we initially speculate. The features of those robust platforms (i.e., Facebook and Tumblr) can provide a conjuncture of virtuality and reality, meanwhile rendering self-disclosure on SNS with great flexibilities. However, we do not figure out any relations between their perceived ethnic identity depictions and the Asian stereotypes, but nonetheless conclude a different pattern of how Chinese-American youth respond to Asian stereotypes on SNSs. On SNSs, in general, they can still observe online portrays of Asian stereotype, whereas they are more inclined to disregard, or just take fun out of these contents in light of their "joking" attributes. This approach is mostly ascribed to the features of SNSs which circumscribe teenagers' reaction to the Asian stereotypes, as well as their online networking efforts on Facebook and Tumblr that interact with their real-life social circles.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Returning to the basic tone of our discussion—the intraethnic variations that are associated with demographic overtones of new second generation—given the interviews done so far, we are probably able to tease out the interplay between assimilation, SNS and racial stereotype for each generation cluster of Chinese-American youth.

Obviously, the American-born group (2.0ers) faces the easiest challenge in being integrated into American mainstream society. Their families' solid SES, liberal cultural sphere at home, and concrete community (church) support have cooperatively facilitated our interviewees' adaption process that already resulted in a fully-cultivated frame of mind for "being American, behaving American". This desirable outcome then carves the preferred technological and sociological frameworks for SNS use, wherein they demonstrate active engagements in networking under both virtual and real-life circumstances, albeit critiques on possible addictions that brought by. On the other hand, their longtime experience of being embedded into American society augments the perceptions of Asian stereotypes, which also vibrates on SNS in different ways and thus yields differentiated resolutions than those in reality. In brief, the major form of Asian stereotypes on SNSs is racial joke in terms of comics that prevail on Tumblr. Accordingly, these teenagers either conceive of the incapacity to alter the tide of stereotyping Asians online, or do not take these images seriously but just for fun.

The generations of 1.75ers and 1.5ers, to a large extent, resemble what the American-born group presents yet along with nuances in each thread of this course, ranging from the family's SES to the personal opinions regarding the Asian stereotypes on SNSs. The 1.25ers give a rise to their profound connection with China. This rooted sociocultural relation nevertheless provokes a tougher environment for assimilation,

causing another set of family and community interactions to accommodate their distinctive immigrant experience. In this context, Asian stereotypes remain unobvious given their early stage of assimilation. Thus their SNS use caters to assimilation needs rather than opening new windows for stereotype debates, but meanwhile reveals more diversity that continuing with the Chinese platforms to maintain networks back to homeland.

To be honest, at best the above analysis leads to a preliminary comprehension about the relationship between SNS and Chinese-American youth with respect to specific social contexts, let alone exhausting the discussions on assimilation, SNS use, and Asian stereotype due to several methodology limitations. At the baseline, the sum of 10 participants is too meager to offer substantial ground for summarizing tangible trends, particularly for 1.5ers and 1.25ers. A large number (more than 30) of interviewees will not only bring about a better display of variations in qualitative information and data, but also a wider spectrum of social class since our interviewees can be monolithically categorized into just one or two class strands. Regarding the discourse of digital divide, participants from lower class are integral to a comprehensive examination. The overrepresentation of teenagers from middle or low-middle class in this study might cloud others who are economically disadvantaged and socioculturally marginalized. And it is important to glean parents' ideas to impartially measure children's performance in the family dynamic. For instance, we notice the use gap on social media between our interviewees and their parents, however we are unable to articulate this form of digital divide since we did not interview parents for that concern. In addition, online observations should be conducted in tandem with face-to-face interviews. The direct

scrutiny over their SNS profiles probably offer an appropriate angle to capture significant cues which cannot be told from interviews. For example, by observing our interviewees' Facebook profiles we might obtain a clear-cut apprehension of their use trajectory and details on Facebook.

Besides, we pinpoint two uncovered (or unreachable) issues to inspire future studies dedicated to this field. First, we discuss racial/ethnic stereotype on SNS without mapping out the cultural flows within the online circle of Chinese-American youth. Their creative digital skills and cultural fusions that are shown on social media are not fully illustrated. Such an absence might incites the underestimations of their agency and autonomy about leveraging social media over various needs. Second, without vertical (older or younger Chinese-American teenagers living in Austin) and horizontal (Chinese-American youth living in other parts of U.S.) comparisons, some findings might lapse into ad hoc results and drains the capacity to deduct convincing generalizations about the relationship between social media and Chinese-American youth.

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