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Identity Work of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders on Reddit: Traversals of Deliberation, Moderation, and Decolonization

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Abstract

Marginalized groups experience issues in managing their identities for a variety of reasons, and online spaces afford them the opportunity to make sense of and revise their intersectional identities. One such group is Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs), who are at the receiving end of stereotypes that often manifest in inaccurate public perceptions. The dissertation consists of three empirical studies that disentangle how AAPIs construct and express their identity in online communities within Reddit:

1. The first study examines how users engage in an online community through a deliberation lens to understand the extent to which Reddit supports identity work as a deliberative process. Through a content analysis of 4,406 Reddit comments collected during the 2016 US Presidential Election, I discuss how the expression of identity, and thereby solidarity, in a politicized online setting may lead to a social movement.

2. The second study uncovers how moderators on Reddit shape the norms of their subreddit through the analytic lens of emotional labor. I conduct interviews with 21 moderators who facilitate identity work discourse in AAPI subreddits, present a thematic analysis of their moderation practices, offer recommendations for improving moderation in online communities centered around identity work, and discuss implications of emotional labor in the design of Reddit and similar platforms.

3. The third study examines marginalization through the analytic framework of decolonization, uncovering the threats and tactics that AAPI redditors encounter and employ to decolonize their collective identity. I find that moderators of AAPI subreddits develop collective resilience within their online communities by reclaiming space to confront brigade invasion, recording collective memory to circumvent systemic erasure, and revising cultural narratives to deconstruct colonial mentality. I discuss how algorithmic configurations within sociotechnical systems reaffirm existing hegemonic values and describe ways in which redditors may work toward resistance.

These three studies are woven together to uncover ways in which AAPIs negotiate collective action in the context of online identity work.

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To my dear parents
Who planted and watered seeds
For lifelong learning

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Introduction

1.1 Background and Motivation

Marginalization is the process of excluding a particular group of people to the periphery of society by denying them of their voice, identity, or place in it (Sibley, 2002; Trudeau and McMorran, 2011). People with marginalized identities have difficulty making sense of and managing their identities, particularly when systemic structures prevent their ability to find social and socioeconomic support. In the US context, race is one of many ways in which American society is categorized, and people of color continue to live on the margins as they face certain sets of challenges that disproportionately affect their communities. For example, African American communities in the US have been the subject of structural inequalities for centuries—that is, our society has relegated black communities to the margins. Existing systems, such as the criminal justice system, banking institutions, and educational systems, are designed without them in mind, and even reinforce systemic biases (Artz and Murphy, 2000; Omi and Winant, 2014).

Whereas African American and other marginalized communities are impacted by systemic biases, this dissertation focuses on one specific community—Asian Americas and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs). Once relegated to narratives of erasure (the removal of recorded history) and exclusion (the restriction of participation), AAPIs are becoming a more visible and self-organized collective in the fabric of American society. For example, AAPIs have been relegated as "perpetual foreigners" and "Orientals" in America, and similar xenophobic stereotypes influenced how systemic biases impact AAPI identity—concepts I will deconstruct later in the dissertation.

While bias is often perceived as a social issue, this dissertation builds on discourse which sheds light on how biases also creep into sociotechnical systems (Bozdag, 2013; DeVito et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2015; Lustig and Nardi, 2015; Rader and Gray, 2015). Here, we adopt a sociotechnical perspective, which means that our social world is influenced by technology, and technology influences our social world. In this view, much in the way in which societal structures are produced by people, technical systems are also designed and developed by people—people have their own values and biases, and whether explicitly or implicitly, these values and biases find their ways into the technologies we use everyday for work, social life, and more (Bozdag, 2013). As such, scholarship has found that technical systems can serve to reinforce systemic biases (Lee et al., 2015; Lustig and Nardi, 2015), which can have impact on people's daily lives (DeVito et al., 2017; Rader and Gray, 2015).

Whereas technology can reinforce biases, it can also serve as a means through which people build the capacity to overcome issues that plague them. In returning to AAPIs, this dissertation's primary contribution is in exploring the role technology has played in their narrative of building resilience, that is, their ability to cope and bounce back (Mark and Semaan, 2008) from the conditions that perpetuate to their marginalization in the US. As the advent of the internet made their ability to organize across communities more effective and widespread, marginalized identities like AAPIs overcome systemic

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oppression by reclaiming their power and agency through acts of solidarity.

Online platforms such as Reddit afford AAPIs the opportunity to engage in identity work—a process through which people manage and revise their identities. In this dissertation, I focus on identity work through the narrative aspect of resilience. I foreground the people who are using these platforms and how they build resilience and solidarity in revising their identities; how people build resilience in the technical systems they are using—that is, how they generate stability in these spaces—so that identity work can happen; and how people are working to decolonize their identities, or in other words, build an identity that is their own.

The studies contained within this dissertation explore how the use of sociotechnical platforms contribute to the identity work of AAPIs, weaving together a shared theme of traversal through their social interactions within online communities. My dissertation locates cases of AAPI identity work within three contexts—deliberation, moderation, and decolonization—in order to propose a more useful and nuanced understanding of the ways in which racial projects can be embedded within social computing. As AAPIs navigate digital frontiers and the publics associated with their virtual journeys, they begin to make sense of their individual selves and collective place within the American racial imaginary.

In solidarity with scholars of color who study race to advance scholarship for communities who otherwise live and exist on the margins, I was motivated to conduct fieldwork that gave voice and agency to my own community, which is AAPI. In the words of Vo (2000), "studying one's own racial group may represent a more equitable relation of power since it displaces the usual racial hierarchy, but ultimately the researcher is still in a position of authority to control the interpretation, authority, and presentation of the data." Having grown up with and alongside the internet, I sought to understand the effects of digital transformation within online communities, deeply captivated by the social networks,

governance, and infrastructure that underpin them.

1.2 Problem Statement

The cultural journeys of AAPIs have been explored in multi-sited ethnographic works, such as Manalansan's anthology of ethnographic explorations (Manalansan, 2000), revealing possibilities for the design, execution, and articulation of researching and writing about AAPI communities. Such patchwork makes for a vivid tapestry; Manalansan's anthology bridges the conceptions of marriage and gender in the Korean American community (Park, 2000), the making of biopolitical subjects within Cambodian refugees (Ong, 1995), investigations into Chinese diaspora identities (Louie, 2000), political forays of Filipino beauty pageants (Bonus, 2000), and other fascinating works that illustrate the richness and complexity of AAPI identity. While these studies engaged with the landscape of AAPIs prior to the turn of the 21st century, an opportunity now exists to extend such ethnographic projects to the digital domain of life online.

Recent social computing scholarship explores identity work—the process through which people make sense of or re-construct their identities—by a number of groups on social media, including those undergoing gender transitions (Haimson et al., 2015), and underprivileged college students (Morioka et al., 2016). AAPI youth lead all other racial groups in technology use and proficiency (Perrin, 2016), but only a couple of studies illustrate how AAPIs use technology for identity work (Dich, 2012; Rao and Hemphill, 2016). Ethnically similar yet culturally distinct from their transnational origins on the Asian continent, AAPIs are the fastest growing immigrant group in the United States. And yet despite their staggering growth, AAPIs are still one of the most understudied racial groups in the nation (Coloma, 2006; Tsai and Kong, 2012).

AAPIs engaged in online identity work may be doing so to redefine their public facing identity and challenge existing stereotypes. For example, in contrast to other marginalized racial groups in the United States, AAPIs are perceived as the "model minority" with a monolithic identity. In reality, they are composed of different ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, political ideologies, and immigrant histories. Identity work in collectivist cultures can get increasingly complex with respect to AAPIs, as their identities have formed, over time, in a highly politicized and ever-evolving sociohistorical context.

1.3   Research Questions

This research, and the questions I generated to guide my inquiry, represent my motivation to understand, more broadly, how people with marginalized identities use online platforms to engage in identity work, and what the impact of identity work is on the lived experiences of those who are at the margins. In an effort to explore these larger themes, I believed it was imperative to understand how people use technical systems, but to also situate that work more broadly in the structural underpinning of society, and as such, my dissertation looks at multiple intersections of resilience and how people build resilience—that is, how people build solidarity as a community, how people build resilience into the systems they are using, and what the impact of this work is, more broadly, on their identities. The following six research questions, partitioned into three separate studies, charted the course of exploration and inquiry for the dissertation.

Study 1. Identity work as deliberation: AAPI political discourse in the 2016 US Presidential Election.

- **RQ1**. How are AAPIs constructing and expressing their identity in online communities?

- **RQ2**. What factors affect AAPI participation in online identity work?

Study 2. Identity work within moderation: Emotional labor in sustaining online communities.

- **RQ3**. How do online moderators shape the identity work of online communities?

- **RQ4**. What emerging properties collectively sustain an online community in AAPI contexts?

Study 3. Identity work for decolonization: Collective resilience of AAPI communities on Reddit.

- **RQ5**. How do sociotechnical systems contour and contribute to the identity work of marginalized communities?

- **RQ6**. How are AAPIs using technology to decolonize their collective identity?

This dissertation by no means seeks to become the authoritative voice of the lived experiences of all Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, but rather provides a collection of focused cases for understanding how AAPIs engage in identity work online.

1.4   Approach

Utilizing a multi-staged qualitative approach following the *sequential transformative design strategy* (Creswell, 2003), this work aims to expand research in identity work in three distinct but mutually informing ways. I seek to understand how AAPIs engage in identity work online, and will frame my dissertation around three contexts of identity work—deliberation, moderation, and decolonization—using different researching methods to dive deeply into the case of study. In doing so, I hope to deepen conceptual frames of identity work that may be complicated by marginality.

In contrast to the traditional monologue of the doctoral thesis format, a compilation of three staged empirical investigations makes the multi-essay format a more desirable choice to help me build an academic record in the form of rigorously peer-reviewed publications.

To answer RQ1 and RQ2, I sought online spaces where AAPI identity work is happening, which is important considering in many cases, AAPIs are unable to do so in the physical world or in online communities that are designed for general use for fear of harassment, or even harm. As such, I identified online community spaces created specifically for AAPI identity work, such as on Reddit. For the first study, I isolated Reddit comments collected during the 2016 US Presidential Election as a case study through which I could more clearly interrogate emergent identity work discourse. Discourse regarding presidential elections is relevant because it is a moment of disruption similar to natural disasters or other forms of unique events. Presidential elections serve as opportunities through which people reflect on themselves and their identities (Dosono and Semaan, 2018). For this case, I employed an inductive content analysis to label variables and their relationships within the data corpus (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Coding was iterative with the first phase focused on an open coding process that established tentative labels for representing emerging themes from the data. The second round of comment coding proceeded into an axial coding process for identifying relationships among open codes (Saldaña, 2015).

To answer RQ3 and RQ4, I contacted moderators of relevant AAPI subreddits for semi-structured interviews. I began each interview by asking the moderator a series of probing questions to obtain an overall understanding of their community and their moderation practices. Utilizing an approach derived from grounded theory, I found emerging patterns through a thematic analysis of qualitative data.

To answer RQ5 and RQ6, I revisited my interview data and applied a critical framework of decolonization to understand how AAPIs were liberating themselves from oppressive, hegemonic forces in both their subreddits and the in-person meetups associated with their online communities. I present the emerging threats to identity work in AAPI subreddits and the tactics that moderators deploy to decolonize their collective identities.

1.5   Relevant Publications

Within the field of human-computer interaction (HCI) are selective venues for research. Proceedings from the Association for Computing Machinery's Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems exceed many journals within HCI in their selectivity, visibility, and impact.

Preliminary results of this dissertation are already published as the following papers in the top venue in my field—the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI):

- Dosono, B., Semaan, B., Hemsley, J. (2017). Exploring AAPI identity online: Political ideology as a factor affecting identity work on Reddit. *Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 2528-2535). ACM.

- Dosono, B., Semaan, B. (2018). Identity work as deliberation: AAPI political discourse in the 2016 US Presidential Election. *Proceedings of the 36th Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems.* ACM.

The following completed paper has been accepted to the Proceedings of the 37th Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems:

- Dosono, B., Semaan, B. (2019). Moderation Practices as Emotional Labor in Sustaining Online Communities: The Case of AAPI Identity Work on Reddit. *Proceedings of the 37th Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems.* ACM.

1.6   Thesis Overview

This dissertation situates Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) as one case for studying online identity work through a collectivist framing, employing a qualitative approach to understand how the discourse and moderation of a related set of online communities contributes to identity work.

Chapter 2 contours the landscape of relevant work at the intersections of human-computer interaction, identity, race, and online communities. We identify missing perspectives in current literature and outline how my dissertation aims to address those gaps.

Chapter 3 describes the qualitative methods we employ, namely content analysis and interviews, to investigate my research questions. We explained how we retrieved 4,406 public comments on Reddit and give a rundown of the interview protocol I conducted with 21 Reddit moderators.

Chapter 4 contributes the idea of identity work as a deliberative process. Using the 2016 US Presidential Election as an exploratory case study, we link identity work as a discursive, political activity where all actors (redditors) involved acquire the means to interpret their understanding of AAPI identity in their own terms and also as a collective. Through this analysis, I found that AAPIs were using Reddit as a space to engage in discourse around their identities—a phenomenon we dubbed "identity work as deliberation."

Chapter 5 examines how moderators shape the identity work of online communities, illuminating the personal costs attributed to emotional labor and its effects on sustaining online communities. We interview moderators of AAPI subreddits and provide a descriptive analysis of their moderation challenges and strategies through the lens of emotional labor.

Chapter 6 analyzes the marginalization of sociotechnical systems through the lens of decolonization. We uncover the threats and tactics that AAPI redditors encounter and employ to decolonize their

collective identity, and describe ways in which redditors build resistance against instantiations of cultural and algorithmic hegemony.

Chapter 7 bookends the dissertation by providing a summary of contributions, personal reflections throughout the research journey, limitations of my studies, and future research directions that we intend to pursue. Additional research materials such as our interview protocol, IRB approval, and study consent forms are located in the appendices.

2

Literature Review

2.1   Conceptualizations of Identity

This chapter presents multiple perspectives of identity scholarship that draw from areas of sociology, psychology, communication, and social computing. We review concepts relevant to identity work and organize the chapter into three parts. The first part of the literature review covers how identity is constructed among individuals and groups, and then articulates how identity is manifested and represented online. The second part of the literature review examines how identities are marginalized within society and lays the groundwork for studying AAPIs as a collective identity positioned at the fringe of America's racial landscape. The third part of the literature review situates the online identity work of AAPIs as a collective group, and discusses collective identity construction as a process that facilitates their understanding of their community at large.

2.1.1 Constructing Identity

The concept of identity is notoriously abstract to study as researchers across disciplines define identity in different ways (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock, 1996; Strauss, 1997; Weigert, 1983). Identity is all-pervasive in contemporary social science, studied across fields like psychology, political science, sociology, and history (Burke and Reitzes, 1981; Hunt and Benford, 1994; Snow, 2001; Snow and Anderson, 1987; Stryker, 1968; Stryker and Burke, 2000; Stryker and Serpe, 1982). According to Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock (1996), "Disciplinary myopia is one reason for this... A great many notions lurk behind the term identity." While the notion of identity can be traced back to the founders of the sociological discipline such as Marx (1867) and Durkheim (1912, 1933), and extended to mid-century theorists like Goffman (1978) and Erikson (1994), scholarship in identity work integrated global perspectives of modernity in the 1990s and 2000s with the works of Giddens (1991) and Castells (2007). In many cases, identity is an individuated construct where it is considered the self-concept people have of themselves; in this dissertation, we focus on collective identity and its formation in the public sphere.

Early sociological work in collective identity has argued that the relationships that arise between individual consciousness take the form of organic solidarity. According to Durkheim (1933), "[societies] are constituted... by a system of different organs, each one of which has a special role and which themselves are formed from differentiated parts." Durkheim reasons that the division of labor is what facilitates a necessary partitioning of the collective consciousness. Marx (1867), in his time, called for members of the working class to develop a class consciousness, or the awareness of one's place in a system of social classes as it relates to the class struggle, to revolt against the capitalist systems that were exploiting them.

The work of Irving Goffman and his seminal texts on the presentation of self (Goffman, 1978),

stigma (Goffman, 2009), and interaction ritual (Goffman, 2005) has greatly influenced the field of

sociology. According to Goffman (1978), identity is constructed in relation to rules and norms in a

social setting. We often draw on these rules and norms as a means through which we manage other

people's impressions of us, and these rules and norms can vary depending on the setting. For example,

the ways in which people act in the privacy of their own homes can differ from how they act in a public

park. Goffman went on to advance the development of symbolic interactionism (Goffman, 2005),

which articulated the development of the self as a construct emerging from interactions. Scholars

have since built on his work in different disciplines, ranging from psychology to communication to

human-computer interaction.

Sociologists have theorized the significance of a collective identity for shaping a social movement

(Castells, 2015; Hunt and Benford, 1994; Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock, 1996; Snow, 2001).

Hunt and Benford (1994), in their analysis of peace and justice movements in the 1980s, posited that

their participants channeled their identities as activities through the mode of storytelling. In doing so,

they define the political playing field and other actors in it by becoming aware, active, committed, and

weary. Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock (1996) extend their work by adding subcultural as a meso layer

between individual and collective identities. While these scholars have articulated identity work as a

group process, they fall short in demarcating boundaries between identity of the self and identity of the

collective.

Snow (2001) provides a conceptual framework for differentiating between personal, social, and

collective identity. His scholarship on identity work among the homeless looked at how people who

lived on the margins of society create identities that create meaning and affirm self-worth (Snow and

Anderson, 1987). He sought to understand, through an objective and empirical lens, 'identity talk'

as a rudimentary form of 'identity work,' which is the "verbal construction and assertion of personal identities" (Snow and Anderson, 1987). He then goes on to describe identity work as "the range of activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept" (Snow and Anderson, 1987).

Scholarship in social psychology draws upon Tajfel's contribution to social identity theory, which explained how individual identity influenced intergroup contexts by defining an individual's own standing in society (Tajfel et al., 1979). Individuals placed themselves and those around them into various social categories. In turn, the process impacted those in the group and the larger structures in which the group operates. Self-categorization theory later emerged from social identity theory to explain the cognitive processes of social identity development, where individuals placed themselves and others into prototypes based on assumed attributes of contrasting groups (Hogg and Terry, 2000). Self-categorization theory described how positive in-group attitudes produced a normative ideology of one's self with in-group members, while also providing a stereotyped view of out-group members. Race as a significant mechanism for self-categorization becomes a factor of social identity by which individuals categorized themselves and others.

Erikson, another notable psychologist, viewed identity as essential and core to a person's essence and community. In his work understanding adolescent youth, Erikson (1994) coined the term "identity crisis" to describe the period of uncertainty and confusion in which a person's sense of identity becomes insecure. He argued that identity crises in transition emerge from the lack of continuity between former and present rules and norms governing interaction.

2.1.2 Constructing Identity, Online

Communication scholars have extended Goffman's dramaturgical work to the public arena of social media. Chief among them, boyd's repertoire of scholarship focuses on how youth use social media in their everyday life. boyd discusses the nuanced practices that teenagers arrange to hang out with their friends in both online and offline settings (boyd, 2014). She discusses "context collapse" within social networking sites, and how teenagers build complex networks that involve different types of audiences. boyd argues that teenagers are now wearier of the type of information they share online as once unconnected friend groups could now overlap. boyd's research on impression management draws largely from Goffman's work on self-presentation, noting that people present different versions of themselves based on their audiences (Goffman, 1978). In today's networked world, social media profiles are an extended presentation of self. Users constantly curate status updates, photo captions, and video snaps that are in line with how they craft their outward image onto others. Describing the self as dramaturgical, Goffman also posits that interactional behavior is scripted. Even in private, backstage communication, instant messages and emails are becoming more deliberate acts of performance than our informal behaviors in the physical world (Goffman, 2005).

HCI scholars have shown how people are increasingly negotiating their online identity with their ICT use Ammari and Schoenebeck (2015); Haimson et al. (2015); Li et al. (2018); Morioka et al. (2016); Semaan et al. (2016). We are focused on identity work in the case of disruption, and such studies have mostly focused on life changes brought on by transition as highlighted in cases of residential moves (Shklovski et al., 2006, 2008a), relationship breakups (Massimi et al., 2012; Sas and Whittaker, 2013), homelessness (Le Dantec and Edwards, 2008; Le Dantec et al., 2011), job loss (Burke and Kraut, 2013), and the transition from high school to college (Cummings et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2012). These

studies highlight how people reconfigure sociotechnical infrastructures in support of transition.

Most connected to our research is the scholarship examining collective identity work online. Crivellaro and Vlachokyriakos focus their discussions on the online public discourse of social movements, which has extended prior work on collective action afforded through social media, particularly through case studies of natural disasters (Huang et al., 2015; Olteanu et al., 2015; Qu et al., 2011; Semaan and Mark, 2011; Shklovski et al., 2008b; Starbird and Palen, 2011) and political movements (Adamic and State, 2015; Al-Ani et al., 2010; Monroy-Hernández et al., 2013; Semaan et al., 2014; Starbird and Palen, 2012; Varnelis and Friedberg, 2008). These studies have focused mostly on technology's role in social movements, such as the 2011 Egyptian Uprising (Starbird and Palen, 2012) and the 2014 Umbrella Movement (Kow et al., 2016), illustrating how crowds express solidarity that sustain larger public discourses. While these studies report on the visible data captured online during newsworthy occurrences, Kow et al. (2016) viewed how undercurrents—what they define as "backstage practices consisting of meaning-making processes, narratives, and situated work"—contribute to sustaining social movements. Kow and colleagues interviewed 16 participants involved with Hong Kong's democracy protests of 2014—also known as the Umbrella Movement—and found that people were appropriating ICTs to coordinate safety, manage tensions, and circumvent authoritative control. Their findings on the undercurrents of social movements call attention to the invisible and often unreported activities that occur on site.

In this dissertation, we are interested in understanding how people, particularly AAPIs, come together online to engage in collective identity work. Members of the AAPI community who engage in online identity work may be doing so to redefine their public facing identity. However, this process can be complex with respect to AAPIs, as their identities have formed, over time, in a highly politicized and ever evolving socio-historical context. For example, AAPIs are collectively perceived as high-income and

well-educated, but in reality, AAPIs are scattered across the spectrum on socioeconomic attainment and civic participation (Hoeffel et al., 2012; Lee, 2015; Ocampo, 2016).

2.1.3 Boundaries of Online Identity Work

In studying collective identity formation, reviewing theories from sociotechnical systems scholarship can unpack how AAPI internet users appropriate the infrastructure of online platforms. Star's work on boundary objects entails interpretive flexibility, which allows for different groups of people to have their own views of how they interpret concepts. Because consensus is based on power, shared understandings allow people to communicate abstractly without details (Leigh Star, 2010). In their prior work, Star and Ruhleder justify infrastructure as a relational concept that emerges for people in practice and is connected to activities and structures (Star and Ruhleder, 1996).

Prior identity scholarship draws upon boundary theory literature to circumscribe particular domains of study (Nippert-Eng, 2008), such as at home or at the workplace. Ashforth and colleagues conceptualized how individuals engage in micro role transitions (such as commuting to and from work) as part of their organizational life, arguing that identity role transitions become less difficult over time as they develop transition scripts and role schemas (Ashforth et al., 2000). In an empirical qualitative interview study of 44 individuals, Knapp and colleagues reported how individual and organizational identity work tactics were created among workers of family-owned businesses to create or reduce social capital (Knapp et al., 2013). While these and similar works investigate the segmentation and integration of identity work across personal and social boundaries, more relevant to this dissertation is the identity work that occurs at the collective level.

Sociotechnical systems, such as social media platforms, are capable of capturing identity work across a

number of groups and subcultures. Each platform comes with its own set of affordances that complicate how people manage the expression and privacy of their identities. For instance, Facebook's terms of service[1] require its users to provide accurate information about themselves, such as the name they use in everyday life. In contrast, sites like Reddit allow for the detachment of its users' online identity from their real identity, as its users are not required to report their real names.[2]

Beyond digital interactions, sociotechnical systems also impact the ways in which members of society collectively organize and act. The internet plays a role in amplifying spontaneous revolts in the form of outrage, and this phenomenon has particularly been explored among youth protesters (Castells, 2015). Castells demonstrated the power of networks that gave rise to movements like the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street. In times of political unrest, the internet provided a platform for debate, a tool for organizing protests, and a vehicle for relaying information. However, not all of the action happened online. Instead, a hybrid public space made of digital social networks and of a newly created urban community was at the heart of the movement, "both as a tool for self-reflection and as a statement of people's power" (Castells, 2015). Castells argues that the multimodality of autonomous communication allowed for citizens to overcome fear by the act of the joining and sharing. In connecting networks of counter-power, protesters weakened the cybernetic system of domination, creating experience out of defiance.

Critics of identity scholarship note that it has evolved into a "stock technical term in sociology" and also refer to identity as a "widespread cultural buzzword," and despite its ubiquitous diffusion, does "not imply agreement on or even a clear understanding of its various meanings" (Weigert, 1983). Some say the abstract nature of identity stems from an absence of theoretical agreement (Gecas, 1982), and call

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[1]https://www.facebook.com/terms.php
[2]https://www.redditinc.com/policies/user-agreement-may-25-2018

for more work to be done "to unpack, codify, apply, and speculatively expand" the concept of identity (Weigert, 1983). In this dissertation, we draw upon Snow's conceptualizations of identity to help establish initial boundaries for discourse situated within personal, social, and collective narrative frames that have the potential to intersect and overlap (Snow and McAdam, 2000).

Additional scholarship in identity work has critically analyzed how identities are constituted and maintained through talk (Hadden and Lester, 1978; Snow and Anderson, 1987); how dress and fashion broadcast identities outwardly (Davis, 1994; Stone, 1990); how identities are performed through the act of storytelling (Gergen and Gergen, 1988); how boundaries of identity are imposed (Nagel, 1994); and how notions of the self can manifest in signs (Perinbanayagam, 1985; Singer, 1980). This collection of literature has mainly considered identity work as an individual activity, which is largely lacking of identity work that happens in groups.

2.2 Identity and Marginalization: The Case of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

2.2.1 Diaspora and Demography

According to a 2017 social and demographic trend report by the Pew Research Center, the Asian population in the United States grew 72% between 2000 and 2015 (from 11.9 million to 20.4 million), which marks the fastest growth rate of any major racial or ethnic group (López et al., 2017). The 2010 US Census estimates that over 17 million AAPIs currently reside in the United States, and that over 80% of the AAPI population come from six countries: China (23%), the Philippines (20%), India (18%), Vietnam (10%), Korea (10%), and Japan (8%) (Hoeffel et al., 2012). The remainder identified

as Other Asian (11%). The census report also showed that the Asian population increased more than four times faster than the total US population and that about 15% of the Asian population reported multiple races. The US federal government commonly appends the term Pacific Islander after Asian American, expanding the scope of the AAPI umbrella to include populations originating from Far East Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and the Pacific Islands. Today, AAPIs are the fastest growing immigrant group in the United States, yet despite their staggering growth, are still one of the most understudied racial groups in the nation (López et al., 2017).

Unpacking the monolith behind the AAPI label illustrates larger disparities that have plagued AAPI subgroups for decades. AAPIs are routinely judged by the model minority myth and the negative role it plays in their identity construction (Chou and Feagin, 2015; Lee, 2015; Wong et al., 1998), when in reality the larger AAPI population is highly diverse. First, although AAPIs are unified under a larger umbrella, their cultures and practices are highly nuanced and unique (Coloma, 2006). Much of the written historical discourse of Asian Americans centers on immigration and citizenship (Lowe, 1996; Volpp, 2005). One of the earliest recorded arrivals of Asians in the US were Filipino sailors who involved with the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade and later settled in Louisiana in the mid-1700s (Okihiro, 2001). In the 1850s, the Chinese migrated to California to work in the goldmines and railroads. Japanese immigrants first arrived in the Pacific Northwest in the 1880s, when Anti-Chinese sentiment grew and created demands for new immigrant labor. In 1898, the United States acquired the Philippines from Spain as a territory at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War, which prompted a wave of Filipino migration to Hawaii and California (Lowe, 1996; Volpp, 2005).

As Asian Americans continued to take on manual jobs for lesser wages than their white counterparts, Anti-Asian resentment accumulated over the early twentieth century. Eventually, a formal organization called the Asiatic Exclusion League applied pressure to Congress to pass legislation (Asiatic Barred Zone

Act of 1917) that prevented the immigration of people of Asian origin. While immigration quotas were eventually lifted (Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965), this pattern of restriction and alienation persisted for the rest of the twentieth century in different contexts, such as the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Pacific Islanders contend with a different past of colonialism, sovereignty, and imperialism in the United States (Hau'Ofa, 1993). Guam, an island in the Pacific Ocean, was acquired as a territory of the US after the Spanish American War, and consequently, natives of Guam became Americans with no political voice during elections and other policy matters. On a similar note, Native Hawaiians became Americans at the turn of the twentieth century without any declaration of war—the Kingdom of Hawaii became a US protectorate after it had been overthrown by the US citizens who resided there. While the sociohistorical migration and statehood contexts of Pacific Islanders differ from their Asian American analogues, their reception in the contiguous US was met with similar experiences of exploitation. In sociological literature, Hau'Ofa critiques a belittling, yet prevailing notion scholars have about Islanders: "in this view, the small island states and territories of the Pacific, that is, all of Polynesia and Micronesia, are much too small, too poorly endowed with resources, and too isolated from the centers of economic growth for their inhabitants ever to be able to rise above their present condition of dependence on the largesse of wealthy nations" (Hau'Ofa, 1993).

Beyond issues of immigration, members of the AAPI population have highly variable levels of both income and educational attainment that remain largely invisible when looking at AAPIs in aggregate (Holland and Palaniappan, 2012). For example, while the majority of East Asian ethnic groups report relatively higher median household incomes in the US Census, those with the lowest median household incomes are Southeast Asian groups with large refugee populations that have been recently resettled in America. Thus, the myth that AAPIs are well off and do not need assistance may actually do more harm

than good (Chou and Feagin, 2015; Lee, 2015; Wong et al., 1998).

America's racial outlook will continue to diversify over time (Passel and Cohn, 2011), so it is becoming increasingly more important to retrieve, analyze, and share data on AAPIs to address masked needs within AAPI subgroups. For instance, a study published by the National Institutes of Health recommended that national surveys should oversample AAPIs to ensure representation across the six largest subgroups of the country of origin, and that sampling should recognize the wide range of socioeconomic status and demographic characteristics among AAPI subgroups (Holland and Palaniappan, 2012). Such disaggregation of data matters because AAPIs boast highly variable levels of both income and educational attainment that remain largely invisible in aggregated data. While AAPIs have become historical targets of discrimination, they also find themselves situated in an ever evolving and increasingly complex racial environment that extends to online spaces. AAPIs may be going online to engage in identity work in service of their community, and this dissertation seeks to understand the motivations behind this phenomenon.

2.2.2   Unpacking the AAPI Monolith

According to a 2012 social trend study conducted by the Pew Research Center, the majority of the Asian American and Pacific Islander population is comprised of first generation (59%) and second generation (41%) immigrants (Social and Trends, 2012). Hoeffel et al. (2012)'s census report show that the Asian population increased more than four times faster than the total US population, and that about 15 percent of the Asian population reported multiple races. Another Pew Research Center study showed that undocumented AAPI immigrants account for about 10-11% of the US undocumented population and about 13-15% of the Asian immigrant population during the 2000-2010 decade (Passel

and Cohn, 2011).

As numbers show that AAPIs are mostly an immigrant force, their attitudes have been molded by their Asian heritages from across the Pacific and continue to maintain connections with their homelands. While they continue to hold onto collective memories, languages, and customs of their former nation, their new place in the racial imaginary of America makes them an interesting case of study. For example, while empirical studies have looked at technology use from a sinocentric perspective (Oreglia et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2007; Williams et al., 2014), that is, referring to the ethnocentrism of Chinese society and culture, scant research has looked at how Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders within North America use technology in their everyday lives.

As a result of their perceived monolithic identity and unique to other historically marginalized groups, AAPIs contend with battling the model minority stereotype—the cultural expectation that AAPIs are exemplary achievers and attain a higher degree of education and socioeconomic status in contrast to other minority groups (Lee, 2015). While AAPIs are often praised as math geniuses and spelling bee champions, they are also simultaneously *othered*—that is, excluded or differentiated from mainstream groups, e.g. perceived as terrorists, objectified as having sexual fetishes, and exploited as cheap laborers by the dominant culture (Lee, 2015).

The model minority myth also suggests that other racial groups that have not accomplished the same as AAPIs are seemingly at fault for their own position in society. Thus, the myth has also been used as a hegemonic device—that is, for protecting the interest of the white ruling or dominant class by pitting AAPIs against other minorities, such as affirmative action cases in higher education admissions processes (Wong and Halgin, 2006) and hiring practices in the workplace (Bell et al., 1997), contributing to the exclusion of AAPIs in leading positions within government, corporations, and the entertainment industry (Aoki, 1996; Wong et al., 1998; Woo, 2000). This leads to questioning how AAPIs come

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together to negotiate and reconstruct their collective identity, online.

Researchers have cautioned the use of "Asian American" as a broad label for referring to diverse ethnic groups within the AAPI umbrella due to the way it collapses ethnic identities. For example, in sociolinguistic research, rigorous coding for ethnic identity across retrieved corpora will allow for more comparable work as well as increased sharing of similar data sets (Hall-Lew and Wong, 2014). Public health experts also warn the use of the term 'Asian' as a supplement to more precise terms pertaining to regional or religious groupings (Bhopal et al., 1991). Disentangling the heterogeneity of less-studied sub-groups, such as Pacific Islanders, South Asians, and Southeast Asians can disrupt the monolithic perception of AAPIs (Coloma, 2006). The disparities that lie within the ethnic variance of the AAPI umbrella is not to be understated, and recognizing each ethnicity in its own terms is necessary for its advancement.

Statistics from a 2014 report by the Center for American Progress illustrate significant differences among the inner diversity of AAPIs across issues salient to English proficiency, education, socioeconomic status, and poverty (Ramakrishnan and Ahmad, 2014). There is considerable variation in English proficiency by nation of origin, with Indian Americans (22%), and Filipino Americans (22%) possessing higher rates of proficiency compared to their Vietnamese Americans (53%), Chinese Americans (46%), and Korean Americans (45%) counterparts who possess relatively lower rates of proficiency (Ramakrishnan and Ahmad, 2014). Southeast Asian American groups report some of the lowest educational attainment levels; while 30% of whites have a bachelor's degree or higher, fewer than 15% of Cambodians, Hmong, and Laotians have a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 72% of Indian Americans, 57% of Sri Lankans, and 53% of Chinese Americans (Ramakrishnan and Ahmad, 2014). There also exists noticeable occupational diversity across ethnic groups: South Asian ethnic groups like Indian Americans (66%) and Sri Lankan Americans (62%) rank among the highest

AAPIs to find employment in management and professional occupations, whereas Southeast Asians like Vietnamese Americans (26%) and Thai Americans (29%) are disproportionately more likely to work in service occupations (Ramakrishnan and Ahmad, 2014). In viewing the median household income (in 2012 inflation-adjusted US dollars) as one of numerous metrics of socioeconomic status, Indian Americans ($95,000) and Filipino Americans ($80,000) rank highest earners among all ethnic groups, whereas Samoan Americans ($55,950), Cambodian Americans ($53,700), Hmong Americans ($52,500), and Bangladeshi Americans ($46,950) among the lowest (Ramakrishnan and Ahmad, 2014). For many of the outcomes reported by Ramakrishnan and Ahmad (2014)'s analyses of public use microdata samples from the Bureau of the Census, disaggregated data by separate ethnic groups either does not exist or is only made possible through combining several years of data, rendering such data sets less current and less comparable to data available for the rest of the US population. This important limitation prevents rigorous quantitative approaches to studying specific ethnic groups.

While numerous groups within the AAPI community may be studied in greater detail, the scope of this dissertation focuses on studying the collective pan-ethnic identification of AAPIs. As a collective coalition, the "Asian American" label was a pan-ethnic identity that was chosen, rather than given, by its community (Maeda, 2012). This radical label of self-determination advocated for a movement of racial equality, social justice, and political empowerment (Wei, 2010). Academic scholars in ethnic studies, such as Espiritu (1992), direct attention "to the importance of pan-Asian solidarities in countering racial prejudice and violence in which perpetrators fail to differentiate between types of Asian ethnicity," which affirm the need to study collective identities in relation to their shared experience of oppression and marginalization in North America. Interconnected and salient histories of immigration, labor exploitation, and racism have, over time, strengthened a collective consciousness among AAPI activists that is becoming even more amplified in new forms of media. The analytic approach of collective identity

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work intentionally prioritizes the need to study a pan-ethnic identification over separate ethnic identities, as research in collective identity work may illustrate the extent to which a whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Thus, in the context of networked publics, studying AAPIs as a powerfully political construct and strategically unifying label provide an appropriate framework to observe the emergence of collective identities in sociotechnical platforms.

2.2.3   AAPI Identity Work on Reddit

AAPIs often come from cultures that function in "high context," that is, cultures that uphold a system of values that prioritize the identity of the group over the identity of the individual (Hall, 1989). High context societies, such as those in the East, are hierarchical in nature and emphasize honor and respect-based practices that maintain positive impressions both within interpersonal networks and outwardly in public (Hall, 1989; Semaan et al., 2017a). This type of lifestyle restricts how people who live in high context societies speak and interact with one another. While low context societies, such as the United States, embrace values of openness and free speech, AAPIs often retain their cultural values even after immigrating to Western countries (Chan, 2005). In doing so, AAPIs have struggled in their adjustment from collectivist to individualistic norms, as they are less likely to voice outward the problems they face in school and in the workplace and instead keep and internalize such problems to themselves. AAPIs come from cultures that restrict being outspoken as any negative impression they create is viewed as a direct reflection of their family. However, online communities like Reddit allow AAPIs to create anonymous profiles that are detached from their identity in the real world.

Identity is a multi-faceted construct in that people can have several identities (Butler, 2006). For example, people often identify with a certain race or ethnic group, or they may identify with other

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affiliations, such as where they work or go to school. When viewed as a social construction, identity is a moving target, and members of a particular group may not agree with public perceptions of themselves. For example, AAPIs are often viewed as a model minority (Lee, 2015), though members of this group do not always understand, agree, nor adhere to the public norms that are associated with them. To make sense of or change one's identity, people often engage in identity work (Snow and McAdam, 2000). This process can be collaborative, as people work together to make sense of identity for themselves, or as a way to reconstruct collective identity in an effort to change public perceptions.

Studies of identity work have explored the use of social media by a number of groups, including those undergoing gender transitions (Haimson et al., 2015), first-time fathers entering parenthood (Ammari and Schoenebeck, 2015), and disadvantaged students navigating college (Morioka et al., 2016) to name a few. Beyond scholarship focusing on individual identity work, Schwalbe examined subcultural identity work as a group process, suggesting how identity work can be understood as part of a process of cultural struggle (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock, 1996). He describes subcultures as *the creation of a body of meanings, signs, and signifying practices that are distinct from, yet linked to, a larger culture* (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock, 1996). AAPIs have subcultures of their own that can be divided further into regional ethnicities (i.e., South Asians, East Asians, Pacific Islanders), special interests (i.e., video game hobbyists, luxury car collectors, music festival enthusiasts), issues of concern (i.e., LGBT activism, parenting, affirmative action), and more.

AAPI youth lead all other racial groups in technology use and proficiency (Perrin, 2016), but to our knowledge, only a couple of preliminary studies illustrate how AAPIs use technology for identity work. Khoir et al. (2014) employed a photovoice method in a community-based participatory research pilot study to illustrate the information behavior of Asian immigrants in South Australia, arguing that a multicultural society allows immigrants to maintain their cultural identities. Rao and Hemphill (2016)

conducted a content analysis on one Facebook group used by Asian American immigrants in Chicago, IL and found that its immigrant users depend on social media for both cultural identity work and professional network development. Both of these studies are limited to only a subset of specific ethnic groups within localized geographic areas and their preliminary results fall short of a rigorous analysis of AAPI identity work as a whole.

A review of intersectional identity in HCI literature demonstrated that only 1% of CHI conference proceedings from 1981-2016 archived in the ACM Digital Library used keyword classifiers that centered around identities of gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, or class (Schlesinger et al., 2017), and no proceeding used keywords of "Asian American" or "Pacific Islander," signifying a gap in identity work within published social computing research. Members of the AAPI community who engage in identity work online may be doing so to redefine their public facing identity. However, this process can be complex with respect to AAPIs, as their identities have formed, over time, in a highly politicized and ever-evolving socio-historical context. For example, AAPIs are collectively perceived as high-income and well-educated, but in reality, AAPIs are scattered across the spectrum on socioeconomic attainment and civic participation (Chou and Feagin, 2015).

Snow situates identity work in the grander literature of new social movements, explaining how personal, social, and collective identities overlap and interact (Snow, 2001; Snow and McAdam, 2000). He defines personal identity as *self-designations and self-attributions regarded as personally distinctive by the actor*; social identity as *categorical attributes or roles imputed to others in an attempt to situate them in social space*; and collective identity as *a shared sense of "one-ness" or "we-ness" anchored in real or imagined shared attributes and experiences among those who comprise the collectivity and in relation or contrast to one or more actual or imagined sets of 'others.'*

Due to its malleability, Reddit can support identity work at the personal, social, and collective levels.

On the personal level, a redditor may comment on different threads that are relevant to her personal interests, which allows her to curate her Reddit profile with a list of commented topics that she can display outwardly to others. On the social level, a redditor may join a plethora of niche subreddit communities where she can contribute advice or answer questions that other redditors have concerning a shared affinity. On the collective level, a redditor may decide to create a brand new subreddit to spark dialogue or plan concerted efforts on organizing around a specific cause. Whereas we believe Reddit can support identity work, we do not understand the social dynamics underlying the identity work being engaged in by AAPIs on Reddit.

2.3   Identity Construction in Sociotechnical Systems

2.3.1   Virtuality and Anonymity

Social media platforms invite the adhoc formation of a public sphere—spaces in which different opinions and general concerns are expressed (Habermas, 1991). In online platforms where friends, family, and acquaintances are present, talking about taboo topics can lead to stigma. Thus, anonymity leads to uninhibited forms of communication that may only take place through virtual means.

Reddit is but one of many online platforms that encourage an ethos of anonymous community building. Scholars have explored the notion of anonymity and its link to accountability, drawing upon previous work on deindividuation theory (Festinger et al., 1952; Jessup et al., 1990) to explain anti-normative behavior. Le Bon (2017) observed how individuals acted differently when they took on a collective mindset when joining a crowd as opposed to how they would normally act when isolated. Kiesler et al. (1984); Sproull and Kiesler (1986) link computer-mediation communication with deindividuation theory via social anonymity, suggesting that the reduced social cues afforded by

anonymity facilitate unregulated, impulsive, and less socially acceptable behavior. However, not all deindividuation paradigms share the same conclusions. Reicher et al. (1995) challenged traditional assumptions of anonymity because those theoretical models of deindividuation do not account for collective phenomena. Counter to prior scholarship on deindividuation theory, Reicher claims that "anonymity within a social group… maximizes the opportunity of group members to give full voice to their collective identities" (Reicher et al., 1995). While these studies largely draw from psychological studies in clinical environments, the next wave of literature projects classical paradigms of anonymity in the context of online social computing systems.

Online community members frequently communicate with each other through online commenting systems, and their deliberation has been studied in-depth by many social computing scholars. Gilbert et al. (2009)'s empirical work on echo chambers in the blogosphere showed that in hand-coding a sample of over 1,000 comments from the most visited blogs, comments that signaled agreement were on average at least three times more likely to outnumber comments that signaled disagreement. Grevet et al. (2014) investigated political disagreements on Facebook to explore circumstances that allow for diverse opinions online. Their mixed methods study of 103 survey responses and 13 interviews confirmed increased polarization among like-minded social media users and suggest that (1) making common ground visible and (2) continued exposure to weak ties make friendships more resilient to ideological differences. Moreover, Rowe (2015) studied civility in the context of online political deliberation by analyzing the types of comments left on a popular news outlet website versus its Facebook page. He found that comments left on the news outlet website were more likely to be uncivil because they were anonymous compared to the non-anonymous comments left on its Facebook page. His findings were in line with the prior literature on social anonymity; in the context of online commenting platforms, he has shown that as the identifiability of the user increased, incivility by the user decreased.

Anonymous representations of identity can still enable the maintenance and moderation of online communities. These types of communities depend on the voluntary participation of their members to remain active (Ren et al., 2007). While the social dynamics of physical and online communities remain consistent as both involve a network of relationships among people who have something meaningful in common (Kim, 2000), anonymous online communities provide a unique set of challenges and opportunities for building relationships and maintaining identity (Donath, 2002). In the physical world, one body is tied to one identity. While that identity is likely to change over time, the body provides a persistent sense of self. However, in the virtual world, one body is not tied to one person (Marwick and boyd, 2011; Papacharissi, 2010), as one person may represent a variety of identities through multiple online profiles.

Studies have linked identity management with identity verification. Ma and Agarwal (2007) argue that communities which support four characteristics of virtual co-presence, persistent labeling, self-presentation, and deep profiling amplify perceived identity verification. In conducting a survey of more than 650 users of two distinct online communities, they find that technology design of those four characteristics improves community outcomes via knowledge contribution. Stutzman and Hartzog (2012)'s work on understanding group context of socially mediated technologies finds that multiple profile management in social media is motivated by a different set of four factors: privacy, identity, utility, and propriety. Their qualitative study of 20 interviews, analyzed from both an inductive and deductive approach, uncovered a continuum of boundary regulation behaviors—pseudonymity, practical obscurity, and transparent separation—users employed in their multiple profile maintenance practices.

A number of empirical studies have looked at online censorship and deletion practices in authoritarian countries. For instance, Bamman et al. (2012) presented a large-scale analysis of political content

censorship in Chinese social media. In their dataset of over 56 million messages from the Chinese microblogging site Sina Weibo, approximately 17% that involved politically sensitive terms were deleted. They contrasted Sina Weibo with Twitter, which was not reported to censor the stream of data from its users globally, as a means for establishing a baseline against which to measure global attention to a certain topic. They found that the rate of message deletion was not uniform throughout the country's geographic distribution, with messages originating from outlying provinces of Tibet, Qinghai, and Ningxia deleted at disproportionately higher rates compared to areas like Beijing and Shanghai. Additionally, Rauchfleisch and Schäfer (2015) contributes a typology of 7 types of public spheres on the Chinese SNS Weibo: thematic, short-term, encoded, local, non-domestic, mobile, and meta. He argues that the affordances of Weibo, a platform widely known for its strong censorship practices, allow for users to share sensitive content in ways that circumvent detection from the authoritarian government, allowing for continued discourse in the public sphere of the platform (Rauchfleisch and Schäfer, 2015).

2.3.2   Online Community Design on Deliberation

As the AAPI umbrella comprises numerous conflicting and nuanced ethnic identifications, emergent identity work is highly politicized. That is, the social dynamics of identity work can be highly conflicting and problematic. To explore the nature of AAPI identity work, we draw on Habermas who describes the public sphere as a domain of our social life through which public opinion is formed (Habermas, 1984, 1991). Within the public sphere, people often engage in deliberation, which comprises of the activities through which people share information, form opinions, and participate in the political process.

A public sphere must adhere to three values for it to function properly: inclusion, civility, and rationality. Inclusion means that anyone can participate. Civility means that everyone must treat others

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with respect. Rationality means that people engage in reasoned argumentation and provide facts to support their claims. Deliberation has been applied to the study of online public spheres, such as social media, though findings are scattered in that some scholars have suggested that online public spheres are polarized such that like-minded people interact with one another (Espiritu, 1992; Matias, 2016c; Morioka et al., 2016), whereas in other cases online media have achieved Habermas' values (Habermas, 1984, 1991). Here, we apply this lens to explore identity work as something that is deliberated.

In our pilot study (Dosono et al., 2017b), we find that there exist differences between conservative and progressive identity work among AAPIs, and that these groups work toward censoring alternative views in an effort to maintain their vision of collective identity. However, to our knowledge, few studies have explored identity work as a deliberative act, and our pilot study aims to explore whether or not identity work adheres to the ideals of the public sphere. Given AAPI's longstanding history of invisibility, silence, and exclusion (Osajima, 1995), this pilot study expands the ongoing work on impression management and AAPI identity construction. Because AAPI identity work is not monolithic, we are interested in understanding differences among identity work in comparable online communities.

The sociotechnical configurations of Reddit enable people to engage in identity work. Any user (redditor) can create a community (subreddit) on nearly any topic, where they can share content in the form of text, links, and images. Content can be either upvoted or downvoted by any redditor. Participation in identity work occurs in the form of comments on each subreddit thread. Each community is moderated independently by volunteer users. Previous research on Reddit looked at how redditors make temporary accounts to protect their anonymity in disclosing sensitive issues and opinions (Andalibi et al., 2016; Leavitt, 2015), moderate and police disruptive behavior within new subreddits (Bergstrom, 2011), and invoke memories of prior cultural material through the rhetorical construction of memes on the Reddit interface (Potts and Harrison, 2013). Additional work looking at

the motivational factors of participation in online platforms found uses and gratifications as a valid means for understanding redditor behavior and their frequency of engagement with the platform (Moore and Chuang, 2017). Redditors have power over their media consumption by interpreting and integrating Reddit content into their own lives, using Reddit as a tool for situated self-making and sensemaking (Weick et al., 2005).

HCI research has also taken an interest in looking at the motivations and goals of users who create online communities. Prior scholarship on motivations in online communities has focused on its contributors, finding that Wikipedia editors have diverse motivations such as enjoyment, learning, and ideology (Schroer and Hertel, 2009). Foote, Gergle, and Shaw surveyed over 300 founders of online wikis and found that the most prevalent goal of its wiki founders was to create high-quality information, and the next two most popular goals focused on building community and sustaining growth (Foote et al., 2017). Their study suggests that smaller communities are not necessarily failures, but rather niche locations that deserve to be studied on their own terms. Foote and colleagues further discuss that other community-based platforms like Reddit or Facebook Groups have their own affordances and their community founders may have a different set of motivations and goals. Lampe and Resnick (2004) analyzed usage logs on the news and commentary site Slashdot, which included 293,608 moderations, 489,948 comments, and 1,576,937 meta-moderations. While widespread participation was evident across users of Slashdot, they found several factors (comments posted later in the conversation, comments not at top-level, and comments with low starting scores) that were more likely to be overlooked by moderators. Thus, exploring the sociotechnical configurations of online communities may contribute additional dimensions of complexity and nuance to identity work emerging online.

Reddit enables identity work to manifest in online subreddits that are moderated by volunteer

stewards of a particular community and offline meetups organized by members of such subreddits. Both virtual and physical environments allow for identity work to exist and flourish within the community, providing rich opportunities to survey how users of Reddit appropriate existing identity management technologies to engage in their identity work, widening a larger ecology of technologies that groups can use to form and sustain a collective identity.

2.3.3   Identity Work as a Collective Process in the Online Public Sphere

As a means of making sense of or changing one's identity, people engage in identity work (Snow and McAdam, 2000). This process can be collaborative as people work together to make sense of identity for themselves or reconstruct collective identity in an effort to change public perceptions. Flesher builds on top of Snow's scholarship on identity work by discussing different tactics that keep social movements alive, such as her claim that "a positive emotional experience of movement participation can keep activists involved even when the group is not meeting its political goals, whereas a hostile environment can dissuade activist participation even when their commitment to the cause is strong" (Flesher Fominaya, 2010). She further recognizes that while collective identities can share similar "interests, ideologies, subcultures, goals, rituals, practices, values, worldview, commitment, solidarity, tactics, strategies, definitions of the 'enemy' or the opposition and framing of issues, it is not synonymous with and cannot be reduced to any of these things" (Flesher Fominaya, 2010). Flesher echoes Snow's Snow (2001) charge in that scholars need to examine more closely the relations between different levels of collective identity before claiming that a strong collective identity at the group level can lead to a social movement.

   Identity work often emerges as a collective process in the public sphere, which as defined by

Habermas is a domain of our social life through which public opinion is formed (Habermas, 1984, 1991). Within the public sphere, people often engage in deliberation, which comprises of the activities through which people share information, form opinions, and participate in the political process. A critique of Habermas' ideal concept of the public sphere is that it is based on rationality rather than emotionality. According to Melucci (Melucci, 1996), emotion is an important element of collective action as "there is no cognition without feeling and no meaning without emotion." In a modern networked society, digital publics are mobilized and connected or disconnected through affective statements that blend fact with opinion and emotion, demonstrating the importance of affect in creating feelings of community to sustain involvement and connections (Papacharissi, 2015).

It is well established that in the context of online political activities, certain communicative acts invite the formation of an ad hoc public sphere—an online space where any individual is free to exchange political information and ideas with others (Semaan et al., 2014). For example, users of social media services such as Facebook and Twitter can engage in political deliberation through private groups (Boulianne, 2016; Brooker et al., 2015; Semaan et al., 2014; Skoric et al., 2016). Identity work in the context of the AAPI community, then, constitutes a form of political deliberation, and today, users have taken to online community platforms, including Reddit, to engage in identity work as a deliberative, political process (Dosono and Semaan, 2018).

Prior studies have looked at how Asian immigrants use technology to make sense of their new surroundings. Most related to our work is Dich's ethnographic dissertation of Asian American users on the social network site Xanga, which examined how Asian Americans wrote, explored, and circulated their racial identities for varied audiences (Dich, 2012), finding that Xanga affords a flexible writing ecology for its users to write about their ever-evolving identities. AAPI youth lead all other racial groups in technology use and proficiency (Perrin, 2016), but few studies illustrate how AAPIs use technology
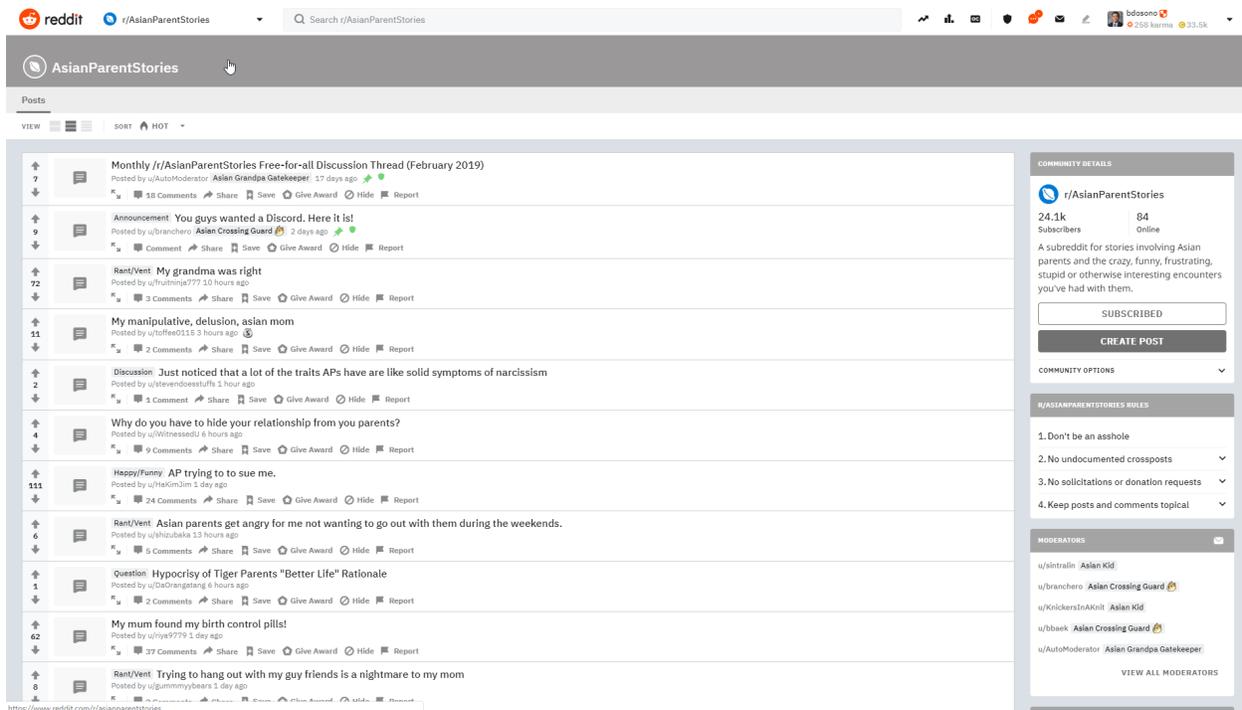
Figure 2.1: Classic Reddit view of r/asianparentstories. Retrieved 18 February 2019.

for identity work (Khoir et al., 2014; Rao and Hemphill, 2016), and this dissertation research aims to

address this gap in literature.

3

Methods

This research is part of a broad, multi-sited investigation of the use of ICTs within and among online

communities engaging in identity work. In the first study, we found that moderators played a significant

role in shaping how identity work happens and how these online community spaces work. We

employed content analysis as a non-invasive approach to systematically examine patterns within a

corpus of data, a subset of 4,406 Reddit comments isolated during the 2016 US Presidential Election

cycle. This method confirmed that certain types of social phenomena were occurring on Reddit,

which then validated the need to design follow up interview studies to dive more deeply into the

phenomena observed. Thus, we designed the subsequent second and third study to dive deeply into

what kind of identity work they do, and how their identity work sustains their communities. Through

an inductive, grounded theoretical analysis of qualitative data from 21 Reddit moderators across a

diverse range of AAPI subreddits, we observed that emotional labor within online moderation became

an emergent finding, which informed how I presented the data for the second study. We also observed

how decoloniality—the delinking of hegemonic epistemology from all ways of understanding—also

emerged from the interview data, which motivated the direction for the third study.

3.1   Site of Research

We intentionally chose Reddit as a primary source for data collection for a number of reasons. When comparing the deliberation features and affordances of other major social networking sites, we found Twitter's 280-character restriction severely limited English-speaking users on what they can express in a single post. Additionally, due to Facebook's ever changing application programming interface (API) and privacy settings, we may not be able to capture and scrape data from status updates that were once public. Unlike Twitter, Reddit allows for users to make posts of up to 40,000 characters. And unlike Facebook, Reddit allows researchers to scrape data continuously from public posts via their API, as long as they comply with the API's terms of use. [1]

While Reddit is known for its controversial comments and inflammatory rhetoric, it also differentiates itself from platforms like LinkedIn and YouTube by giving its registered moderators more agency to channel attention to a topic of discussion (Van Dijck and Poell, 2013), granting moderators greater agency to influence identity work, shape online discourse, and curb the polarizing effects that plague other platforms.

We consider evidence of identity work on Reddit to be captured in a number of ways through the behavioral log data of its users. For instance, sentiment on a wide variety of identity-focused topics can be analyzed by the comments posted by redditors. Measures of agreement and disagreement can be quantified through upvotes and downvotes of each comment. Topics that are not related to identity, such as subreddits that function as question answering forums for technical problems (i.e., debugging

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[1] https://www.reddit.com/dev/api/

computer programming problems), are not considered identity work because they do not involve discourse relevant to one's sense of self, belongingness to a group, or a shared sense of experiences among a set of people.

3.2 Content Analysis

3.2.1 Reddit Comment Data Collection

We searched for subreddits where AAPIs engaged in identity work. Thus, subreddits that mainly posted news articles with little to no comments around the post were excluded from consideration, as redditors in those subreddits may find lurking behavior (Leavitt, 2015), or nonpublic participation, normative within the community. Table 3.1 lists the most popular AAPI subreddits by subscriber count. We restricted our filtering criteria to subreddits with over a thousand subscribers. Topical subreddits were chosen based on relevance to issues pertaining to Asian American identity as self-described in their respective subreddit descriptions. International Asian groups (r/korea, r/japan, r/china) are excluded from this study due to issues of language translation and general detachment from American issues and perspectives.

We targeted r/asianamerican as the focus of the analysis because it covered the broadest spectrum of AAPI topics in comparison to other subreddits that focused conversations on specific topics, and also because of membership size. The description of r/asianamerican reads:

> "*Anything related to Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, as well as other Asians who grew up outside of Asia. This includes news, discussions, pictures, or videos that happen outside of America. While members of all races and nationalities are welcome,*

Subscribers	Subreddits
12,171	r/asianamerican
11,683	r/asianparentstories
7,703	r/asianmasculinity
6,345	r/abcdesis
5,212	r/asiantwox
3,683	r/aznidentity
3,629	r/gaysian
2,128	r/hapas
1,169	r/asianamericanissues

Table 3.1: Subscriber count of popular AAPI subreddits. Updated 19 October 2016.

our purpose is to foster a sense of community among Asian Americans and their respective counterparts in the Asian diaspora."

We ran a Python script to store a collection of Reddit JSON files in MongoDB, scraping public comments (as well as metadata to changes and deletions from such posts) every 10 minutes. We collected comments posted from the beginning of October to the end of December 2016 in r/asianamerican, retrieving the comment, thread title, score, author, subreddit, position in comment tree and other fields that are available through Reddit's API, yielding a dataset with 4,406 comments from 888 distinct usernames.

3.2.2 Content Analysis

We employed an inductive content analysis approach to label variables and their relationships within our corpus (Saldaña, 2015). The first author coded a random sample of 500 randomly generated comments from the corpus in the initial round of analysis via an inductive, open coding process that established tentative labels for emerging themes from the data. In the second round of analysis, the first author then proceeded into an axial coding process for identifying relationships among the open codes. A total of 19 reoccurring codes emerged describing AAPI identity work, presented in Table 4.2. While it was

not feasible to create a codebook that covers all possible facets of identity, we employed an inductive approach based upon close readings of comments to create labels for analyzing AAPI discourse on Reddit. We created categories for these codes related to AAPI identity work and participation in relation to Habermas' public sphere values, which led to the themes presented in our findings.

The first author trained a team of two undergraduate students to iteratively and redundantly code random samples of 500 comments, each time computing Cohen's kappa (McHugh, 2012) for each variable and discussing disagreements. The coders rated whether or not the comment satisfied each of the Habermasean values (inclusivity, civility, rationality) all at once before proceeding to code the next Reddit comment in the dataset. After three rounds of redundant coding, we achieved an acceptable average pairwise Cohen's Kappa score among three coders for all observed Habermasean values (0.86 for inclusivity, 0.82 for civility, and 0.85 for rationality). We then split the corpus into three sets and coded all 4,406 subreddit comments independently in relation to their comment thread title. We then conducted a thematic analysis on a subset of comments that were made both before and after the election results. We met weekly throughout the data analysis period to generate and organize themes that we present in the results.

3.3   Interviews

3.3.1   Participant Recruitment

Between February and April 2018, we recruited 21 participants who were listed as moderators on public AAPI subreddits. Using Reddit's internal search engine, we used keywords such as "Asian," "Asian American," "Pacific Islander," and "AAPI" to identify subreddits where AAPIs engaged in identity work through which we could recruit moderators. Topical subreddits were chosen based on

relevance to issues pertaining to Asian American identity as self-described in their respective subreddit descriptions. We employed maximum variation sampling as a purposeful sampling strategy (Patton, 2005) for observing how a phenomenon is understood among different groups of people across a variety of contexts. Thus, our eligibility criteria included anyone who served as a current or previous moderator for an AAPI-focused subreddit.

Moderators were recruited from 13 different AAPI subreddits, 11 of which had a minimum of 1,000 subscribers during the time of data collection. Listed by subscriber count in Table 3.2, the subreddits varied in the kind of identity work being engaged in a public subreddit setting. Private subreddits were excluded from the study due to their discretionary nature and strict membership requirements. The first author directly messaged every single redditor listed as a moderator in the sidebar of targeted subreddits. A total of 118 Reddit direct message solicitations were sent to moderators of our final list of 18 AAPI subreddits (in addition to the subreddits reflected in Table 3.2, the first author reached out to moderators from r/asianparentstories, r/asianmasculinity, r/easternsunrising, r/asianpeoplegifs, r/asianeats).

The human moderator count for the targeted subreddits varied greatly (average = 7.15, standard deviation = 8.44; bots were removed from calculation), with the largest moderation team count of 33 belonging to r/hapas, and the smallest moderator count of 1 on both the r/asianamericanissues subreddit and the r/asianamericanathletes subreddit. A moderator listed on a specific subreddit does not necessarily imply that the moderator is still active on the subreddit.

3.3.2 Interview Protocol

The first author conducted semi-structured interviews via voice and video calling applications like Skype, Google Hangout, and Discord. Interview sessions were audio-recorded upon obtaining the

Table 3.2: Summary of AAPI subreddits studied.

Subscriber Count	Subreddit Name	Creation Date	Moderator Count
18,847	r/asianamerican	Jan 2010	*11
11,719	r/abcdesis	Sep 2013	*6
11,382	r/aznidentity	Nov 2015	*13
10,614	r/asiantwox	Jan 2012	*8
9,305	r/hapas	Sep 2014	33
6,029	r/gaysian	Jan 2012	*4
4,047	r/asianbeautyadvice	May 2017	*7
2,875	r/asiandrama	Jun 2011	6
1,781	r/asianfeminism	Aug 2015	*4
1,463	r/asianamericanissues	Feb 2009	1
1,311	r/asianbros	Nov 2014	*3
550	r/desitwox	Jan 2012	*5
63	r/asianamericanathletes	Sep 2017	1

* u/AutoModerator (bot) is listed as a subreddit moderator. Updated 18 April 2018.

consent of each participant. One participant (P10) requested that the interview was done purely through textual exchanges to preserve the participant's anonymity. Moderators were required to be at least 18 years old to participate in the study. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to more than 2 hours, with an average interview length of 47 minutes. Recordings were transcribed within 24 hours of conversing with each participant. Our Institutional Review Board approved the study.

The interview guide comprised of eight sections organized prior to beginning interviews: (1) collecting demographic information of the moderator, (2) diving into their motivations behind using Reddit, (3) understanding their sense of identity within their community, (4) exploring factors that influence their deliberation on Reddit, (5) uncovering their moderation practices, (6) unpacking their understanding of anonymity, (7) inquiring about the ways they seek social support, and (8) their perceptions on the Reddit platform at large.

Table 3.3: Summary of participant demographics.

ID	Sex	Age	Race	Ethnicity	Degree Earned	Subreddit Moderated
P1	M	20-29	Asian	Indian American	Bachelor	r/abcdesis
P2	M	20-29	Asian	Pakistani American	Bachelor	r/abcdesis
P3	M	18-19	White	Caucasian	High School	r/asiandrama
P4	M	20-29	Asian	Vietnamese American	Master	r/gaysian
P5	F	20-29	Asian	Taiwanese American	Bachelor	r/asianbeautyadvice
P6	F	30-39	Asian	Taiwanese American	Doctoral	r/asianamericanissues
P7	M	20-29	Asian	Chinese American	Bachelor	r/asianbros
P8	M	20-29	Asian	Chinese Canadian	Bachelor	r/aznidentity
P9	M	20-29	Asian	Chinese	Master	r/aznidentity
P10	M	30-39	Asian	Chinese	Bachelor	r/aznidentity
P11	F	20-29	Asian	Chinese American	Master	r/asianamerican
P12	M	20-29	Mixed	Chinese, Italian	Bachelor	r/asianamerican
P13	F	20-29	Asian	Hong Kong American	Bachelor	r/asianfeminism
P14	F	30-39	Asian	Thai American	Postgraduate	r/asiantwox
P15	M	30-39	Asian	Korean American	Master	r/asianamerican
P16	F	20-29	Asian	Indian American	Master	r/desitwox
P17	M	40-49	Mixed	Chinese, Caucasian	Bachelor	r/hapas
P18	F	20-29	Asian	Chinese American	Bachelor	r/asiantwox
P19	M	30-39	Asian	Korean Canadian	Master	r/asianamericanathletes
P20	F	18-19	Mixed	Japanese, Welsh	High School	r/hapas
P21	F	20-29	Asian	Bengali American	Bachelor	r/desitwox

3.3.3   Data Analysis

The first author analyzed interview transcripts iteratively by using coding (Saldaña, 2015) and memoing (Glaser, 1978) techniques. He inductively developed a codebook that maintained an inventory of codes with their descriptions (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). A total of 18 reoccurring codes emerged related to the challenges moderators faced in managing their subreddits, working with their moderation teams, and developing strategies for moderating AAPI communities. The codes were reduced under axial coding into the 6 themes presented in this paper. We reached a point of saturation after our interview with our fifteenth participant, as no new themes emerged, and the remaining six participant interviews confirmed the identified themes.

3.3.4   Participant Demographics

As illustrated in Table 3.3, a total of 12 participants identified as cis male (57%) and 9 identified as cis female (43%). The majority of moderators were aged in their twenties (62%). All but one moderator (P3) identified with having Asian or Mixed (with Asian) heritage (95%). Moderators were highly educated, as 19 participants attained at least a bachelor's degree (90%), and 8 participants completed an advanced academic degree (38%). We also collected self-reported data on the average amount of time moderators spent on Reddit during the participant recruitment period: 7 participants spent 0-1 hours on Reddit per day, 1 spent 1-2 hours on Reddit per day, 8 spent 2-3 hours on Reddit per day, 2 spent 3-4 hours on Reddit per day, 2 spent 4-5 hours on Reddit per day, and 1 spent over 5 hours on Reddit per day.

3.4   Reflexivity Statement

In examining how marginalized communities are studied, reflexively understanding the authors' race and ethnicity may bring certain affinities into perspective (Schlesinger et al., 2017).

I used my personal Reddit account (u/bdosono) to reach out to moderators to conduct the qualitative interview studies. For the sake of transparency, my account disclosed a profile photo of my appearance, my university affiliation, and a link to my website. My pinned post during the time of the study was an open recruitment call for participants, and my comment history illustrated an interest in AAPI topics. I have also been subscribed to AAPI subreddits for more than four years.

As a Filipino American male who has previously engaged in advocacy work for the AAPI community, I recognize that I have certain privileges and implicit biases in my dissertation's reportage and narration. For example, my male gender expression may have granted me access to certain subreddits that

female researchers may have struggled to access. I aimed to let the voices of my participants speak for

themselves in the quotes presented in the studies and relied on my close understanding of the meta AAPI

discourse to explain collective identity work observed in these subreddits to an uninformed audience.

4

Identity Work as Deliberation

4.1   Abstract: AAPI Political Discourse in the 2016 US Presidential Election

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are perceived as the "model minority" with a monolithic identity, in contrast to other marginalized racial groups in the United States. In reality, they are composed of different ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and political ideologies. AAPIs share their political views online, engaging in the public sphere through a collaborative process we coin, "identity work as deliberation." Using the 2016 US Presidential Election as a case study, we retrieved 4,406 Reddit comments posted between October 2016 to December 2016. We examine how users engage in an online community through a deliberation lens to understand the extent to which Reddit supports identity work as a deliberative process. Under the collective AAPI umbrella, we find that ethnic identifications complicate the types of discussion possible within r/asianamerican. We discuss how the expression of identity, and thereby solidarity, in a politicized online setting may lead to a social

movement.

4.2   Background

Policies created by the racial majority in the United States' 400 years of chattel slavery permanently shaped racial identities and power structures in America. The surge of race-based activism in the 1960s fueled the need and urgency for creating pan-ethnic coalitions—or, collective identifications for diverse yet related ethnic groups (Espiritu, 1992; Ocampo, 2016; Omi and Winant, 2014). Here, we focus our attention on a less studied pan-ethnic population—the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community.

Born out of the American civil rights movement of the 1960s, the term Asian American was first used to unite a wide array of Asian nationalities, such as Chinese, Filipinos, and Japanese, under a common political umbrella (Espiritu, 1992; Maeda, 2012), as these groups faced different, yet similar discriminatory challenges (Nee and Sanders, 1985). For example, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited all immigration of Chinese laborers; the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act reclassified all Filipinos, including those living in the United States, as aliens; and Executive Order 9066 forced the relocation and imprisonment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Understanding that the liberation of one oppressed community is directly tied to the liberation of all oppressed communities, political activists from different Asian ethnic groups coalesced under one larger identity construction to build political power (Maeda, 2012), thus creating one unified monolithic identity.

Panethnic identities have since matured as part of the fabric of the greater heterogeneous American tapestry, largely in part by the identity work advanced by activists, cultural institutions, the media, and ethnic studies departments in higher education (Ocampo, 2016). However, the composition of

identifications within the larger AAPI umbrella is diverse and potentially problematic. For example, there have been well-documented tensions between people from different Asian and Pacific Island countries, such as China and Japan (Espiritu, 1992). This leads to the question of how AAPIs collectively manage and negotiate an identity that brings together so many ethnicities and nationalities. Against this backdrop, we utilize a lens that combines identity work (Butler, 2006; Goffman, 1978; Lofland and Lofland, 2006; Snow, 2001; Snow and Anderson, 1987; Snow and McAdam, 2000) with public sphere deliberation (Habermas, 1984, 1991) to position identity work as a political, discursive process. As such, we explore the concept of *identity work as deliberation*—the collaborative process through which people negotiate and construct their collective identity (Snow and McAdam, 2000)—focusing on the extent with which online identity work adheres to the three values of the public sphere: inclusion, civility, and rationality. As such, we frame our work around the following questions:

- **RQ1**: *How are AAPIs constructing and expressing their identity in online communities?*

  - **RQ1A**: *What kinds of topics are AAPIs deliberating online?*

- **RQ2**: *What factors affect AAPI participation in online identity work?*

  - **RQ2A**: *How do AAPIs in a deliberative space engage in identity work?*

  - **RQ2B**: *How do political identifications within online communities complicate AAPI identity work during an election?*

To disentangle monolithic perceptions of collectivity, and explore identity work as a deliberative process, we analyze emergent identity work amongst AAPIs on the social networking site, Reddit—one of the largest and most frequented online community platforms. We focus the analysis of this paper to Reddit data captured a month before and a month after the 2016 presidential election. We use the

election as a case study for identity work as deliberation because political events provide an opportunity for people to rethink their identities (Lichterman, 1999). We retrieved 4,406 Reddit comments from a popular AAPI Reddit community—r/asianamerican—and thematically analyzed the comments into categories of identity work as deliberation to illustrate multifaceted AAPI perspectives on a number of political issues. We find that ethnic identifications complicate the types of discussion possible within r/asianamerican, and thus complicate the process of identity work as deliberation. We then discuss how expressions of identity, and thereby solidarity, in a politicized online setting may lead to a social movement.

4.3   Research Setting

4.3.1   Identity Work During an Election

AAPI identity work is, in itself, a political activity. In the context of a political election, the well-being of AAPIs are at stake as elected officials determine their access to health care, decide on immigration policies that affect their families, etc. Elections provide an opportunity for people to reflect and rethink their identities.

As we situate our study using data collected during the 2016 US Presidential Election to study how AAPIs engage in the political process, our data provides a snapshot of online discourse one month prior to and one month after the election results. On Tuesday, November 8th, 2016, Donald Trump was declared President-Elect of the United States of America after a tightly-contested race against former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (Shear, 2016). Per post-election data from the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund's exit poll of nearly 14,000 AAPI voters (Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2017), AAPIs voted in greater numbers for Clinton (79%) than they did for

Trump (18%). According to the exit poll, the most important issues influencing the vote for president were the economy/jobs, immigration/refugees, health care, and education (Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2017). The ideas Trump entertained during his presidential campaign (such as the implementation of a travel ban intended to screen out radical terrorists from Muslim majority countries) by and large were not favorable toward the AAPI community's most pressing needs.

Reddit became a popular site for people to express their reactions to the 2016 US Presidential Election. Known as "the front page of the internet" (company slogan), redditors used the social news aggregation site to comment on the numerous controversial headlines both prior to and after Trump's victory. While redditors do not need to identify as AAPI to subscribe r/asianamerican, those concerned with AAPI interests are more likely to contribute to public discourse on Reddit as such groups signify identities for whom they are attached (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock, 1996).

4.3.2   Structural Affordances of Reddit for Identity Work

The r/asianamerican subreddit provides a space for AAPIs to engage in identity work. It features scheduled theme discussions that take place on a specific day of the week (e.g., relationship advice on Mondays, AAPI representation in the media on Wednesdays). The subreddit also fosters community building in different ways. The sidebar of the subreddit serves as a resourceful bulletin board of upcoming subreddit activities, such as upcoming AMAs (ask-me-anything) where redditors can ask questions and engage in dialogue with prominent AAPI figures. For example, the r/asianamerican subreddit maintains a fantasy sport league leaderboard. The sidebar also dates for Reddit meetups, which are in-person gatherings of redditors from a specific subreddit that are regularly organized by the community. Reddit meetups allow local redditors to build community offline by gathering in a physical

location (often within a large metropolitan area). The sidebar also includes a directory of related AAPI subreddits, recommended blogs, scholarly readings lists, and financial aid resources geared toward AAPI students.

Reddit allows moderators to customize the subreddits they moderate. At the time of the study, r/asianamerican has 10 publicly listed moderators who manage a subreddit of over 12,000 subscribed redditors. The moderators of r/asianamerican conducted a demographic survey of the subreddit and found that majority of its respondents identified as Chinese (59%), Vietnamese (12.1%), Korean (11.7%), and Indian (5.5%).[1] In comparison to the general US population, the 2010 US Census estimates that over 17 million AAPIs currently reside in the US, and that over 80% of the AAPI population come from six countries: China (23%), the Philippines (20%), India (18%), Vietnam (10%), Korea (10%), Japan (8%), with the remainder identifying as Other Asian (11%) (Hoeffel et al., 2012). Among 357 respondents, 29.4% identified as female, 67.2% identified as male, and 3.4% identified as other gender. There were slightly more self-reported redditors in r/asianamerican in the 18-24 range (41.7%) than in the 25-34 (40.3%) range.

4.4   Findings

Here we present findings from our Reddit data analysis, organized by our research questions. In presenting commentary captured both before (as shown in RQ1A and RQ2A) and after (as shown in RQ2B) from r/asianamerican, we illustrate how Reddit can be conceptualized as a public sphere for supporting identity work.

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[1] https://www.reddit.com/r/asianamerican/comments/6p9bfj/2017_rasianamerican_demographics_survey_results/

Post Title	Comment Total
POST-ELECTION MEGATHREAD	170
POST-ELECTION MEGATHREAD #2	126
/r/asianamerican Friday Banter - October 21, 2016	103
/r/asianamerican Friday Banter - November 18, 2016	101
/r/asianamerican Friday Banter - November 04, 2016	87
Trump surrogate citing Japanese Internment As "Precedent" For Muslim registry	74
Asian Americans Are Now Being Targeted For Harassment After Donald Trump's Victory	73
Stop Asking Me To Empathize With The White Working Class	67
/r/asianamerican Hobbies Discussion - October 19, 2016	67
/r/asianamerican Friday Banter - November 11, 2016	65

Table 4.1: Top ten most commented posts in r/asianamerican during data collection period.

Code	Description	Examples	Frequency
Entertainment	Representation in movies, music; sports; celebrities; anime; fashion	Yellowface; Oscars	32.68%
Politics	Political involvement, governance, party affiliation, war, economy	Voting	26.29%
Race	Stereotypes; discrimination; injustice	Skin complexion	18.00%
Jobs	Career advice, networking opportunities, salaries	Bamboo Ceiling	3.47%
Education	College admissions, grades, standardized exams	Affirmative Action	3.47%
Relationships	Dating advice; marriage; interracial arrangements; attraction	WMAF; AMWF	3.43%
Food	Reviews of Asian cuisine; restaurant recommendations; drinks	Cultural Recipes	2.29%
Immigration	Coming to live permanently in a foreign country; colonization	Deportation	1.97%
Family	References to family structures, collectivist norms	Parenting Struggles	1.85%
Assault	Physical attack, rape, violence, or other criminal activity	Sexual Assault	1.46%
Meta	Affordances of Reddit; meta discussion	Subreddits	1.00%
Masculinity	Critiques of qualities traditionally associated with men	Alpha Males	0.99%
Other	Deleted comment, Bot comment, Other	Bot	0.76%
Health	Discussion of a person's mental or physical condition	Mental Health	0.59%
Activism	Organizing, mobilizing around social justice issues; resistance	AAPIs for Black Lives	0.51%
Language	Linguistic inquiries of languages; accents; translations	Pronunciations	0.47%
Sexuality	Discussion of a person's sexual orientation or preference	LGBT Issues	0.41%
Feminism	Advocacy of women's rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes	Gender Equality	0.28%
Religion	Particular system of faith and worship	Islam	0.08%

Table 4.2: Codebook of Reddit comment codes in r/asianamerican.

4.4.1 Topics of Deliberation

To answer RQ1A, we reveal codes that emerged out of our inductive coding process that showcase the diversity of topics deliberated on r/asianamerican. To understand the breadth of topics deliberated in r/asianamerican, we report on the frequency of topics discussed in r/asianamerican in Table 4.2, which illustrates the diversity of topics discussed over the span of a three-month data collection period. In our dataset, the top three most commonly occurring comments involved topics of entertainment (32.68%), politics (26.29%), and race (18%). This demonstrates that while politics remained recurring theme of discussion during the climax of the 2016 US Presidential Election, redditors also used the subreddit to comment about other issues such as asking for career, dating, and fitness advice.

As Reddit allows for back-and-forth conversations to occur between Redditors in the form of nested comments, we also explored which types of threads were the most debated by the count of overall comments. Table 4.1 lists the comment totals from each Reddit post to illustrate which threads were most popular to discuss from October to December 2016. In r/asianamerican, redditors primarily discussed topics relevant to the US Presidential Election, both explicitly in the name of post titles and implicitly within the comments embedded in the thread discussion. Nine out of the top ten most commented threads during the data collection period were tied to the 2016 US Presidential Election.

4.4.2 Identity Work Through a Deliberation Lens

To answer RQ2A, here we break down a thematic analysis of comments based on patterns, relationships, and values in textual data. We show how deliberation in r/asianamerican, upholds Habermasean values of inclusivity, civility, and rationality.

Inclusivity in deliberation: Moderating inclusivity

Inclusion means that anyone can participate. In r/asianamerican, nearly all (99%) of the comments were coded as inclusive, meaning they were not blocked or censored from commenting. Through our analysis, we find that factors affecting a redditor's ability to participate in subreddit activity centered around the moderation practices within communities. Comments that flagged banned users, were deleted by the original redditor, or prohibited the participation of others, or redditors were marked as un-inclusive in our dataset. Comments that were later removed by the moderators (12 total) were not coded as inclusive.

Per Reddit's content policy,[2] those who do not comply with the rules of the platform may be subject to temporary or permanent suspension of accounts; removal of privileges from, or adding restrictions to, accounts; removal of content; banning of Reddit communities. Redditors who have been banned without being given an explicit reason have complained about the lack of transparency for being silenced in their community, and have created multiple Reddit accounts to express their frustration outwardly. Reddit moderators police and enforce the norms of their communities. For comments such as hate speech that violate such norms, moderators step into the conversation and intervene, such as in the following examples:

> *"Your remarks about Asian women have earned you a ban. That kind of talk is absolutely not tolerated here."*

> *"Removed for derailing. We're not dragging this thread into some theoretical argument about asserting the perpetrator is 'probably white'. The focus should be on how awful this is and the victims."*

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[2] https://www.reddit.com/help/contentpolicy/

Redditors who editorialize comment threads have also been banned by moderators. However, some redditors who have been banned return to the subreddit under a different alias to challenge the authoritative decisions of the moderators:

> *"I find it frustrating that posts are deleted because of where they originate from rather than their content. Sometimes I want to share a conversation from a different sub because it was well written. It's frustrating to magically have your post deleted when there is no rule at all that is broken. If you had a list of banned subreddits and are transparent about what topics you think are welcome and what topics are not, great! I'll participate without breaking the rules... Problem is, when the way you want to run it is hidden, I can't know how."*

Moderators on r/asianamerican tend not to actively contribute to threads unless they need to police the behavior of users who do not follow community rules and guidelines. We found many instances of redditors leaving r/asianamerican altogether to join other AAPI-related subreddits with contrasting philosophies:

> *"I'm going to respond just this once and then stop replying to this thread. We don't have a list of subs for a couple reasons. First, there's always new subs coming out, and we don't want to have to maintain a master list of all the problematic subs on Reddit. Second, we want to avoid any inter-sub drama or feuds. Some subs are run with a totally different philosophy than ours and that's **fine**. Our policy is to leave those subs alone and avoid getting involved in any drama. We don't discuss those subs, the content on those subs, how they're run, etc. We're happy to do our own thing. It might be frustrating that things don't feel "transparent" and to an extent knowing what subs are excluded are "tribal*

knowledge." But the goal isn't to be transparent; it's to maintain meaningful discussion

here without (intentionally or unintentionally) fomenting inter-sub drama... if you're

unhappy, you're welcome to post elsewhere, but that is how we run things here and for the

most part we feel it's working out great."

Despite their involvement with the subreddit, moderators do not have the power to control all

information flow within the online community. Proprietary Reddit algorithms beyond the scope of

the moderator's control, such as those that dictate the exposure of trending or controversial posts, also

affect what types of threads surface and appear on any given redditor's dashboard. Moreover, due to

the platform's affordances, comments that are downvoted would sink to the bottom of the page, while

comments that are upvoted would float to the top of the page. Thus, comments that went against the

perceived norms of the subreddit were less likely to be seen by future visitors of the thread. For example,

the most downvoted comment in the entire dataset may now be buried at the bottom of its respective

thread:

> *"I disagree, illegal immigration is a pretty clear cut issue for me and most americans, and so*
>
> *is curbing abuse of the h1b system by tech companies. These are issues of law, not of racial*
>
> *politics."*

Overall, we see moderators play an integral role in enforcing their subreddits to uphold values of

inclusivity. As political events capture a wide range of topics through which we can actively observe

identity work, inclusivity remains an important value for deliberation.

Civility in deliberation: Balancing conflict with courtesy

Civility means that everyone must treat others with respect. As the subreddit moderators defined specific discussion characteristics appropriate to r/asianamerican in their rules section,[3] we coded un-civil comments that moderators may flag as "any form of bigotry, including sexism, racism, homophobia, victim-blaming, attacks on entire communities, or attacks of a personal nature." Comments that threatened the livelihood of other redditors, used vulgar language, or considered disparaging in speech were marked as un-civil in our dataset. While the majority of comments were coded as civil (96%), comments that centered around issues of race and masculinity were most subject to in-civil deliberation. The state of race relations leading up to the election results fueled a number of vulgar comments that we did not code as civil, such as:

> "...when racists see your chinky eyes, they don't give a fuck if you're korean, viet, from hong kong... They're not going to all of sudden be like 'Oh I'm sorry, I thought you were a jap, please forgive my racist stereotyping and insults' Other races aren't going to accept you more just because you throw your fellow chinky eyed, yellow skinned brothers and sisters under a bus. You're always going to be a little silky haired, buck toothed menace who can't pronounce r's and l's and can't drive in their eyes so stop treating other asians like shit to make yourselves feel better."

Since AAPIs are an umbrella category of a number of ethnic identifications, we also observe comments that pit or compare one ethnicity to another:

> "They're different nationalities and see each other as different, that's what matters. Just like Taiwanese (Chinese) people and mainland people have conflicts. It might not be

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[3] https://www.reddit.com/r/asianamerican/wiki/rules

racism, but it's certainly xenophobia."

In an effort to maintain the civility of a controversial topic in a different thread, another r/asianamerican redditor posts:

> *"Let's strive for civil discussion of political disagreements. There's no need for sweeping generalizations/attacks on immigrant parents or people on the other side of the political aisle from you. It might sound good in an echo chamber, but it doesn't actually help anyone communicate, or change anyone's mind."*

In those types of comments, we read such calls for empathy and civility as guiding reminders that helped in calming down heated arguments. This illustrates that community standards within r/asianamerican police a certain type of decorum in order for others to share diverse thoughts in a respectful manner, thus drawing on high context values.

In analyzing deliberation, it is important to note the nuance of different ethnic groups and their sociohistorical ties to understand how their interactions influence the kinds of discussion possible, or at least strongly encouraged, in an online setting. Since much of the online discourse amongst AAPIs run at the intersection between identity and politics, civility is most likely to be found among Redditors who share the same values and political identifications.

Rationality in deliberation: Argumentation with evidence

Rationality means that people engage in reasoned argumentation and provide facts to support their claims. The following comment provides an example of a redditor reasoning with evidence to support his argument:

"East Asian cultures are deeply rooted in Confucian philosophy and those cultural factors don't get entirely erased when you immigrate. In particular, using Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions theory as a framework (which is a very common framework when discussing international business and I can tell the article is using here too), East Asian cultures have incredibly high 'Power Distances', high 'Collectivism' rating, and fall more on the 'Feminine' side of the spectrum (before the angry Asian dudes bombard me with hate mail, this descriptor is less to do with gender roles and effeminacy than the name implies). This is compared to not just the west, but to other Asian cultures that are less rooted in Confucianism. What does this mean in the western workplace? Less a focus on individual achievement due to higher values in cooperation and modesty. If workplaces were a true meritocracy, then I bet you would find more East Asian CEOs, but to get to the top you have to play the politics which East Asians are less inclined to do for all the reasons mentioned above."

Another way redditors substantiate their claims is by providing hyperlinks to reputable online sources, photos, and videos. A total of 177 external hyperlinks were shared as comments in r/asianamerican during the data collection period. For instance, one redditor shares:

[What Civic / Community / Political / Activist Organizations Are You Involved With?]

"there's a really great list here that's being compiled by Asian Women in Business: http://www.awib.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewpage&pageid=816

you'll have to do a little research and poking around to find out which ones are more engaged on social issues but I have full faith that you'll find em

additionally, the NCAPA coalition is great: http://www.ncapaonline.org/coalition_

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members."

In summary, we observed that comments that shared either (1) convincing or persuasive arguments or (2) external links to reputable sources were more likely to be upvoted by other redditors than comments that lacked substantial content for furthering discussion. Comments that were rational in nature were more likely to be read and supported by other redditors—particularly those who have not yet made an informed decision on which candidates and policies to vote for in the context of an election.

4.4.3   Post-Election Reactions: A Case Study in Deliberation

To answer RQ2B, here we focus our analysis on one r/asianamerican thread in its whole titled, "POST-ELECTION MEGATHREAD," as a case study to observe the deliberation that occurred immediately after the results of the 2016 US Presidential Election. The thread, created by a moderator, begins with the following text:

> *"Since we've had like 15+ posts since last night and now, it's time to keep it all condensed into one thread. Reminder: KEEP IT CIVIL."*

Among 170 comments retrieved in that specific thread during the data collection period, at least 74 unique redditor accounts participated in deliberation. Due to the controversial nature of the thread, moderators later deleted eight of the comments left on on this thread, and 11 other comments were self-deleted by the original redditor. Here, we review the values of the public sphere in action and present a pattern of resistance building among redditors attempting to make sense of the election results.

Characteristics of identity work in review

We observed all three values of a Habermasean public sphere in the post-election thread. Regarding inclusivity, moderators warned that redditors who were out of line with their comments would be removed from the discussion:

> "*Cut down on the snark, please. There is only one rule in this thread. Follow it. We've already had to remove dozens of comments from both Clinton and Trump supporters.*"

Regarding civility, a different moderator removed a comment from an upset redditor and signaled the importance of following the norms of the subreddit:

> "*Removed. Please (1) refrain from speaking for others and (2) remain civil.*"

Regarding rationality, the most upvoted comment (98 points total) came from a concerned redditor who briefly stated in a top-level comment: "*hate crimes are gonna spike... strap up.*" In response, other Redditors shared personal and secondary anecdotes to reinforce the original comment. One redditors replies:

> "*Unfortunately, this seems to be happening. I'm hearing from friends and seeing on facebook about instances of white people harassing Asian Americans on the streets, telling them to go back to their country, and even physically harassing them. This is NOT ok.*"

Another redditor shared a link in response to the top-level comment:

> "*Sadly, this has happened in San Diego:* http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/[public-safety/sd-me-sdsu-robbery-20161110-story.html](http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/public-safety/sd-me-sdsu-robbery-20161110-story.html).*"

Redditors shared their thoughts and reflections to the election results in a centralized thread within r/asianamerican, and in doing so, engaged in the process of identity work as deliberation.

Complications of ethnic identification: A call to resistance

In our thematic analysis of comments in the post-election thread, we consistently observed a pattern of resistance building emerge among redditors who identified as an ethnic minority in the US. Among the 170 comments in the post-election thread, over half (90 comments) contained elements of Snow's concept of collective identity, an embedded *we-ness* or *one-ness* to a larger group that corresponds to a sense of collective agency (Snow, 2001). The following comments by r/asianamerican redditors poignantly describe the stark state of politics in the US:

> *"Stay safe guys. Protect those around you and take extra steps to be careful. If you're Sikh or Muslim, know that you will not be judged for protecting yourself from violence. If you're a minority at all, know that you have a right to self defence. Look up Jarred Ha. Even an East Asian can get attacked in one of the most liberal cities."*

> *"...if you think AAPIs are any higher on the totem pole than other minority groups, that's a joke. I live in the south and have known this all my life. We need to band together so we can become a voting bloc by the time the US becomes majority-minority. White people are afraid because they know the US demographics are changing and they will become a minority in the future. They will try to divide us further and make us turn against each other..."*

As time passed, comments of shock and awe eventually cascaded into calls to action for those in r/asianamerican. We see redditors implore others within their ethnic and racial communities to become more vigilant of their surroundings and begin mobilizing for their livelihoods.

> *"This country has been through some really rough times before... Minorities will survive, as we always have. Start organizing. Start resisting... The US government has a bunch of*

checks and balances to curb the power of the president... Educate yourself and leverage

those tools."

AAPIs also alluded to how they view the inaction of others in their community with respect to political apathy.

"Even more important is to actually get your ass in the streets and PARTICIPATE. Your

physical presence is more valuable than your money. For any Asian Americans who think

this isn't your problem or that you won't have it 'as bad' make no mistake that you're

next. You will never be white, you will never be seen as their equal, there is no amount of

education or assimilation or compliance that can ever make you white, you are taking

their jobs and you are NEXT. Do not delude yourselves for one second longer..."

Next, we contextualize AAPI involvement with the public sphere at large and explore the impact of the election on their ability to sustain a collective identity.

Collaboration toward collective action

Tensions in the conversations redditors have among each other manifest when talking about identity more at the individual and less so at the collective level. This may signal a shift for AAPIs becoming more gradually individualistic over time in comparison to previous generations of collectivist formations. Our data suggests that generational differences may contribute an added dimension to framing collective identity. For example, one redditor comments:

"It's sad how many Asian countries promote 'equality' on paper but in reality is more

sexist and patriarchal than many Western countries. The older generation argues that

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it's because of cultural values, but in reality why should we accept the fact that sons are

favoured over daughters?... I don't want to be overly critical but it's times like these that

really make me hate this culture, but I'm [also] glad the newer generation are taking... steps

to change this."

Post-election, redditors pleaded their community to engage in calls to action. In situating redditors

with motifs common to the AAPI struggle, redditors also signal calls to redefine their collective sense

of self and position in the American racial imaginary. Examining the ecologies of technology used

by AAPIs, such as Reddit, provides a more holistic picture on how they form and sustain a collective

identity among both themselves and alongside other social movements. For instance, the following

comments articulate identity work as deliberation, showing how redditors are trying to reconcile and

position their collective sense of AAPI identity to larger social movements:

"I think there is a real anxiety in activist circles with... getting people to... show up to

marches and protests on the ground. like, if you're organizing a group and about four

of your huge 200+ social media membership group shows up (which seems to be a

pretty common thing...) then what's even the point of organizing? on the flip side, I think

political radicalism is all a big continuum. thinkpieces work to push the conversation and

dialogue... towards more and more progressive lens... so while I do wish more folks show up,

I also think that this current dialogue on race is still new and fresh... these thinkpieces serve

a purpose into bringing folks more into the fold."

The examples we highlighted for portraying how AAPIs engage in identity work at the collective level

conceptualize collective identity as a process rather than a property. This demonstrates that action is a

necessary component for identity work to be sustained at the collective level.

4.5 Discussion

In this paper, we describe how AAPIs engaged in identity work online. In the discussion that follows, we share how their involvement with the public sphere, through expressions of solidarity, can lead to a social movement. We then provide recommendations for moderating behavior in online communities, as our results showed that moderators play an integral role in maintaining a healthy public sphere for identity work.

4.5.1 Transforming Identity Work into Collective Action

Sociologists have theorized the significance of a collective identity for shaping a social movement (Castells, 2007; Hunt and Benford, 1994; Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock, 1996; Snow, 2001). Hunt and Benford, in their analysis of peace and justice movements in the 1980s, posited that their participants channeled their identities as activities through the mode of storytelling. In doing so, they define the political playing field and other actors in it by becoming *aware, active, committed, and weary* (Hunt and Benford, 1994). Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock, 1996) extends their work by adding *subcultural* as a meso layer between individual and collective identities (Snow, 2001).

HCI research has also taken an interest in looking at the emergence of social movements in online contexts. Crivellaro and colleagues observed how community members appropriated the structural affordances of Facebook as a tool for political discussion and mobilization, as the Facebook page represented the political will of the citizens assembled on it (Crivellaro et al., 2014). Vlachokyriakos and colleagues have adopted an action research approach to understanding the solidarity economy of Greece as an experiment in direct democracy (Vlachokyriakos et al., 2017). When deliberation continued to

fall out of line with values of the public sphere, we observed moderators in r/asianamerican take action to restore the dialogue that may have been derailed or disrupted in a thread. Moderators return and reconnect the deliberation to the bigger picture of AAPI solidarity, particularly in the aftermath of a presidential election.

Our paper contributes the idea of identity work as a deliberative process. We link identity work as a discursive, political activity where all actors (redditors) involved acquire the means to interpret their understanding of AAPI in their own terms. What then, does this mean, with respect to designing online community spaces to support this kind of work?

4.5.2   Moderating Deliberation for Social Movements in Emergence

Social movements tend to develop within established groups and networks through the appropriation of the collective identity and solidary incentives on which the group rests. As our findings suggest that r/asianamerican is a growing social movement in the emerging stage of its development, we offer several recommendations for community moderators to be mindful of when shaping discourse of a social movement in its nascent stages:

1. *Direct redditors to speak for oneself and not on behalf of others.* When moderating contentious topics, interjecting the difference between an individual opinion and a generalization about a group of people adds clarity to the intent behind a comment and facilitates opportunities for empathy in discourse.

2. *Welcome other forms of collaborative identity work both within and beyond AAPI contexts.* Open signals for collaborative identity work allow people to engage with others in overlapping communities and make sense of the similarities, differences, and complexities of intersectional

identities.

3. *Improve visibility of community-generated rules.* Moderators can work alongside designers to
   improve how rules of each subreddit are accessed and displayed. For instance, linking (or hinting
   via tooltip) community rules right next to the Reddit Content Policy hyperlink in comment boxes
   may nudge a redditor to think twice about posting content that may not be appropriate for the
   community. Making community values explicit in sidebar descriptions may also improve the
   overall awareness of community norms and consequences for inappropriate behavior.

In demonstrating how moderators may enforce collectivist norms in online communities, our
work complements and expands quantitatively-driven design implications for Reddit moderation
and governance (Matias, 2016c) with insights for improving the quality of moderation in collectivist
contexts.

4.5.3   Limitations

We used the 2016 US Presidential Election as a case study for identity work to materialize relevant
themes from a deep dive of deliberation within a particular community. Our intent was not to produce
results generalizable across all AAPI communities.

4.6   Conclusion

We conceptualized Reddit as a public space where people come together to engage in collaborative
identity work as a public sphere through a process we call, "identity work as deliberation." We situate
our study during the 2016 US Presidential Election to capture a wide range of deliberation through

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which we can actively observe identity work and found that redditors engage in a multitude of strategies for maintaining values of inclusion, civility, and rationality. We analyze and discuss how the expression of identity, and thereby solidarity, in an online setting may shape collective action and lead to a social movement.

5

Identity Work within Moderation

5.1 Abstract: Moderation Practices as Emotional Labor in Sustaining Online Communities

We examine how and why Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) moderators on Reddit shape the norms of their online communities through the analytic lens of emotional labor. We conduct interviews with 21 moderators who facilitate identity work discourse in AAPI subreddits and present a thematic analysis of their moderation practices. We report on their challenges to sustaining moderation, which include burning out from volunteer work, navigating hierarchical structures, and balancing unfulfilled expectations. We then describe strategies that moderators employ to manage emotional labor, which involve distancing away from drama, building solidarity from shared struggles, and integrating an ecology of tools for self-organized moderation. We provide recommendations for improving moderation in online communities centered around identity work and discuss implications of emotional labor in the design of Reddit and similar platforms.

5.2   Background

While identity is often an individuated concept (Erikson, 1994; Giddens, 1991), for many people, identity is a social construct—that is, it is generated through perceived membership in a social group (Tajfel, 1974). In this view, who we are can be defined across a range of collective factors, such as social class, race, and ethnicity.

The ways in which we come to define our collective, social identities, however, can be complex (Stryker and Burke, 2000). Here, we focus our attention on the identity work—a collaborative process through which people negotiate their identities—engaged in by Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs). AAPIs live a rich and storied history through which their intersectional identities have developed over time (Lee, 2006; Pyke, 2010) and are interconnected across a range of demographic categories, diverse backgrounds, and multi-generational perspectives (Manalansan, 2000).

However, the composition of conflicting identities within the larger AAPI community is diverse and potentially problematic. For example, there have been well-documented tensions between people from different countries that comprise the AAPI identity, such as China and Japan (Maeda, 2012). Further complicating identity work is where AAPIs fall at the receiving ends of stereotypes that often manifest in inaccurate public perceptions, such as the model minority stereotype (Lee, 2015)—the cultural expectation that AAPIs are exemplary achievers and attain a higher degree of education and socioeconomic status in contrast to other minority groups (Lee, 2015)—and they are often "othered" as perpetual foreigners (Ng et al., 2007). This leads to us questioning how AAPIs engage in collective identity work in service of managing inter-group tensions and outer-group stereotypes.

Today, AAPIs have access to a range of online communities through which they can engage in collective identity work. In this paper, we explore the online identity work being engaged in by

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AAPIs whereby they are working to redefine their public identity, challenge existing stereotypes, and negotiate their diverse and often conflicting identities. Online communities provide the socio-technical infrastructure for people to engage in identity work, yet given the complexity of AAPI identity construction, understanding how these online spaces sustain these activities beyond Western contexts remains understudied.

To explore how online identity work spaces are sustained, we examine the role and daily practices of moderators on Reddit—a category of users who, unlike traditional users, engage in the work of mediating the interactions and activities of other members of their online communities (Lampe and Johnston, 2005; Lampe and Resnick, 2004). More specifically, we explore how they work toward sustaining the online community spaces (subreddits) through which collective identity is formed. Importantly, the practices they engage in are often in service of promoting pro-social behavior and limiting anti-social behavior. Their primary role is to develop productive social norms and mediate the interactions of users as a means of sustaining their online communities (Lampe and Johnston, 2005; Lampe and Resnick, 2004). This leads to examining the role moderators play in developing sustainable online communities through which identity work can be accomplished. To guide our study, we focus on the following research questions:

- **RQ3**: *How do online moderators shape the identity work of online communities?*

- **RQ4**: *What emerging properties collectively sustain an online community in AAPI contexts?*

Against this backdrop, we apply a lens that combines emotional labor (Hochschild, 1997, 2015), identity work (Erikson, 1994; Snow and McAdam, 2000), and public sphere deliberation (Habermas, 1984, 1991) to examine the visible and invisible practices of AAPI moderators on Reddit in service of sustaining their online communities.

5.3 Research Setting

5.3.1 Moderation Practices as Emotional Labor

Given the rich socio-historical context through which AAPIs engage in identity work, we are motivated to understand factors that sustain online community spaces like Reddit in the face of potential adversity and conflict. To explore this phenomenon, we draw on the conceptual framing of emotional labor. Hochschild defines emotional labor as *"the silent work of evoking and suppressing feeling—in ourselves and in others"* (Hochschild, 2015). Hochschild focused on the ways that workers in organizations regulate their emotions while interacting with a range of stakeholders, such as customers and superiors.

Recent scholarship has found that participation in modern sociotechnical systems involves various forms of emotional labor. For instance, dominant patriarchal structures in peer production systems like Wikipedia make it challenging for women editors to participate when they are constantly targeted by trolls or receiving unwanted sexual advances (Menking and Erickson, 2015); psychological constraints embedded in crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter disadvantage introverted personality types (Davidson and Poor, 2015); and demands to improve reputation ratings in ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft result in added work for drivers to please their passengers (Raval and Dourish, 2016). The proactive socialization of online volunteers remains essential for retaining their engagement (Halfaker et al., 2011). In building on this scholarship, we study how moderators of online communities engage in emotional labor in the context of identity work, and how such practices might serve as a way to sustain their communities.

Reddit relies on volunteer moderators to keep its platform active. Similar to users of other large-scale online communities, redditors that continue to visit the platform are increasingly exposed to sponsored advertisements that keep the company profitable (Vincent et al., 2018). In Hochschild's words,

"a commercial logic will penetrate deeper and deeper into what we used to think of as a private, psychological, sacred part of a person's self and soul" (Hochschild, 2015), the platform has been criticized for providing a fertile ground for breeding toxic online behavior that promotes misogyny and racism (Massanari, 2017). In its visible efforts to ban hate speech, Reddit closed down a number of prominent subreddits that violated its anti-harassment policy in 2015 (Chandrasekharan et al., 2017). Hochschild argues that during times of uncertainty, emotional laborers are most likely to sense an organization's "feeling rule" as socially shared norms that guide how people should try to feel (Hochschild, 1979). Hochschild uses the example of flight attendants and the outward positive performance they must uphold in front of airplane passengers (Hochschild, 2015). Based on the advertisements of airline companies that promise enjoyment to their clients, flight attendants are expected to greet passengers with a smile when they board a plane to prompt the way that "passengers ought to feel" (Hochschild, 2015). Hochschild draws on Goffman's work of the presentation of self (Goffman, 1978) to explain the dramaturgical demands of frontstage (visible to the audience) and backstage (invisible to the audience) behavior in the context of service sector jobs.

Emotional labor can be a highly visible, frontstage practice. In the case of Reddit, as feeling rules reflect patterns of social membership, moderators are taxed with the emotional labor involved in generating and enforcing shared norms with respect to how redditors should interact with each other. For example, most subreddits have a visible set of rules typically referenced in the sidebar of the subreddit, and moderators often engage with their communities in service of enforcing those rules. Thus, we see that the rules that become institutionalized within Reddit are actually institutionalized feeling rules.

5.3.2   Moderation on Reddit

Moderators play integral roles as volunteer stewards in shaping and enforcing the rules and norms of their community (Fiesler et al., 2018; Matias, 2016b). Any redditor can become a moderator by either creating their own subreddit or being invited by an existing moderator to moderate a subreddit. The latter may involve a vetting process which includes applying for a moderator position within the community and having one's post history reviewed by the moderation team. Per the 2018 Reddit user agreement,[1] moderating a subreddit is an unofficial, voluntary position.

Moderators have a range of controls for configuring the settings of their subreddits. They may edit stylesheets to change the subreddit's aesthetic, edit the rules page viewable by redditors, view traffic statistics of their subreddits over time, and manage items that are reported for review. Moderators are listed on the sidebar of their respective subreddit communities. Redditors may reach out to moderators through ModMail, a personal messaging tool that forwards inquiries to all moderators of a subreddit.

HCI and CSCW scholarship exploring moderation practices have looked at the quality control of user-generated content in health discussion boards like WebMD.com (Huh, 2015; Huh et al., 2016), tools for both deterring antisocial behavior and promoting content literary practices on the video streaming site Twitch (Gerber, 2017; Seering et al., 2017), and blocklist subscriptions for preventing online harassment on Twitter (Geiger, 2016; Jhaver et al., 2018a). More specific to Reddit, studies have also been conducted with Reddit moderators, exploring how they took part in collective action against the platform in the 2015 Reddit Blackout (Matias, 2016c), how they negotiated their contributions as civic participation (Matias, 2016b), how they foster discussion on topics of debate (Mano et al., 2018), and how they view their role in welcoming newcomers to rapidly growing subreddits (Kiene et al., 2016). Additional studies on Reddit have examined how its social voting design contributes to users

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[1]https://www.reddit.com/help/useragreement/

Table 5.1: Summary of moderation practices.

Code	Theme	Participant Total
Challenge	Burning out from volunteer work	6
Challenge	Navigating hierarchical structures	7
Challenge	Balancing unfulfilled expectations	3
Strategy	Distancing away from drama	12
Strategy	Building solidarity from shared struggles	21
Strategy	Integrating an ecology of tools for self-organized moderation	12

overlooking high-quality content (Gilbert, 2013), how users create throwaway accounts to protect their anonymity in sharing controversial opinions (Leavitt, 2015), and how it has become a place for users to self-disclose stigmatized issues (Andalibi et al., 2016; De Choudhury and De, 2014; Pavalanathan and De Choudhury, 2015; Vickery, 2014). Less is known about the day-to-day emotional costs involved with moderating behavior and the resulting practices, or labor, that contribute to the longevity or stagnation of an online community. To address this gap in scholarship, we investigate how moderators engage in the emotional labor that sets the stage for pro-social behavior.

5.4 Findings

We center our results on the emergent themes of emotional labor involved in the moderation practices of our participants. To answer RQ3, we report on challenges that arise in their meta moderation that shape the identity work of their online communities. To answer RQ4, we describe their moderation strategies for managing emotional labor and the underlying workarounds they employ to sustain their AAPI subreddits. We outline the moderation practices in Table 5.1.

5.4.1 Challenges of Meta Moderation

Here we describe challenges moderators face as manifested in emotional labor from meta moderation. Moderators engage in a range of meta practices—practices that exist outside of Reddit itself—as a means for fulfilling their duties as moderators, and in managing tensions within moderating teams. These challenges include: (1) burning out from volunteer work, (2) navigating hierarchical structures, and (3) balancing unfulfilled expectations.

Burning out from volunteer work

Six participants (P5, P7, P12, P13, P16, P18) disclosed feeling burned out, or exhausted, from their volunteer service as moderators at some point in their service. P12 notes how burnout caused by overwork or stress is a gendered issue for her moderation team.

> *"Sadly, we do get a lot of burnout, mostly through our female moderators. As far as keeping everything alive, we just keep moving forward. Try and encourage them. But, you know, it's tough."* (P12)

While moderators talk about burnout in different ways, some continued to serve their volunteer roles for the benefit of others. P16, an Indian American female in her twenties who moderates for r/desitwox (a subreddit devoted for Desi girls of the South Asian diaspora to talk about life, culture, fashion, and community) underpins the gravitas of keeping her community accessible for people like her, despite the emotional toil she endures to keep her subreddit alive.

> *"It's been a tiring job doing this for free and dealing with a lot of the shit that we've dealt with, and so now I kind of just mostly focus on r/desitwox and my private sub and just*

keeping the community going and keeping that space open for other girls who may be like

me." (P16)

The majority of participants who have experienced burnout in this study identified as female. These participants shared how they encountered harassment and misogynist comments directed either towards themselves or the redditors of the communities they moderate. Similar outcomes in volunteer roles have been found among female Wikipedia editors, which eventually influence the type of work the editors commit to serving in their volunteer roles (Menking and Erickson, 2015).

Navigating hierarchical structures

AAPIs hail from high context societies, such as those in the East, which are hierarchical in nature and emphasize honor and respect-based practices that maintain positive impressions both within interpersonal networks and outwardly in public (Hall, 1989; Semaan et al., 2017a; Zakaria et al., 2003). We continue to see hierarchical structures reinforced in the moderation practices of AAPI subreddits, where moderators may be provided different levels of access contingent on the roles they fulfill in each subreddit they moderate. P12 illustrates this point further among the moderation team of r/asianamerican.

> *"Yes, there's actually some hierarchy. The more tenured ones have full moderator powers*
>
> *that include banning. They have a lot more say in what we wanna do as a whole, from*
>
> *a meta standpoint. Then we have the newer mod permissions. It's more a support role.*
>
> *Mostly they're in charge of just looking out for threads."* (P12)

Hierarchical structures vary across moderation teams, and some teams found the hierarchy challenging to subvert. P7 notes how uneven levels of moderation access prevent moderators from

gaining complete control of a subreddit.

> *"Reddit's moderating structure makes it difficult to usurp power... The only way to usurp a*
>
> *moderator is by literally hacking their account."* (P7)

The power dynamics stemming from hierarchical moderation structures influence how moderators interact with one another. P9 reveals how hierarchical clashes between moderators may contribute to the formation of new subreddits.

> *"There's four [main moderators] who split from r/asianmasculinity [to create*
>
> *r/aznidentity] because we disagree with the moderation tactics of the top mod. We slowly*
>
> *moved the conversation from sexual dynamics into racial politics."* (P9)

Seven participants (P4, P5, P8, P9, P11, P13, P15) elaborated on their observations of AAPI subreddits and their history of fragmentation. According to the creation dates of AAPI subreddits in Table 3.2, r/asianamerican (a subreddit that aims to foster a sense of community among Asian Americans and their respective counterparts in the Asian diaspora) is one of the oldest subreddits created for AAPI identity work. P11, a Chinese American female in her twenties who moderates for r/asianamerican, provides a brief overview of allegiances and defections among AAPI subreddits.

> *"On our side of the issue would be r/asianamerican, r/asianfeminism, r/asiantwox,*
>
> *r/asianparentstories. Then all the other Asian communities on Reddit are some variation*
>
> *of r/asianmasculinity and r/aznidentity—those were actually splinter communities of*
>
> *r/asianamerican because they felt that the moderation of r/asianamerican was too harsh.*
>
> *Those people moved out of the community and created their own."* (P11)

As confirmed in our interviews, the r/asianamerican subreddit served as the central space for AAPIs to discuss a wide range of topics on Reddit, which later splintered off into smaller communities. Those

who repeatedly shared philosophical disagreements on the direction of r/asianamerican were banned or censored from the subreddit, thus creating splintered spin-offs for alternative discussion.

Balancing unfulfilled expectations

Three participants (P1, P4, P8) have experienced challenges in keeping pace with the demands redditors expect out of their subreddit moderators. Redditors grapple with maintaining values of the public sphere: inclusion, civility, and rationality (Habermas, 1984, 1991). Inclusion means that anyone can participate. Civility means that everyone must treat others with respect. Rationality means that people engage in reasoned argumentation and provide facts to support their claims. P1, an Indian American male in his twenties who moderates for r/abcdesis (a subreddit for members of the South Asian diaspora, colloquially referred to as American Born Confused Desis), feels caught in a dichotomy of doing both too much and too little moderation.

> *"It's always been a fine line to find balance. Sometimes we had users in the past they say*
> *we're Nazi mods, and then there's sometimes where we get criticized for not doing enough."*
> (P1)

Political differences among influential AAPI redditors also played a factor in the splintering of subreddits. P15, a Korean American male in his thirties who moderates for r/asianamerican, attributes political ideology as a factor for subreddits to splinter into smaller fringe groups. Previous research has shown that AAPI redditors engage differently between conservative and progressive online communities through a process conceptualized as identity work as deliberation (Dosono et al., 2017b).

> *"There was a split within r/asianmasculinity where a bunch of people were kicked out.*
> *Those people went on to form r/aznidentity. It had to do with the amount of labor that was*

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being invested and personal vendettas, also political differences." (P15)

In light of the evident splintering within AAPI subreddits, P8, a Chinese Canadian male in his twenties who moderates for r/aznidentity (a subreddit that prioritizes the discussion of issues, ideas, and policy that affects the lives of Asians who live in Western society), recognized how newer moderators work to change the culture left behind by older moderators.

> *"Our older moderators were in favor of more fringe topics that might not really get*
>
> *much praise, whereas newer moderators are more in favor of more moderate topics that*
>
> *everybody likes to discuss."* (P8)

Moderators are also aware of the increasing importance emotionality plays in online discourse, particularly when facilitating contentious deliberation. P8 became conscientious of how moderation is interconnected with the moods of people browsing the subreddit at that point in time.

> *"[We are] balancing the type of extremist posts with moderate posts and positive and*
>
> *negative kind of post material. Because I realize as a large subreddit, the type of topics*
>
> *that we have on our front page can affect people's moods."* (P8)

Despite their shortcomings, moderators have come to accept the thankless nature of their roles. Outside of their moderation team, moderators hardly receive any gratitude for the emotional labor they invest in their community. P4, a Vietnamese American male in his twenties who moderates for r/gaysian (a subreddit for LGBTQ members of the AAPI community) compares redditors as children of a subreddit family, with moderators serving a largely unappreciated—yet important—parental role in the development of the subreddit.

> *"You can't please everybody and everybody wants something different, but they're all*
>
> *children about it."* (P4)

While moderators play a key role in maintaining and upholding values of the public sphere through meta moderation, we find that they do not feel fully appreciated by members of their subreddits, which may negatively affect the recruitment and retention of moderation teams.

5.4.2   Moderation Strategies to Manage the Stress of Emotional Labor

In this section, we describe the strategies moderators employ to manage the emotional stress manifest in moderation work. These strategies include: (1) distancing away from drama, (2) building solidarity from shared struggles, and (3) integrating an ecology of tools for self-organized moderation.

Distancing away from drama

Twelve participants (P3, P4, P5, P7, P9, P11, P13, P14 P15, P16, P20, P21) shared their experiences of observing drama unfold within their online communities. P18, a Chinese American female in her twenties who moderates for r/asiantwox (a subreddit dedicated to Asian women—the 'TwoX' refers to the XX chromosomes that determine the sex of an individual), describes how she has become desensitized to threatening messages over the tenure of her moderation.

> *"It is a ton of emotional labor, but I've forced myself to detach a lot. For example, we got*
>
> *like a super, super threatening message in the ModMail the other day, and I thought it was*
>
> *kind of funny, so I shared it with a friend. She was horrified. She was like, 'I'm so sorry.*
>
> *Wow, I can't believe you had to read that.' I was like, 'Oh... I thought it was kind of funny.'*
>
> *I just have to emotionally divorce myself, otherwise, it'd be too much."*   (P18)

P11 also reveals how she separated herself from drama that unfolds in her subreddit by not intervening in drama.

"Lots of drama happened in these subreddits, of which I wasn't that related to, but it just

convinced me that it was not a community that I wanted to invest more time in... I needed

to step back." (P11)

While discussions on Reddit have the capacity to be interesting and meaningful, not all interactions on Reddit are productive. P12 has repeated observed the futility of arguing with anonymous people online, particularly redditors who are not open to listening to opposing perspectives or having their worldviews challenged.

"I don't really directly respond because I know, like at this point... some of those guys'

minds are already made up and they're not gonna change them. I just kinda, like,

downvote, roll my eyes, get a little annoyed, and then just move on." (P12)

Moderators are acutely aware of how their responses to incendiary dialogue can impact the emotional labor behind their moderation. P14, a Thai American female in her thirties who moderates for r/asiantwox, illustrates that avoiding antagonistic redditors serve as an effective means of strategic distancing.

"There some very aggressive antagonistic people and I don't want to attack them, I don't

want them tracking me down because I'm not high profile, but I can be found and I don't

want that." (P14)

Experienced moderators tend to distance themselves from unnecessary drama that pervades their subreddits, as the visible work that comes from dealing with drama is not worth their emotional labor. Our empirical evidence draws parallels to Hochschild's work on emotional labor, whereby the suppression of emotions are felt but not expressed (Hochschild, 2015).

Building solidarity from shared struggles

All 21 interview participants experienced microaggressions—indirect, subtle, or unintentional discriminatory exchanges against members of a marginalized group (Sue et al., 2007a,b)—on Reddit targeted either toward them or members of their community. P8 describes how microaggressions have a long-term effect on how AAPIs may view themselves and those similar to them.

> *"Think about the huge and ever-growing list of lies against Asians: dog eaters, small*
>
> *penises, hated by women, no human rights, organ harvesting, Tibetan genocide, Mao's*
>
> *genocide, Tiananmen Square massacre, uncreative copycats, etc. What is there to be*
>
> *proud of? These Asians get brainwashed into hating themselves."* (P8)

Beyond comments that hint at casual slights, moderators also expressed their interactions with redditors who spew blatant racial biases, discriminatory remarks, and other forms of harassment. Instead of directly responding to the attacks targeted toward them, moderators vented their frustrations internally to their moderation teams as a means of seeking social support. P16 illustrates how this process of support seeking develops friendship among a team of moderators.

> *"I kind of started meeting some other Asian women and we kind of started realizing that,*
>
> *'Hey, this harassment that we're facing, we're not the only ones.' We reached out to each*
>
> *other, 'Oh, you're getting this, too? Oh, these are the same people.' I've formed friendships."*
> (P16)

In response to microaggressions and harassment, moderators form solidarity with others in the larger AAPI community by connecting and welcoming redditors to newly created subreddits that address a community need. P16 shares the motivations behind her creation of r/desitwox and how moderators who believed in her vision rallied around her and volunteered to grow her subreddit.

"With r/desitwox, one of the mods was like, 'Hey, I really want space for Desi girls, because r/abcdesis is very male-dominated.' We were like, 'Why don't we carve out a space for ourselves?' By that time, I had already had experience with the other subs, so I was like, 'Oh, I'll help run some of the automoderator' and that's how it came about." (P16)

P17, a mixed-race male in his forties who moderates for r/hapas (a subreddit with a reputation for sparking controversial topics among those who identify with half-Asian ancestry), articulates the way he intervenes in guiding contentious and gendered microaggressions surrounding dating within the AAPI community.

"I didn't like banning the Asian males because I kind of had a sense of camaraderie for them. But then I also understood, I could kind of see how they were, it was a little bit of a crowd out and sometimes we had to just cut down the numbers somehow tactfully so that actual Hapas had more of a voice in their own sub." (P17)

Here we see P17 engage in emotional labor in negotiating the need for camaraderie with the need for representation, performing invisible work in banning Asian male redditors who were drowning out the voices of Hapa individuals through microaggressive comments.

Moderators like P9 are willing to put aside their personal differences to see AAPI subreddits more united than divided, underscoring the need for the community to stand in solidarity for issues larger than the feuds between AAPI subreddits.

"We all want the same thing, no matter how much we hate each other, we should just squash the beef. I forgive." (P9)

As microaggressions have the potential to be internalized by those that encounter them on a daily basis (Sue et al., 2007b), moderators play an important role in creating opportunities for solidarity by

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building online spaces that counter disparaging stereotypes surrounding their AAPI identity. These spaces allow AAPIs to reframe how they perceive themselves in the larger narrative of society and allow moderators to reclaim their sense of purpose from the emotional labor invested in their online communities.

Integrating an ecology of tools for self-organized moderation

Bricolage is the act of choosing tools at hand in order to develop solutions that enable agency (Weick et al., 2008). Twelve participants (P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P9, P11, P13, P16, P18, P19, P21) engaged in bricolage whereby they assembled an ecology of technologies together as a means of building capacity for moderation work. The Reddit platform lacks a range of features that moderators need to perform their activities, and we find that moderators self-organize to develop agency for moderation work. A common strategy among moderators is to relegate private communication channels for steering the direction of the subreddit to platforms like GroupMe and Discord, as Reddit's private messaging platform has been described as less usable. P11 shares how she works with her moderation team to make decisions backstage in a private Slack channel invisible to their subreddit.

> *"We have a team of five to seven people who are somewhat active. We all sit in a Slack channel. Usually, if people don't know what to do about a comment, whether they should allow it or not, they'll ask other mods. We kind of go on a consensus basis, although we sort of divide our team into full mods and support mods."* (P11)

As illustrated by P11, moderation teams piece together subtasks (i.e., remove comments, ban users) in their coordinated practices that require human intervention. For tasks that can be automated, moderators may resort to using AutoModerator,[2] a customizable bot that monitors new and edited

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[2] https://www.reddit.com/wiki/automoderator

comments in subreddits and acts on them as needed. Bots can be configured to detect, flag, and remove content regarded as offensive, inappropriate, or rule-breaking; post regular community discussion threads; and alert moderators if certain types of content are posted.

> *"I would say 50% to 70% of the work is done by u/automoderator. When there's a post that auto mod took down, it'll message us, and we can look at it and be like, 'This is actually fine,' or, 'No. This does need to go."* (P11)

Our participants also described ways in which they have customized their Reddit routines to improve their ability to moderate their subreddits more effectively. P2 explains how he uses a third party browser extension to annotate private notes about a redditor's post history, which remains unseen by the redditor.

> *"People don't realize that as mods we have this toolbar where we can post notes about individual users. We can say, 'Over here he was trolling, or over here, he was trying to bait someone."'* (P2)

P16 notes how the users of its subreddit took it upon themselves to improve their experience with using Reddit.

> *"I wish Reddit itself would have those kinds of tools integrated into the platform, but they don't. The toolbar, auto mod, all that stuff, it's not actually Reddit who created those kinds of things. It's users who created it and made it better."* (P16)

In implementing a bricolage of tools to facilitate their moderation practices, moderators engage in invisible work that does not get seen by the broader subreddit.

5.5   Discussion

In the following section, we discuss the costs of emotional labor within collectivist cultures and suggest how practices of moderation constitute a form of emotionally taxing volunteer work. We then provide implications for designing for emotional labor, what we coin as designing for sustained volunteerism, to improve how the work of moderation happens in Reddit and similar platforms.

5.5.1   Costs of Emotional Labor

As illustrated in our findings, the work moderators engage in is personally emotional, and they encounter threats to their personal privacy and wellbeing. The longevity of online communities rests on the backs of the moderators who have a significant emotional investment in the online spaces in which they are embedded. This is especially important given the personal risks associated with engaging in this kind of work, which we explore next.

Risking personal safety and wellness for the social good

Recent research has looked at how paid commercial content moderators are contracted for employment by social media companies to flag and remove inappropriate content from the platform (Roberts, 2014). These platforms need human agents to sift through and evaluate vast quantities of user-generated content that have been reported by community members for review. Companies have historically exploited the volunteer labor of their workers in order to maximize profits, and this bottom line ethos has also been evident in Reddit's well-documented history of corporate mismanagement (Matias, 2016b,c). Platforms with smaller revenue streams lack the financial resources to compensate their content moderators and depend on volunteers to take on the burden of moderation without compensation.

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While platforms are experimenting with ways in which moderation tasks can be automated, current filtering mechanisms are coarse and still in need of refinement to detect inappropriate content and halt abusive behavior of bad actors (Ríos et al., 2012). The work of human moderators cannot scale and is not well-equipped to review content for extended periods of time. Inconsistent moderation limits the ability of community members to understand the bounds of acceptable behavior and does little to guide individual actions.

When moderators ban redditors or delete content from their subreddits, their actions may be subject to scrutiny by dissenting community members. Angry redditors may escalate their retribution in a way they perceive as justified harassment, abuse, or doxing that jeopardize the character or safety of the moderator (Blackwell et al., 2018). Moreover, since moderators are subject to rote and monotonous tasks in their moderation workflow, they are constantly exposed to disturbing content that may have long-term effects on their mental health. The lack of a standard definition of harassment across current social media platforms (Pater et al., 2016) pose additional hurdles to designing moderation tools that work across multiple platforms.

Despite such personal costs, moderators can empower themselves to be viewed as social entrepreneurs, such that in moderating identity work spheres, moderators are working to improve the social good of the platform. For instance, the relationship between Reddit moderators and Reddit administrators (paid company staff) can be improved, as most female participants felt that Reddit administrators can take a stronger stance against the issue of harassment on the platform. Thus, moderators—the minority of any subreddit—take it upon themselves to manage the emotional labor that sustains their community.

Saving face in online collectivist spaces

AAPIs hail from cultures that function in "high context," that is, cultures that uphold a system of values that prioritize the identity of the group over the identity of the individual (Hall, 1989; Zakaria et al., 2003). High context societies, such as those in the East, are hierarchical in nature and emphasize honor and respect-based practices that maintain positive impressions (i.e., "saving face" (Huang et al., 2011; Semaan et al., 2017a)) both within interpersonal networks and outwardly in public space (Hall, 1989). For instance, traditional high context cultures view negative impressions of individuals as a direct reflection of their entire family (Chan, 2017; Iwamoto and Liu, 2010; Iwamoto et al., 2013; Sung et al., 2015).

Online communities like Reddit function as identity work spheres—public spheres that provide a space for the enactment of collective identity work—because they allow AAPIs to create anonymous profiles that are detached from their identity in the real world. In navigating values from Eastern to Western societies (Semaan et al., 2017a), the process by which redditors move from a collective identity to an individual identity makes for an interesting complication of identity work. While low context societies like the United States embrace values of individuality, openness, and free speech, AAPIs often retain their cultural values even after immigrating to Western countries (Chan, 2005), complicating their identity work across the continuum of collectivist to individualistic norms (Hwang et al., 2003).

On Reddit, AAPI spaces reify collectivist norms from offline to online contexts. Collectivism and humility—two separate factors listed in Kim's (Kim et al., 1999) Asian Values Scale—persist within the moderation practices of AAPI subreddits. For instance, AAPI moderators serve an integral role in continuously "saving face" (Goffman, 2005; Huang et al., 2011) or managing impressions of the subreddit. This, in turn, maintains the integrity of a collective identity to outside observers (Hwang,

1987). In speaking individually with AAPI Reddit moderators, we also perceived notions of humility absorbed and exuded through their volunteer roles. They often credited the work of their holistic moderation team instead of seeking singular recognition. Developers of online community platforms similar to Reddit should take into account their users' adherence to cultural values when designing new mechanisms to facilitate moderation.

5.5.2 Opportunities for Sustainable Volunteerism

The activities being engaged in by moderators are a form of volunteerism (Hsieh et al., 2013), which is a pro-social behavior whereby people engage in activities that promote the social good (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986). Previous research in HCI and CSCW has looked at how digital volunteers, particularly during crisis, will become an increasingly important feature of social life (Cobb et al., 2014; Starbird and Palen, 2011). However, in the context of crisis situations, digital volunteer work may not last too long given that after a crisis has ended, people return to their routine lives. In the context of Reddit, moderation (and thus volunteerism) can become habituated. In relation to the sharing economy, moderation can be viewed as a service in a growing economy of emotional labor. Here, we propose design criteria to support sustained volunteerism in connection with the emotional labor involved.

Empowering moderators through visible social support

Recent HCI and CSCW research has investigated the online experience and disclosure of vulnerable and stigmatized identities. Andalibi and colleagues have looked at the various types of sensitive self-disclosures made on the photo-sharing platform Instagram, finding that emotional, network, and esteem support were discussed in greater frequencies than informational and instrumental support (Andalibi et al., 2017). Rho and colleagues analyzed anonymized Facebook disclosures of students

enrolled in elite universities who identified with low socioeconomic status, discovering that the structural

affordances of social network sites can provide restorative properties among its users that foster a sense

of belonging and enable opportunities for action, reflection, and communication (Rho et al., 2017).

Social support brings positive benefits to those who seek it, as it decreases stress, helps develop coping

skills, improves mental health, and increases the overall quality of life (Eysenbach et al., 2004; O'Leary

et al., 2017; White and Dorman, 2001). However, in cultures embedded with collectivist values,

seeking support in public settings is frowned upon because it reflects poorly on the collective identity

of the family and community (Semaan et al., 2017a). As visible work is highly emotional and politically

charged, providing social support to moderators in the form of community affirmations (e.g., making a

sitewide announcement for Moderator Appreciation Day every July 1st) may raise awareness of their

contributions and validate their experiences through added recognition from their subreddit.

Developing moderation tools with emotional affect in mind

Dourish describes how the immaterial, virtual world has implications on the material, lived experiences

of people (Dourish, 2017). In threading the perspective and lived experiences of our participants,

we notice their personal investment and emotional labor in online spaces are adversely impacted in

the material, "real world." Future research along these lines anticipates how we may consider various

features of socio-materiality—such as heft, time, and resilience—in relation to moderation.

As volunteers consume their spare time moderating online communities (the mode reported in our

dataset was 2-3 hours spent per day on Reddit), they implement an assemblage of material strategies to

streamline and automate their moderation tasks. However, automation lacks an emotional dimension,

and exploring the development of automated tools through an emotional labor lens may provide

designers with insights for ways to generate empathy with emotionally-enhanced tools. Moderation

tools, like bots for instance, are embedded with the values of a group (Long et al., 2017), and reinforce positive or toxic behavior. As Reddit bots are scripted to provide mechanical feedback on various output fields like comments or private messages, interjecting emotion in the form of linguistic mimicry (Otterbacher et al., 2017) may aid in guiding dialogue that is more open to authentic, empathic responses, resulting in less emotional labor for moderators.

5.5.3   Limitations

Our sample of participants who moderate for AAPI subreddits may not necessarily represent the experience of moderators on other online platforms that operate on a different set of identity management affordances and privacy norms. Similar to the nature of interview studies in qualitative research (Leung, 2015), the goal of this work is not to produce generalizability, but rather to study a specific phenomenon in a focused context.

5.6   Conclusion

People increasingly turn to online communities for shaping their identity work. While current research trends consider the role of algorithms in shaping how information is disseminated, human moderators also invest emotional labor to manage how information is shared within their communities, and further work along these lines should explore opportunities for sustainable digital volunteerism. As much of this work is unseen, little is known about the experiences of the people doing this work, and this qualitative study sheds light on the experiences of a subset of moderators engaged in largely invisible work. This paper illuminates the underreported experiences of AAPIs who are themselves engaging in identity work within their moderation practices.

6
Identity Work for Decolonization

6.1 Abstract: Collective Resilience of AAPI Communities on Reddit

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities are using online platforms like Reddit to build capacity for resilience from white hegemony. We conducted interviews with 21 moderators of AAPI subreddits to understand how sociotechnical systems contour and contribute to the marginalization of online communities. We examine marginalization through the analytic framework of decolonization and uncover the threats and tactics that AAPI redditors encounter and employ to decolonize their collective identity. We find that moderators of AAPI subreddits develop collective resilience within their online communities by reclaiming space to confront brigade invasion, recording collective memory to circumvent systemic erasure, and revising cultural narratives to deconstruct colonial mentality.

6.2 Background

Marginalization is the process of excluding a particular group of people to the periphery of society by denying them of their voice, identity, or place in it (Sibley, 2002; Trudeau and McMorran, 2011). Individuals and groups can be marginalized on various dimensions of their identity, such as their race, gender, or socioeconomic status. One of the ways marginalization is normalized in society is through cultural hegemony—a system of ideas, practices, and social relations that permeate the institutional and private domains of society (Gramsci, 2009). For example, the institution of race-based slavery and the Jim Crow system of legalized segregation by skin color was visibly enforced in the US until the 1960s (Artz and Murphy, 2000; Omi and Winant, 2014). While white male perspectives have historically dominated cultural discourse as the current demographic majority in America, marginalized identities are increasingly challenging Western patriarchal tenets in their identity work (Haraway, 2006), particularly in sociotechnical systems like online communities and social media.

Online communities provide the infrastructure for people to engage in identity work—a collaborative process through which people negotiate their identities (Snow, 2001). Despite opportunities for information and communication technologies (ICTs) to expand access to information and enable democratic change within society (Christensen, 2011), marginalized identities continue to experience oppression (Gray, 2012), exclusion (Robnett and Feliciano, 2011), and harassment (Blackwell et al., 2017) within sociotechnical systems. In this study, we draw attention to the sociotechnical implications of marginalization among a historically understudied group: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs).

Despite their lack of representation in mainstream American media (Zhang, 2010), AAPIs have found viral success in online platforms that allow them to upload and distribute creative content for

public consumption without relying on traditional media platforms like television and radio (Guo and Lee, 2013). For example, AAPIs use YouTube to discuss pertinent issues salient to their identity, such as Asian male masculinity in sports (Yep, 2012), adversity in breaking through the music industry (Jung, 2014), gender fluidity in Bollywood dancing (Khubchandani, 2016), romantic relationships (Chun, 2013), and contemporary racial incidents as a public sphere (Balance, 2012). While they have experienced a meteoric rise in visibility on YouTube, AAPIs who lack an organic audience of subscribers can also engage in pseudonymous online platforms like Reddit as a means of provoking controversial and earnest conversations about their identity (Dosono and Semaan, 2018). Given the complex ethnic identities that are situated within the larger AAPI umbrella (Espiritu, 1992; Hall-Lew and Wong, 2014), studying a pan-ethnic identification that shares a set of marginalized histories—such as a legacy of colonization—accentuates the emergent challenges AAPIs face as a collective and how they are using sociotechnical systems in their identity work to shift society's perceptions of them.

AAPIs engaged in online identity work may be doing so to redefine their public facing identity, to challenge existing stereotypes, and to negotiate their diverse and often conflicting identities (Dosono and Semaan, 2018). The design of online platforms in the United States assume and privilege the expression of whiteness as the default racial identity over other racial identities (Kanjere, 2018; Steinfeldt et al., 2010), and in doing so, normalize which narratives become mainstream. As white hegemony continues to pervade online communities organized by and for people of color, examining identity work discourse through a decolonization lens brings to light how marginalized people build resilience within their online communities. We draw upon indigenous scholarly articulations of decolonizing pedagogy (Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Smith, 2013), to operationalize decolonization as a process that aims to "*create a sense of the complexity of colonial oppression and how it is systematically exercised*" (Iseke-Barnes, 2008). Whereas resilience in crisis and trauma contexts refers to the practices people develop to bounce

back from disruption (Semaan et al., 2016; Wildavsky, 2017), this paper examines how people using Reddit are building resilience through the ability to routinely decolonize their identities.

To guide our study, we focus on the following research questions:

- **RQ5**. How do sociotechnical systems contour and contribute to the identity work of marginalized communities?

- **RQ6**. What ecology of technologies are AAPIs using as a means to sustain and decolonize a collective identity?

We conducted interviews with 21 moderators of AAPI subreddits to understand how the design of such sociotechnical systems enables and shapes marginalization. We examine marginalization through the analytic framework of decolonization and focus attention to the emerging practices moderators develop to resist threats of white hegemony within their online communities. We then present our findings in the form of decolonizing tactics as collective resilience.

6.2.1 Colonization as Systemic Marginalization: From Sociohistorical to Sociotechnical Contexts

From a sociohistorical perspective, colonization involved the enslavement, rape, and genocide of indigenous peoples (Adas, 1998). While colonization has occurred globally, colonial forces have had a particularly severe impact on nations within the Asian continent. Western powers sought foreign lands as resource-rich spaces for conquest and exploitation (Adas, 1998). One product of colonization is the erasure, and thus marginalization, of indigenous cultures. For instance, the East Asian nation of Macau and Southeast Asian nations of Cambodia and the Philippines were colonized by the Western imperialist powers of Portugal, France, and Spain, respectively (Adas, 1998). Here, through colonization, people's

indigenous identities were erased and thus marginalized; colonial subjects were denied the right to vote and were often deprived of the rights of full citizens (Immerwahr, 2019). To focus our literature review, we delve into sociohistorical scholarship that explains how colonization operates in the context of invasion, erasure, and cultural revision.

Imperialist powers, or colonists, often deploy military force to invade nations for a number of reasons, broadly with the intent of conquering economic resources, liberating control over a territory, or changing established governments (Adas, 1998). Importantly, colonization has potentially destructive ramifications on the lives of those who are colonized. For example, in 1947, Great Britain forced a partition of India into the two separate dominions of India and Pakistan, creating an overwhelming refugee crisis by displacing over 14 million people along religious lines (Pandey, 2001). Similar divisions have been drawn in other countries, such as the Syrian occupation in Lebanon (1976-2005), Iraq's invasion of Kuwait (1990), and more (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe, 2007). In 2003, the US invaded Iraq under the premise of disarming weapons of mass destruction and found no such weapons (Chen, 2010); over hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties resulted at the conclusion of the Iraq War (Kean, 2011). Systemic conflict, much of which relates to perceptions of identity (i.e., India as mostly Hindu versus Pakistan which is mostly Muslim), is a direct result of imperialism and colonization.

Contemporary discourse of Asian Americans centers on immigration and citizenship (Lowe, 1996; Volpp, 2005). In the 1850s, the Chinese migrated to California to work in the goldmines and railroads. Japanese immigrants first arrived in the Pacific Northwest in the 1880s, when Anti-Chinese sentiment grew and created demands for new immigrant labor. In 1898, the United States acquired the Philippines from Spain as a territory at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War, which prompted a wave of Filipino migration to Hawaii and California (Lowe, 1996; Volpp, 2005). As Asian Americans continued to take on manual labor for lesser wages than their white counterparts, Anti-Asian resentment

accumulated over the early twentieth century. Eventually, the US Congress passed legislation (Asiatic

Barred Zone Act of 1917) that prevented the immigration of people of Asian origin (Lee, 2003).

While immigration quotas were eventually lifted (Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965) (Chin and

Villazor, 2015), a pattern of restriction and alienation persisted for the rest of the twentieth century in

different contexts, such as the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II (Nagata, 1990).

Pacific Islanders contend with a different past of colonialism, sovereignty, and imperialism in the

United States (Hau'Ofa, 1993). Guam, an island in the Pacific Ocean, was acquired as a territory

of the US after the Spanish American War, and consequently, natives of Guam became Americans

with no political voice during elections and other policy matters. On a similar note, Native Hawaiians

became Americans at the turn of the twentieth century without any declaration of war—the Kingdom

of Hawaii became a US protectorate after it had been overthrown by the US citizens who resided

there. While the sociohistorical migration and statehood contexts of Pacific Islanders differ from their

Asian American analogs, their reception in the contiguous US was met with similar experiences of

exploitation. In sociological literature, Hau'Ofa critiques a belittling, yet prevailing notion scholars have

about Islanders: "*in this view, the small island states and territories of the Pacific, that is, all of Polynesia

and Micronesia, are much too small, too poorly endowed with resources, and too isolated from the

centers of economic growth for their inhabitants ever to be able to rise above their present condition

of dependence on the largess of wealthy nations*" (Hau'Ofa, 1993). While Asia and the Pacific may

seem geographically separated, the two global regions indeed share an interlocking history of militarized

invasion and imperialism by Western powers (Shigematsu and Camacho, 2010).

With the Asian diaspora continuing to spread across North America toward the end of the twentieth

century, AAPIs have consequentially grown to become the fastest growing immigrant group in the

United States (Hoeffel et al., 2012). According to a 2017 social and demographic trend report by

the Pew Research Center, the Asian population in the United States grew 72% between 2000 and 2015 (from 11.9 million to 20.4 million), which marks the fastest growth rate of any major racial or ethnic group (López et al., 2017). However, AAPIs as a collective identity are at the receiving end of stereotypes that often manifest in inaccurate public perceptions, such as the model minority stereotype (Lee, 2015), and are often "othered" as perpetual foreigners (Ng et al., 2007). Beyond issues of immigration, members of the AAPI population have highly variable levels of both income and educational attainment that remain largely invisible when looking at AAPIs in aggregate (Holland and Palaniappan, 2012). For example, while the majority of East Asian ethnic groups report relatively higher median household incomes in the US Census, those with the lowest median household incomes are Southeast Asian groups with large refugee populations that have been recently resettled in America. Thus, the myth that AAPIs are well-off and do not need assistance may actually do more harm than good (Chou and Feagin, 2015; Lee, 2015; Moraga and Anzaldúa, 2015; Wong et al., 1998).

America's racial outlook will continue to diversify over time (Passel and Cohn, 2011), and AAPI community leaders are drawing attention to the need to retrieve, analyze, and share data on AAPIs to address masked needs within AAPI ethnic subgroups. For instance, a study published by the National Institutes of Health recommended that national surveys should oversample AAPIs to ensure representation across the six largest subgroups of the country of origin, and that sampling should recognize the wide range of socioeconomic status and demographic characteristics among AAPI subgroups (Holland and Palaniappan, 2012). AAPI community leaders argue that the disaggregation of data matters because AAPIs boast highly variable levels of both income and educational attainment that remain largely invisible in aggregated data (Maramba, 2011). While AAPIs have historically been targets of discrimination, they also find themselves situated in an ever-evolving and increasingly complex racial environment that extends to online spaces.

6.2.2   Sociotechnical Systems as Colonizing Machinations

While the political history of decolonization has been discussed across a number of comprehensive texts, discourse on decolonization has only been recently explored within the field of social computing (Dourish and Mainwaring, 2012; Irani et al., 2010). Irani and colleagues (Irani et al., 2010) operationalize postcolonial computing as a paradigm to analyze the transferring of technological knowledge in an increasingly connected and global world. That is, the postcolonial lens on computing, and specifically, postcolonial design perspectives, illustrates how technology, such as online spaces, are designed by people with certain values and perspectives. Designers often design top-down for cultures as a "problem to be solved" (Baumer and Silberman, 2011). Dourish and Mainwaring describe concerns of the colonial intellectual tradition of ubiquitous computing as an ethical, pragmatic, and conceptual problem; they argue that the colonial impulse in technology denies agency from non-dominant perspectives, lacks reflexivity, and operates through narrow limitations of innovation (Dourish and Mainwaring, 2012). When online spaces are created by groups that privilege certain identities, hegemony and normativity are reified by design and serve to marginalize through technology.

Critics of postcolonial computing argue that its conceptualization is blind to racial formations and silent on issues of reparations (Ali, 2016). Ali calls for adopting a "decolonial computing" perspective in lieu of a postcolonial perspective; as a critical project, decolonial computing "*is about interrogating who is doing computing, where they are doing it, and, thereby, what computing means both epistemologically (that is, in relation to knowing) and ontologically (that is, in relation to being)*" (Ali, 2016). Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith further problematizes the dialectics of postcolonial scholarship in the context of academic research. Per Smith, "*naming the world as 'post-colonial' is, from indigenous perspectives, to name colonialism as finished business... There is rather compelling evidence*

that in fact this has not occurred" (Smith, 2013).

While colonization is often explored with respect to the countries that were colonized, the effects of colonization migrate to other contexts. That is, even in the United States, AAPIs continue to be plagued by a longstanding history of colonialism, creating conflict with respect to how people enact and internalize their identities in their present environment (Immerwahr, 2019). For example, cosmetic products that promote lighter skin enforce beauty ideals of white bodies (Hunter, 2007).

When examined through structures of race, decolonization aims to center non-Western perspectives located at the margins of the racial world system. According to Smith, "*decolonization, once viewed as the formal process of handing over the instruments of government, is now recognized as a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power*" (Smith, 2013). Per Ali, scholarship on race and the internet remains largely Eurocentric in orientation, obscuring the dark underside of modernity that is coloniality (Ali, 2014). Colonial education has even culminated in psychological, emotional, and material trauma (Matias, 2016a). Colonization problematizes identity work because the colonized are conditioned to believe they are different and, therefore, intellectually inferior. Put simply, decolonization is a way of talking openly about whose stories get told, whose faces get seen, and whose ideas get amplified.

Cultural hegemony and erasure are also forms of control and colonization (Huvila, 2011). In 2018, the blogging site Tumblr enacted a platform-wide ban on adult content in an attempt to curb child pornography content, and in doing so, limited young women and queer-identifying individuals who relied on the site to explore their gender identity and sexuality (Bromwich and Van Syckle, 2018). Individuals of various online communities expressed valid concerns for preventing their online platforms from suffering similar fates of erasure. Those involved in writing online fan fiction, for example, have developed their own archive with design norms influenced by accessibility, inclusivity, and identity

(Fiesler et al., 2016). Just as historical archives are recorded in the perspective of the colonizer, the study of decolonization remains marginal in the general American history curriculum. As summarized by Smith, "*there is still unfinished business, that we are still being colonized (and know it), and that we are still searching for justice*" (Smith, 2013). Thus, activist scholarship in decolonization seeks to direct attention to the silenced and the unheard.

6.2.3   Decolonizing Tactics as Collective Resilience

Resilience is manifested in a variety of situations. In life disruptions, such as getting diagnosed with a disease, struggling through a divorce, experiencing job loss, or becoming homeless (Massimi et al., 2012), people typically undergo a period of adjustment, and aspects that people take for granted, such as routines, relationships, and roles, can change immensely (Schlossberg, 1995). As more people have access to an ecology of ICTs, we can better study how ICTs aid in building resilience—the collective set of practices people develop to bounce back from disruption (Mark and Semaan, 2008). Transpiring from crisis research, scholarship has increasingly used the theme of resilience to examine overlapping themes between disaster recovery and ICTs (Mark and Semaan, 2008; Palen and Liu, 2007; Vieweg et al., 2010). Here, we shift our emphasis on resilience to the collective practices AAPI redditors enact to routinely decolonize their identities.

The term "decolonization" broadly refers to the transition from a world of colonial empires to nation-states in the years following World War II (Betts and Betts, 2004; Jansen and Osterhammel, 2017; Kennedy, 2016). Projects of decolonization are undertaken by marginalized communities of color in different ways. Indigenous communities in North America coordinate activism that builds mass popular support around Indigenous sovereignty among urban non-natives through community

panels, film festivals, and circulation of literature (Walia, 2012). African Americans have strategized Black Power programs as a way to gain control of ghettos policed by white bureaucratic forces (Blauner, 1969). The Latin American community draws upon perspectives of their political advocacy networks to dispute legalization roadblocks, dealing with the ongoing treatment of second-class citizenship due to national border security (Jonas, 2005).

A growing movement within academia focuses on the need to decolonize the practice of research and affirm indigenous ways of knowing (Smith, 2013; Zavala, 2013), resisting the colonial and imperial ways human subjects data has been unethically collected and disseminated for centuries. In contrast to written master narratives of science advanced by European accounts, theoretical frames from indigenous production systems center around the radical notion that people and their oral stories contribute to knowledge (Agrawal, 1995). Smith argues that indigenous communities around the world have been dehumanized through Western methods of research for colonizing knowledge, particularly when their lands, possessions, and bodies have been stolen for expansion, profit, and discovery (Smith, 2013). According to Smith, "indigenous Asian, American, Pacific, and African forms of knowledge, systems of classification, technologies and codes of social life, which began to be recorded in some detail by the seventeenth century, were regarded as 'new discoveries' by Western science" (Smith, 2013).

This leads to questioning how people are using online community spaces to decolonize their identities. The AAPI context is an important means for understanding decolonization online, as AAPIs use Reddit to engage in identity work—a collaborative process through which people negotiate their identities (Snow, 2001). AAPIs live a rich and storied history through which their identities have developed over time, and their identities are highly intersectional (Lee, 2006; Pyke, 2010). Their identities are interconnected across a range of categories, such as race, social class, and gender, and they come from diverse backgrounds and perspectives (Manalansan, 2000). Communities on

Reddit encompass various intersections of social difference, which makes it a platform that can engage decolonialist enactments. Thus, we argue that AAPIs are using online platforms such as Reddit to decolonize their identity.

While Reddit is known as a platform that enables controversial comments and inflammatory rhetoric (Massanari, 2017), it also differentiates itself from social networks like LinkedIn and YouTube by giving its moderators more agency to channel attention to a topic of discussion (Van Dijck and Poell, 2013). Reddit grants its moderators the agency to influence identity work and shape online discourse toward collective action (Dosono and Semaan, 2018). Researchers have also investigated how moderators engage in a range of meta practices—practices that exist outside of Reddit itself—as a means for fulfilling their volunteer roles (Dosono and Semaan, 2019). In building on top of this literature, our study examines how moderators discuss and facilitate the process of decolonization within identity work spheres.

6.3   Research Setting

6.3.1   Platform Governance on Reddit

As a nexus of online communities, Reddit offers its users the opportunity to engage in discussions across a wide range of topics. According to 2019 Alexa Internet rankings, Reddit is the fifth most visited website in the United States.[1] Reddit enables identity work to manifest in online communities (subreddits) of users (redditors). The rules and norms of subreddits are enforced by volunteer stewards (moderators) of a particular community. In addition to online interactions, redditors may opt to interact offline through in-person meetups organized by members of respective subreddits. Both virtual and

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[1]https://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/US

physical environments allow for identity work to exist and flourish within the community, providing rich opportunities to survey how users of Reddit appropriate existing identity management technologies to engage with their identity work.

Obscured from public view, moderators also have access to an internal set of moderation tools for welcoming and engaging with their community.[2] Mod Mode enables the ability to approve, remove, or mark items as spam directly below each post and comment. Modmail is the shared messaging system that moderators use to communicate with each other and to handle incoming requests from their users. Moderators can also customize the appearance (color theme, name and icon, banner, menu, posts, and cascading style sheets) and structure (menu links, post flair, user flair, emojis, sidebar widgets) of their community. These moderation tools add to a larger ecology of platform affordances for shaping identity work.

6.4 Findings

We center our results on the emergent themes of decolonization as observed and experienced by our participants: (1) reclaiming space to confront brigade invasion; (2) recording collective memory to circumvent systemic erasure; and (3) revising cultural narratives to deconstruct colonial mentality. With each finding, we report on the colonizing threats that arise and affect the identity work of their online communities, and present the recurring tactics our informants employ to decolonize the dialogue occurring within their subreddits. We outline the moderation practices in Table 6.1.

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[2]https://mods.reddithelp.com/

Table 6.1: Summary of decolonization practices.

Code	Theme	Participant Total
Threat	Disruption of identity work discourse	7
Threat	Platform operators prioritize profit at the expense of consumers	5
Threat	Proliferation of false perceptions	4
Tactic	Networked solidarity in Reddit meetups	11
Tactic	Discourse preservation in alternate archives	6
Tactic	Self-determination in collective consciousness	4

6.4.1   Reclaiming space to confront brigade invasion

Threat: Disruption of identity work discourse

Seven participants (P2, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12, P17) referenced brigading tactics as a recurring issue they monitor constantly in their subreddit. Brigading is a concerted effort by one group to manipulate another by vote manipulation (e.g., upvoting/downvoting content) or mass commenting (Jhaver et al., 2018a). As such, our participants described engaging in moderating practices centered around monitoring and circumventing brigading behavior. P2, a Pakistani American male in his twenties who moderates for r/abcdesis (a subreddit for members of the South Asian diaspora, colloquially referred to as American Born Confused Desis), describes different ways in which brigades attack the ideology of a subreddit:

> "There is brigading and stuff that goes on, and you have to always have an eye open for
>
> it. Threads can fill up with comments really quickly, and you don't know what people are
>
> saying and how long those posts are staying up on the site. Brigading is when people from
>
> a certain subreddit usually have a particular ideology and specifically they're targeting
>
> against our demographic or even our moderatorship. Maybe they've had incidents with
>
> us in the past. Maybe they've been banned from our sub and they've congregated in other

subs and they all come at the same time and either post hate speech or troll or do something

like that." (P2)

P7, a Chinese American male in his twenties who moderates for r/asianbros (a subreddit dedicated to promoting a positive image of Asian men), rationalizes the need to be vigilant of his subreddit's standing in relation to others in the AAPI space. He shared that while he reads content from r/asianamerican (a subreddit whose purpose is to foster a sense of community among Asian Americans and their respective counterparts in the Asian diaspora) from time to time, he is not an actual subscriber to it as he does not want content from that subreddit to appear directly on his newsfeed. This implies that redditors may lurk on other AAPI related spaces without contributing to the overall subscriber count of a community.

> *"I think for me, it's important to understand what's going on in the grand scheme of*
>
> *r/asianamerican as a redditor. It's important for me to contact other ones because*
>
> *sometimes we do get brigades. We do get when, sometimes drama happens, and you need*
>
> *to stay on top of things just to make sure, figure out what something is."* (P7)

Depending on the situation, brigading may have a severe impact on shaping emerging topics that are about to reach a critical mass of readership on the platform. P7 alludes to the potential financial incentives for trolling behavior during an election period. He references the "red pill" metaphor, or the alt-right's concern with having hegemonic notions of masculinity challenged by societal shifts (Mountford, 2018). Elections provide an opportunity for people to reflect on and rethink their identities. AAPI identity work is, in itself, a political activity (Dosono and Semaan, 2018).

> *"Probably the peak during the election period, there was a lot of... non-Asian men who*
>
> *came in r/asianmasculinity posing as Asians. These were troll accounts. They were*
>
> *alt-right funded troll accounts, and they were trying to push the Asian American male*

narrative more towards alt-right nature. They were trying to push a little bit more of the

red pill philosophy, more of a conservative viewpoint."   (P7)

Brigading can also occur in conversations that repeatedly take place in AAPI subreddits. When moderators observe a significant amount of redditors from outside their community attempt to drown out or derail the voices of their own subscribers, they take action to restore the conversation to its original intent and audience. P11, a Chinese American female in her twenties who moderates for r/asianamerican, describes how she counters bad actors like trolls from hijacking the direction of dialogue in the subreddit she moderates. She notes how other subreddits who have less of a focus on discussion (e.g., r/asianeats is primarily a space for sharing photos, memes, and recipes of food instead of a space for diving into their deeper ties with culture) encounter fewer trolls than subreddits that are more conversant in nature.

> *"I would say for subreddits that focus on identity we have to deal a lot more with*
>
> *trolls—trolls who come in and try to hijack the agenda to push whatever thing that they're*
>
> *trying to push. Usually it's something political that they're going to try to get people*
>
> *to think about a topic a certain way. You won't see posts about that kind of stuff in*
>
> *r/asianeats, for example, because that's just food. It's not going to be about that."*   (P11)

Distinguishing a troll from a genuinely irritated redditor is not always an easy task for a moderator. P10, a Chinese male in his thirties who moderates for r/aznidentity (a subreddit that prioritizes the discussion of issues, ideas, and policy that affects the lives of Asians who live in Western society), also shares his experience putting out flames from trolls on Reddit who sought to rile up members of his community.

"There are lots of white male trolls who try to divide and conquer. They pretend to be

Asian men and write hateful things about Asian women, tell us to abandon Asian women,

incite violence, etc. In essence, they try to false flag to make Asian women hate us and get

us banned from Reddit. A peculiar problem is that the trolls often sound like real Asian

men. So, it's hard to tell if it's a false flagger or an angry Asian man."   (P10)

As illustrated in the examples above, moderators continuously encounter different forms of invasion

by bad actors that advance unwarranted notions of colonization within their online communities. Just as

colonizing forces invaded Asian nations in the past to exert dominance and authoritative control (Chen,

2010; Kean, 2011; Pandey, 2001), similar attacks emerge in online contexts where invaders attempt to

segregate, divide, and partition communities through brigading as a means of attacking the ideology of

such subreddits.

Tactic: Networked solidarity in Reddit meetups

While marginalized groups are pushed to the fringes of a fragmented society, they are actively

self-organizing to reclaim spaces that once belonged to them and were originally organized by them.

One of the ways in which our informants organized their community is through hosting Reddit meetups,

which are in-person gatherings of redditors from a specific subreddit. Meetups often take place in a

public location, such as an open park, and allow for conversations to shift from online to offline settings.

Eleven participants (P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12, P13, P14, P18, P21) shared their experience with

organizing or attending a Reddit meetup. These meetups are generative in that they serve as moments

through which people network offline as a means of reclaiming space.

P7 described how attending AAPI-focused meetups located in his geographic region allowed him

to understand his place and positionality among the larger landscape of AAPI subreddits. Interactions

mediated in offline occurrences may also speak to the limits of virtual organizing on the platform.

> *"I actually did meetups—I went to two. One was for r/asianmasculinity, and one was for*
>
> *r/asianamerican. They were both in the Bay Area, and I wanted to know, meet some other*
>
> *people. I met some other moderators of the subreddits, specifically like the Reddit Asia*
>
> *sphere. We just talked about life and what people were up to, how people were doing. It*
>
> *was just a normal thing, but we also talked a little bit about meta Reddit."* (P7)

One way in which people reclaim space is through making sure their online communities are not co-opted by others. P4, a Vietnamese American male in his twenties who moderates for r/gaysian (a subreddit for LGBTQ members of the AAPI community), shared his experience organizing a meetup for his subreddit and the steps he took to prevent his subreddit's meetup from being co-opted by unwelcoming folks. To thwart potential meetup invaders, he and his moderating team would verify the identity of interested redditors via tools outside of the Reddit ecosystem, such as Slack, to ensure they would not pose a safety risk to the community.

> *"We do organize Reddit meetups, but we don't really advertise them on the sub that*
>
> *frequently. We used to, but then we had this weird influx of random people we did*
>
> *not know or who were never part of the community, trying to join. So for the safety of*
>
> *our members, what we would do is kind of vet them through the process of the Slack.*
>
> *We noticed the people were kind of random—or white people who fetishize Asian*
>
> *Americans—would try and join the meetups. We would be like, okay, that's not what we*
>
> *want to do, so let's try and vet them through another process first. So they have to join this*
>
> *blog, chat with us for a little while, and then basically the consensus is depending on the*
>
> *members in that area."* (P4)

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P4 goes on to explain the value that meetups can provide in building social capital for the subreddit and its members. Social capital as defined by Putnam features "social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, 1995). While newcomers to subreddit initially meet through anonymous interactions, in-person meetups anchor trust within newly acquainted community members. These community members then return and continue their online interactions as redditors in their subreddit with increased rapport via the social capital granted from in-person meetups.

> *"I'm hoping within the next year to create a little more of a meetup culture so that people*
>
> *who aren't necessarily part of our Discord and only a part of our subreddit, or who aren't*
>
> *necessarily the most active, can feel comfortable participating and potentially extending*
>
> *their circle... to put themselves out there in a way that feels comfortable to them."* (P4)

P9, a Chinese male in his twenties who moderates for r/aznidentity, also comments on the value that offline interactions contribute toward the overall decolonization of the subreddit, suggesting that meetups allow for more authentic conversations—those that are not policed, contained, or restricted—surrounding identity work to take place. While redditors may not be comfortable discussing their AAPI identity with co-workers or family members, subreddits provide a focused channel for discourse that redditors use to vent and provoke within their community.

> *"It's so rare to talk to someone in real life that actually thinks exactly the same as you, then*
>
> *they care about this issue, and they are not afraid to talk about it. I know there is certain*
>
> *stuff that I know Asians don't like to participate in. They don't want to say it in real life*
>
> *because they are afraid that white people are going to judge them, or they're going to be*

deviating from what's cool, what's trendy. They care about the issues that people tell them

not to care about." (P9)

While redditors are not obligated to disclose their actual identities on the platform, its users are still compelled to share certain facets about themselves to build solidarity with their communities. Thus, there is privilege to being visible within an anonymous network. For example, P19, a Korean Canadian male in his thirties who moderates for r/asianamericanathletes (a subreddit for news, achievements, and accomplishments of Asian American athletes in sports), demonstrates his willingness to find other like-minded individuals by making his interests known.

> *"I did get heavily involved in r/aznidentity and Slack. Anybody who is an r/aznidentity*
>
> *mod knows my Twitter and my Reddit handle. My Twitter is public, so they know who*
>
> *I am... I find that activism is most effective when you're willing to put yourself out there.*
>
> *That's why I put myself out there."* (P19)

In response to dealing with online spaces getting co-opted and brigaded by bad actors, AAPIs are organizing offline to share tactics for improving the quality of discussion on their subreddits. In forming networked solidarity, Reddit meetups facilitate the creation of new relationships among redditors of shared communities, which contribute to the building of social capital. Through vetted in-person gatherings, redditors regain control of who can and cannot participate in their subreddits.

6.4.2 Recording collective memory to circumvent systemic erasure

Threat: Platform operators prioritize profit at the expense of consumers

Five participants (P4, P9, P10, P12, P16) described how their subreddits faced threats of systemic erasure—that is, they referenced ways they perceived their communities to be erased by platform

operators, hereafter referred to as Reddit administrators. While social media platforms have painted themselves as impartial conduits of user-generated content (Gillespie, 2017), the protections of underrepresented groups have been historically ignored in the decision-making processes of platform governance.

P9 shares his documented interaction with Reddit administrators. His concerns derived from the lack of accountability and diversity at the highest levels of the platform's leadership. P9 described his experience with filing a moderator complaint that resulted in the suspension of his own account. Per Reddit's content policy,[3] "site-wide suspensions can only be applied to accounts by employees of Reddit and are done so after review of the actions and the context in which it took place." Site-wide suspensions differ from subreddit bans in that suspensions are enforced by employed Reddit administrators and bans are actions taken by a volunteer moderator of a community on Reddit.

> *"Nowadays I'm really afraid our internet infrastructure is basically controlled by white admins… Imagine all your social media—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit—all your social media internet infrastructure. Eventually, there's a white guy standing at the top. One time, for example, I reported [undisclosed subreddit] to be doxxing, to be brigading us. Then the admins punished me, suspended me, for reporting them."* (P9)

P16, an Indian American female in her twenties who moderates for r/desitwox (a subreddit devoted for Desi girls of the South Asian diaspora to talk about life, culture, fashion, and community), echoes P9's perceptions of Reddit administrators and their lack of competence for helping redditors who need the most protection. While redditors can submit an appeal[4] for an account suspension, administrators will not guarantee the reversal of a suspension even after an appeal has been reviewed. Reddit's help page[5]

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[3] https://www.redditinc.com/policies/content-policy
[4] https://www.reddit.com/appeals
[5] https://www.reddithelp.com

also states, "any abusive messages sent to the admin as a result of a permanent or temporary suspension could result in a longer suspension and/or an indefinite and immediate suspension of any alternate or newly created accounts," which may discourage harassed redditors from submitting an appeal in the first place.

> *"I would have the admins take issues of harassment seriously—I don't feel that they do. I think there's been so many instances where I've reported, other people have reported, who've shown documented evidence, and nothing happens. I know I have a friend who's part of some of the same communities and for her, someone actually created an account to troll her. That was literally almost her exact username with one extra word, so they were trying to be her and get mistaken and give her a bad reputation. They would literally follow her from sub to sub, follow all her comments, harass her, and she told them to fuck off, and she got banned for 'harassing' him."* (P16)

P12, a biracial Chinese and Italian male in his twenties who moderates for r/asianamerican, attests to the lack of urgency Reddit administrators convey to resolve internal subreddit issues. P12 alludes to the asymmetric relation of power between paid employee administrators and volunteer moderators. While administrators have access to a wide array of tools to review user actions, moderators lack the ability to escalate existing issues that warrant immediate review.

> *"The admins kinda control everything. And it's annoying having to go and ask them for help because sometimes they take a long time to come back. Like maybe one, two weeks."* (P12)

P10, another moderator for r/aznidentity, shared how frustrated he was with the poor archival practices of deleted online spaces. Even beyond Reddit, communities that have built up a reservoir of

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activist-related resources can have their content removed without explanation and without a moment's notice. For instance, a website's hosting service may not be renewed due to a missed payment to a domain registrar, or larger social forces such as governments may issue takedown notices of websites that store illicit content (McCown et al., 2009).

> *"I wanted to organize all the questions/answers into one place to accelerate our awakening, organization, and success. Most importantly, I wanted to avoid the disaster of forums/websites dying and resetting our progress back to zero."* (P10)

P4 articulated how people with multiple intersecting and oppressed identities rely on his r/gaysian subreddit to understand how to maneuver through challenging issues they face in the real world. He illustrates how race-agnostic discussions on Reddit reduce and erase the natural complexities of lived experiences.

> *"The idea that if you say that you don't see race or color or any of those pieces that you are effectively erasing the narrative of what people go through as a result of those experiences. It was just kind of a conversation between me and a few other people about what it means to be a person of color and how that experience impacts how people navigate life and how people develop as individuals."* (P4)

Erasure takes many forms. As described by the words of P9 (*"the admins... suspended me"*), P12 (*"they take a long time to come back"*), and P16 (*"nothing happens"*), the negligent actions of Reddit administrators add to the collective indifference that leaves AAPI redditors silenced and invisible. Once-active platforms that no longer operate also contribute to a collective amnesia, such as the example of P10 (*"resetting our progress"*), with valuable content previously stored in web servers effectively

erased from public inquiry. Lastly, erasure can be reductive such that complex issues get collapsed into rudimentary forms; as told by P4 (who is critical of color blindness, a perspective that ignores the institutional practices that encourage the segregation of people of color), when gross oversimplifications of intersectional identities further occlude nuanced conversations to exist.

Tactic: Discourse preservation in alternate archives

Six participants (P2, P9, P10, P11, P14, P15) engaged in archival processes to circumvent systemic erasure. Archives function as both material and symbolic spaces. The material arrangements of information in virtual environments shape how society encodes digital representations of everyday life (Dourish, 2017). For instance, Reddit stores behavioral trace data of its users and their interactions on the platform over time. Symbolically, Reddit also captures the collective memory—a recollection of events shared by a group (Roediger III and Abel, 2015)—of its redditors in ideas, values, and emotions exchanged through the deliberation and vote ranking of trending topics and current events. When studied as an ethnographic site of inquiry through a decolonization lens, we interpret mutual memory-making between moderators and redditors as another tactic that prevents the erasure of an online community.

P9 notes how the expansive discussions that take place in the r/aznidentity subreddit serve as an indispensable trove of crowdsourced knowledge. While vast units of scholarly literature and scientific research are stored behind inaccessible paywalls of for-profit academic publishing companies (Brienza, 2012), redditors champion an ethos of free and open resource sharing. Many of the subreddits listed in Table 3.2, such as r/abcdesis[6] and r/aznidentity,[7] curate internal wiki pages that link to personal growth resources and research articles pertaining to the well-being of the AAPI community.

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[6] https://www.reddit.com/r/abcdesis/wiki
[7] https://www.reddit.com/r/aznidentity/wiki

"There's so much thinking going on. I learned so much on [r/aznidentity]. It's a global

Asian American studies department, and it was like research. People write giant essays

that could be a fucking paper over there, you know? The thread is like... some people try to

write a single paper, then when you read the thread, it's like reading a whole paper, even

though the language is not as sophisticated, but the ideas expressed are huge." (P9)

Redundancy of conversations reinforces certain interpretations of identity work among a subreddit. In addition to listing the most common topics repeatedly brought up in r/aznidentity, P10 asserts that consistent subreddit discourse aids in socializing its members with certain perspectives that are linked to survival.

"A lot of conversations are redundant. They can be split into a few groups: anti-Asian

incidents, Asian women/white male relationship abuse, white male crimes against

children, brainwashed Asians that white worship, and self-hate. This sounds petty. It is

not. A big problem with Asians is that they failed to organize the information so we fail

to see the long pattern of abuse. Collecting the information is important to connect the

dots. Occasionally, there are those who provide advice on race relations and how we can

survive and thrive." (P10)

P2 further adds that while old conversations persist on Reddit, attitudes may be subject to change over time when new context is introduced. This illustrates the ongoing, discursive nature of identity work as deliberation (Dosono and Semaan, 2018), conceptualizing the formation of a collective identity as a process rather than a property.

"You can see the same conversation happen a hundred times on Reddit. Gradually it might

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shift and one narrative might supersede another one in terms of dominance after a while."

(P2)

Moderators like P11 voiced how the evocative discussions on Reddit empowered her to contribute and record her own experience with navigating the complexities of her identity. Archival knowledge based repositories allow for redditors with stigmatized identities to draw upon the experiences of "sympathetic others" (Goffman, 2009) to find methods of coping and support.

> *"Seeing people post those kinds of things and receive the kind of replies that they needed, that were very supportive and helped them through those situations, motivated me as well to sort of share my own experiences. Now that I'm getting older too, I definitely feel a need to sort of guide people who went through the same identity issues that I've gone through."*
>
> (P11)

Moderators also demonstrated archival tendencies, such as making plans to mirror and crosspost the content of certain subreddits to external platforms. By doing so, the mirrored content is accessible and preserved elsewhere in the event Reddit as a platform dissolves or gets acquired by a larger company.

> *"I really want to transfer all this so that we have backup options, so the day they delete our forum, they delete our community, we can immediately put it up… some other place. Either on some Chinese internet sphere, like we just have it over there or something like that."* (P9)

Fighting against obscurity and oblivion, marginalized groups engage in tactics that record collective memory in material and symbolic means. Moreover, unlike analog techniques for preserving cultural artifacts, history encoded in digital doxa takes entirely new forms and capabilities. Decolonization of digital histories diversifies perspectives by affirming different ways and systems of knowing.

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6.4.3 Revising cultural narratives to deconstruct colonial mentality

Threat: Proliferation of false perceptions

Four participants (P11, P15, P16, P17) alluded to different ways they observed redditors express forms of colonial mentality on Reddit. Social psychology scholars refer to colonial mentality as the attitude of ethnic or cultural inferiority internalized as a result of colonization (David and Okazaki, 2010; David, 2013). Colonial mentality makes identity work difficult given that people are unaware of its consequences. This threat, intertwined with oppressive systems of complicity (Puwar, 2004), subsequently shapes the work of moderators who call attention to aspects of colonization in the conversations they facilitate on their subreddit.

Discussions centered on microaggressions—indirect, subtle, or unintentional discriminatory exchanges against members of a marginalized group (Sue et al., 2007a,b)—and stereotypes are examples of the lasting effects of colonialism captured in online communities. In recounting her lived experiences, P16 alluded to the long-term impacts that microaggressions and stereotypes may imprint on one's identity and sense of self-worth.

> *"When you face the same things, you hear the same things day in and day out, then it becomes weeks, months, and years, I think it can affect your psyche and I think it probably did affect me as a child growing up, some of the stereotypes that I would hear about Indians and Desi people and stuff like that. I think once I kind of learned a little bit about microaggressions and learned how to, I guess, take a step back and differentiate between ignorance and something more malignant, I'm able to not let it affect me as much, but I definitely think, yeah, it could affect me, it could affect anyone."* (P16)

P11 came to understand how she learned about microaggressions through online resources via the

internet. She also notes the importance of the comment section of each subreddit post and how divisive deliberation may negatively impact the overall perception of and participation within the subreddit. She views the comment section as a space to de-naturalize racialized difference.

> *"I would say that before I gained the vocabulary and academic learning to discuss these [microaggressive] issues, I was very much shaped by these ideas about race and gender that were in the American mainstream. I couldn't put my finger on why it bothered me so much, but it did. Now I can identify them, and see it for what it is, and sort of take a step back, and be like, 'Well, that doesn't define me or who I am...' The comment section is super important. I think that's where the majority of understanding and dialogue happens within a community, and if I see a comments section that's extremely hostile and has name calling, and personal attacks, and lots of aggressive people going at each others' throats, that completely makes me not want to participate in that subreddit as a commentator, as a user.'* (P11)

P15, a Korean American male in his thirties who moderates for r/asianamerican, discloses how perceptions of AAPIs in mainstream American culture are constantly discussed on Reddit by AAPIs. Despite existing as a racial minority in America, AAPIs are able to create and curate their own communities online where they are seen and heard by fellow AAPIs.

> *"I think that really stems from microaggressions of 'Hey, Asians are quiet. Asians are subservient. Asians are this. Asians are that. Asians are polite.' And a lot of people end up internalizing that and believing that among Asian Americans. They really believe we're all these things."* (P15)

He then goes on to share how Reddit provides a unique platform for AAPIs to share their frustrations dealing with racial stereotypes and microaggressions. In subreddits where AAPI-identifying users comprise the majority instead of a minority, conversations that center race and ethnicity can be discussed with greater depth and nuance.

> *"Anything about race or identity really fascinates me. And those are the discussions that happen a lot on our [r/asianamerican] sub. With a lot of what the frustrations that's driving those other subs, it's this frustration of feeling like we're being ignored or being seen as silent."* (P15)

P18, a Chinese American female in her twenties who moderates for r/asiantwox (a subreddit dedicated to Asian women—the 'TwoX' refers to the XX chromosomes that determine the sex of an individual), attests to Reddit's utility as a pseudonymous platform where she can speak her mind. With anonymity, redditors feel less judged to share their opinions on controversial topics surrounding their identity work.

> *"I talk more about my interest in Asian issues on Reddit. I'm definitely much more vocal about it. I feel like I don't have as much of a platform in my day to day life to talk about these issues, so Reddit is where I go if I want to do that. [Anonymity] obviously allows people to be their worst self and receive no consequences for it. But I think it does also allow people who might otherwise not feel safe to express themselves in more positive ways. So it's definitely important to Reddit."* (P18)

P17, a mixed-race male in his forties who moderates for r/hapas (a subreddit that has a reputation for sparking controversial topics among those who identify with half-Asian ancestry), describes how

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Redditors are in different stages of their identity development. He admits that while some redditors are aware of the long-lasting effects colonization endures across the generational differences of AAPIs, some redditors are also unaware of colonization and its consequences.

> "We're not all on the same stage of development, some are like young people who are just being woke, some are older people who've already been through it, maybe a little jaded… And so there is a wide spectrum." (P17)

As the largest growing immigrant population in America, AAPIs who use Reddit for identity work are realizing the pernicious ways stereotypes and microaggressions can seep beyond their physical environments and creep into their virtual ones. The problem is exacerbated further when ignorant AAPIs lack the language or awareness to deconstruct colonial mentalities from within their own communities.

Tactic: Self-determination in collective consciousness

Four participants (P8, P9, P10, P17) articulated direct ways they have helped deconstruct colonial mentality through the process of cultural revision within their respective subreddits. Largely absent in mainstream American media, AAPIs turn to the internet to consume and create content by and for their communities. Textual spaces like Reddit allow for AAPIs to center their knowledge and share their own lived experiences. Moreover, Reddit as a social news aggregator affords redditors to find, upvote, and provide commentary on culturally relevant content. In doing so, Reddit grants its users the agency to make sense of and rework their identities through cultural revision.

P10 explicitly notes how he endeavors to correct external perceptions of his r/aznidentity subreddit. He utilizes the platform's voting system in accordance with what he perceives the content's value adds

to the community. Essentially, he upvotes content that contributes positively to conversation and downvotes content that does not. His actions are in line with "reddiquette," or the informal expression of values of redditors, as written by redditors themselves.[8]

> *"I want to shape the narrative accurately the best way that I can. I downvote harmful, ignorant comments such as our sub being 'racist' and 'anti-white.' Angry Asians are a reaction against abuse from racist whites and others. I upvote comments that provide good advice to Asians. There are obviously many other categories, but generally, my votes are based on their effect on Asians. Good for Asians equals an upvote. Bad for Asians equals a downvote. Bad/good is not about feeling, but effectiveness/productiveness."* (P10)

P8, a Chinese Canadian male in his twenties who moderates for r/aznidentity, indicates how AAPI subreddits actively seek novel perspectives from the Asian diaspora. This illustrates that redditors take it upon themselves to intentionally discuss perspectives that may never surface in mainstream media.

> *"We try to encourage discussion from Asian diaspora worldwide. Although I get that a lot of topics or posts that are submitted onto our subreddit are Asian American focused mostly because Reddit is probably American dominated, we try to encourage others who come from other places to talk about their own issues relating to their own country."* (P8)

De-centering whiteness also played a role in the narrative revision process. Narrative revision involves the actual work of decolonizing with a framing of the self through lived experiences. P9 points out the power differential of AAPIs and their subjugation to whiteness within a perceived racial hierarchy.

> *"We grew to be completely dependent on white Americans, and that's why we don't ever dare to talk about it. Because we're at their mercy. They're our bosses, they're our*

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[8]https://www.reddit.com/wiki/reddiquette/

managers, they're our employers. They control the politics, and they control media. So,

whatever they say we just have to listen, and we can't fight back." (P9)

P9 further explains that AAPIs are using Reddit to expand their language of resistance. He articulates

the need for AAPIs to lead their own movement of liberation instead of piggybacking off of the efforts

of other marginalized groups. Prior work has shown how the discursive nature of Reddit conversations

allow for identity work, particularly among communities of shared pan-ethnic identifications, to occur at

the collective level (Dosono and Semaan, 2018).

"There's a lot of people that definitely want to attack us, so we need to keep the rhetoric

very tight. I feel like there's a lot of pushing back on the mainstream rhetoric and really

critically thinking about the messaging. We should be able to forge something that's

unique for ourselves and not just an exact replica of what other people are doing. I want

to create a consistent rhetoric and community that's improving, that progresses our values,

[and] then also counter the threat of white media influences." (P9)

In addition to the racial conflicts AAPIs are navigating externally, P17 also calls attention to the

internal issues that plague the community from within its heteronormative and patriarchal structures.

He asserts that moderators within r/hapas can enable acts of solidarity by widening who can participate

within the subreddit and model civil discourse in welcoming new redditors.

"In order to reclaim ourselves, I think we have to forge bridges with the Asian women and

Hapa women and part of doing that is allowing more of them on the sub and toning down

the harsh language toward them. It really serves the white patriarchy when there is a

psychological divide between Asian men and Asian women or Hapa men and Asian or

Hapa women." (P17)

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Decolonization is inherently a critical and racial project that calls for the continuous reaffirmations of the identities, cultures, languages, and experiences of colonized people of color (Halbert and Nathan, 2015; Matias, 2016a). Not only are AAPI subreddits helping AAPIs become more conscientious and aware of the social injustices that pervade them, but they are also equipping redditors with the organizational scaffolding, supportive network, and forceful vocabulary for decolonizing their personal, social, and collective narratives.

6.5 Discussion: Toward Decolonizing Sociotechnical Systems

Our study illustrates the ramifications of colonization within sociotechnical systems and contributes collective resilience as a method of decolonizing identity work. In Reddit, algorithmic hegemony influences which posts get viewed and voted on in any redditor's front page. While the exact algorithm for determining trending Reddit posts remains propriety and may be tweaked over time, our participants have been able to continuously adapt to the constant design changes to the platform. By continuing to anticipate ways in which they can build collective resilience around their identity work, they are actively taking part in resisting algorithmic hegemony.

In returning to our research questions, we next articulate how sociotechnical systems contour and contribute to the marginalization of fringe communities (RQ5). We then discuss how algorithmic design shapes the ecology of technologies AAPIs are using as a means to sustain and decolonize a collective identity (RQ6). In the sections that follow, we offer and describe ways in which users and designers of sociotechnical systems can work toward developing collective resilience against external hegemonic forces and checking algorithmic hegemony embedded in sociotechnical systems.

6.5.1 Developing Collective Resilience

As a marginalized group in America, AAPIs are using online platforms to organize collectively and negotiate their identities that have been constructed in a complex, highly politicized, and ever-evolving process (Dosono and Semaan, 2018). AAPIs are actively seeking to dismantle colonial structures in their identity work, taking to online platforms like Reddit to revise the false perceptions that have dominated their everyday realities. As marginalized communities integrate ICTs in ways that are meaningful to them (Mehra et al., 2004), they are using technology for their own means to reclaim, reframe, and rework their identities. While digital repatriation will not absolve centuries of colonization, people have access to more tools than ever before to shape the way they and their entire social networks view their collective identities in online platforms like Reddit. To make identity work visible is to make it matter.

Within sociotechnical systems like Reddit, platform operators wield the most power and resources as they define the platform's terms of use and have the discretionary ability to remove content from the platform at will. This leads us to question how the decision-making processes of an authoritative Reddit administration parallel historically colonizing forces. Given that CSCW research discusses how Eurocentric perspectives and Western values project 'technological imperialism' on the design of sociotechnical systems (Semaan et al., 2017a), to what extent are platform operators colonizing the discourse of online communities? The governance of sociotechnical systems may be improved by providing transparency in regards to the demographics of employees who control power within the platform. Moreover, as illustrated by P9, P16, and P12, privileged white male administrators may lack the competence to properly handle issues involving cultural hegemony and could easily be unaware of their own prejudices in the design of Reddit and similar platforms.

Reddit governance may be viewed as authoritative when its employees make decisions relative to what subreddits should be banned. Given the nuances of online community spaces, controversial discourse can share similar characteristics under the lens of computational linguistics but be interpreted completely differently through cultural context. For example, incels—a portmanteau of "involuntary celibates"—blame women for why they are unable to find a romantic or sexual partner despite desiring one. Self-identified incels are predominantly white males that organize in subreddits perceived as toxic (Beauchamp, 2018). Reddit administrators banned the r/incels subreddit due to content that called for violence and physical harm (Hauser, 2017). Perhaps the same rules for algorithmically evaluating toxicity could flag AAPI identity work subreddits to become banned or quarantined by Reddit administrators because they are critically talking about white hegemony. To prevent such a review, online communities may enrich their discourse with coded language comprising of multiple meanings to get around authoritative censorship—such practices have been studied as cases of internet censorship in China (Mina, 2014; Yang and Jiang, 2015).

History documents the written narrative of those in power—particularly how they became powerful and how they used their power to maintain positions in which they continue to dominate others (Smith, 2013). Cultural hegemony and erasure of identity work constitute valid forms of colonization. The oppressed do not have the agency to construct the reality of how the majority of society perceives them; those narratives are written by the colonizer. For instance, within the AAPI community, existing stereotypes manifest from Orientalist prejudice—beliefs based on inaccurate generalizations and erroneous characterizations derived from Western claims of superiority and power over foreign places (Said, 1979). And in the event platforms like Reddit go out of business and shut down, such sites may not offer archival guarantees to export Reddit data to other platforms, which further contributes to the erasure of identity work. Marginalized people are creating and curating online communities to push

against colonizing forces they encounter in the physical world.

Acts of decolonization do not require a total rejection of all theory or practice of Western knowledge. Rather, decolonization diversifies perspectives by affirming different ways and systems of knowing. Centering our concerns will allow us to understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes. Current social identity theories articulated within HCI and CSCW scholarship (Seering et al., 2018) do not take into account how processes of decolonization affect the use of ICTs. We therefore broaden HCI and CSCW research in this field by showing that decolonization has a critical role to play in the shaping of identity work in the form of developing collective resistance.

6.5.2   Resisting Algorithmic Hegemony

Algorithmic hegemony can be conceptualized as an extension of white hegemony in sociotechnical systems. But unlike their programmers, algorithms lack the culpability to be shamed if they produce racist or sexist results even when they re-embed the cultural, racial, and gender biases of their programmers. Designers of algorithms inject their own racial and gender bias into their constructions—explicitly or implicitly (Bozdag, 2013)—contributing to how racism and sexism is maintained and sustained in sociotechnical systems (Noble, 2018).

Marginalized communities fight against colonizing and oppressive forces through engaging with an ecology of technologies that aid in sustaining their identity work. A clear example of this within our research site are the Reddit bots as alluded to in Table 3.2. Moderation teams piece together subtasks (i.e., remove comments, ban users) in their coordinated practices that require human intervention. For tasks that can be automated, moderators may resort to using AutoModerator,[9] a customizable bot that monitors new and edited comments in subreddits and acts on them as needed. Bots can be

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[9]https://www.reddit.com/wiki/automoderator

algorithmically configured to detect, flag, and remove content regarded as offensive, inappropriate, or rule-breaking; post regular community discussion threads; and alert moderators if certain types of content are posted. Bots, then, play an increasingly important role within a larger ecosystem of technologies used to sustain a collective identity as they alleviate the volunteer labor required by humans to moderate their online communities.

Algorithms determine an individual's credit score, hiring profile, and candidacy for college admissions (Citron and Pasquale, 2014). Feedback loops—such as Google's interconnected relationship with Wikipedia (McMahon et al., 2017)—sustain algorithmic authority and are susceptible to human manipulation. As more platforms focus on monetizing the attention span of their users to increase ad revenue, users are increasingly exposed to information assembled and presented algorithmically (Powers, 2017), and many users lack the literacy to comprehend how algorithms influence what they can and cannot see (Lee et al., 2015). Users also do not engage with algorithmic production from the point of governance. Algorithms are becoming pervasively inescapable in a digitally mediated world, which means that they have vastly consequential impacts on the way we live our lives. How can those with marginalized identities—those that have been systemically disadvantaged—regain their agency when hegemonic forces take control?

The emergence of new technology sectors, the power of corporations, and new forms of organization encapsulates the current zeitgeist of technocapitalism (Suarez-Villa, 2012). Decolonization of technocapitalist structures "*marks a struggle over the terms of who and what could live, work, trade, and move in the world,*" and as such, Irani and Philip caution: "*post-colonial and de-colonial frameworks, then, cannot in themselves produce recipes for liberation*" (Irani and Philip, 2018). Data discrimination continues to show perverse consequences for society, particularly as capitalist structures and private interests influence the outcomes of search engine results (Noble, 2018), availability of gig economy

employment (Lee et al., 2015), and visibility of dissenting opinions (DeVito et al., 2017). The uncertainty that stems from algorithmic hegemony also creates anxiety for workers on sharing economy platforms who seek more control in marketplace interactions (Jhaver et al., 2018b). There are also biases embedded through machine learning development pipelines in the loop of algorithmic systems (Holstein et al., 2019); recent research has shown how crowdworkers can also unintentionally introduce issues of algorithmic hegemony when the majority of a crowd labeling a content moderation data set are male (Barbosa and Chen, 2019). Such risks of algorithmic hegemony fall disproportionately upon certain kinds of internet users, especially those of marginalized communities.

So where do we go from here? HCI and STS scholarship calls for greater transparency in algorithm design (Gillespie, 2014; Rader and Gray, 2015). Scholars like Matias implore the need "*to decolonize the colonizer's mind; for, if we leave such a mindset intact, we risk recycling the state of colonial racism all over again*" (Matias, 2016a). Algorithm designers can divest white hegemony by ensuring their design teams comprise of talent that reflects diverse identities. Another way algorithm designers can minimize bias in their designs is to ensure diversity within their training data. For instance, when scaling facial recognition technology or automatic responses of chatbots, designers should audit their training data to ensure that the analyzed data points paint a richer picture of humanity. As people and communities of color become more aware of how algorithms shape their oppression, decolonization through collective resilience may offer an explanatory lens for how they resist algorithmic hegemony.

6.6   Conclusion

While the marginalization of groups has been occurring for millennia, online communities provide a space for people to safely negotiate tensions of their intersectional identities on topics such as

race or citizenship. In this paper, we focus on uncovering how AAPI subreddits enable the process of decolonization to occur and build capacity for collective resilience. We find that these online communities constantly fight for their existence through decolonizing tactics that include reclaiming space to confront brigade invasion, recording collective memory to circumvent systemic erasure, and revising cultural narratives to deconstruct colonial mentality. We center the perspectives of AAPI moderators and discuss how their acts of resistance challenge and circumvent their systemic marginalization as materialized by white hegemony and algorithmic authority.

7
Conclusion

In this chapter, we first open a discussion on the importance of identity work by zooming into the interplay between identity and the design of sociotechnical systems. We then revisit the major contributions of each study of the dissertation. Next we discuss the challenges and limitations of the research and offer future directions to pursue. We conclude with final reflections on the holistic dissertation journey.

7.1   Why Identity Work Matters

Identity work matters in the design and exploration of sociotechnical systems because it materializes in the way people talk among themselves, the way they manage interactions within their groups, and the way they align with the shared ideals of a movement. Here, I will discuss the relationships between sociotechnical systems and identity work more broadly, illustrating how both shape each other in mutually informing ways across personal, social, and collective contexts.

Identity work is a personal endeavor. People undergo identity work to understand their place in

society and to find meaning in the way they live their lives. Anonymous online platforms like Reddit afford individuals the ability to ask deeply personal questions or lurk for relevant answers without disclosing their own identity. In times of personal crisis, such as losing a job or becoming homeless, individuals turn to ICTs to attain the resources they need to resolve their crisis and return to a state of normalcy. Thus, ICTs designed for identity awareness enable a wider understanding of new rules and norms when individuals embed new practices in their sense-making activities. By empowering individuals with agency and self-determination, sociotechnical systems are serving an increasingly important role in the construction of the ever-evolving personal identities of its users.

Identity work is a socializing process. AAPIs may have a particularly difficult time receiving adequate social support due to the contrasting traditional cultural beliefs of their parents and that of the mainstream culture's views of adequate social support. For example, the model minority myth fails to recognize the needs of AAPIs as it shrouds them in a veil of perceived excellence and accomplishment. Such societal expectations make AAPIs reluctant to seek assistance for dealing with issues that are critical to their overall health, well-being, and sense of self. Furthermore, the model minority myth reinforces a toxic mindset for AAPI students as it hinders the way they seek support for dealing with issues of mental health, sexual assault, and other taboos. Consequently, cultural barriers stigmatize AAPIs from receiving the adequate resources and services they need. Our work empirically demonstrates how AAPIs seek social support in online communities to address the various issues they are facing on a daily basis. By allowing groups to form around social categories like race, gender, and special interests, sociotechnical systems facilitate the organization of social identities.

Identity work is a community effort. When explored from the perspectives of people in Western contexts, while parts of people's intersectional identities are often individuated, AAPIs are deeply embedded in routines and logics that are more centered around the collective. Identity work can be

expressed through signals of solidarity, particularly in times of crisis or uncertainty. Elections, for example, are one of many ways social movements can develop and redefine a group's position in society. Sociotechnical systems, then, provide the means for marginalized groups to amplify their intentions and strengthen their networks during times of political unrest. Collective identity, in turn, shapes the value of public spheres by setting boundaries of participation. These values determine who can and cannot participate in deliberation, the affective nature in which topics are expressed and perceived, and how information spread in such a system is perceived as credible. By lending visibility for social movements in emergence, sociotechnical systems enable collective identities to cement more quickly than ever before.

Building better environments that facilitate identity work begin with prioritizing the safety of its users. All three of the studies in this dissertation contribute to the ongoing scholarly critiques of Reddit as a toxic corner of the internet (Massanari, 2017). To improve the design of social computing systems, HCI researchers should continue to explore ways to improve online infrastructure for practices centered on care. Creating empathy through experiences that exist at the peripheries of care, like vulnerability and humility, should be championed in the design process. Moreover, integrating interdisciplinary and transnational perspectives into the design of new sociotechnical solutions to support and sustain care infrastructures will add to the collective resilience of online communities.

In summary, understanding the complex interplay between sociotechnical systems and identity work will influence how which individuals, social groups, and collective movements act and behave in online contexts. Designers who seek to champion inclusivity in the design of sociotechnical systems should take into account the multiple layers of identity that can be expressed at the personal, social, and collective level.

7.2 Summary of Contributions

The studies presented in chapters four, five, and six uncover ways in which AAPIs negotiate collective action in the context of online identity work. In Chapter 4, I illustrated how AAPIs work to orient and make sense of their place in the political ecosystem through a collectivist lens. Their overall participation in the public sphere provides them with solace and solidarity in spaces where they have been traditionally silenced and sidelined. In Chapter 5, I bring to light the emotional labor involved in moderating spaces for identity work discourse to take place, providing recommendations for improving moderation in online communities centered around identity work. In Chapter 6, I delve into more critical aspects of identity work in sociotechnical systems, particularly illuminating the ways in which AAPIs use online platforms to decolonize themselves from systemic hegemonic in their everyday lives.

Research in identity work matters because identity allows for meaning and sense-making to occur. We observe notions of resistance among marginalized communities that permeate in both offline and online settings to spur people to take action and change public perceptions about their collective identity. Civic consciousness forged from the connection between people's online networks and offline networks can potentially lead to meaningful steps forward in achieving institutional change. To review the main takeaways of each study, I will next recapitulate research implications for deliberation, moderation, and decolonization.

7.2.1 Implications for Deliberation

In conducting a content analysis of 4,406 Reddit comments collected during the 2016 US Presidential Election, we conceptualized Reddit as a public space where people come together to engage in collaborative identity work as a public sphere through a process we call, "identity work as deliberation."

We situate our study during the 2016 US Presidential Election to capture a wide range of deliberation through which we can actively observe identity work and found that redditors engage in a multitude of strategies for maintaining values of inclusion, civility, and rationality.

The first study advances the idea of online communities using platforms for collective identity deliberation, and not just for self-presentation. We offered several recommendations for community moderators to be mindful of when shaping discourse of a social movement in its nascent stages: (1) directing redditors to speak for oneself and not on behalf of other; (2) welcoming other forms of collaborative identity work both within and beyond AAPI contexts; and (3) improving visibility of community-generated rules. The online commentary of AAPIs during the 2016 US Presidential Election constitutes as a valid form of their identity work, and in turn, a political activity for shaping their collective sense of self.

7.2.2   Implications for Moderation

Through our interview study of 21 moderators of AAPI subreddits, we describe how people increasingly turn to online communities for shaping their identity work. While current research trends consider the role of algorithms in shaping how information is disseminated, human moderators also invest emotional labor to manage how information is shared within their communities, and further work along these lines should explore opportunities for sustainable digital volunteerism. As much of this work is unseen, little is known about the experiences of the people doing this work, and this qualitative study sheds light on the experiences of a subset of moderators engaged in largely invisible work.

The second study lays the groundwork for scrutinizing the costs of emotional labor within collectivist cultures, namely: (1) risking personal safety and wellness for the social good, and (2) 'saving face' in

online collectivist spaces. We then propose opportunities for designing for emotional labor, what we coin as designing for sustained volunteerism: (1) empowering moderators through visible social support, and (2) developing moderation tools with emotional affect in mind. The findings from this study can inform the management of emotional labor in open collaboration repositories such as GitHub, and improve the work of meta-moderation in the design of similar platforms.

7.2.3   Implications for Decolonization

Communities are using online platforms like Reddit to build capacity for resilience from white hegemony. We discuss how algorithmic configurations within sociotechnical systems reaffirm existing hegemonic values, and we describe ways in which users and designers of sociotechnical systems can work toward resistance.

The third study reveals how AAPI subreddits enable the process of decolonization to occur and build capacity for collective resilience. We find that these online communities constantly fight for their existence through decolonizing tactics that include: (1) reclaiming space to confront brigade invasion, (2) recording collective memory to circumvent systemic erasure, and (3) revising cultural narratives to deconstruct colonial mentality. We center the perspectives of AAPI moderators and discuss how their acts of resistance challenge and circumvent their systemic marginalization as materialized by white hegemony and algorithmic authority.

7.3   Challenges and Limitations

7.3.1   Methodological Considerations

Our site of research is based on a single online platform: Reddit. As the objective of this work aimed to study a specific phenomenon in a focused context, we cannot generalize our results broadly to the entire AAPI community. Moreover, our sample of participants who moderate for AAPI subreddits may not necessarily represent the experience of moderators on other online platforms that operate on a different set of identity management affordances and privacy norms.

We ascribed values from cultures that function in "high context" to the work of moderators in AAPI subreddits. However, we did not collect comparative data on the work of moderators in other identity work subreddits that function in "low context," which could provide more insight into the meta-moderation practices among both types of subreddits.

7.3.2   Ethical Considerations

In my role as a researcher of color, I experienced the double work in reading and writing to inform multiple audiences—such as those familiar with critical race theory and those who are not—at once. I found it unnecessary at times to repetitively justify why race is of relevance to the greater HCI community—particularly when I do not feel like I should have to do that with every HCI paper.

While conducting research with individuals who share marginalized identities comes with its own set of obstacles, I do acknowledge that my identity as an Asian American male could have provided me with privileged access to Reddit moderators who were more comfortable speaking to a researcher who looked like them. The AAPI moderators I interviewed saw my work as an opportunity to preserve their history and narrative, and I did feel a compelling obligation to do them justice. As a scholar of color, I

also felt an obligation to give something back to the community that I researched. In the words of Vo, "as ethnic researchers, we must continually balance the expectations of others, in addition to our own desire, to do advocacy work versus the demands of completing a research project and fulfilling the requirements of the academic institution, which oftentimes does not reward us for community activism" (Vo, 2000).

Due to a lack of research funding, I was also conflicted with the inability to provide my interview informants with cash-equivalent compensation for their time in my study. I am absolutely grateful to have met and interviewed passionate moderators who truly go beyond their volunteer duties to speak with researchers like me.

Reddit affords anonymity as a norm of the platform. In my interview studies, quotes from my participants are associated with the specific subreddits they moderate. While this research design choice makes it potentially possible to identify a Reddit alias to a moderator, I felt it was necessary to provide a demographic table that situates the quotes within the context of the subreddit. Although moderators are publicly listed on the sidebar of the subreddits they moderate, I intentionally chose not to disclose the usernames of my participants in my studies to reduce their identifiability. Moreover, the interview protocol was designed such that the real names of participants were neither asked nor collected. Since I am interested in researching multiple facets of identity work, I argue that providing a participant table that demarcates a redditor's sex, race, ethnicity, and educational degree earned can further contextualize the quote within the perspective of the moderator's background.

7.4   Future Research Directions

We have accomplished the goals established in this dissertation and have presented ways in which AAPIs negotiate collective action in the context of online identity work. As mentioned in our literature

review, identity is multifaceted, fluid, and constructed in relation to social rules and norms. As such, we aim to further the scope of our research to focus on additional aspects of identity we have yet to illuminate:

1. According to a 2016 Pew Research Center study (Barthel et al., 2016), approximately 7% of US adults use Reddit, and its demographic user base skews white (70%), male (67%), and between the ages of 18-29 (64%). How do generational considerations complicate the transmission of identity?

2. AAPI activists routinely demand policy makers to ascertain disaggregated data among ethnicities of the Asian diaspora. Such subgroups include South Asians, Southeast Asians, East Asians, Central Asians, and Pacific Islanders. How do the particularities of identity work among ethnic enclaves that are covered under the AAPI umbrella differ? Where do they share similarities?

3. As ethnic identifications within the larger AAPI umbrella complicate identity work, how do viral social movements (i.e., "Subtle Asian Traits," "Subtle Curry Traits") build collective solidarity within Western countries beyond the US, such as Asian Australians and Asian Canadians?

The completion of my dissertation marks a new starting point for building a research agenda around collective identity construction in sociotechnical systems. While this thesis focused on the AAPI pan-ethnic identity, I will continue to drive research that expands identity work within other communities that share collectivist norms that intersect with other social categories. Social movements are collective because they unite people under a single cause. Similarly, our identities are intersectional, and I plan to explore other intersections whereby people come together to collectively engage in identity work.

For instance, I have already begun to publish various strands of work that study how masculine norms are shifting and evolving in traditionally collectivist communities. I have explored this undertaking with collaborators through the institutions of the military (Dosono et al., 2017a; Semaan et al., 2017b), college athletic programs (Grimaldi et al., 2019), and fraternal organizations (Dosono et al., 2019), connecting common themes across deference and demeanor in hyper-masculine cultures. Complementary research will further examine the ways in which emerging ICTs complicate gender expression across collectivist contexts.

7.5   Research Reflections: Why Identity Work Matters to Me

7.5.1   Decolonization as a Lifelong Journey

I was three years deep into my PhD program when I first came across papers that were tagged as "identity work" within my academic community. While I initially was drawn to topics of privacy and security as an early doctoral student, I also began to notice how so many papers I was reading and citing—at least within social computing research—drew conclusions from samples with overwhelmingly white male users. I sought to find research that reflected the norms and composition of my own community, but had difficulty locating that body of work in my field. This lack of diversity compelled me to look further into identity work scholarship and scope out situated contexts that have remained largely unexplored and unprovoked.

By happenstance, I began a process of self-decolonization in the late stages of my PhD program. As I was conducting interviews with moderators of AAPI subreddits, I inductively noticed that my informants were also sharing their processes of decolonization and how they were shaping identity awareness within their own subreddits. With each interview I completed, I was gaining a better sense

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of not only the AAPI Reddit sphere, but I was also piecing together various facets of my identity that I never fully examined.

My parents immigrated from the Philippines—a country subjected to over four centuries of colonial rule—to settle down on the Yakama Reservation in Washington state, where I was born. Growing up on a Native American reservation, I did not identify with other students of similar cultural backgrounds because AAPIs accounted for less than one percent of my home county's demographic. Questions like "am I Filipino enough?" or "what are you?" became a recurring thought as I began to reflect upon my racial identity during my K-12 years. Critical issues relevant to AAPI history were largely absent in the history books I was required to read in middle and high school.

As a Filipino American male, I live and breathe within a colonized body that grants me certain privileges and denies me of others. The heightened awareness of AAPI empowerment in my own fieldwork inspired me to add a component of decolonization to my scholarship. Reflexively, how can I play my part to ensure AAPI narratives are accessible and inclusive? Knowledge, from the beginning, has and always will be a political construct. Imperial, hegemonic structures dictate what type of content gets published and what does not. I decided to use my privilege as a researcher to legitimize the lived experiences of AAPIs by centering their narratives—literally and figuratively—in my dissertation.

Decolonization is a transformative process for me as it allows me to "unlearn" what I have learned in over two decades of cultural assimilation. I now maintain a firm grasp on how to combat social inequities, appreciate cultural traditions, and activate silent AAPI voices around me. I never imagined AAPI coalition building and grassroots organizing to develop into passionate side hobbies, but these skills enabled me to make systemic changes within my community. Today I no longer feel invisible, and I envision the AAPI narrative of struggle, devotion, and triumph to emerge as one of the most pronounced stories on the shelf of American history.

7.5.2 Activating Asian America: Becoming, Belonging, Bestowing

It is fitting that I submit this thesis and present my dissertation defense during AAPI Heritage Month at Syracuse University. AAPI Heritage Month prompts a moment for me to reflect on my personal journey of AAPI activism and reaffirms the importance of celebrating diversity within the greater community. Coincidentally, I am also grateful to have an examination committee comprising of several faculty who identify with having Asian ancestry themselves—despite the circumstantial surroundings of completing a doctoral program in a predominantly white institution within a predominantly white discipline. Their perspectives have not only reaffirmed and validated my work, but have also deepened my research explorations into overlapping domains of study. **I am becoming** more comfortable with my presence and perspective within the research enterprise because of the path they have been able to pave for me.

I am deeply passionate about researching issues that pertain to social justice and the Asian American and Pacific Islander identity, and I am immensely grateful to have the opportunity to intertwine both my scholarly and professional interests. In my organizing work, I have come to learn that the liberation of one marginalized group is tied to the liberation of all marginalized groups. Critical race scholarship is unapologetically liberatory and emancipatory in nature, and I found the dissertation journey to be so intrinsically rewarding as I have been able to piece together parts of my own past and genealogy—projects that I never thought I would have the foresight, conviction, or energy to take on during graduate school. In foregrounding my research with sociohistorical context, I am able to pinpoint where **I am belonging** within the grander narrative of AAPI identity work and concentric circles of contemporary social movements.

Given AAPI's longstanding history of silence, exclusion, and marginalization in America, I believe my work has significant potential to inform how their involvement in contemporary social movements

affects other groups who face similar oppressive challenges. Unique to other disadvantaged groups,

Asian Americans contend with deeply seeded anti-black sentiment apropos the Black Lives Matter

movement and its spread across social media and social organizing at large. **I am bestowing** a body of

scholarship that represents a symbolic step forward in centering the lived experiences of AAPIs in online

environments, and I hope future scholars of color can further expand our conceptual framings of identity

work across disciplines. My research also has the potential to inform how other marginalized or niche

AAPI subgroups, such as those dealing with mental illnesses or other stigmatized realities, come together

on online platforms to collaboratively make sense of their identities and develop a sense of belonging

with community members that share a collective identity with them.

A
Subreddit Descriptions

Subreddit	Description
r/abcdesis	South Asian Americans- A place for members of the South Asian diaspora that includes people who descend from Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Nepal. We also welcome Desis who live in Australia, Britain, Canada, and other countries outside of the South Asian subcontinent.
r/asianamerican	Anything related to Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, as well as other Asians who grew up outside of Asia. This includes news, discussions, pictures, or videos. While members of all races and nationalities are welcome, our purpose is to foster a sense of community among Asian Americans and their respective counterparts in the Asian diaspora. Topics do not necessarily need to be related to race as long as they contribute to the community.
r/asianamericanathletes	A sub to discuss the latest news, achievements and accomplishments of Asian and Asian American athletes in various sports. You can also follow the Asian American Athletes Reddit Twitter account at https://twitter.com/AsianAthletesRT.
r/asianamericanissues	Current issues relevant to Asian Americans.
r/asianbeautyadvice	A place for lovers of Asian beauty and skincare. If you have a question, need help with your routine, want to share a review or just talk with like minded people, we are the place for you.
r/asianbros	/r/asianbros is a subreddit dedicated to promoting a positive image of Asian men. This is primarily a subreddit for male Asian Americans to hang out and discuss Asian bro stuff. If you do not identify as such, feel free to participate as long as you are respectful of our community.
r/asiandrama	/r/asiandrama is for anybody who would like to discuss and explore Chinese, Taiwanese, Hong Kong, Japanese and Korean dramas.
r/asianeats	N/A
r/asianfeminism	Restricted

Table A.1: Subreddit descriptions. Updated 26 March 2019.

Subreddit	Description
r/asianmasculinity	The only space on the web dedicated to critically examining the Asian male experience.
r/asianparentstories	A subreddit for stories involving Asian parents and the crazy, funny, frustrating, stupid or otherwise interesting encounters you've had with them.
r/asianpeoplegifs	N/A
r/asiantwox	This means ANY kind of Asian! ;) South Asian, East Asian, Half-Asian, etc. No photos to gawk over here, this is a subreddit for Asian girls! All are welcome, but if you start to post inappropriate or offensive material, you will be banned.
r/aznidentity	The most active Asian diaspora forum on the web. We are a Pan Asian community (East, Southeast, South, Central) against all forms of anti Asian racism. We aim to help Asian-Americans and Asians in the West, more broadly, make sense out of their own life experiences, find a supportive like-minded community, and live the best possible life. We prioritize our identity as Asians, not to be used as political pawns for either left or right in Western ideologies/parties.
r/desitwox	A subreddit meant for desi girls to talk about life, culture, fashion, seek advice, and build a community
r/easternsunrising	The last bastion as a space for East/Southeast Asian men and women to come together to defy western brainwashing and western supremacism.
r/gaysian	A subreddit for gay Asians!
r/hapas	A Hapa community for all multiracial Eurasians, Blasians, Quapas, Hāfus, Hùnxuè'ér, Luk khrueng, honhyeol, Amerasians. We also provide an anti-racist safe space for Hapas to share the unique identity issues experienced when racism and sexism comes not just from society but in some cases from our own family through White Patriarchy, White Privilege + internalized racism. We help empower part Asian Pacific offspring whose parents have shown racial insensitivity

Table A.2: Subreddit descriptions (continued). Updated 26 March 2019.

B

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

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Factors Affecting Online Identity Work
IRB #17-272

Lead Researcher
Bryan Dosono, PhD Student
Syracuse University School of Information Studies
bdosono@syr.edu

Other Researchers
Bryan Semaan, Assistant Professor
Syracuse University School of Information Studies
bsemaan@syr.edu

Interview Questions

1. **Demographics**
   a. What gender do you identify as?
   b. What is your race and ethnicity?
   c. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   d. What is your current occupation?
   e. How old are you?

2. **Motivations**
   a. How did you become interested in Reddit?
      i. How long, in terms of years, have you been using Reddit?
      ii. How much time per day, on average, do you spend on Reddit?
      iii. How and where do you log into Reddit?
   b. What kinds of Reddit activities have you participated in? i.e.:
      i. "Ask me anything" / "I am a..."
      ii. Meetups
      iii. Reddit gift exchange
      iv. Reddit gold
   c. What motivated you to get involved in each of those activities?
   d. What other social networking sites or applications do you use on a regular basis?
      i. How does your use or behavior on Reddit differ from the sites you have listed?

3. **Identity**
   a. Can you recall the last time you shared anything relating to your identity as an Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) online?
      i. What anecdotes or experiences did you share? Please provide 2-3 examples.
   b. Are you subscribed to any subreddits relevant to AAPIs?
      i. If so, which AAPI subreddits do you follow?
      ii. How would you describe the community of those subreddits?
   c. Microaggressions are indirect, subtle, or unintentional discriminatory exchanges against members of a marginalized group.
      i. Do you encounter microaggressions in Reddit? If so, how do you react?
      ii. How would you characterize the people behind these microaggressions?
      iii. Do you think microaggressions have a long-term effect on how you view yourself and those similar to you? If so, how so?
   d. Are there any other online sites beyond Reddit that you use to talk about your experience as an AAPI?
      i. If so, what sites do you use?
      ii. For what reason does each of these platforms serve?

4. **Deliberation**
   a. What influences your decision to subscribe to a certain subreddit?
   b. Do you consider yourself an active contributor to any subreddits? Explain.

Interview Questions - Redditors

Interview Protocol

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    c.   Do you take part in upvoting/downvoting comments? Why or why not?

    d.   Have you ever posted a link/created a thread on Reddit? What motivated you to do that?

    e.   How would you describe the conversations that happen on your specific subreddit?

    f.   Have you ever argued against another Redditor in the comment section? If so, what was that experience like for you?

    g.   When you talk to people, do you feel like the conversations are productive or challenging in any way?

5. Moderation

    a.   Have you ever created a subreddit on any topic? Why or why not?

    b.   Do you moderate any/other subreddits? If so, which ones?

    c.   How did you become a subreddit moderator?

    d.   What do you consider your role as a moderator?

    e.   What is the most challenging aspect of moderating a subreddit?

    f.   Have you ever banned a Redditor? If so, what factors led up to that decision?

    g.   In what ways do you work with other moderators to make decisions or take action within the subreddits you moderate?

        i.   How are new moderators invited/vetted into their role?

        ii.   How are old moderators transitioned out of their role?

    h.   Have you observed instances of new moderators who sought to change the culture left behind by older moderators? What are your thoughts on that?

    i.   Do you find Reddit moderator tools, like ModMail, helpful at all?

        i.   If so, how so? If not, why not?

        ii.   Do you have any suggestions for how to improve moderation on Reddit?

    j.   How would you characterize your moderating style versus other moderators on Reddit?

        i.   Do you feel that moderating decisions among Reddit moderators differ between subreddits that focus on cultural/AAPI identity versus subreddits that don't focus on cultural/AAPI identity?

6. Anonymity

    a.   How did you come up with your Reddit username?

    b.   Have you created multiple Reddit accounts?

        i.   If so, how many and what purpose do each of these accounts serve?

        ii.   Have you ever created a throwaway/burner account? If so, why?

    c.   Do people on Reddit know who you are in real life?

    d.   How do you describe the relationship between your Reddit identity and the identity you present to others in the real world?

    e.   Do you think anonymity is an important platform feature for Reddit? Why or why not?

7. Support

    a.   Have you ever used Reddit to seek support or help for a personal issue? If so,

        i.   What was the personal issue?

        ii.   What motivated you to disclose your personal issue online?

        iii.   Were you able to find appropriate resources or feedback on your issue?

        iv.   Did you seek support for the issue on other sites beyond Reddit? If so, where?

    b.   Do you feel Reddit is an appropriate site for sharing personal issues? If so, why?

    c.   Can you detail your last experience where you felt like you were censored when seeking support online?

    d.   Do you have any privacy concerns that limit your ability to seek help and support online?

8. Conclusion

    a.   How would you describe the Reddit community to those unfamiliar with the site?

    b.   If you could change one thing about Reddit to make it a better site, what would it be?

    c.   Is there anything we have not talked about that you think is important for me to know?

Interview Questions - Redditors

C

IRB Approval

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
MEMORANDUM

TO: Bryan Semaan
DATE: September 19, 2017
SUBJECT: **Expedited Protocol Review - Approval of Human Participants**
IRB #:   17-272
TITLE: *Factors Affecting Online Identity Work*

The above referenced protocol was reviewed by the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) and has been given **expedited approval.** The protocol has been determined to be of no more than minimal risk and has been evaluated for the following:

1. the rights and welfare of the individual(s) under investigation;
2. appropriate methods to secure informed consent; and
3. risks and potential benefits of the investigation.

The approval period is **September 15, 2017** through **September 14, 2018**. A continuing review of this protocol must be conducted before the end of this approval period. Although you will receive a request for a continuing renewal approximately 60 days before that date, it is your responsibility to submit the information in sufficient time to allow for review before the approval period ends.

Enclosed are the IRB approved date stamped consent and/or assent document/s related to this study that expire on <u>September 14, 2018</u>. **The IRB approved date stamped copy must be duplicated and used when enrolling new participants during the approval period** (may not be applicable for electronic consent or research projects conducted solely for data analysis)**.** Federal regulations require that each participant indicate their willingness to participate through the informed consent process and be provided with a copy of the consent form. Regulations also require that you keep a copy of this document for a minimum of three years after your study is closed.

Any changes to the protocol during the approval period cannot be initiated **prior** to IRB review and approval, except when such changes are essential to eliminate apparent immediate harm to the participants. In this instance, changes must be reported to the IRB within five days. Protocol changes must be submitted on an amendment request form available on the IRB web site. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others must be reported to the IRB within 10 working days of occurrence.

IRB Approval

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Thank you for your cooperation in our shared efforts to assure that the rights and welfare of people participating in research are protected.

Katherine McDonald
IRB Chair

DEPT: Information Studies, 338 Hinds Hall   **STUDENT:** Bryan Dosono

D

IRB Recruitment Script

School of Information Studies
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Behavior, Information, Technology, Society Lab
Hinds Hall 217, Syracuse University
Factors Affecting Online Identity Work
IRB #17-272

Lead Researcher	**Other Researchers**
Bryan Dosono, PhD Student	Bryan Semaan, Assistant Professor
Syracuse University School of Information Studies	Syracuse University School of Information Studies
bdosono@syr.edu	bsemaan@syr.edu

Recruitment Script for Mass Email Solicitation, Craigslist, and Social Media

Greetings,

We are researchers of the BITS Lab at Syracuse University—a new lab that was established within the School of Information Studies. We are interested in recruiting people to interview for a forthcoming study on "Factors Affecting Online Identity Work."

The lead researcher for this study is Bryan Dosono, a doctoral student in the School of Information Studies. We are interested in understanding how people construct and express their identity in online communities within Reddit.

We expect this interview to take approximately 1.5 hours over Skype or phone call. You will not be paid for your time, as this interview is voluntary. If you are over 18 years old, have a Reddit account, and are interested in participating, please email Bryan Dosono at bdosono@syr.edu with your availability for an interview.

Respectfully,

Bryan Dosono and Colleagues
Behavior, Information, Technology, Society Lab
Syracuse University School of Information Studies

Recruitment Script

E

IRB Consent Forms

Consent Forms

School of Information Studies
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Factors Affecting Online Identity Work
IRB #17-272

Lead Researcher	**Other Researchers**
Bryan Dosono, PhD Student	Bryan Semaan, Assistant Professor
Syracuse University School of Information Studies	Syracuse University School of Information Studies
bdosono@syr.edu	bsemaan@syr.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study about how people construct and express their identity in online communities within Reddit.

The risks for participating in this study are minimal. You may experience discomfort when recalling past or current experiences, though the risks and discomfort associated with participation in this study are no greater than those ordinarily encountered in your daily life. There are no direct benefits from participation in the study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. There is no cost to you for participating. You may refuse to participate or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty. You may choose to skip a question or a study procedure.

You will not be paid for your participation in this research.

The research procedure involves an audiotaped interview between the individual participant and the researcher. The interview that will last up to 1.5 hours at a private location that is convenient for the interviewee, such as at your home, or our laboratory facilities. You will be asked a series of questions to help the researcher understand how people construct and express their identity in online communities within Reddit.

We wish to record the interviews because it will be difficult to capture the entire interview as we are having a conversation. The recordings will be used for purposes of data analysis, whereby following each interview we will transcribe the recordings and analyze the text. Text materials will be kept for 10 years, and audio will be destroyed after it is converted to text. All research data collected will be stored securely and confidentially. Data will not be identified. Audio recordings will be stored in digitally on a password-protected computer that only the researchers of this study (Bryan Dosono and Bryan Semaan) can access.

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the researchers listed at the top of this form.

You may contact the IRB Office—by phone at (315) 443-3013 or by email at orip@syr.edu—if you have questions regarding your rights as a participant, or if you have questions, concerns or complaints you wishes to address to someone other than the investigator, or if you cannot reach the investigator.

Do you have any questions about the research?

Are you 18 years of age or older? Circle YES or NO.

Please indicate your consent by marking your answer using an "X":
_____   I agree to be audio recorded.
_____   I do not agree to be audio recorded.

Please sign below if you agree to participate in this study. You will receive a copy of the consent form.

_____   _____   _____
Signature of Participant   Printed Name of Participant   Date

_____   _____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Printed Name of Researcher   Date

Syracuse University   IRB Approved

Written Consent Form   OCT 2 6 2017   SEP 1 4 2018

337 Hinds Hall   315-443-2911
Syracuse, New York 13244   https://ischool.syr.edu/

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Consent Forms

School of Information Studies
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Factors Affecting Online Identity Work
IRB #17-272

Lead Researcher	**Other Researchers**
Bryan Dosono, PhD Student	Bryan Semaan, Assistant Professor
Syracuse University School of Information Studies	Syracuse University School of Information Studies
bdosono@syr.edu	bsemaan@syr.edu

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If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the researchers listed at the top of this form.

You may contact the IRB Office—by phone at (315) 443-3013 or by email at orip@syr.edu—if you have questions regarding your rights as a participant, or if you have questions, concerns or complaints you wishes to address to someone other than the investigator, or if you cannot reach the investigator.

Do you have any questions about the research?

Are you 18 years of age or older?

Do you agree to be audio recorded?

Do you agree to participate?

How can I provide you with a copy of this consent script?

Syracuse University   IRB Approved

OCT 2 6 2017   SEP 1 4 2018

Oral Consent Form

337 Hinds Hall
Syracuse, New York 13244

315-443-2911
https://ischool.syr.edu/

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Frederic Stutzman and Woodrow Hartzog. Boundary regulation in social media. In *Proceedings of the ACM 2012 Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, pages 769-778. ACM, 2012. https://doi.org/10.1145/2145204.2145320.

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Vasillis Vlachokyriakos, Clara Crivellaro, Pete Wright, Evika Karamagioli, Eleni-Revekka Staiou, Dimitris Gouscos, Rowan Thorpe, Antonio Krüger, Johannes Schöning, Matt Jones, et al. HCI, solidarity movements and the solidarity economy. In *Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, pages 3126-3137. ACM, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1145/3025453.3025490.

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Kathleen Yep. Linsanity and centering sport in Asian American studies and Pacific Islander studies. *Amerasia Journal*, 38(3):133-137, 2012. https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.38.3.c6423501kt300ljp.

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Qin Zhang. Asian Americans beyond the model minority stereotype: The nerdy and the left out. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 3(1):20-37, 2010. https://doi.org/10.1080/17513050903428109.

BRYAN DOSONO

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EDUCATION

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2019   Ph.D. in Information Science and Technology
       Syracuse University (SU), School of Information Studies, Syracuse, NY
       Concentration: Data Science

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE

2013   B.S. in Informatics: Human-Computer Interaction
       University of Washington (UW), Information School, Seattle, WA
       College Honors, Phi Beta Kappa, Magna Cum Laude, Minor: Music

EMPLOYMENT

ACADEMIC

2014   Doctoral Researcher, Syracuse University
 −19   **Research**: Behavior, Information, Technology and Society Laboratory (Research Assistant);
       Social Computing Systems Laboratory (Research Assistant)
       Teaching: Human-Computer Interaction (Guest Lecturer);
       Introduction to Asian American Studies (Guest Lecturer);
       Theories of Digital Technology (Teaching Assistant);
       Information Reporting and Presentation (Teaching Assistant);
       Social Web Technologies (Teaching Assistant)

2019   Teaching Fellow, University of Pittsburgh
 −16   **Research**: iSchool Inclusion Institute (Advisor)
       Teaching: Python Programming (Instructor)

INDUSTRY

2018   Experience Research Ph.D. Intern, Airbnb
2018   Virtual Student Federal Service Research Intern, National Aeronautics and Space Administration
2013   Google Policy Fellow, New America Foundation Open Technology Institute
2012   Brand Ambassador, Google
2008   Engineering Intern, Boeing Company

RESEARCH

PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

[J3]   Dosono, B., Hayes, J., Wang, Y. (2018). Toward accessible authentication: Learning from people
       with visual impairments. *IEEE Internet Computing*, 22(2).

[J2] Dosono, B., Rashidi, Y., Akter, T., Semaan, B., Kapadia, A. (2017). Challenges in transitioning from civil to military culture: Hyper-selective disclosure through ICTs. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction, 1* (2). ACM.

[J1] Gomez, R., Pather, S., Dosono, B. (2012). Public access computing in South Africa: Old lessons and new challenges. *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries, 52*(1).

PEER-REVIEWED CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

[C14] Dosono, B., Semaan, B. (2019). Moderation practices as emotional labor in sustaining online communities: The case of AAPI identity work on Reddit. *Proceedings of the 37th Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems.* ACM. Forthcoming.

[C13] Grimaldi, V., Figueroa, J., Sullivan, J., Dosono, B. (2019). From gridiron gang to game plan: Impact of ICTs on student athlete information seeking practices, routines, and long-term goals. iConference 2019. *Lecture Notes in Computer Science.* Springer, Cham. Forthcoming.

[C12] Dosono, B., Semaan, B. (2018). Identity work as deliberation: AAPI political discourse in the 2016 US Presidential Election. *Proceedings of the 36th Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems.* ACM.

[C11] Booth, K., Dosono, B., Redmiles, E., Morales, M., Depew, M., Herman, E., Trahan, K., Tananis, C., Farzan, R. (2018). Diversifying the next generation of information scientists: Six years of implementation and outcomes for a year-long REU program. In Transforming Digital Worlds. iConference 2018. *Lecture Notes in Computer Science* (pp. 655-664). Springer, Cham.

[C10] Dosono, B., Semaan, B., Hemsley, J. (2017). Exploring AAPI identity online: Political ideology as a factor affecting identity work on Reddit. *Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 2528-2535). ACM.

[C9] Bratt, S., Semaan, B., Britton, L., Dosono, B., Franco, Z. (2017). Translation in personal crises: Opportunities for wearables design. *Proceedings of the Conference on Information Systems for Crisis Response and Management.*

[C8] Hayes, J., Dosono, B., Wang, Y. (2017). "They should be convenient and strong": Password perceptions and practices of visually impaired users. *iConference 2017 Proceedings.*

[C7] Semaan, B., Dosono, B., Britton, L. (2017). Impression management in high context societies: 'Saving face' with ICT. *Proceedings of the 2017 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing* (pp. 712-725). ACM.

[C6] Semaan, B., Britton, L., Dosono, B. (2017). Military masculinity and the travails of transitioning: Disclosure in social media. *Proceedings of the 2017 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing* (pp. 387-403). ACM.

[C5] Semaan, B., Britton, L., Dosono, B. (2016). Transition resilience with ICTs: 'Identity awareness' in veteran reintegration. *Proceedings of the 34th Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 2882-2894). ACM.

[C4] Dosono, B. (2016). Patron privacy: A luxury concern for marginalized Internet users. *iConference 2016 Proceedings.*

[C3] Dosono, B., Hayes, J., Wang, Y. (2015). "I'm stuck!": A contextual inquiry of people with visual impairment in authentication. *Symposium On Usable Privacy and Security* (pp. 151-168). USENIX Association.

[C2] Dosono, B. (2014). Digital inclusion for migrant millennials: Improving the ICT landscape of Yakima Valley Schools. *iConference 2014 Proceedings.*

[C1] Ko, A., Dosono, B., Duriseti, N. (2014). Thirty years of software problems in the news. *Proceedings of the 7th International Workshop on Cooperative and Human Aspects of Software Engineering* (pp.32-39). ACM.

WORKSHOPS ORGANIZED

[W1] Bayo, I., Budd, J., Caidi, N., Changfoot, N., Diaz Andrade, A., Dosono, B., Gomez, R., Quan-Haase, A., Wolske, M. (2014). Information and marginality: Ethical issues. *iConference 2014 Proceedings*.

POSTERS

[P3] Figueroa, J., Sullivan, J., Grimaldi, V., Dosono, B. (2018). Finding a future beyond the field: Exploring ICT-mediated practices of student athletes. *iConference 2018 Proceedings*.
[P2] Dosono, B., Britton, L., Semaan, B. (2016). 'Transition resilience' in veterans and refugees: Regaining normalcy after war. *iConference 2016 Proceedings*.
[P1] Dosono, B., Huynh, W., Liu, K., Lu, W. (2012). vTracker: Volunteer management web application. University of Washington Information School Capstone Fair. **Audience Choice Award.**

DOCTORAL CONSORTIA

[D5] Dosono, B. (2019). Moderating identity work in online communities: The case of Asian American and Pacific Islanders on Reddit. *Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*.
[D4] Dosono, B. (2018). Online identity work: The case of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders on Reddit. *Association of Internet Researchers*.
[D3] Dosono, B. (2018). AAPI identity work on Reddit. *Richard Tapia Celebration of Diversity in Computing*. ACM.
[D2] Dosono, B. (2018). Identity work on Reddit: Social support and collective action of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.*iConference 2018 Proceedings*.
[D1] Dosono, B. (2018). AAPI identity work on Reddit: Toward social support and collective action. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Supporting Group Work*. ACM.

BOOK CHAPTERS

[B2] Dosono, B., Badruddin, B., Lam, V. (2019). History of Asian American Fraternal Organizations. In Sasso, P. (2019). Foundations, Research, and Assessment of Fraternities and Sororities: Retrospective and Future Considerations. *Myers Publishing*. (Forthcoming)
[B1] Gee, B., Seoh, H., Dosono, B. (2019). The National Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Panhellenic Association. In Sasso, P. (2019). Supporting Fraternities and Sororities in the Contemporary Era: Advancements in Practice. *Myers Publishing*. (Forthcoming)

TECHNICAL REPORTS

[R2] Ganghadaran, S., Dosono, B., Ngu, K. (2013). Virtually unused: Virtual private networks and public internet users. New America Foundation.
[R1] Dosono, B. (2012). Digital inclusion: Developing an action plan for the City of Seattle. University of Washington Undergraduate Research Symposium, Seattle, WA.

INVITED TALKS

[T4] Dosono, B. (2019). Syracuse University, Office of Multicultural Affairs. "Decolonizing Asian American Institutions."

[T3] Dosono, B. (2018). Colgate University, Department of Computer Science. "Of platforms and publics: Identity work on Reddit."

[T2] Dosono, B. (2017). University of Pittsburgh, iSchool Inclusion Institute. "Exploring Asian American and Pacific Islander identity work on Reddit."

[T1] Semaan, B., Britton, L., Dosono, B., Bratt, S. (2017). Cornell University, Intercultural Communication Lab. "Transition resilience with ICTs: The case of veteran re-integration."

INSTITUTES

2018 Oxford Internet Institute Summer Doctoral Programme

2018 Computing Research Association Grad Cohort Workshop for Underrepresented Minorities + Persons with Disabilities

2015 SU Future Professoriate Program Annual Conference

SERVICE

PROFESSION

2018 Session Chair & Student Volunteer, ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems

2018 Student Volunteer, ACM International Conference on Supporting Group Work

2017 Student Volunteer, ACM SIGCHI Executive Committee

2017 Reviewer & Student Volunteer, ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems

2016 Reviewer, Computer-Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing

2015 Reviewer & Student Volunteer Captain, iConference

2014 Reviewer, Symposium On Usable Privacy and Security

UNIVERSITY

2019 Co-Chair, SU Office of Multicultural Affairs Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month

2015 Organizer, SU Graduate Forum on Research Methodologies

2014 Graduate Student Representative, SU Graduate Council

2014 Chair, SU Graduate Senate Academic Affairs Committee

2014 Graduate Student Representative, SU Senate

2014 Organizer, SU Graduate Research Symposium

2013 Student Representative, UW Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity Student Advisory Board

DEPARTMENT

2017 Doctoral Representative, SU iSchool Hiring Committee

2014 Doctoral Representative, SU iSchool Personnel Committee

2013 Doctoral Representative, SU iSchool Faculty Committee

2013 Organizer, SU App Challenge

2012 Student Volunteer, UW Information School Research Fair

2012 Student Volunteer, UW Information School Career Fair

2011   Undergraduate Student Representative, UW Informatics Program Committee

STUDENT LIFE

2017   Founding Advisor, SU Filipino Student Association
2017   Senior Editor, SU ALINE Magazine
2012   President, UW United Greek Council
2011   Senate Speaker, Associated Students of the University of Washington
2010   Founder, UW Student Philanthropy Education Program
2009   Mentor, UW Honors Program

SPEAKING

2018   Panelist, Syracuse Professional Fraternity Council
2017   Workshop Presenter, Syracuse Women in Science and Engineering Program
2016   Workshop Presenter, East Coast Asian American Student Union Conference
2015   Panelist, Mortar Board National Conference
2013   Commencement Speaker, UW Filipino American Student Association Graduation
2012   Keynote Speaker, UW Spring Leadership and Service Symposium
2012   Keynote Speaker, UW Boeing Donor Scholarship Breakfast
2008   Commencement Speaker, Wapato High School Valedictorian Address

COMMUNITY

2017   Director of Technology, National Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Panhellenic Association
2016   Organizer, National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association Mental Health Summit
2013   Washington Leadership Program, Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership
2012   Volunteer Coordinator, National Marrow Donor Program
2009   Hardware Refurbisher, InterConnection

PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS

2015   Ambassador, White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders
2011   Commissioner, City of Seattle Community Technology Advisory Board

MEMBERSHIPS

2018   New York Academy of Sciences (NYAS), Active
2017   Special Interest Group on Computer-Human Interaction (SIGCHI), Active
2013   Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), Active
2013   Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), Active
2008   Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T)

AWARDS

TRAVEL GRANTS

2018   National Science Foundation: ACM Richard Tapia Celebration of Diversity in Computing Conference Travel Grant

2018　National Science Foundation: iConference 2018 Doctoral Colloquium Travel Grant

2018　CRA Grad Cohort Workshop Travel Grant

2018　ACM GROUP Doctoral Consortium Travel Grant

2017　ACM SIGCHI 50th Celebration of the Turing Award Student Scholarship

2017　ACM SIGCHI Graduate Student Organization Travel Grant

2016　ACM SIGCHI Student Travel Grant

2016　SU iSchool Doctoral Travel Grant

2015　Symposium on Usable Privacy and Security Travel Grant

2015　SU iSchool Doctoral Travel Grant

FELLOWSHIPS

2018　Digital Library Federation New Professional Fellowship

2016　iSchool Inclusion Institute Teaching Fellowship

2016　Lloyd G. Balfour Foundation Fellowship

2015　Mortar Board Graduate Fellowship

2015　Dean's Fellowship

2013　Google Policy Fellowship

2013　Ronald E. McNair Graduate Fellowship

2009　Robert Lee Ellis Civic Fellowship

SCHOLARSHIPS

2018　Thomas B. Jelke Graduate Scholarship

2014　SU Katzer Research Fund

2013　Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Research Scholarship

2012　Early Identification Program Presidential Scholarship

2012　National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates Grant

2012　University of Washington Homecoming King Royalty Scholarship

2011　Boeing Diversity Scholarship

2011　Ruth and William Gerberding Scholarship

2011　Lambda Phi Epsilon International Brother of the Year Scholarship

2010　Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship

2010　National Science and Math Access to Retain Talent Grant

2008　Washington Scholar Full Tuition Scholarship

2008　Elks National Foundation Scholarship

2008　Dell Scholars Foundation Scholarship

HONORS

2019　SU Office of Multicultural Affairs' Irma Almirall-Padamsee La Fuerza Community Enhancement Award

2019　SU Award for Excellence by an Organization Advisor

2013　UW Faculty Award for Student Excellence in Informatics

2013　UW President's Achievement Award

2013　UW Hall of Fame Inductee for Outstanding Contributions to Student Activities

2013　UW Ethnic Cultural Center Director's Outstanding Leadership Award

2013 UW Commencement Gonfaloniere
2013 UW Dean's List
2012 Order of Omega
2011 Phi Beta Kappa

PRESS
2019 *The Daily Orange*, "AAPI Heritage Month exhibit remembers SU campus hate crime, raises awareness"
2019 *Syracuse University iSchool News*, "Faculty, students presenting at iConference 2019"
2018 *ALIST Magazine*, "The intersection of technology, innovation and human values with Bryan Dosono"
2018 *The Daily Orange*, "Asian American and Pacific Islander students celebrate their place at Syracuse University"
2018 *Syracuse University iSchool News*, "Faculty, students presenting at iConference 2018"
2017 *Syracuse University iSchool News*, "Dosono to attend ACM's Turing Award Celebration"
2017 *Syracuse University iSchool News*, "Faculty, staff, doctoral students presenting at iConference 2017"
2016 *Connections Magazine*, "iSchool researchers use technology to understand veteran reacclimation"
2016 *Syracuse University iSchool News*, "Faculty, doctoral students presenting at iConference"
2015 *Syracuse University iSchool News*, "Research in privacy, security being profiled at SOUPS Conference"
2014 *The Daily Orange*, "iSchool research aims to aid military veterans, refugees"
2014 *Syracuse University iSchool News*, "Faculty, doctoral students presenting at iConference"
2014 *Viewpoint*, "The husky experience"
2013 *The Daily Orange*, "SU app challenge offers $1,000 grand prize"
2013 *Northwest Asian Weekly*, "EOP celebration honors 3 APA students"
2013 *Yakima Herald Independent*, "Wapato resident receives UW honor"
2013 *UW Daily*, "ECC honors community members for activism efforts"