The Routledge Handbook of Gender and Communication

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Gaysian Fabulosity

Publication details
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429448317-4
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Published online on: 30 Nov 2020

How to cite :- Shinsuke Eguchi. 30 Nov 2020, Gaysian Fabulosity from: The Routledge Handbook of Gender and Communication Routledge
Accessed on: 31 May 2022
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429448317-4

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The centrality of whiteness and of White-on-White gay male relationships [is] a sense-making norm that fuels the logic by which we [people of color] ascribe value in the gay marketplace of desire.

Dwight A. McBride

Queers of color are excluded or constructed in ways that further marginalize that identity construct, in the service of promoting heteronormative constructions of White masculinity—even in the presumed context of foregrounding queer identity.

Bryant Keith Alexander

Since moving from Japan to the United States in 2001, I have almost always observed, felt, and experienced the politics of racialized gender essentializing Asian men as feminine and submissive Others in and across gay sexual cultures. Whether I was in Orange County (2001–2003), San Francisco (2003–2005), New York (2006–2008), or Washington, DC. (2008–2011) where Asian and Asian American populations are historically visible, the logics of whiteness that organize gay sexual cultures always already subordinate Asian men “as a subcultural category referencing the racialized fetishes of an older white male for the diminutive and effeminized Asian male.” In and across gay sexual cultural spaces such as clubs, pride parades, community events, and online dating sites I have frequented, youthful, healthy, able-bodied white men who look like buffed-out blue-eye gay Adonises represent the normative masculine power and ideal. As C. Winter Han argues, a catchphrase “No Fat, No Femme, and No Asians” that emerged from gay online dating and hookup websites mirrors how gay sexual cultures that naturalize and stabilize the youthful White masculine beauty standard continue to ostracize Asian men.

This situation showcases what queer Asian American scholar David L. Eng has argued that the historical continuum of U.S. racial formation institutionally organized Asian men and masculinities as subordinate to white men and masculinities. The active forces of White supremacy that normalize the power and privilege of white men and masculinities have thus far controlled the hetero-reproductive growth of the Asian population. In the early 1900s, the anti-Asian migration policy and legislation restricted women from nations in Asia to enter into the United States. So, large numbers of Asian men remained single and could not reproduce their offspring. Additionally, the institution of White supremacy relegated Asian men to occupy the labor
market such as domestic servants, hotel workers, and laundrymen largely considered as feminine jobs. Such material conditions of Asian men perpetuated the stereotypes of their physical traits (including body shape, height, and penis size) as smaller and therefore more feminine than white men, who signify and affirm the normal and ordinary. Because of Asian men historically seen as not man enough, Asian men have become to signify undesirable feminine and submissive Others.

This racialized gender politics has also affected the gay sexual cultural representations of Asian men. The prominent stereotype about gay + Asian (also known as gaysian) is that they are also smaller and more feminine than white men. This feminine stereotype often essentializes gaysians as sexual bottoms (meaning anal sex receivers). Gaysians are not mostly expected to be masculine, active, and sexual tops (meaning anal sex penetrators) and/or to be sexually versatile even when the gay sexual cultural practices of top-bottom roles are much more fluid. Indeed, a gay subcultural category “Asian” has been produced and materialized for the pornographic consumption of older men who desire youthful foreign Asian men as feminine and submissive Others. Hence, a stereotypical gaysian narrative that operates as the gay sexual cultural norm is that Asian men cannot easily find ideal sexual and romantic partners because they are “too” feminine and submissive. Accordingly, gaysians are known to compete against each other to find their partners from the limited numbers of white men who desire Asian men. At the same time, it is ironic that gaysians are mostly regarded not to desire other Asian men and/or non-Asian men of color (e.g., Arab/Middle Eastern, Black, Latinx, Native, and Pacific Islander), white men as the ideal and desirable partners occupy in the center of a stereotypical gaysian narrative. Thus, the politics of racialized gender that reify the essentialist, false White-Asian, West-East, and domestic-foreign binaries surround the performative rhetorics of gaysian.

However, I critique that the stereotypical gaysian narrative I have mentioned above solely depends on the discourse of oppression. Gaysian narratives are much more complex, contested, multiple, and fluid than a simply oppressed narrative. While the supremacy of whiteness as the normative gay masculine power and ideal can undeniably cultivate similar racialized gender experiences for the gaysian subjects, it should not entirely homogenize differences of gaysian narratives. Depending on locations where gaysian subjects are situated, they differently internalize, embody, and perform the intersectionality of gay and Asian. By intersectionality, I mean a simultaneous and multifarious operation of differences (such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, language, citizenship, coloniality, and the body) that politicize, historicize, and contextualize one’s experiences. Accordingly, I am concerned with how the simplistic and highly limited gaysian narrative rooted in the discourse of oppression maintains the privilege of whiteness the normative gay masculine power. Thus, this chapter stands as a humble call to interrogate, complicate, and shift gaysian narratives to push the whiteness of gay sexual cultures to the margin.

To do so, I draw the genealogy of quare studies as a critical interpretive methodology to analyze various YouTube vlogger-created gaysian contents. E. Patrick Johnson maintains, “‘Quare’ offers a way to critique stable notion of identity and, at the same time, to locate racialized and gendered knowledges.” Writing from this standpoint, I interrogate how gaysian subjects self-represent their internalizations of and/or resistances against the politics of racialized gender through their everyday performances. I also examine how such gaysian narratives ironically help sustain whiteness as the normative gay masculine power. To interrupt and break through such workings of whiteness, I reconsider possible ways in which the embodied performance of gaysian fabulosity works as a “quare” performative strategy. According to Fiona Buckland, fabulosity is an extra, over-the-top performance of fashion, beauty, and lifestyle emerged from gay bar/night.
Gaysian fabulosity
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cub cultures, which develop counter-normative formations of sexual and gender identities, performances, and politics. At the same time, Bryant Keith Alexander also reminds that the ways in which people of color perform (White) bourgeois characteristics, values, and attitudes allude to potential forms of resistance. Elaborating Alexander’s point, I propose that gaysian fabulosity is a political everyday performative in which gaysians present, articulate, and celebrate the intersectionality of their race/culture and queer sexuality as an ownership of particularity and pride. Such a strategically intentional performative is resistant to the social constructions of their identity and promotes a celebration of gaysian identity as worthy of a particular space in geopolitical realms of queer identities, performativities, and desirabilities that encourages self-love. What follows is an explication of Johnson’s notion of queer studies in the application to building a theory of gaysian identity in/as a politics of Queer-of-Color critique.

Quare studies as a methodology

There have been critiques against the field of queer studies as a site of reproducing the supremacy of whiteness. Especially in light of the fact that the theoretical foundation of queer studies is supposedly about the plurality of agency and sexual freedom. A fluidity problematizes the essentialist paradigm of a straight and gay/lesbian binary rooted in the logics of cisheteronormativity. Queer studies are supposedly a call to destabilize and eliminate the fixed categories of gendered identity politics. People should be able to freely enjoy the particularity of sexualities and genders as they desire across a range of race/culture informed communities of engagement. However, such queer theorizing neglects to consider the complex roles of intersectionality—producing ways of knowing about sex, sexuality, and gender across categories of race/culture/class and situated origins. Queer studies/theory as it exists erases, ignores, and marginalizes the culturally specific and nuanced ways in which people of color embody and perform their sexuality that intersects with race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, class, and the body. Differences are essentially lumped into one categorical paradigm—that is, queer. Consequently, Bryant Keith Alexander critiques, “Queer studies is unacceptably Euro-American in orientation, its purview effectively determined by the practically invisible, because putatively nonexistent—bounds of racial whiteness.”

To intervene the aforementioned practices and promotions of queer studies as circumferences of whiteness, performance studies scholar E. Patrick Johnson builds the notion of quare as a counter-narrative to queer theory that expands a space of inclusion for Queer-of-Color critique. The goal of Queer-of-Color critique is for all non-White queers to articulate and rearticulate their particularized experiences to find a homeplace in an expanded sense of the normal and ordinary. The offering of counter–narratives functions as both resistance and inclusion of gender and sexual minoritarian voices. In promotion of quare studies, Johnson is advancing a Queer-of-Color critique concerned with how the historical and contemporary realities of race intersecting with gender and class construct nuanced particularities of sexual knowledge among lesbian–gay–bisexual–transgender (LGBT) people of color. The culture–specific and text–specific knowledge embedded in the material realities of LGBT people of color explicate, elucidate, and elaborate the historical significances of relational and communal ties that has promoted collective resistances against White supremacy. The social constructions of racial category rooted in the politics of difference matter to LGBT people of color. While homophobia, transphobia, and related oppressions are prevalent in and across raced communities, LGBT people of color cannot easily cut off their ties with their counterparts who identify as heterosexual. Everyday operations of race and racial category develop shared dissatisfactions among raced subjects. At the same time, LGBT people of color experience the complex intersections among racism and
classism when they enter into LGBT communities predominantly occupied by White sexual
minoritarian [of this majority] counterparts. Thus, LGBT people of color’s experiences are
performative products of their intersectionality. They are neither just LGBT people nor just people
of color, but both-and.

Jeffery Q. McCune Jr. exemplifies Johnson’s theorizing of quare studies as he analyzes
intersectionality of race, gender, sexuality, and class among Black men who engage in discreet
same-sex sexual and romantic relations. These privately queer active men are also known as Black
men on down low (DL). The term became popular in early 2000s through media.20 However,
McCune rejects the simplistic representation of these Black men as “closeted” gay men. Instead
he offers,

The DL may offer an alternative to the closet—a space where much more happens than
Black men having sex with wives/girlfriends while having sex with other men—where
men actively negotiate issues of race, gender, class, and sexuality.21

For instance, Black men are pressured to embody and perform a hetero-patriarchal Black
hypermasculinity. Such racialized gender performances may work as the embodied methods for
Black men to navigate and resist against the White control, discipline, and surveillance. At
the same time, Black men are constructed as hypersexual. Particularly, the White sexual imagination
has historically eroticized the Black male penis size as large. This was both as an actuality of being
and as a promotional strategy during slavery to promote the relationality between chattel and the
procreation of more slaves, as well as the notion of hypersexuality with deviance. Simultaneously,
“homosexuality was effectively ‘theorized’ as a ‘White disease’ that had ‘infected’ the Black com-

munity.”22 Thus, they are not expected to engage in same-sex sexual and romantic relations
because such sexual desires violate the norm of racialized gender.

Accordingly, Jose Esteban Muñoz’s theorizing of disidentification is significant to the cen-
tral development of quare studies. Disidentification helps identify how LGBT people of color
perform ways of knowing, acting, and being within and against the majoritarian norm. Muñoz
asserts, “Disidentification is the third mode of dealing with the dominant ideology, one that
neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification
is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology.”23 Indeed, LGBT people of color
must navigate back and forth between ideologically divided spaces of identity and difference.
Accordingly, LGBT people of color must learn how to walk around material fragmentations
of their intersectionalities as they both cope with and resist against the majoritarian codes of
belonging. LGBT people of color are not structurally given privileges to either fully buy into or
refuse dominant ideologies due to the lack of the cultural capital.

Such Quare theorizings have resulted its fruitful expansion of Johnson’s initial proposal.24
To explicitly borrow Johnson’s quare studies, Wenshu Lee, a transnational Taiwanese womanist,
proposes to “Kuare” queer studies.25 Bringing a Chinese/Mandarin pronunciation of queer to
the fore, Lee argues for accounting particular geopolitical places and spaces in which both local
and transnational-level circulations of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and nation occur. In
fact, the contemporary Taiwanese productions and constitutions of sexualities implicate effects of
both local politics and globalization. In addition, by centering the notion of dis/ability, Robert
McRuer calls to “Crip” queer studies to interrogate assumptions about gender, sexuality, and
sex through Disability Studies.26 For instance, the historical medicalizations of homosexuality
and transgenderism implicate how cisheterosexuality is discursively normalized as the healthy
symbol of able-bodiedness in the United States. At the same time, queer scholars such as Judith
Halberstam, Railey Snorton, and Susan Stryker advocate for “Transing” the social systems and
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cultural processes of disciplining gender intersecting with race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and the body. Gender embodiments and performances implicate discursive and material effects of historical and existing power relations. These lines of methodological expansion help complicate and deepen the intellectual and political utilities of quare studies within and beyond Black queer studies from which quare studies has originally emerged from the site of original theorizing.

A theory of gaysian identity also elaborates such utilities of quare studies. Indeed, a number of gaysian scholars examine how the historical production of gaysians as feminine and submissive. Other creates a glass ceiling for gaysians as they seek out dating and hookup in and across gay sexual cultures. At the same time, because of such structural constraints that normalize the White patriarchal phallic masculinity, the aforementioned gaysian scholars also argue that some gaysians both actively and strategically recycle their racialized gender images. By exaggerating their “femininity” and “submissiveness,” they intend to attract men who desire feminine and submissive men. In fact, gay sexual cultures embrace and celebrate gaysians who perform as drag queens because they are assumed to be suitable to feminine gender roles. Simultaneously, some gaysians put efforts to masculinize their body images to separate from their racialized gender images. Still, because of the historical pervasiveness of Asian men as feminine and submissive, some gaysians borrow and imitate hypermasculine images portrayed onto other men of color to pass as masculine. Thus, gaysians are not simply oppressed. They are both actively and strategically disidentifying with dominant ideologies as they simultaneously cope with and resist against the historical feminization and subordination of Asian men and masculinities.

Drawing from the genealogy of quare studies I have described above, in this essay I approach the conception of queerness as a fleeting moment of sexual and gender transgression politicized, historicized, and contextualized in and across the lines of differences. The major analytical significance of such queer transgression implicates a futurity. By a futurity, I mean a “a temporal arrangement in which the past is a field of possibility in which subjects can act in the present in the service of new futurity.” Performing queerness implicates an ongoing interplay of contradictory tensions between possibilities and impossibilities moving toward the future—that is, where the politics of difference maintaining dominant ideologies are no longer useful. Accordingly, queerness is indeed about failure that demonstrates missing holes of the material realities through which queers cannot be queers. In this view, my methodological operationalization of queerness highlights what Bryant Keith Alexander has suggested is queerness as “a gendered identity location but as resistance to orthodoxy—expounding, elaborating, and promoting alternative ways of being, knowing, and narrating experience.” Thus, queerness is an intellectual and political paradigm of sexual and gender transgression.

YouTube and gaysian narratives

With the aforementioned methodological background, I engage in a close reading of YouTube vlogger-created contents about gaysian identities, performances, and politics. As Ivan Dylko and Michael McCluskey have argued, my reason for choosing YouTube as an analytical site is that it offers a space of self-representations in which each vlogger freely produces their own media contents. Such self-representations are also never free from historical and existing power relations within which each vlogger is located. Each vlogger actively reuses, remakes, and recycles local, national, and global circulations of power, culture, and ideology to narrate their everyday experiences. So, the viewers can consume the vlogger-created contents—relative to the personal intentionality of the vlogger or that of the viewer. Thus, I approach YouTube video contents as the media and cultural text through which gaysian narratives implicate the politics of racialized gender.
For this essay, I insert keywords such as “gay Asian” and “gay and Asian” in the search engine to select vlogger-created contents in YouTube. In so doing, I locate 23 videos uploaded from 2010 to 2018. To interrogate how gaysians narrate the politics of racialized gender, I choose the contents of nine vloggers (e.g., calvinwoo, Collin Factor, DDCC, FlawlessKevin, OneWingedChris, Scottyyah, Tim Wong, Will from TerraNovaBoys, and Vladomir Lolincio). In particular, I am interested in analyzing how they address self-representations of their own gaysian narratives. To examine such contents through the lens of quare studies as a methodology, I also depend on my autoethnographic ways of knowing about gay and Asian. Queer performance studies scholars such as Bryant Keith Alexander, Bernadette Marie Calafell, and Amber Johnson have argued that the body plays a quintessential site of knowledge. The researcher’s subjective knowing is always a part of critical qualitative research design, analysis, and writing. Thus, I unapologetically use myself as a referencing point to explicate, elucidate, and elaborate an intersubjective space through which the vlogger-created gaysian contents are closely read. Through these analytical processes, I organize my argument according to three themes: Gay Anti-Asian Racism, Strategic Essentialism, and Gaysian Critically, Needed. I begin sharing my analysis with the first theme Gay Anti-Asian Racism next.

Gay anti-Asian racism

The performative rhetorics of gaysian self-narratives in YouTube revolve around the material duality of “either gay or Asian.” More precisely, the logics of whiteness almost always organize overall implications of being gay. Consequently, gaysians are structurally forced to adapt the logics of whiteness that subordinate their race/culture/class. At the same time, the White supremacy that promotes anti-Asian racism erases, ignores, and marginalizes queer sexualities associated with Asian men. The material fact of Asian men castrated as asexual according to the logics of phallic masculinity implicates the historical context of Asian men known as remaining single. However, I argue that both terms gay and Asian also implicate the stable, singular, and essentialist constructions of racialized gender politics. The plurality and fluidity of gay and Asian are not really accounted. As a result, the gaysian self-narratives exemplified by the YouTubers/YouTube personalities operate within the essentialist logic of an intersection between gay and Asian. As Maurice Kwong-Lai Poon has observed, “The [gaysian] personal narratives focus primarily on Asian men’s interactions with White society, often in the form of relationships with white men, and the oppression that occurs as a result of the racism that exists within the gay community.” Overlooking intersectional approaches to their everyday experiences, the gaysian subjects mostly focus on white men to construct their narratives.

In the 6 minute and 13 second YouTube video “Being Gay and Asian!” published on March 9, 2018, FlawlessKevin politicizes his sexual and romantic encounters with gay men. He starts the video by arguing that the media representations of Asians are either Whitewashing or nerds. Then, he critiques media representations of gays as mostly White masculine men. To support his argument, he also names a couple of recently popular gay romantic movies such as Call Me by Your Side and Love Simmons. The following scripted skit of Kevin’s dating experience represents the very typical feminized gaysian stereotypes imposed onto his body. Kevin’s Asianness is almost always read according to the logics of gay subcultural categories such as twinkish and/or fetish. Or, no gay man is interested in dating him literally because he is neither White nor masculine. Kevin says that he has seen multiple online dating app profiles such as Grindr suggesting “No blacks, No feminine guys, and No Asians.” At the same time, Kevin as a feminine gaysian subject is “naturally” expected to be submissive and not to talk back to (white) men. Kevin is normally asked if he cross-dresses because he often uses makeup products such as foundation, lip gloss, and...
concealer to present himself. However, Shinsuke Eguchi and Hannah R. Long have suggested that an embodied performance of nonbinary femininity does not automatically indicate whether a gaysian subject is actually cross-dressing or not. Thus, this video concludes that Kevin is never free of Asian male feminization.

Another YouTuber based in Canada, Wil normally produces vlogger-content videos with his white male partner Adam under the name of TerraNovaBoys and published his gaysian narrative on January 3, 2017. Wil starts off this 9 minute and 40 second video “Growing up Gay and Asian” by saying that his experience is different from Adam, who is benefited by the logics of whiteness. For instance, he was looking to make friends through gay social networking apps. Because Wil is an Asian male, white men whom he messaged often rejected him. Some of them immediately blocked him from messaging them further. Or they messaged back to Wil saying “not interested in Asians.” Such blunt racism made him feel like he is “garbage.” He was hurt especially because he expected that (white) gay people experiencing homophobia and heterosexism would be welcoming him. Thus, Wil says that he learned being “a dominant strong gay white guy” is a social requirement to fit into a gay world. Such strict policy of gay social dress code is the aesthetic production of homonormativity. By homonormativity, I mean the politics of respectability promoting the hetero-standardized beauty, style, and value of men and masculinities rooted in the whiteness. As a consequence, Wil went to the therapy to work on his racialized gender struggle. Based on such experience, he questions why there are no gaysian male leads in media. There is always the effeminate Asian male who cooks, cleans, and does laundry. Asian men are not assigned to do “manly things.” Yet Wil says, “There are Abercrombie & Fitch models with the six-pack abs, blond hairs, and scruff” in media and popular culture. A Queer-of-Color critic Dwight A. McBride also reminds, “Abercrombie codes for race and class without actually having to name it. … the A&F look is styled on a celebration of racial and cultural whiteness.” Thus, this video ends with Wil’s questions and critiques of whiteness as the gay sexual cultural capital.

By closely reading these videos, I argue that gay anti-Asian racism remakes a structural (re) production of power that sustains the white male superiority. The material realities of gay male beauty, style, and value symbolize and affirm the logics of White/Western/U.S. American exceptionalism through which Asians and non-Asian people of color are marginalized. At the same time, cisgender, able-bodied, and affluent white men are given privileges to easily perform liberal outlooks of sexual freedom. Yet Asian men are strategically lumped into one racialized gender—that is, a feminine submissive foreigner. Consequently, both Kevin and Wil, speaking English as their first languages without any foreign accents, share experiencing similar sexual and romantic rejections rooted in the simultaneous technology of gay anti-Asian racism intersecting with anti-femininity.

Hence, I maintain that our desires can never be simply just preferences. What we are sexually and romantically attracted to is an embodied product of dominant ideologies. For instance, the logics of whiteness that organize gay sexual cultures shape how some white men reject these gaysian subjects regardless of their (racialized) gender presentations and performances. In fact, Kevin’s gender performance is very different from Wil. Kevin seems to be comfortable with his femininity. He also presents his face with campy makeups. Simultaneously, Wil is more of a masculine gaysian. He presents his body by wearing a baseball hat and a sports jersey jacket in the video I have mentioned above. Wil is not what I think of as a feminine gaysian whose body type is represented in the gay pornographic marketplace category of “Asian.” At the same time, it is noteworthy to mention that (white) gay men unfairly devalue, discredit, and discount diverse gender presentations and performances of gaysians just because they are Asian. A Louisiana-native YouTuber Scottyarah also introduces such anti-Asian racism in the 4 minute and 28 second video “Getting Rejected on Grindr??” published on January 2, 2015. Scotty represents his body with the performative signs of masculinity including his outfit, yet he tells the viewers, “they
Shinsuke Eguchi

[men in the Grinder] don’t give me a chance because I am Asian.” Some of them said to Scotty, “I am not into Asians.” Thus, regardless of how each of them embodies and performs racialized gender, the logics of whiteness as the normative gay masculine power and ideal maintains the always-alreadyness of gaysians as feminine and submissive Others.

**Strategic essentialism**

Still these gaysian narratives overlook the complex roles of intersectionality in producing differences. Richard Fung reminds that the implications of nationality affect Western gay pornographic representations of Asian men. To be specific, Filipino men may be imaged as sexually available while Japanese men are assumed to be sexually kink. Nguyen Tan Hoang also demonstrates how the Western gay pornography give gaysian actors performing assimilated images more freedom and flexibility to be both sexual tops and bottoms than gaysian actors performing foreign-born images. Considering these arguments, I must also acknowledge that my intersectionality such as citizenship (U.S.), nationality (Japanese), location of birth (foreign), language (accented English), and class and occupational status (international scholar and tenured university faculty) constructs my everyday gaysian experiences. This does not mean that I do not experience what Kevin, Scotty, and Wil have argued. I too experience the politics of racialized gender. However, being a gaysian U.S. citizen migrating from Japan, I have also encountered both Asian and non-Asian gay and bisexual men who are interested in Japanese and Japanese American cultures, histories, and politics. Driven by liberal capitalism, the globalization promotes rapid flows of Japanese cultures and commodities via business, media, social media, and technology. Some of them have traveled to and/or lived in Japan. So, I was not always feeling like “garbage” as I participated in gay sexual culture. The feeling of being desired by other men was secretly “ego” boosting despite the fact that the gay sexual logics of fetishism for Japanese might have driven their desires. My experience implicates the political, economic, and cultural hierarchy of Japan as the major Global North center. The contemporary realities of globalization give me an unearned privilege of being Japanese. Thus, I am reluctant to uncritically promote the essentialist version of gaysian narratives as if all gaysians are the same.

From this line of thought, I reframe gaysian narratives through the conceptual lens of strategic essentialism as a disidentificationary practice working on and against the dominant ideology. I borrow what Dwight A. McBride has witnessed is that “African American intellectuals often use to reclaim a racial essentialism based on experience that authorizes or legitimizes their speech in some very politically important ways.” Indeed, this racial politics is what a post-colonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak also argued is strategic essentialism. That is, an intellectual tactic through which minoritarians mobilize and push forward their shared identities to increase their group visibilities to achieve political goals. By borrowing such identity politics, I argue that strategic essentialism is compulsory for gaysian subjects to interrupt and break through the whiteness of gay sexual cultures and the cisheteronormativity of Asian ethnic cultures.

In the 4 minute and 25 second video “2 Short Grindr Stories: ‘But Where Are You REALLY From?’ published on December 8, 2016, OneWingedChris says that he is almost always assumed to be a migrant in Grindr; this as a consequence of his Asian appearance. When Chris said to a man that he is from Southern California, this man replied to Chris, “Not your pretentious answer” and “But, where are you really from?” The question “where are you from?” is indeed a discursive form of racism rooted in whiteness as a normative U.S. American point of origin. Asian Americans can never get to be considered as just Americans even when they were born and raised in the United States Thomas K. Nakayama has already argued the overall historical orientation
of Asian Americans as forever foreign in the White racial imagination. Thus, Chris’ response could have been his resistance against anti-Asian racism or his sincere sense of U.S. citizenship.

This kind of racialized gender experience is also shared by Tim Wong in his 4 minute and 54 second video “Gay Asian American’s ‘Joy Luck Club’ Comundrum” published on October 3, 2015. Tim starts this video by sharing that he always felt he was too Asian in the United States. His body symbolizes always-alreadyness of Otherness. At the same time, Tim is too American in his motherland, that is, China. He says, “I have no idea of what I’d be like in China.” He has never dated Asian and/or Chinese guys and cannot eat Chinese foods all the time. He is accustomed to date American guys and eat American foods. Here, I am reminded that Tim, as a gaysian subject, resides in an ambiguous state of in-betweenness requiring ongoing negotiations of contradictions complicated by his intersectional identity.

Such in-betweenness is further exemplified by both U.S. and Canada-based YouTubers such as calvinwoo, Vladomir Lolinco, and Wil from TerraNovaBoys. These gaysians talk about their experiences of coming out to their traditional, conservative, and tiger “Asian” parents. They were originally concerned that the parents and family would never understand why they publicly want to live as gaysians. The heteronormative path of passing on the family’s name to next generation is significantly valued for cisgender males in and across “Asian” communities rooted in patriarchy. Let me explain how this is unique to various “Asian” communities, as some readers may not understand otherwise.

The paradigm of coming out of the closet, rooted in the logics of individualism, responsibility, choice, and merit, is indeed a White/Western/U.S. American organization of same-sex desire. Such individualistic sexual freedom is not often practiced in non-Western cultures. The organizations of same-sex desire have been different in and across “Asian” communities. In Chinese mainland, for instance, there is a culturally nuanced practice through which queer women and men get married to meet the relational, familial, and institutional expectation of marriage. So, they can maintain their private spaces in which they engage in queer desire, intimacy, and relationality. The institution of marriage is rather a duty than a choice to fall in love.

Thus, gaysians coming out of the closet can be seen as wanting to be like liberal and progressive white men, who are publicly open and frank about their sexuality. Therefore, as Calvinwoo, Vladomir and Wil have demonstrated on YouTube, the central framing of gaysian narratives “is predicated on a liberal concept of individual autonomy and universal justice that permeates the political and social landscape of Western civil rights movements (particularly in the U.S. context).” Accordingly, the politically important mechanisms of gaysian narratives are useful mostly only in Western contexts in which gaysians are structurally forced to coordinate the unbalanced fragmentations of their intersectionalities.

More precisely, gaysians are less likely to develop a sense of shared critical dissatisfaction without working on and against the centrality of whiteness and cisheteronormativity. Kevin is Vietnamese. Tim and Wil are Chinese. Scotty is Laotian. Vladomir is Filipino. Calvin and Chris do not explicitly elaborate their ethnic identifications in their narratives, while I can guess their ethnicities. Other aspects of difference such as gender performance, class, migration status, citizenship, age, and location also vary. However, these YouTubers represent the strategically essentialized version of racialized gender narratives as gay and Asian. So, other gaysians from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds make relatable and supportive comments and constructive feedback on YouTube gaysian vlogger-created content. Accordingly, they can collectivity dismantle the whiteness of gay sexual cultures and the cisheteronormativity of Asian ethnic cultures. Strategic essentialism is a racialized gender formation of gaysian as a political identity.
Gaysian criticality, needed

Simultaneously, I remain concerned with the gaysian self-narratives I have introduced above. They explicitly focus on the gay cultural value of sexual and intimate relations with (youthful, cisgender, healthy, and able-bodied) white men. More specifically, the politically important moves of gaysians self-narrating their experiences ironically re-center, re-secure, and readjust the White cismale power and privilege. However, gaysians indeed meet, make friends, and/or fall in and out of love with Asian men and non-Asian men of color in and across gay sexual cultures, for example. The same-sex color-to-color relations can be politically significant and revolutionary. Such same-sex couplings can possibly marginalize the superiority of whiteness from gaysian narratives. At the same time, these couplings can also mimic the logics of whiteness as the gay relational norm when the subjects uncritically participate in such relationships. The representations of racial categories, emerged from whiteness as a normative knowledge production, may affect how men of color make sense of one another. Thus, I maintain that gaysians must be critically reflexive of their same-sex desires (re)defining who they are, what they do, and how they make sense of what they do.

For instance, a gaysian YouTuber Collin Factor uploaded his six-minute and 33-second video “Not into Asians” on April 3, 2016 first. He has a follow-up nine-minute and 40-second video “Asians Not into Asians” published on May 6, 2018. In both video contents, Collin features his dialogues with his gaysian friend Marvin. Just like any other gaysian YouTubers, the first video of their production focuses on how Asian men unequally and unfairly experience dating and hook up in and across gay sexual cultures. Then in the second video they also respond to the critiques that the viewers have offered to the first video. Specifically, some viewers have critiqued that both Collin and Marvin center white men as the ideal sexual and romantic partners. In so doing, they do not elaborate Asian men who date Asian men and non-Asian men of color. In addition, some viewers have mentioned that both Collin and Marvin as the Filipino subjects are “their own enemies.” They essentialize “Asians” as a single culture according to the White/ Western/U.S. American logics of racial category. So, both Collin and Marvin own up to their biases and/or shortcomings that directed their production of the first video. They say that they grew up in the social and cultural environments in which white people are overwhelmingly the majority. People of color were not as visible. As a consequence, they developed their sexual and romantic desires toward white men. Most significantly, they question if the material legacy of U.S. colonialism among Filipino/a/xs might have affected their sexual and romantic aspirations toward white men.

While Collin and Marvin’s co-performance of self-reflection yet requires a critically in-depth interrogation, I appreciate how they publicly exemplify a referencing point for gaysians to evaluate their own same-sex desires. Through the lens of an ongoing interplay between privilege, power, and oppression, both Collin and Marvin demonstrate that gaysians actively turn their attentions to white men as the ideal dating partners. Indeed, gaysian desires always already implicate the simultaneous technology of whiteness intersecting with patriarchy, hetero/homo-normativity, and capitalism. Thus, it is necessary for gaysians to critically problematize the strategically essentialized framings of their “oppressed” narratives. Adapting what Celine Parreñas Shimizu has suggested, I maintain that all gaysians must begin recognizing and working with their unearned privileges within and beyond the historical feminization and subordination of Asian men and masculinities.

Consequently, I advocate for pushing forward intellectual and political spaces in which gaysian counter-narratives destabilize the hegemony of Asian-White interracial couplings. While some scholars have previously worked on gaysian color-to-color sexual encounters and romantic
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relations, these collections of studies are not enough. Gaysian narratives continue to be overwhelmingly dominated by their rejections by white men. In addition, several gaisian YouTubers I have introduced also suggest there is a dating competition driven by the capitalist logic of gay sexual cultures. Gaysians are fighting against one another to earn attentions from the small pools of (white) men who desire Asian men. This creates a discursive phenomenon of what Collin and Marvin’s second video’s title says is “Asians not Into Asians.” Simultaneously, I question if such competition also implicates political rivalries, economic hierarchies, and historical tensions among gaisian men. Thus, more and more gaisian counter-narratives need to come forward. So, the collective shared performances of gaisian criticality can be further cultivated for change.

Gaysian fabulosity as a “quare” performative strategy: a conclusion

In this essay, through a lens of quare studies I have attempted to showcase how YouTube vloggers self-represent their gaisian experiences. The performative rhetorics of gaisian narratives, being produced by these vloggers, explicitly explicate, elucidate, and elaborate the supremacy of whiteness as the gay sexual cultural value of desire. More specifically, gay anti-Asian racism produces the racialized gender representation of Asian men as feminine and submissive Others for sustaining the power and privilege of White patriarchal phallic masculinity. Gaysian narratives also implicate the complexities and contradictions of identities, performances, and politics as they simultaneously navigate the material fragmentations of places and spaces such as white gay sexual cultures and “Asian” cultures. Yet gaisian narratives primarily draw from the hegemony of Asian-White interracial couplings as the relational norm. Thus, self-representational productions of gaisian narratives require ongoing questions and critiques. The performative meanings of becoming and being gaisians must be complicated, problematized, and shifted further.

Before concluding this essay, I highlight queerness of gaisian identities, performances, and politics implicated by the YouTube vlogger-created contents. I want to recognize that the gaisian YouTubers are in search of self-presenting and self-representing their racialized gender aesthetics working on and against the simultaneous technology of anti-Asian racism intersecting with the supremacy of whiteness and cis/heteronormativity. For example, the Australian-based gaisian couple YouTuber DDCC published their intraracial coupling images in the four-minute and 49-second video “Cute Gay Asian Couple 2018 Recap” on December 30, 2018. The images are composed of picture slides featuring David and Eri showing off their same-sex intimacies to each other. Specifically, one of the images is their couple ring while there is no description of ring such as promising, engagement, or wedding. Also, some of the images include their photo shoots gathering with their family members and friends. The overall framing of their coupling image is fabulous. I recognize that some readers may discount their video as “extra,” “over the top,” and “ostentatious.” They may also say the couple mimics White, cis/heteronormative, and capitalistic logics of love, sex, and relationship. The ways in which they showcase their gaisian same-sex love is not any different from a Hollywood (or West Hollywood, a gay subdivision) love story. However, as a gaisian subject, I highly value their vlogger-created contents. It does not at least recycle the hegemony of Asian-White interracial couplings as the normal and ordinary. In addition, gaisian intraracial images and representations are not often available, especially in the Western contexts such as Australia, Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Accordingly, I maintain that David and Eri’s co-performance of gaisian intraracial desire is very politically important. It is a queer subcultural production of gaisian fabulosity; that is, a collective intelligence of gaisians who fabulously perform the racialized gender aesthetics to counter white gay sexual cultures.
Shinsuke Eguchi

In closing, I end this essay by reiterating gaysian fabulosity as a “quare” performative strategy. Gaysian identities, performances, and politics are never simple, clear-cut, and linear. Intersectionality, a construction of messy texts of privilege, power, and oppression produces and constitutes the material realities of gaysians. The ways in which gaysians simultaneously identify and disidentify with the majoritarian codes of belonging, taste, and value are much more complex and contradictory. Thus, there remain intellectual and political spaces for quareing racialized, gendered, and class knowledge embedded in the material realities of gaysem fabulousity further. Therefore, I invite the readers to engage in questions, critiques, and practices of gaysem fabulousity as “quare.”

Notes
9 See Eguchi, “Negotiating Sissyphobia.”
12 Johnson, “‘Quare’ Studies,” 3.
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19 See, for example, Richard A. Ferguson, Toward a Queer of Color Critique: Alterations in Black (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).


21 Ibid., 299.

22 Johnson and Henderson, Black Queer Studies, 4.

23 José Esteban Muñoz, Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 11.

24 See Yep, “Queering/Quaring/Kuaring/Crippin’/Transing ‘Other Bodies’ in Intercultural Communication.”


28 See, for example, Eguchi, “Negotiating Sissphobia”; Han, Geisha of a Different Kind; Hoang, A View from the Bottom; Lim, Brown Boys; and Poon and Ho, Sex Role.

29 Han, Geisha of a Different Kind, 148.

30 See, for example, Shinsuke Eguchi, “Queerness as Strategic Whiteness: A Queer Asian American Critique of Peter Le,” in Interrogating the Communicative Power of Whiteness, eds Dawn Marie D. McIntosh, Dreama G. Moon, and Thomas K. Nakayama (New York: Routledge, 2019), 29–44.

31 See an analysis of gaysian porn star Brendon Lee in Hoang, Geisha of a Different Kind, 148.

32 José Esteban Muñoz, Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity (New York University Press, 2009), 16.

33 See Muñoz, Cruising Utopia.

34 Alexander, “Queerr(y)ing the Postcolonial,” 108.


41 McBride, Why I Hate Abercrombie & Fitch, 71.


43 Han, Geisha of a Different Kind, 141–142.

See Hoang, *A View from the Bottom*.


