NIKKEI-NESS: A CYBER-ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF IDENTITY AMONG THE JAPANESE PERUVIANS OF PERU

The ways in which identity labels and categorizations were traditionally spoken about no longer serve human populations today. The obvious implications of globalization and transnationalism demonstrate new forums where identity can be expressed. Widespread use of the Internet has created a condition in which certain populations must question how they view and present themselves, as well as how they are seen and portrayed by others. For the purpose of this paper, I will focus on *nikkei*, or Japanese immigrants and their descendents, within the South American country of Peru. The purpose of this paper is to explore the contemporary factors in identity construction and negotiation among the younger generations of *nikkei* in Peru, as demonstrated in their use of *hi5*.

The international social networking site, *hi5*, is an example of a forum where *nikkei* have the opportunity for identity expression. These sites allow users to create profiles with information ranging from favorite musical genres to self-labeled race and ethnicity. The design layout of the profile allows for some control on the part of the user, and profiles vary from sparse and plain to heavily decorated and well thought out, meaning the user has put a lot of time into producing a profile page that fully expresses how they want to portray themselves to others. There is also a feature that allows users to create groups. These groups stretch across a large and varied scope of topics, including that

of national, racial/ethnic, and cultural identities. Though such sites have become increasingly popular for adolescents and young adults across the globe, there is a lack of research pertaining to their influences on identity expression.

As the *nikkei* of Peru illustrate, transnational migration has led to circumstances in which humans can no longer form an identity based solely on physical location. Anthropology has made progress since the study of "primitive" communities and has transformed due to social, economic, and political changes and continues to evolve. Through interviews with self-identified *nikkei*, historical research and an examination of profile pages of *nikkei* on an international social networking site, I will explore the ways in which the *nikkei* utilize *hi5* to transcend typical markers of identity to create their own unique approaches to expressing their one-of-a-kind national, racial/ethnic, and cultural identities. Before the prevalence of the Internet in daily life, identities were marked by geographical location, racial/ethnic characteristics, and other factors that were visible and comprehensible through face-to-face contact. The Internet shifts the focus away from easy categorization so that these factors become hazy and confusing. Instead of depending on our own judgments and thoughts regarding identification, we now must rely on what is being put forth by the individual.

Previously, even when *nikkei* spoke of their identity, they simplified it by summing it up as a Japanese ethnic identity with aspects of Peruvian

culture "mixed in." I suggest that this manner of considering identities does not fully encompass the *nikkei* experience. By including the Internet in identity construction and negotiation, *nikkei* have new avenues of identity discovery and exploration. I propose that *nikkei*, especially adolescents and young adults, are in the process of shaping their identities based on factors that past generations did not have to face, such as advancement in technologies and rapidly paced globalization.

In the course of completing research for this paper, I have come across terms, concepts, and ideas that have shown up time and time again. Identity construction is an important aspect of this study because young *nikkei* are at crucial points in their lives where questions of identity present themselves in various forms. Through the development of cyberspaces, they are learning to negotiate their identities in ways that earlier generations never could. With Internet access, globalization has sped up and what it means to be Japanese has also come into question. It is in this exact situation that *nikkei* have learned to participate in various communities, both in their online and offline worlds. Finally, all of this information becomes increasingly relevant with an understanding of migration history and how a collective memory is passed down from one generation to the next.

Overview of Chapters

My first chapter on Cyber Anthropology places me within the ongoing debates surrounding the validity of data obtained on the Internet. In my view, the development of the Internet and the appearance of sites such as *MySpace* and *Facebook* have demonstrated the power of social networking and the rapid pace with which adolescents and young adults can learn to navigate them. Besides ethnic and cultural websites, later generation *nikkei* have used their computer savvy to create groups in which they can declare their heritage and make cultural connections. As such, it is now possible for *nikkei* return migrants to Japan to keep in contact with family and friends back in Peru in order to maintain language and a Latin American identity as well.

In connection to identity construction, Sherry Turkle writes that, "…cyberspace becomes an object to think with for thinking about identity—an element of cultural bricolage," (Turkle 1999, p. 646). Through Internet usage, people come in contact with wide ranges of identities from which they can pick and choose qualities. *Nikkei* with Internet access can communicate with one another while also navigating a network of identity construction within what they label as a *nikkei* identity. As they continue to develop and expand, cyberspaces will become major forums for the expression of identities.

The second chapter reflects my belief that in order to fully understand the implications of social networking sites on the *nikkei* community in Peru, it is necessary to have background information about the generations of *nikkei* and the various historical events that helped shape their identities. The initial contact between the Peruvian and Japanese governments have led to long-lasting relations and the migration of mostly Japanese men to Peru in order to find work. It is significant to note the economic situations that drove these men to switch from physical field labor to starting small businesses in urban areas. Many stereotypes of the *nikkei* grew out of their economic practices, and they faced discrimination that worsened with World War II. Following the war, a large shift occurred in the *nikkei* manner of thinking. Instead of planning to return to Japan, they realized that their homeland was no longer somewhere to which they could easily return. It took this realization for many to finally consider Peru as their home. Much of current *nikkei* identity is based on the stories and experiences passed down from the earlier generations, so by researching the lives of the parents and the grandparents, I hope to gain a multi-layered understanding of how identity persists.

The question of identity construction and negotiation is at the forefront of this paper and my own cyber ethnography. There are racial/ethnic, cultural, and national identities, which will all come up in the third chapter. There is also the question regarding the difference between how a person identifies herself and the how he or she is identified in the larger context by other

people. One of my participants, a man named Mori, explained that the *nikkei* identity is created from the ideas and feelings that people have from being part of two cultures. In his view, this obligated them to collect the best of both to be better people and to create a better society. However, he also mentioned that this identity was often misunderstood as a means of separating from the rest and being elitist. For that reason, he believes that the traditional notion of a *nikkei* identity is quickly fading among the third and fourth generations and making way for a new *nikkei* identity.

As Mori's thoughts demonstrate, forming and expressing identities can be conscious decisions and actions on the part of the person. Taking on an already categorized identity does not necessarily mean forfeiting the right to be part of one or more others. The fluidity of identity allows a person to create multiple visions to fit the many facets of which he or she is composed.

Research Design and Methodology

My research consisted of two phases. Phase one was completed in Peru during the spring of 2006, and the second has just recently come to an end. Both focused on obtaining personal histories and observing public spaces in which *nikkei* can be found exploring their identities and where they communicate with each other. In terms of textual research, I have utilized both

Spanish and English language sources, with a few supplemental Japanese materials.

The fieldwork I conducted in Peru was mainly within the cultural center of the Asociación Peruano-Japonés, which is located in the middle class neighborhood of Jesús María in the capital city of Lima. The building occupies an entire block and consists of a hospital, theater, and general cultural center area that has a cafeteria, café, library, classrooms, small stores, and more. I spent time in the lobby reading all of the announcements and observing the comings and goings of the people. Similarly, I ate in the cafeteria and took note of the kinds of people and the food they chose to eat, because the menu offered both Japanese and Peruvian cuisine. Finally, I sat in the library for hours, not only to conduct research using their books and annals, but also to see what kinds of people tended to utilize the library the most. There I became acquainted with a librarian who later helped me find people to interview for my independent study.

Starting at the beginning of this fall semester of 2006, I focused on using the international social networking site, *hi5*, to find groups of *nikkei*. *Hi5* is much like other well-known social networking sites in the United States, such as *MySpace* or *Facebook*, in that it allows users to create profiles and join subgroups. Profiles can be as descriptive as a user wants, with photos and music, or as minimal as a simple introduction. Users join groups to make new friends or to simply create a forum for the friends that they already have

in the offline world. Group topics range from favorite kinds of music to nationality, and it is through a group search that I found my specific topic population of Peruvians of Japanese descent who live in Peru. These groups were either in relation to *nikkei* institutions in Lima or were simply labeled as *nikkei* pride groups. Once I found my target audience, my methodology went as follows:

1. Private messages sent to random selection of members
2. Email interviews
3. MSN Messenger[1] interviews
4. Distribution of general surveys for those who wanted to participate but did not have the time or the frequent Internet access
5. Observation of public user profiles and consideration of how *nikkei* identities manifest themselves in these profiles

After collecting a suitable amount of material with which to write, I sat down to examine common threads of conversation that came up with my participants. The many email and instant messaging exchanges presented themes, such as the influence of family and experiences with discrimination, which appeared in nearly all discussions. Using those hints, I further

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[1] MSN Messenger is an instant messaging program.

questioned my participants and accumulated enough information from which I drew my own conclusions.

When referring to my participants, I have chosen to use their handles instead of their full names. Some handles are composed entirely or partly of participant names while others are simply nicknames. Handles are what my participants used in the Internet public, so I find it appropriate to use them in this paper, which will be read by others.

It is important to note here also that the writing of these chapters, especially the final one on my own ethnographic work, was extremely challenging. Within one exchange with a participant I found myself reading both Spanish and Japanese, but also words and slang that were unique to *nikkei*. For readers who understand Spanish and Japanese, some of my translations may seem incorrect, but in my own defense I would say that within the context of the exchanges, my translations of their language are indeed accurate and represent to the best of my ability the meaning that they were trying to convey.

Background Experience

In order to place myself within the context of this study, it is important to know that I identify as a person who is half Japanese and half Jewish. This identification I have chosen has been problematic in the past when

questionnaires or others have wanted simple, straightforward answers. There

is no single box for me to check, and there are not many people that I know

with similar racialized/ethnic family backgrounds or experiences with

Japanese and Jewish culture. I understand firsthand how issues of identity can

be complex and multifaceted.

In the spring of 2006, I studied abroad in Peru for a full semester. I

chose SIT Study Abroad, specifically because it included a month-long

independent study project (ISP) period where students could focus on a topic

of their choosing and spend time collecting information. During my ISP

period, I lived in Lima, the capital city, where the majority of the *nikkei*

population is situated. There I was able to visit the Asociación Peruano-

Japonés every few days to explore the cultural center and try to make contacts

with the people that spent time socializing and taking classes there. Outside of

the actual cultural center, I spoke to Peruvians of non-Japanese descent,

everyone from taxi drivers to professors, about the views and stereotypes

surrounding the *nikkei* community. I also had the opportunity to sit down and

speak with a prominent poet and famous figure, Doris Moromisato Miasato, a

woman of Okinawan descent, who became my advisor during the course of

my study. This month-long independent study project became the basis for the

paper that I now present to the reader.

As a researcher, I feel qualified to conduct this study not only in terms

of my educational experiences, but also in my position as a multilingual

person. Japanese was my first language and I have achieved fluency in Spanish through years of study. I feel confident in my ability to pick up on the subtle nuances in the language my participants choose to use. If a participant felt better able to express him or herself in one language or the other, I was able to offer them the option to do so without a need for translation, thereby cutting down on interruptions to the flow of conversation. In addition to being able to translate responses, I could also situate these responses in their specific cultural contexts.

There are many factors in the formation of an identity. For populations that are not incorporated by a single racial/ethnic, national, or cultural background, it is difficult to clearly express and articulate a cohesive identity. In fact, each person within a seemingly closed group might have their own specific manner of expressing identity.

Nikkei identity does not easily fit into just one category of identification. The distinctive nature of contemporary *nikkei* identity is largely an example of the many influences that affect a person's identity. Advances in technology, such as the Internet, have helped spread the effects of globalization. Current *nikkei* generations can now remain in contact with each other through email, chats, and international social networking sites. The last of these three modes of Internet communication is significant, in that it has created a public space for *nikkei* to creatively express their individual identities.

Through this study, I gained a profound understanding of how *nikkei* adolescents and young adults have constructed their identities, and what major perspectives in the construction of identity exist. Combining on-site observation and conversation with online ethnography allowed for a multifaceted view in which I began to appreciate how offline and online participation complimented each other in the development of the community and the exploration of the individual. My research spanned various fields to achieve a larger picture of the ways in which people exist in this world. I believe that contemporary groups such as the *nikkei* need to be taken into account in order to understand their significance, and modern circumstances call for a reevaluation of how we study identities.

Chapter Two: Introduction to Cyber Anthropology

It is only recently that anthropology has turned to the Internet, or virtual spaces, as new locations for ethnography. Anthropology began with physical travel around the world that led to unknown peoples and cultures. Now we see that there are ways to find the unknown without even having to obtain passports. The unknown and unexplored live right within a device so vital to academic daily life that it is barely noticeable. The personal computer has greatly transformed our lives and has led to the creation of new and non-physical spaces for navigation. It is no surprise that anthropology would eventually have to turn to the Internet in order to evaluate how its existence and effects fit into the more traditional objects of anthropological study, such as kinship and economy. The Internet itself as a culture is huge, and its existence has allowed for subcultures to emerge. There is no question that virtual spaces have changed the ways in which we go about our lives, and therefore require the attention and careful consideration of anthropologists.

The Internet on its own has generated a lot of controversy due to its overwhelming size and its ability to disseminate large quantities of information indiscriminately to anyone with access to a computer with Internet connection. Its unmapped status leads many to fear what might unfold with each new discovery. Within academia, there has always existed the question of validity in all available information and concern over who is

posting it. Teachers often warn students that not all information acquired on the Internet is accurate and trust-worthy. We are told to be wary of what we read online unless it is from a credible source or is cited correctly. We must constantly look at the screen with a critical eye. Because anthropology is very much part of the larger grouping of academia, these cautions also apply.

But what happens when we are not looking for definite, factual answers to questions of world history or biology? What can the navigation of virtual spaces teach us that we cannot learn in the physical world? Can ethnography happen online? Is a virtual community a true subculture and worthy of anthropologists' time and attention? These are the important questions that need to be asked surrounding Cyber Anthropology.

Cyber Ethnography: Collecting Data in Virtual Spaces

The process of ethnography is not the search for facts. Cultures and networks are not factual beings, but are constantly shifting and changing according to different situations and experiences. We can make generalizations and assumptions regarding customs and practices, but we will never be able to make one statement and expect that it will remain that way forever. This is the nature of a social science. The Internet mimics this in that it too is constantly undergoing changes. At any given second there is someone in the world who is somehow altering the Internet, just as there will always be

an exception to the assumptions we make about cultures and networks in anthropology.

As a result of its volatile nature, anthropologists must utilize many different methodologies to gain understandings of virtual spaces. It is impossible to do a search on Google for college students' uses of *Facebook*[2] and expect a well-rounded view of this phenomenon. Instead, the anthropologist must enter *Facebook* and explore profiles, while also communicating with users of the site. In this way, it becomes an ethnography of a virtual space. Just like in the physical field, the cyber-ethnographer must find ways to enter into a community and find guides to gain insight into that particular subculture. Though these subcultures may exist outside of the virtual world, it is precisely how they exist and interact within a virtual space that is so interesting and worthy of study. The study of college students' social interactions would be a completely different study from the one on college students' uses of *Facebook*. Social interactions are often facilitated through technological means, such as cell phones, text messages, and instant messaging. *Facebook* adds yet another dimension to the multitude of resources college students utilize in their daily communications. An ethnographer studying *Facebook* interactions without actually entering into the system and examining the many ways in which the site facilitates social

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[2] *Facebook* is a social networking site, originally created for specifically college-aged populations, but has since opened up to high schools and the general public.

interaction would be sorely mistaken in thinking that they had uncovered the importance of *Facebook* as a social networking site. We would be suspicious of an ethnographer who claimed expertise on Native American society without ever having spoken to a Native American or visited any reservations. The same would apply to an ethnographer of an Internet based community. Entry and experience within it is key. However, the online nature presents a completely different topic of study because the ethnographer is not required to be in any physical location, but instead must occupy a virtual space in a substantial way in order to appreciate the matter of study and gain profound insight.

As David Hakken writes, "'Ethnography' refers both to study of the distinctive practices of particular human groupings and representations— *pictures* of a *people*—based on such study," (Hakken 1999, p. 38). Renato Rosaldo would add to that, "In presenting culture as a subject for analysis and critique, the ethnographic perspective develops an interplay between making the familiar strange and the strange familiar," (Rosaldo 1989, p. 39). Both Hakken and Rosaldo's statements can apply to the practice of cyber ethnographies, or ethnographies of virtual spaces on the Internet. When doing an ethnography online, the anthropologist must closely examine how people come together and form communities while negotiating the vastness of the Internet. What is so fascinating about the Internet as a space for ethnography is that people can leave trails showing where they have been and where they

are heading. Presenting thoughts in text, audio, or video form online means that these thoughts are accessible and available to the public. An anthropologist can read, listen, or watch them as they are frozen in cyberspace and come to conclusions using them. Sometimes they even have the opportunity to have follow up discussions with Internet users in order to gain even more of an understanding. The pictures of people that Hakken mentions is a crucial part of ethnography, though instead of it being so separate from the study of online practices within virtual communities, it is very much a part of it and is contained within it. The study and the representations are inseparable in web ethnography because the representations are put forth precisely by the studied peoples themselves. In this way, what Rosaldo wrote becomes true. Computers are familiar objects for most Western anthropologists and it would be difficult to find someone who has never been exposed to this piece of technology in one form or another. Using the computer, the anthropologist must go beyond their familiar uses and enter into a new state, or virtual space, in which they are not completely comfortable. By applying existing computing knowledge to virtual subcultures, anthropologists can gain access into forums or social networking sites. However, once they are there they must become accustomed to a new set of rules and practices that have already been established prior to their entry. It is here that the familiar becomes strange, uncharted territory. Once the anthropologist has spent time among the "natives" of this particular virtual subgroup, they have the

necessary methodological tools to make sense and meaning out of what happens. In this way, web ethnographies mimic ethnographies that happen in the physical world while adding dimensions that were previously absent from the process.

Coming in contact with representations of people instead of the people in their physical bodies is what makes cyber ethnography appear drastically different. Meeting a person online in a situation where a photo is not available means relying on the information put out by the source. Since we are taught to be so critical of what we read online, it is no wonder that critics do not trust the representations submitted on the Internet. When we meet people face-to-face there are certain details that we are able to uncover without even having to mention them outright. For instance, in the United States we might notice a person's physical appearance and judge that they have dark skin and therefore are Black. It is human nature to want to neatly categorize people based on various factors such as appearances, mannerisms, names, nations of origin, and more. Taking away this basic element requires us to examine our first impressions, as well as become more aware of the ways in which we put ourselves across to others. It is my belief that this does not necessarily make cyber ethnography less credible than offline ethnographies. Though it takes away our abilities to make snap judgments, it also serves as a reminder that an anthropologist's job is to go beyond these general categorizations. Similarly, I would point out that unmentioned details that we look to in order to classify

types of people are sometimes misleading. A person's name or appearance

may lead us to one conclusion that might actually be drastically different from

the how the person views him or herself. It is important to remember that

offline representations are still just that: representations. The value we place

on physical bodies does not necessarily mean we must distrust all that is

presented in non-physical form.

There have been many studies completed (boyd & Heer 2006, Carter

2005, Donath 1999, Hakken 1999, Jones 1995 and 1997, Rheingold 1994,

Turkle 1995 and 1999) already on virtual spaces where users create handles[3],

or screen pseudonyms for online purposes. The use of handles means that

users can create names for themselves that they feel are more appropriate to

their personalities or interests instead of the ones given to them at birth.

Handles also permit complete anonymity so that whatever is stated or

presented by the user cannot be brought back to them in their offline world

unless they choose to allow that to happen. In web forums and other virtual

spaces, users do not typically upload photos of themselves, so it is completely

up to their discretion whether they want to divulge their sex, gender,

racial/ethnic background, nationality, age, and any other personal detail. This

allows users to experience a complete freedom from the usual judgments that

might be made about them in the every day offline world. They are released

from the restrictions and free to create multiple identities depending on any

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[3] Handles are also known as "screen names" for instant messaging purposes.

number of factors. Sherry Turkle, in her study of MUDs[4] in the mid-1990s

found that users of these programs created multiple handles to represent

various aspects of their selves. For instance, a woman who participated in

online forums had a handle for discussing politics, another for sexual threads

of conversation, and yet another for chatting about her favorite television

program (Turkle 1995). Though this is not unusual online, it violates a basic

rule of the offline world, which is that one body equals one identity (Donath

1999). We are aware that one identity is composed of many characteristics,

but are not able to divide them easily in the offline world. What the Internet

does is make it possible for people to multiply in the sense that they can focus

and have others concentrate on one aspect of their self that they consider

important in that particular situation. In this way, users find the means to

becoming part of various channels of online discussion and participation

without being held to one persona. David J. Elkins put it well when he wrote,

> The ability to add identities rather than being forced to substitute one for another; multiple identities and "cross-pressures" to enhance rather than inhibit one's options; to anchor one's uniqueness in the complex constellation of communities to which one chooses to make a commitment; and the opportunity to be different people in different settings—these implications of communities in the unbundled world appear to be mutually reinforcing elements of a broad syndrome which fits in with our current self-image as autonomous individuals and stands in marked contrast to older notions of rank, status, and duty within an overarching community which claims all our loyalties (Elkins 1997, p. 150).

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[4] Multi-User Domains/Dimensions/Dungeons are multi-player computer games that originated as the game Dungeons and Dragons, a role-playing game made popular in the late 1970s and early 1980s, (Turkle 1995).

Currently, the popularity of social networking sites such as *MySpace*[5],
Facebook, and *hi5*, which I will use for my own web ethnography, have
provided even more options for users to create their online identities. Instead
of the text-based MUDs of the past, these social networking sites hand over
more creative control to the users by permitting them to create comprehensive
profiles. User profiles are basically web pages that people can design and
decorate to suit their needs and purposes. Beginning with the layout, users
have innumerable options on how to decorate their personal pages. They can
list their information, such as age, sex, hometown, schools, and more. Besides
text, users add multimedia clips so that they can share their favorite music or
videos. Finally, if the user chooses to do so, they can add photos of
themselves, or even entire albums. This is where the representations become
even more complicated, because when adding photos the user allows those
who see their profile to make judgments, much like they might do in the
offline world. For this reason, people will post only their best photos, or the
ones that they want to represent themselves with. Or sometimes they might
post photos or pictures of other people, such as celebrities, in order to
maintain some sense of mystery about their offline identity. Whatever photo a
person chooses, it is meant to contribute something to the overall picture of
who they are, and perhaps be a conversation starter (boyd & Heer 2006).

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[5] *Myspace* is a popular social networking site where users create profiles, link
these to their friends, and generally custom their page to their personalities
and interests. It also allows users to send messages to one another and
includes its own instant messaging service called *MySpaceIM*.

Another element that makes social networking sites distinctive is that their main purposes are to help create and maintain friendships. Though these sites can also be used for dating, their stated objectives revolve around the maintenance of human connections. *Facebook* became popular among college students precisely because it gave them a way to keep track of friends from their hometowns who are not attending schools nearby. Similarly, international social networking sites broaden the spectrum for users so that they can meet people from all over the world as well as keep in contact with those they met in offline circumstances. Social networking sites are unique in that they are not simply significant online, but also offline. Teenagers and young adults use a number of different means of communication besides the typical face-to-face contact at school or work. They are relying on cell phones, instant messaging, and the Internet. As such, virtual spaces become valuable to the relationships that they create. Having a profile becomes a way of validating and reinforcing already existing friendships. In a study of *Friendster*, another social networking site, danah boyd and Jeffrey Heer found that, "By inviting people to perform identity to friends, *Friendster* motivated people to grapple with explicit presentations of self, creatively build playful networks, and engage their competitive and voyeuristic tendencies" (boyd & Heer 2006, p. 2). For some, the creation of a profile online may feel like a truer expression of their self.

Critics might argue that this freedom to perform whatever identity a person chooses will lead to gross misrepresentations. This is a valid concern, for there will always be people who will stray from the original purposes, namely social interaction, of social networking sites in order to achieve personal goals. *MySpace* was controversial due to the fact that the majority of users were within an age group labeled as youth (boyd 2006). There was fear that pedophiles would use *MySpace* to contact unsuspecting and impressionable youth and lure them into dangerous situations. Though this fear was well placed, it underestimated the computer savvy youth and the basic reasons why youth are so drawn to these sites in the first place. Most do not join social networking sites in hopes of attracting the sexual attention of adults. They simply want space to make friends and explore themselves. As physical spaces become more and more regulated, youth and teens are fleeing to the comfort of their computer screens where they can explore identities more freely, (boyd & Heer, 2006). Computer-mediated communication can also occur more freely in terms of time because the Internet never closes down and for many young people with computers in their homes, it is possible for them to access communities online whenever they want. However, it is not just the regulation of physical spaces and the availability of the Internet despite time, but also the fact that there are fewer restrictions and fewer perceived consequences to navigating virtual spaces that appeal to young people. For some, the danger seems less real because it is not tangible like the

dangerous situations we are taught as children, such as encountering strangers on the street. The basic point here is that virtual spaces are more accessible and less restricted for some teenagers, but allows for the same types of identity negotiation that occurs in offline interactions. boyd believes that the use of social networking sites by the younger population demonstrates a cultural shift that has come about by the establishment of virtual spaces and the increasing amounts of control imposed by adults on young people (boyd 2006).

As it has been demonstrated, the Internet has modified the ways in which we consider identity. If identity is a means of knowing a person, then the Internet provides a new approach to getting to know people. In this way, we must consider identity in completely different ways as we normally would when thinking about the offline world. Virtual spaces are additional places where personalities and characteristics are expressed through online identities, and these differ from offline identities because the people are more consciously in command of their own identities based on their personal decisions. Again, they are not subject to the immediate judgment reactions of the person opposite them online because the profile allows the user to highlight or conceal aspects of identity. The presentation of the self is in itself a social fact, so it becomes difficult to challenge its validity and truth.

Social networking sites are still fairly new within the study of cyber anthropology. These virtual spaces are still largely unexplored and

demonstrate spheres of study that are open to exploration should members of academia be interested in following them. The study of identity encompasses many disciplines and is widely talked about due to the fact that Western society is obsessed with the idea of individuals. Identity has shifted from being considered as a singular entity into something that has a fluid nature and is not easily categorized. The solid state of identity, which was formerly the dominant concept, has now changed to include multiple, hybrid, fluid, and all other descriptions of identity. Studies of how the Internet affects these variations in identity narratives are crucial in understanding the formation and negotiation of identities in the present (Turkle 1995).

Race/Ethnicity Online: Limitations and Challenges to Presentation of the Self

Because individual users are in charge of representing their own identity, the Internet becomes an exceptionally interesting place of consideration for issues like race/ethnicity. As mentioned above, online encounters are not subject to the same snap judgments that occur in offline encounters. In discussions of race/ethnicity, people have the option to share how they identify themselves or to withhold that information. There is no regulation of this on social networking sites, though they normally provide a list of stock answers from which a user can pick what they feel most applies to them. Usually these sites allow users to opt out of answering questions and so

race/ethnicity becomes as big or as little a part of the profile as individual users want. Certain characteristics may affect how others see the user. For example, if a user lists him or herself as Middle Eastern, this may lead other users to imagine the person as whatever preconceived notion they have of people from Middle Eastern backgrounds, whether it is correct or not. By eliminating racial/ethnic traits from the profile, some believe that it creates a more balanced, equal setting for all users.

It is particularly important that most sites provide menus from which users can choose their own racial/ethnic identities. Oftentimes the choices cater to the populations that most utilize a particular site. For instance, one international social networking site might cater to users from Asian countries or of Asian origin while another might have a large Latin American user population. The popularity of one social networking site over another depends chiefly on the rapid spread of its use among a group. Users will join whatever site their friends are part of, so pockets of users are created in certain geographical areas though there is also the option of participating in several social networking sites. The pockets of users are distributed around the world, so for international social networking sites it is essential that there be racial/ethnic menu options so as not to isolate any users from geographic locations where the sites are popular. Creators of these sites have the data which tells them where their user base is from, so by providing specific labels, they try in a sense to show that these populations and groups are significant.

However, the very existence of this type of categorization is problematic. When there are people creating names and identifications from which users must choose their own identities, there are obvious limitations. Though the users have control over which options they choose, the options themselves are still the creations and the choices made by the website creators. The control ultimately lies with the website and not the user. The Internet is supposed to be liberating in the expression of identity, but the drop-down or clickable menu boxes only serve to solidify traditional groupings without permitting users to define themselves in their own language as they see fit (Nakamura 2002). The available categories on these sites disallow the user's freedom to choose. Besides establishing inflexible racial/ethnic categories, these types of menus offer the category of "other". This category has emerged as a solution to the multicultural world that we now live in, but as far as truly being an identity, "other" is not a satisfying option for many. "Other" comes in countless different variations yet it seems to consolidate them all together as one specific type. Instead of solving the problem, it only serves to demonstrate that we need deeper understandings of the multifaceted construction of race/ethnicity.

<p style="text-align:center">The Nature of Community: Online, as well as Offline?</p>

Virtual communities are groupings of people that come together and create relationships within the virtual spaces provided by the Internet. They do

not differ completely from communities that exist in the offline, physical

world. There are many reasons why people come together offline, as well as

online. People might meet on the Internet based on shared interests, political

viewpoints, and religion, just like in the physical world. The major difference

is that physical location does not impact virtual communities. Instead of being

limited to one city, state, region, or nation, online communities can transcend

these boundaries to become even larger. Though there are opportunities for

this to happen offline, the Internet has created a space that is available to a

wider population. A person may not have the time or money to fly across the

world for an international conference, but they may have the resources to

access a computer and enter into online forums that allow them to participate

in whatever interests them.

Up until now, people tended to interact with those who shared their

physical spaces. Sending letters through the postal system, television

programs, and newspapers helped groups of people learn about one another.

Many school children have grown up participating in pen pal programs where

they are assigned to write letters to another child who lives in a foreign

country. In this case, the Internet greatly speeds up the process so that the

children can send messages in a matter of instants instead of waiting several

weeks for the exchange to occur. Besides email, they can also chat online so

that the interaction is sped up even more. Television and newspapers have

allowed us to learn about events going on throughout the world and not just in

our familiar geographical location. Through these we have come into indirect contact with and have gained passive knowledge of other peoples. The introduction of the Internet into daily life has drastically changed views on what it means to come in contact with the unknown because the unknown could be a user from across the world that becomes a friend through online communication. Instead of relying on secondary sources, a person can in fact engage in active conversation with the unknown and not have to depend on the accounts of others. In terms of technology and human interaction, the Internet has transformed the ways in which people create and sustain relationships.

Prior to looking at each side of the Cyber Anthropology debate, it is necessary to understand how people are defining "community." As Barry Wellman and Milena Gulia write, the debate over virtual communities is simply an extension of the discussion on community as a whole (Wellman & Gulia 1999). Even without the complications brought on by the Internet, people have always talked about community and its implications in the physical world. Some may place a high moral value on communities and want to maintain them as pure entities, (Watson 1997). In such cases, community becomes a deeply meaningful notion. Others may look at the notion of community with skepticism, claiming that community only exists as long as someone is declaring its importance and as long as the members agree upon it.

It is obvious that community is a loaded word with many cultural connotations.

Technological changes attributed to modernization have always affected communities, such as the car or the cellular phone. None of these have, in effect, destroyed communities. They have transformed the landscape of what was previously considered to be the definition of community, but communities still exist. What the Internet does accomplish is a shifting in the concept of community from being location-oriented to being more conscious of the social networks that lie in its depth. Jan Fernback writes, "Cyberspace has become a new arena for participation in public life... Within its boundaries, users can act as media audiences by cruising through Usenet or the World Wide Web, yet users are also authors, public rhetoricians, statesmen, pundits" (Fernback 1997, p. 37). Within the formation of online communities, people are learning that they can take on roles that might otherwise be outside of their reach in the offline world. The virtual expanse allows them to participate in various positions as leaders or members of communities. Virtual communities, then, demand recognition that people are not limited by physical boundaries, but are capable of interacting and forming bonds based on other criteria.

Specifically speaking within the field of anthropology, Nessim Watson writes

> Anthropology's origin in the roots of imperialist expansion and cross-cultural investigations of difference has perhaps been responsible for the field's focus on place-based phenomena and its emphasis on the importance of physical territory in determining group distinctions. This has been at the expense of recognizing "culture," that continuously productive and communicative activity in which all humans are inherently engaged and which I suggest as the source of the communion which makes community real to its participants (Watson 1997, p. 120).

Watson's view of Cyber Anthropology reflects the assertions that anthropology needs to catch up to the present in order to remain a useful discipline in contemporary times. Populations are changing with the times, and so must anthropology. The field has come a long way since the study of primitive societies with unfamiliar practices, such as in the cases of Franz Boaz (Boaz 1888) and Bronislaw Malinowski (Malinowski 1961). These populations, though a source of interest, do not reflect the changes that have occurred in the world. Cyber Anthropology deals with the changes in communities that are no longer definable by semiotic boundaries (Rheingold, 1994). In this way, anthropology must move forward to reflect the modern image of the world. It is the job of anthropologists to keep up with such global trends and try to understand the effects they have on people as a whole. Some might say that nothing in the online world is trustworthy and therefore it is impossible to gather data that might lead to some sort of conclusion. Critics believe that the acquired sense of meaning gained on the Internet is not a legitimate form and incomparable to the data collected when an anthropologist is involved in a new physical location. Similar concerns revolve around the ability for virtual spaces to draw users in so deeply that their senses of reality

become murky and complicated. This argument makes the assumption that there is only one reality and that this reality holds true for all people. Realities exist in many varieties for people, and it seems that virtual spaces are just other spheres of reality within the larger network of meaning that we have created.

Communities that gather in virtual space have practices and rules that are distinct compared to groups that come together in the physical, offline world. Because people are far more comfortable and familiar with the physical world, the presence of this virtual world seems intimidating and threatening to the social bonds we so value in our lives. Yet at the same time it is precisely these reasons that proponents for cyber ethnographies cite when discussing the controversy. They see the Internet as an extension of our daily offline lives and find that the study of virtual spaces is necessary in contemporary anthropology. Movement alongside emerging technologies and trends will help propel anthropology into the present.

The popularity of online-mediated communication lies at the root of the issue of community while also echoing the modern changes that anthropologists must follow. A physically defined community suggests that all members are able to communicate with one another with a fair amount of ease, whether it means walking over to the neighbor's house to taking a quick ride in the car across town. Face-to-face communication is highly valued as the most pure form, and again this comes in conflict with the notion of a

virtual community. As people begin to use email, instant messaging, video conferencing and other computer mediated means of communication, there is a diminishment of the value placed on meeting a person in the physical world. Though there are many examples of how face-to-face contact is still primary and considered to contain more worth, there is certainly no denying that online communication has significantly changed the ways in which we communicate.

Studies on friendship support this shift. Denise Carter looks into sociological and anthropological studies that come up with defining features of friendship, such as it being voluntary, personal, and dependent on reciprocal feelings of closeness (Carter 2005). Though we are accustomed to these characteristics within our physical world, there is no reason why it should be reduced to just that area. Friendships online share these qualities and have the ability to be equally significant and intimate. Even friends that live physically in close proximity to one another often choose to send quick emails. In fact, emails and instant messaging help facilitate face-to-face contact within friends. As mentioned before, a glimpse into any college student's life will show that plans for weekends are often discussed online. There should be no reason why a friendship cannot be both offline and online. This case applies to other human relationships online as well.

The formations of ethnic communities follow similar circumstances. In David J. Elkins' article, "Globalization, Telecommunication, and Virtual

Ethnic Communities," he breaks ethnic communities into three types: concentrated ethnic communities, dispersed ethnic communities, and virtual ethnic communities (Elkin 1997). The first refers to ethnic communities that are clustered together within a specific location or territory. The second refers to ethnic communities that are cohesive outside of the specific location from which they may have originated. Immigrant communities would be considered dispersed ethnic communities because they are away from their homelands but stick together despite this circumstance. The final one, the virtual ethnic community, is what concerns us in this paper. Virtual ethnic community members identify as being of the same ethnicity though their physical locations may vary. Studies on the first two types of ethnic communities are common, but again, not as many academics have taken it upon themselves to delve into the question of how virtual spaces can be useful to ethnic communities. In the offline world, members of ethnic groups that are concentrated in a physical location do not have much of a choice regarding how they identify because they are already part of the identification with that ethnicity. Whether they choose to live there or not, they are included within that community in the eyes of others and from an outsider's point of view, they rightfully belong within that ethnic community. Some deliberately choose to live in these communities whether it is because their families are there, because of access to resources, or any number of other reasons. With the presence of people in a virtual ethnic community, we must understand that

these people choose to identify as such in the same way. The people who want to assimilate into the larger society or disassociate themselves from their ethnic community will not find themselves as active participants in virtual ethnic communities, but for those who opt to maintain ties with their ethnic community, taking part of the community on the Internet can be a useful option.

How do the *nikkei* fit into this framework? They have formed communities and have been seen by other Peruvians as having their own community within the larger Peruvian society. The choices they make regarding community and racial/ethnic identifications reflect overall changes in an increasingly Internet-filled world. Access to online resources and sites such as *hi5* have allowed *nikkei* to express their identities simultaneously in different ways and with assorted means. Chapter two will outline the historical background of *nikkei* in Peru and how early generation *nikkei* experiences and teachings have influenced contemporary *nikkei* in their search for identity.

Chapter Three: Introduction to *Nikkei* in Peru

The Japanese-Peruvians, or *nikkei*[6], are a population that demonstrate the effects of a globalized world where ethnic communities are spread from the land of their origin. Transmigratory populations from all over the world have aroused interest within anthropology. The consequences of political, economic, and social conditions have contributed to a change in the ways in which we consider the "Other." As mentioned before, technology such as the Internet and television have shrunk the world so that it is no longer as difficult to obtain information about populations across the globe. Instead of simply focusing on cultures in foreign lands, anthropologists can concentrate on studying globalized cultures and the new identities that emerge as results of the changes that have come about around us. The *nikkei* are an example of this type of change, and how virtual ethnic communities emerge and develop on the Internet.

On a personal level, this group interests me because I am half Japanese and half American. I have the experience of growing up with a doubled sense of identity and two distinct cultures. I understand the identity crisis that sometimes occurs and the discrimination that people experience when they belong to more than one culture. Although I do not have the profound understanding of identity that an immigrant might have, I can relate to the

[6] *Nikkei* refers to Japanese immigrants and their descendents. Within this paper, the word specifically refers to those in Peru.

emerging themes. On a more practical level, as someone who speaks both Spanish and Japanese, I am capable of understanding the intricacies of both languages. My knowledge of these languages also helped put my participants at ease because they knew that they could write or speak as they normally do and without having to carefully choose words in one language over another. In this sense, I believe I obtained a good idea of the cultural interweaving that occurs in the daily life of a *nikkei*.

As an immigrant population, the *nikkei* are typically known to be a rather closed and cohesive group. Their Japanese customs and traditions have continued since the beginning of the migration to Peru. In comparison to other immigrant groups in Peru, the *nikkei* have combined aspects of old Japanese culture with the culture of Peru to create their own identities as *nikkei*. This is not to say that other immigrant groups have not done this, but the extent to which the *nikkei* have remained as an identifiable group is dramatically visible as compared to others. The formation of a *nikkei* identity cannot be explained in a concrete manner because it is always in a state of transformation. Here it might be useful to look at the theory of middleman minorities. In this case, the social structures of migrant societies mark their differences from other groups but as Edna Bonacich suggests, are even more distinguished by their liquidity, (Bonacich 1973). As she wrote, "…middleman groups are charged with being clannish, alien, and unassimilable. They are seen as holding themselves aloof, believing they are superior to those around them (a 'chosen people'), and

insisting on remaining different," (Bonacich 1973, p. 591). The *nikkei* of Peru can be seen in this way as well.

However, with the knowledge of cultural preservation as a selective process, the *nikkei* community becomes living proof that a culture can be born of two very different others. The *nikkei* identity has aspects of Peru and Japan but at the same time embodies new characteristics that are specifically attributed to the mentality and experiences of immigrants. As such, the *nikkei* will be able to persevere, though not necessarily in a form recognizable to the earlier generation, and develop as a community despite the changes that come with time.

Arrival and Settling In

The relation between Peru and Japan began more or less with the incident of the ship María Luz in 1872 (Lausent-Herrera 1991; Morimoto 1999). The ship carried a cargo of coolies, or Chinese laborers, and was destined for Callao, Lima's large and important port in Peru. With the abolition of slavery, Peruvian employers needed to find new ways to get cheap laborers. For this reason they began to traffic coolies. The María Luz was part of this trafficking but due to bad weather and damage to the ship, it had to be docked in the port of Yokohama, Japan. There the English and the Japanese began to hear rumors about the maltreatment of the Chinese aboard and they decided to intervene. The captain of the ship, Aurelio García García

was sent as an official to initiate conversation with members of the Japanese government. It is during this visit that the Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation was born. At this time Japan had little interest in Peru, but with time the relationship between the two countries grew.

Different from the Chinese immigrants in Peru, the Japanese that arrived came under slightly better conditions. At least they had been educated at the primary level and were literate. The first groups of men to arrive for work were typically second- or third-born sons because the first-born sons in the families were responsible for staying in Japan and guarding what little the family owned in a typical system of primogeniture. The workers were typically between the ages of twenty and forty-five and in good physical health for work on the *haciendas*[7]. They were contracted by companies that were authorized by the Japanese government and came to Peru of their own will unlike the Chinese who were often there because they were forced into labor (Yamawaki 2002). The Japanese workers came with the idea of working hard, saving money, and returning to Japan with enough savings to live comfortably. This mentality of working for a bit and then returning to the homeland distanced them from the rest of Peruvian society. Because their lives there were not seen as permanent, for many years they never came to regard Peru as home and saw no reason to assimilate to local ways.

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[7] *Hacienda* is a Spanish word for a large ranch, similar to a plantation.

The majority of workers came from the Okinawan prefecture. People from this region tended to be poorer and marginalized because it had only become part of Japan in 1879. Before becoming the Okinawan prefecture, it was known as the Ryukyu Kingdom but was taken over during the Meiji Restoration, or a series of events that effected change in the social and political structures of Japan. Due to this history, the Okinawans were often considered as their own separate culture that was distinct from the mainland of Japan (Moromisato & Shimabukuro 2006). Within the new context of working in Peru, their situations were actually better than they had been in Japan.

Unlike the Japanese, the Chinese came in states of poverty and took root in Peru from the very beginning because they knew that they would never return to their homeland. Politically, there were differences between these two Asian groups as well. The Japanese began migrating to Peru starting in 1885 with the help of private companies that were protected by Japanese laws (Lausent-Herrera, 1991). Although the Japanese had the protection of their government, they still experienced discrimination and deplorable conditions in their *hacienda* work. For these reasons, many left the physical work of *haciendas* and moved to the capital, Lima, or Callao to begin new lives in the commerce or service industries.

In the cities the Japanese opened barbershops, bakeries, *bodegas*[8], and more. They formed associations for different fields of work and were successful in commerce due to their sales methods. Their success was based on low prices and high rates of sale. The Japanese were known to be workhorses and their stores were open twenty-four hours a day, which was convenient for night shift workers in the city. Their intense work ethic and motivation to earn money to return to Japan caused them to take few or no breaks during the workday and to hire within the family so they would not have to pay outsiders for work. The Japanese commercial system based on low prices and high volume of sales was a new development in Peruvian society (Yamawaki, 2002).

Another way the Japanese thrived was through the system of *tanomoshi*, or a pooled income fund implemented by an Okinawan named Sentei Yaki. This community fund worked to the advantage of all involved because it served as proof that they were self-sufficient and trusted the other members. This level of trust did not extend to other Peruvians and contributed to the labeling of the Japanese community as closed. The main problem was that the Japanese did not fully grasp the Spanish language yet and were suspicious of the Peruvian finance system. For the most part, they tended to transfer or sell their businesses within the community. Peruvians claimed that

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[8] The word *bodega* comes from Spain, meaning a warehouse for wine or spirits. It is typically used around Latin American to mean a convenience store or a corner shop.

there was some sort of promise made among the Japanese that said they would

not share their commercial success tactics, but the Japanese had their own

explanations for these practices. According to the Federación de Comerciantes

Japoneses del Perú [Federation of Japanese Retailers in Peru], the Japanese

did not post announcements about the sale of businesses in the local papers

(Yamawaki, 2002). There was also a belief that Peruvians did not want to

work in the Japanese-owned *bodegas* even if the opportunity was presented to

them. Because of this, businesses like *bodegas* were transferred from one

person to another within the Japanese community and without the

involvement of Peruvians.

The Japanese work ethic and the image of success in business that they

cultivated affected the ways in which Peruvians saw the Japanese. Peruvians

would say that the Japanese were shrewd because they washed their own

clothes instead of sending their dirty laundry off to the *lavandería*, or local

laundry. From their points of view, respectable people did not wash their own

clothing, so therefore the Japanese must not be civilized. On the other side, the

Japanese were washing their own clothes because they were accustomed to

doing so and it was another way of saving money. The two cultures had

difficulty understanding one another, but,

> A medida que la inmigración japonesa aumentaba y que los inmigrantes se
> iban adaptando a la cultura peruana, se empezaron a escuchar opiniones que
> apuntaba a que ellos mismos, con su propio esfuerzo, pensaban cubrir esa
> brecha cultural [As Japanese immigration increased and the immigrants
> adapted to Peruvian culture, they began to listen to the opinions aimed at

them, and with their own effort, thought to conceal this cultural breach]
(Yamawaki 2002, p.100).

Slowly, the Japanese familiarized themselves with the ways to live respectfully within the socio-cultural rules of the Peruvians. If they were going to stay in Peru for an extended amount of time, they wanted to be considered civilized and have good reputations.

Although their businesses flourished, these same achievements came with their own problems. As the Japanese community advanced, the Peruvians began to see them more and more as threats and discrimination grew. The uneasy feeling caused by the increasing number of Japanese immigrants and their collective will to better their lives eventually led to rumors in the cities about the dangers of the Japanese. For example, one rumor stated that the Japanese were planning an attempt to close down the Panama Canal and that the Japanese were spies from their government bent on controlling the Peruvian economy. Though most were outlandish lies, there was some truth to the fact that Japan was indeed looking to expand its influence in the Americas.

Racism and discrimination existed not just between the Peruvians and the Japanese, but within these separate groups as well. There had always been tension between the mainland Japanese and the Okinawans since the time that Japan annexed Okinawa. It was said that,

> El estado japonés, a través de sus embajadas y consulados, cuidaba la
> unidad de sus súbditos en ultramar para manterner la imagen cohesionada y
> poderosa del imperio, [The Japanese state, through its embassies and

consulates, looked after the unity of its subjects overseas in order to maintain the empire's image of cohesion and power] (Moromisato & Shimabukuro 2006, p. 14).

Though there were very real discriminatory policies put forth by the Japanese government, there was still a need for them to gloss over these tensions and promote an image of harmony between them. In spite of some of these efforts, the two groups maintained a distance from one another.

The ways in which the Japanese thought of Peru also contributed to racial and ethnic tensions. The Japanese were proud of their home country and tended to believe that Peru was below Japan in status. It bothered them that the Peruvians looked down on them (Yamawaki 2006). Similarly, they disliked being compared to the Indigenous and Black populations because in Peruvian society they were also considered inferior. Examples of this can be found in Japanese newspapers. For instance, there was once an article that said that Japanese should stop carrying their children on their backs because this was a practice attributed to inferior populations (Yamawaki 2006). It is unquestionable that the Japanese were very conscious of their images in Peruvian society and the consequences they had on other aspects of life.

To the Peruvians, all people with Asian features were called *chino*[9], but with the arrival of World War II, they learned to differentiate between the

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[9] Though the word *chino* literally means Chinese, it is often used in Spanish-speaking countries to refer to people with stereotypically Asian physical features. Depending on the context, it can be used as a term of endearment or as a word of discrimination.

ethnic Chinese and Japanese. With the events leading up to the war, the Peruvians began to see that the Japanese were a separate, and possibly dangerous community. On May 13, 1940, there was a mass *saqueo*, or plundering and looting, in Lima. Peruvians destroyed the businesses and homes of the Japanese in a large act of vandalism. Many families lost everything they owned, but this was not the end of the hard times. During the war, the Peruvian government was allied with the US and took away the few rights that the Japanese in Peru had. The government sent them to internment camps in the US where they stayed for the duration of the war.

After the war, the situation for the Japanese changed radically. Those who were planning on returning to the homeland began looking for new options because the defeated Japan was no longer the ideal place for their families. The Japanese that returned to Peru after the period of internment had to begin anew because all of their goods were destroyed or taken away from them. This was a crucial turning point for the Japanese in Peru because they finally began to take deep root into their adopted country out of necessity.

A more recent historical event that has had a considerable impact on the *nikkei* community is the presidency of Alberto Fujimori. It marked the first time that a person of Japanese origin became president in a country that was not Japan. Fujimori was not active in the *nikkei* community because he had a different form of identifying himself and expressing his identity, which was through his politics, but his presidency had strong repercussions on the image

of *nikkei*. Soon after the election results were made public, there were many reactions towards the *nikkei*. Some *nikkei* did not perceive any changes in the ways that Peruvians treated them, yet others noticed that the Peruvians who supported Fujimori were friendlier towards them simply because of their Asian features. Of course, some experienced discrimination by Peruvians who disliked Fujimori and who blamed the *nikkei* community for his success and ascendancy to such a high position within the government. In the questionnaire that Amelia Morimoto circulated, some *nikkei* said that they felt something in common with Fujimori, such as the characteristic of being a perfectionist, the level of education, and physical attributes. Those who felt something in common with him referred to the positive stereotypes about *nikkei* that Fujimori benefited from during his campaign. Similarly, his Japanese descent may have helped the largely indigenous population separate him in their minds from his opponent, famous writer Mario Vargas Llosa. Those who were disenchanted by the political elite of that period may have seen Fujimori as a positive alternative.

Institutions and Practices that Build *Nikkei* Solidarity

The experiences of the different generations of Japanese and their descendents are crucial in the analysis of the formation of a *nikkei* identity. The *issei*, or first generation, have more vivid memories of Japan and of the

most difficult times in their history. Although they feel pride in the country of their birth, they also perceive Peru as a better place for themselves. Many knew that Japan after World War II would not be the same as the Japan they remembered. From then on, they did not have plans or yearnings to return to Japan and feel increased pride in the collective progress made by the *nikkei*.

The *nissei*, or second generation, represent the generation of sacrifice and confrontation between two cultures. They pertain to the time period in which marriage outside the *nikkei* community would mean the termination of familial relations. They probably suffered the most discrimination because of their efforts to enter the Peruvian society.

A *nissei* that I met and interviewed during my time in Lima helps illustrate the drastic differences between the generations. Minoru Soeda was born in Huancayo where his parents cultivated coca leaves for medicine. When he was seven years old, his family moved to Lima where he studied in *Lima Nikko*, a Japanese school. He lived there during the *saqueo* of 1940 and the earthquake that followed. His school was transformed into a refugee center for victims of the earthquake and since he could no longer study there, his parents sent him and his older brother to Japan.

Soeda and his brother went to live in Fukushima, to the north of Tokyo, where their father was born. During their time there they lived with an uncle and attended high school. He said that he was at the top of his class in Japan because his Japanese teachers in Peru were exceptional. One year

before the beginning of World War II, Soeda recalls experiencing *ijime*, or teasing at the hands of his classmates. They called him "American" for having been born and raised in Peru, even though he was of Japanese origin. They also teased him because his accent was different due to his teachers back in Peru. At that time, the Japanese educational system was based on strict militarism.

By communicating with his parents back in Peru, Soeda learned that business had become difficult for the *nikkei* in Peru, but that some Peruvian family friends protected them from the worst of it. After the war, life in Japan included a lot of hardship. Soeda's parents would send sugar, clothing, and other products there were hard to come by in Japan. Despite the difficulties, Soeda continued his education and became involved in swimming. He loved his school's pool and was reminded of swimming in the sea in Peru. His swimming talent led him to be recruited by a university. However, in his third year of studying civil engineering, he became sick with tuberculosis and had to take a year off to rest. When he finally became well, it was due to a medicine that was sent to him from Peru because it was not available at that time in Japan.

At the age of twenty-five, Soeda returned to Peru and said that Peru felt like paradise compared to post-war Japan. His parents now had a flower shop and he spent his time working for his parents and re-learning Spanish because he had forgotten it all during his time away. His father still spoke

Japanese, and maintained aspects of Japanese culture even within the flower shop. He practiced *ikebana*, which is a Japanese art form of arranging flowers. While studying Spanish and working, Soeda also participated in the activities put on by the Japanese community. For example, he volunteered time with his father and helped to construct a gymnasium for the children.

After five years of working for his parents, Soeda entered into business as an import representative of Japan. The company imported products like sewing machines and toys. Goods such as *shoyu*[10], *miso*[11], and *sake*[12] were produced within the Japanese colony because there was such a huge demand for them. Soeda said that he missed Japan during this time but there was no lack of goods, even Japanese ones. With his work he had opportunities to travel to Japan, but never felt like he wanted to stay there.

In his Japanese university days, Soeda had met a Japanese woman and even after his return to Peru, wanted to bring her over though she was not *nikkei*. He knew that this woman would suffer from the drastic changes between the cultures and the new language, so he ended up marrying a woman who he knew through his sisters, who all played volleyball. This woman was on the same team as his sisters and since her father owned an import business, Soeda was able to join the family business and begin a family.

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[10] *Shoyu* is Japanese for soy sauce.
[11] *Miso* is Japanese for soy bean paste.
[12] *Sake* is Japanese for an alcohol brewed from rice.

As Soeda's experiences demonstrate, one of the most important institutions in the *nikkei* community is the Asociación Peruano-Japonés (APJ). Its cultural center is located in the neighborhood of Jesús María in Lima and is a large and impressive building with its own theater and medical clinic. Within the cultural center, there is a library, museum, cafeteria, classrooms, and more. The APJ offers many classes besides Japanese language. This remarkable center was founded in 1917 under the name of the Sociedad Central Japonesa. Its principal objective was to promote the good of the Japanese-Peruvian community while initiating the integration of the Peruvian community through the transmission of societal values and strengthening the friendly relations between Peru and Japan.

According to an APJ librarian, those who frequent the library are from all age groups. Some come from outside the APJ as students of Japanese, but many who are already within the association utilize its services as well. The new and larger library opened in 2000, which is now complete with a children's section, reference books, magazines and periodicals, a collection of *manga*[13], and a large collection of books in Japanese. All of these were donated from individuals as well as other institutions. To work in the APJ library, it is necessary to know Japanese because many of the senior citizens that use the space and resources speak better Japanese than Spanish. However, for the most part library patrons ask for books in Spanish. The library tries to

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[13] *Manga* is Japanese for the popular comics or cartoons of Japan.

educate people about Japanese culture while providing a peaceful and quiet space for study.

Another valuable organization within the *nikkei* community is the Asociación Femenina Okinawense del Perú [Okinawan Women's Association of Peru] (AFOP). This group proves the existence of different ways in which less formal culture groups are formed. The objectives of this association are similar to the APJ in that it also works for solidarity and camaraderie. But more specifically, it deals with the identity of Okinawan women. The AFOP magazine celebrating the centennial of Japanese immigration to Peru had an article that explained the role of women immigrants in the transmission of customs and values to the new generations. The *issei* women were responsible for teaching the later generations about feminine qualities such as integrity, strength, refinement, sacrifice, and tenderness. They did not include weakness, fragility, or passivity. Together with the immigrant experience as a whole, AFOP helps to explore issues of what it means to be a woman within the community.

The classification of Japanese associations is interesting because the criteria for membership are many and varied. For example, certain organizations are centered on occupation, such as barbers or antiquarians. Location of origin and current residence are also important. People whose origins go back to specific prefectures in Japan tend to join organizations that are focused on location because they see it as a way to maintain the spirit of

their ancestors and the life that they might have lived had they remained in Japan. Okinawan organizations illustrate this point clearly because as a prefecture it has a very separate sense of identity from mainland Japan. Social status within Peru also comes up often. It is said that since its founding, the Asociación de Japoneses [Association of Japanese] was directed more towards intellectuals because it was founded by immigrants who worked in the consulates and offices (Yamawaki 2002). Although from the outside the *nikkei* community seems very much united, in reality there are many differences between the institutions and organizations, as well as in the people who choose to participate in them. What they do have in common though, is the belief that participation in one form or another is vital to the continuity of a *nikkei* identity.

The establishment of institutions such as the APJ serves as a critical point in the social narrative because these various organizations set up their own rules and requirements for inclusion. The design of Japanese behavior deals with social relativism, or the combination of social preoccupation with the social interactions, which together convert into the essence of Japanese behavioral norms. The feeling of belonging is essential to Japanese life. For this reason, the Japanese tend towards the collective, such as in the system of *tanomoshi*. There is more emphasis on the collective particularly within immigrant communities because of their status as foreigners in a new land and the need for security. There are many manifestations of this feeling of

belonging. For example, the Japanese tend to put a lot of effort into establishing their identities. They like to emphasize the visual indicators of identity, such as with *meishi*, or business cards. But this becomes insufficient since visual qualities can be confused, as in the case of racial/ethnic characteristics. They dislike being confused with other Asian racial/ethnic groups, such as the Chinese. Another important aspect to the sense of belonging is the collectivity that is expressed through individual identification with the goals of the group. This fosters an intense interaction between the members of the group, such as in the case of the *nikkei* associations. Their dependence on one another and the empathy they have both stimulates and sustains the community.

The *nikkei*, in particular those of the earlier generations, guard their identities with much consideration and care. This can be seen in the high numbers and cases of endogamy. They consolidate social ties through marriages and the perpetuation of Japanese blood. The importance of institutions like the ones mentioned above are revealed by the fact that parents of Japanese origin tend to bring their children to Japanese community centers so that their children's first social interactions will be with those who are like them. For some, there is a lot of pressure to marry a partner of similar background. This is not to say that all are pressured into this type of marriage. There are plenty of cases of people who choose of their own will to marry

other *nikkei* simply because they feel more comfortable with them and place value on continuing the cultural ties. As Takenaka summarizes,

> In sum, whether Japanese-Peruvians' high rate of endogamy is a result of their efforts to maintain their culture or is a 'natural outcome' of their 'distinct culture', it has been reinforced through shared community activities. Simultaneously, their high endogamy rate has helped strengthen the tight-knit nature of their "community" reinforcing a belief in shared culture (Takenaka 2003: p. 474).

Through *nikkei* to *nikkei* marriages, the community is propagated and is able to grow. But what happens to those who do not marry *nikkei*? The children of *nikkei* and Peruvians of non-Japanese origin are often called *ainoko*. This word is often used degradingly, though curiously enough the literal translation of this Japanese word is "child of love." *Ainoko* is similar to how we might use the term "love child" in the US. Moromisato explains that when a *nikkei* has a child with a person outside of the community, people assume it must be for profound love because it is a sacrifice of sorts. In the present, there is less discrimination against *ainoko* as people become accustomed to the idea. And yet people of mixed backgrounds continue to participate less in the *nikkei* community's institutions, and if they want to participate they must *japonizarse*[14] or speak, have the same habits, and practice the same customs as the other *nikkei* to be accepted.

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[14] *Japonizarse* is a made-up Spanish word used by Moromisato which basically means "to make oneself more Japanese."

The acceptance of *ainoko* also depends on the racial/ethnic groups that have mixed. The best-viewed mixes are between *nikkei* and *blancos*[15] or other Asians. After that come the *indígenas*[16] and the *negros*[17]. It is like many other societies where the racial/ethnic hierarchies put the Blacks at the bottom. What is interesting for the Okinawans is that for them to become mixed with people of *nikkei* ancestry from the Japanese mainland are also considered *ainoko*. They prefer to marry among other Okinawans, but after this criterion theirs also follows in the same pattern as other *nikkei*.

The maintenance of language is often discussed regarding its importance to the *nikkei* community. In all immigrant communities, the mother tongue marks a crucial aspect in society and how people relate to one another within a group. In Peru, whether or not a person speaks Japanese influences their social placement in the institutions. *Nikkei* who grew up with parents who spoke Japanese or an Okinawan dialect tend to remember certain words, if not most of the language. In the case of religious and spiritual practices, daily customs, functions of associations, and names for family members, they often utilize Japanese words. For example, although the majority of *nikkei* have converted to Catholicism, some families still have *butsudan* in their homes. *Butsudan* are small altars that people put objects on as offerings to relatives who have passed away. *Nikkei* call them *butsudan*

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[15] *Blancos* refers to Caucasians or Whites in Spanish.
[16] *Indígena* is Spanish for Indigenous peoples.
[17] *Negro* means Black, or a dark-skinned person in Spanish.

instead of referring to them as *altares* because their intentions are distinct. These words have survived from generation to generation for the particular feelings that they invoke and the ways in which they mark culture. It is a way to differentiate between the "Us" and the "Them."

The references and feelings enclosed in "Us" and "Them" are defined by the positive images that *nikkei* have chosen for themselves. Any behavior that is not in accordance to the community's presented image is labeled as "Them." If a person has a bad attitude or is not serious about their work, they are often called Creole or Peruvian. The sanctions are well defined for those who deviate from the popular representation, and prove that there are repercussions for not becoming involved in or sharing the same values as others in the community.

Education has always been a central Japanese cultural value. With immigrants it is even more imperative to be well educated because parents want their children to learn not only the typical school subjects, but also the morals and values that go into being a good Japanese and therefore contribute to solidarity within the *nikkei* community. Education is also emphasized as a way to advance as a group and put forth a good image in Peru. Although the *issei* did not attend schools, the *nissei* and *sansei* have had access to education after the war. The first Japanese Peruvian school was a private school called Hideyo Noguchi. It was named after the famous Japanese bacteriologist who discovered the biological agent in syphilis. The school was founded in 1987

after the local school was forced to close, and its aim was to teach Japanese language and culture as well as professional skills. The school motto was: Love – Work – Discipline. Other schools like it opened later, such as Inka Gakuen, which was started by *nissei* who wanted an education that was based more on Japanese tradition and philosophy. Like Hideyo Noguchi, this school emphasized traditional Japanese cultural events, such as the *undokai*[18]. However, within these events, they also included aspects of Peruvian culture, such as traditional dance forms. Inka Gakuen also had a school motto, which was: Honesty – Work – Solidarity. Both schools' mottos effectively communicate traditional Japanese values that were taught to students.

Aside from education and by extension, language, Japanese culture comes up in other aspects of life, such as in the arts and sports. Sports allowed *nikkei* to demonstrate pride in their country of origin. For instance, baseball is very popular in Japan but also among the *nikkei* of Peru. In the past, up to 80% of the Peruvian national baseball team consisted of *nikkei*. All of the institutions mentioned above have sports clubs and some even have their own teams and gymnasiums. Sports have emerged as effective and positive ways of constructing a sense of community. By learning and playing together, social cohesion increases. *Undokai* solidifies group relations and strengthens friendships. There are countless benefits to offering sports as recreation to the *nikkei* community.

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[18] *Undokai* is an annual field days or sports days at Japanese schools.

The *nikkei* in Peru dominate in the field of plastic arts. Artists such as Erika Nakasone Chinen who mixes aspects of Japan with Peru in her art shows that art allows *nikkei* to intengrate the various parts of their identities (Moromisato & Shimabukuro 2006). Another artist, Eduardo Tokeshi, has said that his reason for entering into the art world was because of his parents and the difficulty he had as a child when he would try to understand his parents' Japanese. He decided that he wanted to use the universal language of the visual because it would be the most accessible form for people of all backgrounds and languages to understand (Moromisato & Shimabukuro 2006).

Literature has not been a large part of the *nikkei* community precisely for the reason mentioned above by Tokeshi. Each generation has grown up with different levels of Japanese and Spanish language. Take for instance the family of the *nikkei* writer Doris Moromisato. In her family they spoke a mix of Spanish, an Okinawan dialect, and bits and pieces of Quechua[19] that they learned from local peasants. For her, becoming a poet meant putting order into words in order to assign identification.

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[19] Quechua is a Native American language spoken in many dialects throughout parts of South America. It is said to be the language of the Inca Empire.

Criticism of Current *Nikkei* Solidarity

Although the associations, schools, and activities are good ways of maintaining Japanese identities, in these times it has become necessary for the *nikkei* community to redefine itself through the changes in Japan as well as in Peru. Because of the historical events leading to, during, and following the Second World War and the racism experienced by the Japanese, Peruvians of Japanese descent in the past had to stick together. Together they were stronger and able to be self-sufficient. But with each generation that follows, the community is transforming into something new and different. Curiously enough, although they have adopted aspects of Peruvian culture, such as Spanish language and Catholicism, and have become economically and politically integrated into the Peruvian society, there has still been the maintenance of a separate community that has continued to grow in size, status, and resources.

Ayumi Takenaka suggests that the reason behind the persistence of this community depends less on its capacity to preserve the old Japanese culture than on its capacity to recreate the culture in response to external forces (Takenaka 2003). *Nikkei* identity now is no longer completely associated with Japanese culture because since the beginnings of Japanese immigration to Peru, the Japan that they left behind has changed. The values that early on were associated with Japan such as respect for the elderly no

longer exist in the same forms that the *issei* remember. Unlike contemporary

Japanese, *nikkei* still have old values and traditions. This contributes to the

positive stereotypes of *nikkei*. Even today their images are of good, honest

workers that are worthy of trust. The *nikkei* use these stereotyped

characteristics to their advantage in the search for work and other situations

where personal image becomes important.

The preservation of a culture, though in a constant state of change,

depends on cultural markers. Because of their selectivity in their own cultural

markers, the *nikkei* have been able to draw a firm line between what it means

to be "Us" and how this is different from "Them." For this reason they are

able to say with confidence that their culture is unique and different from

Peruvian culture. The way in which cultural preservation occurs is a selective

process that depends on what the population wants to include as part of their

image. What serves them best is converted into *nikkei* culture. Although not

all *nikkei* know about their own history and language, they can still associate

with other *nikkei* through cultural markers such as dance and music.

When the elderly in the community are asked what they believe is

necessary in order to consolidate and sustain a *nikkei* identity, there are many

responses and ideas returned. Some suggest the dissemination of Japanese

culture and the history of immigration would be useful. Others say that the

community needs more frequent Japanese-Peruvian exchanges. Additional

suggestions include: fomenting the inclusion of young people in the

administration of associations, strengthening institutions through family involvement, support of the arts, stimulation of conversation regarding the culture of the elderly through various types of media, educational presentations, and offering fun activities to attract children (Morimoto 1999).

Similarly, when this population is asked about what they believe will happen to the *nikkei* community, they tend towards speaking of unity and the importance of including the new generations. They also say: unity will be obtained when the work of the young people is recognized, consolidation of the group will be acquired with good examples of principle values, people should worry about the younger generations, and people should be more open to cultural exchange. When younger generations are asked the same question, they say that sometimes they feel that they do not have an identity within the *nikkei* community. It is evident that it this is an important issue for the older generations in terms of cultural and ethnic survival. However, there has been little input from current generations as to how all of this affects them and how they feel about it.

Although there are not many *nikkei* writers, there are many magazine and newspapers directed towards the population. *Puente* [Bridge] was founded by Alejandro Tamashiro, focuses explicitly on *nikkei* identity. In the 80s, a group of intellectuals wrote about the problem of *nissei* integration. The magazine served as a source of declaration on topics of importance to the community. It was revolutionary at the time because,

> En efecto, lo que caracteriza este grupo, que ha encontrado en *Puente* su modo y su medio de expresión, es la lucidez que muestra sobre todo en su unánime rechazo a la creciente intervención de Japón en la vida y las instituciones *nissei* [In effect, what characterized this group that found in *Puente* its mode and means of expression, is the lucidity that shows above all, the unanimous rejection of the growing Japanese intervention in the *nissei* lives and institutions] (Moromisato & Shimabukuro 20op, p. 81).

The founder of *Puente* was a very politically active figure. In 1964, with his twin brother named Enrique and other intellectuals, Tamashiro formed a group called Generación 64 [Generation 64] and later, the Asociación Universitaria Nissei Del Perú [The Nissei University Association of Peru] (AUNP). Tamashiro became a part of Peruvian politics not as a person of Japanese origin, but as a person who pertained to the Japanese community as much as the Peruvian community. With time, he grew increasingly militant and even traveled to Cuba to help in Che Guevara's cause. He also traveled to Nicaragua to support the Sandinistas[20] (Moromisato & Shimabukuro 2006). Tamashiro's political activity made him famous and he continues to be an icon for people who criticize the self-marginalization of the Japanese community in Peru.

Moromisato is also a prominent figure in the *nikkei* community for many reasons besides her successful career as a poet and writer. She is outspoken and open in her opinions about her fellow *nikkei*. Her general belief

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[20] The Sandinista National Liberation Front is a political party in Nicaragua that is based on communist principles. The name comes from Augusto César Sandino, the leader of Nicaragua's nationalist rebellion against the US occupation from 1922-1934.

is that the *nikkei* population in Peru is closed, endogamous, and only small

groups of *nikkei* take the time to circulate among the other peoples of Peru.

According to Moromisato, the general discourse comes from the institutions

and so the rest tend to obediently follow. Social position is measured by

proximity to the institutions and this becomes a crucial point because it

demonstrates the large role that these associations have on the construction

and maintenance of a *nikkei* identity.

When describing herself, Moromisato says that she is a Peruvian of

Okinawan Japanese descent, and a younger member of the *nissei*. Like Soeda,

nissei tend to be older, but Moromisato is the youngest of eleven siblings and

her parents were fairly old when she was born. For this reason, she tends to

experience being *nikkei* differently from the rest of the *nissei* and identifies

more with *sansei*. She remembers there being two worlds when she grew up,

and wrote,

> Ambos—el mundo de afuera y el mundo de adentro—contenían a su vez
> espacios públicos y privados, sus propios códigos, recompensas y
> sanciones; uno y otro se intercalaban en un extraño paralelismo [Both the
> world on the outside and the world on the inside contained as well as public
> and private spaces, their own codes, rewards, and sanctions; both were put
> in to create a strange parallelism] (Moromisato & Shimabukuro 2006: p.
> 85).

This point on parallelism is essential to the understanding of what it means to

exist between two cultures. Immigrant literature is full of references to this

dualism and the differences between a person's behavior within the house and

their attitude outside of their home when they are with people who do not pertain to the same cultural or racial/ethnic community.

Moromisato also says that the immigrants do not learn about their own history because Peru contains such a wide variety of peoples that it already has difficulty teaching history and the issue of the Japanese seems minor in comparison. Perhaps for those reasons the *nikkei* community has so many associations and has opened schools to be able to teach Japanese values and the history of their own group to the coming generations.

Soeda, the elderly man mentioned earlier in the chapter, helps to demonstrate the existing differences between the generations. With his wife, Soeda had three children: Lilian Sayuri, Rafael Takashi, and Fernando Gabriel. They would be considered *sansei*, or third generation. They all speak little to no Japanese. Rafael attended Columbia University in New York for graduate school and now lives in the US. Lilian also lives in the US and works as a graphic designer. Fernando is the only child to remain in Peru. He studied agronomy and was working for Mitshbishi, but changed his career path and decided to attend the Cordon Bleu in Peru for a few years. After his studies there, he moved to Canada to continue his studies as a chef, but now is back in Peru and works in a restaurant.

The experiences of Soeda and his children are obviously quite different. Like their father, they have had the opportunity to get the utmost education available to them and have been able to travel. Yet the

circumstances are quite different when wartime hardship is taken into account. Soeda's children have had the opportunities to travel for leisure instead of necessity. Their educations have been determined by their chosen fields of study instead of adherence to a Japanese cultural standard. It is interesting that two of them decided to move to the US, but this is consistent with many other *nikkei*. The US is seen as one of the ideal countries to live in because of its economic conditions, stability, and lifestyles. Lilian studied in Japan for a year with a fellowship, but decided that she did not like it there. The sons have also been to Japan but only as tourists. As well-educated *nikkei*, they do not need to take advantage of their heritage in order to obtain factory jobs in Japan. Instead, they can identify Japan as a place for vacation, or a distant place with a connection to them but not one that is as tangible to them as perhaps it would be for their father.

For Soeda, there are still vestiges of Japanese culture in his life. For example, he typically eats a Peruvian lunch but dinner usually consists of Japanese food. Since his return to Peru, he has met with people with similar experiences and they formed a social group, which also helps him maintain his identity as a person of Japanese descent. Soeda is retired now, but he spends his time as a volunteer in the Asociación Peruano-Japones [Japanese Peruvian Association] (APJ) library. He enjoys working there because it is easier for him to read in Japanese than in Spanish and there he can be among many books in Japanese. He also participates in an association composed of

people from the Fukushima prefecture in Japan. He used to help in Japanese classes but now does not because few people read in the language and the majority of people learning Japanese are Peruvians who want to move to Japan for work. Though he continues to maintain his *nikkei* identity through the means that have worked for decades, the experiences of his children show that there are different paths that contemporary *nikkei* take and that in order to keep up with these, the community will have to reassess their values and their meanings of what it means to be *nikkei*.

The current *nikkei* generations are without a doubt in need of new and creative ways to participate in the community that means so much to them, yet has left them wanting more in some circumstances. Younger *nikkei* are branching out of the community while holding close to parts that are still relevant and important to them. Though some find their needs met through family involvement and active participation in institutions, others find their lives lacking in *nikkei* influence. It is for this reason that the Internet has become a new place for participation in contemporary *nikkei* culture. Virtual spaces like *hi5* supplement offline involvement, but also create safe atmosphere for those who have not been able to participate in the past. The relatively low cost and ease of Internet use has allowed many to recover and assert their *nikkei* identities in non-traditional ways. With continued widespread use of virtual spaces, perhaps the older generations will find that *nikkei* pride will not diminish with the years, but will grow in unusual places

and in ways that they would not have imagined. Likewise, younger *nikkei* who never felt part of the discussion of their community may find that the Internet allows them to add their opinions and their views and thereby be more proactive in determining what being *nikkei* actually means to them.

Chapter Four: Web Ethnography and *Nikkei* Identity on *hi5*

hi5 is an international social networking site that allows users to create profiles, join groups, and communicate with friends via the Internet. It currently has over 50 million members worldwide, and continues to grow. For my cyber ethnography, I chose *hi5* over other social networking sites because I had been invited to join by my Peruvian friends and knew that it was the site of choice for many young Peruvians. I also did a quick search within the group category and saw that there were public groups created by and for *nikkei*. Once I decided to focus on *hi5* for my online ethnography, I created a profile to be able to fully participate in the community. By creating a profile, I became eligible for group participation and the sending and receiving of messages. Throughout the course of research I also found that people were more at ease when contacted by someone whose profile they could easily access. It allowed them to get a peek into my life in the same way that I had done with theirs and helped foster a mutual respect as members of this online community.

All participants I mention in this chapter were found because they were members of *nikkei*-identified groups. There were two main groups that I perused: one simply called *nikkei* and the other representing a *nikkei* organization in Lima. These two reflect both people that participate in *nikkei* activities offline and online, as well as those who simply identify as *nikkei* in

their Internet use. The quotes that I have selected to illustrate my points were pulled from email exchanges with my participants. After viewing each other's profiles, my participants and I entered into deep conversations where we sent many emails back and forth for months. Through these exchange I found that my participants could be very effective in communicating their ideas regarding identity and what it means to be *nikkei*.

Ultimately, my goal in writing this thesis was to examine the Internet-based factors that have affected the construction and negotiation of contemporary *nikkei* identity. Instead of coming to a straightforward answer, I found that the ways in which these factors influence the *nikkei* are many and varied. The Internet as a space for interaction and communication allows *nikkei* to both solidify their personal ideas regarding the community and the self without limiting the other. Solidarity as a group is achieved through the exploration of the individual. By means of this web ethnography, I was able to enter into a continuously fascinating space of identity creation and interpretation.

Entrance into *hi5*

Nikkei find many ways to participate within their communities. Between schools, institutions, sports, arts, family, and more, *nikkei* have many choices available to them if they want to be part of the group. In the Cyber

Anthropology chapter I talked about the Internet as a space for identity negotiation and how some people may choose to identify a certain way online that they might not necessarily explore in the offline world. When communicating with participants, I always asked how they became involved in *hi5* and what motivated them to join *nikkei*-identified groups. Similarly, I asked them whether they believed that their identity was apparent in their profiles and whether they had made definite decisions to do so or whether it just happened to come out in the process of creating their profiles. What I found is that *nikkei* adolescents and young adults are just like any other group that utilizes social networking sites. They join *hi5* because their friends were part of it first and then invited them, or because they wanted another way of being connected to their friends that exist in the offline world. Online space simply added another dimension to the means of interaction and created a forum for discussion between people who are geographically far apart.

Christian, a 22-year old male from Lima with whom I spoke, started using *hi5* when a *nikkei* friend invited him to join the network. He now uses it as a space for communication with friends who he can get together with offline, as well as to keep in touch with people he has not seen in a while due to physical distance or lost contact. Once on *hi5* he joined a *nikkei* group because he is interested in cooking and wanted to see if there were any food-related events where he could also meet people. He also said that the group has become useful when trying to organize events. By being part of it, he is

not only sharing yet another space with his friends, but making himself available to other *nikkei* who perhaps share his interests.

Dante, a 28-year-old male from Lima, also utilizes *hi5* to get in contact with *nikkei* that he used to know but now live in different areas. He attended La Victoria, a *nikkei* school, but now most of the people he knew back then are strangers though they've maintained some contact online through the use of instant messaging services. While Dante does actively use *hi5*, he has not made many friends through it. Instead, he tends to utilize other features, such as membership in public *nikkei* identified groups.

July, an 18-year-old female from Lima, also joined *hi5* at the urging of her friends. Word of mouth plays a large role in how participants became part of the social networking site. When they realized they are missing out on a popular mode of communication they make the decision to sign onto it. July said that outside of the *hi5* bubble no one understands it, but once they get on the inside it is easy to get the hang of how to use it. The majority of her *nikkei* friends are on *hi5* and she says that the *nikkei* community is well marked through groups and networks of friends.

Like Christian and Dante, Hiroshi, a 30-year-old male, mostly uses *hi5* to reconnect with friends from the past. He believes that sites like *hi5* are for people who want to connect with those who label themselves with the same or similar identifications. Curiously enough, he also states that *hi5* groups are not for the construction or strengthening of identity, though he later revised his

statement to reflect his own experiences and what he sees others doing around him in virtual space.

Family/Generations

For many participants, discussion of what it means to be *nikkei* began with talk of their familes. Before they could get to sharing information about themselves, they tended to feel it necessary to impart the details of how their grandparents and parents came to live in Peru. It became a logical place for beginning the conversation because I already have a fairly detailed understanding of the history of Japanese migration to Peru. By obtaining personal stories, I learned how various individuals experienced the immigration and settlement in Peru. It also prompted me to examine the consequences of the earlier generations' values and actions and how they have helped shape current conceptualization of *nikkei* identity.

Yuriko is a 15-year-old half non-*nikkei* Peruvian and half Japanese female participant. She told me that her parents met at church. For her, it was not until she began attending a *nikkei* church that she came to terms with her identity as being half Japanese as well as Peruvian. She said,

> Bueno de que soy *nikkei*, lo soy pero no he vivido en una cultura japonesa
> sino con la cultura peruana, pero últimamente me estoy familiarizando con
> la cultura japonesa ya que a la iglesia que voy es una iglesia peruano
> japonesa… Bueno ellos si creen que soy *nikkei* [Well about being *nikkei*, I
> am but I've never lived in Japanese culture but just with Peruvian culture,

but ultimately I am familiarizing myself with Japanese culture since the
church I go to is Peruvian-Japanese… Well, they believe that I'm *nikkei*].

Her paternal, Japanese side of the family lives in Japan so she did not

grow up with constant contact with Japanese culture. It was through attending

this *nikkei* church that she realized that other *nikkei* considered her to be part

of their group. This helped form her view of *nikkei* identity because now she

believes that being *nikkei* means being of both Japanese and Latino descent.

What she did not specify was what exactly she meant by descent. When used

by older participants who wrote with more detail, descent tended to refer to

blood and lineage. However, within the framework of my exchange with

Yuriko, it appears that her use of the word descent refers to what the others

might have called culture. As my youngest participant, Yuriko's exploration

of identity was of interest to me because unlike the others, she was still very

much in the process of figuring out her own personal definition and how it fit

in with what she saw around her. She had recently started learning about

Japanese culture in her church and though the Peruvian church she had

attended before was basically the same in religious teaching, the new *nikkei*

church provided not just a religious education but a cultural one as well.

Generation did not come up in Yuriko's discussion of her family and

involvement in *nikkei* community because it was fairly new to her and she did

not have the extensive family network within the country to depend on for

information. Participants like Dante took the time to carefully explain their

generational identification and how it related to that of their parents and grandparents. For example, Dante's mother was born in Japan but came to Peru as a child, so is *nacionalizada*[21]. His father was born in Peru and is *nisei*. Therefore, Dante identifies as *sansei* and says that generation is determined by the father. I found this categorization of generation to be interesting so I asked him to explain it further. He replied that he thought generation was paternally determined because it was established by Japanese cultural norms, which have a *machista*[22] past.

When explaining the generational differences, Dante speaks of his *obaachan*, or grandmother, who always remembers Japanese holidays. Though his family continues to celebrate Japanese holidays, he sees that the younger generations go through the motions without fully understanding what the holidays mean or how they are significant to Japanese culture. He wrote,

> Mi mamá quiere que yo lleve *butsudan*[23] por ser el mayor pero no estoy tan seguro de ello. Yo soy católico y lo del *butsudan* es algo que tiene que ver con el budismo. Mis padres también son católicos así que no le veo razón alguna para tenerlo [My mother wants me to have an *butsudan* because I am the eldest but I'm not so sure about it. I'm Catholic and the thing about the *butsudan* is that it has to do with Buddhism. My parents are also Catholics and so I don't see any reason to have one].

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[21] When asked, Dante said that he meant *nacionalizada* to signify that his mother took on Peruvian nationality and has the rights of a Peruvian citizen, but also maintains her Japanese nationality by origin. Therefore, she has a dual nationality.

[22] Dante's use of the Spanish word *machista* is interesting here because he uses it to describe Japanese culture. His language demonstrates the various ways in which *nikkei* interchange Japanese and Spanish language and cultural descriptions.

[23] *Butsudan* is the Japanese word for cabinet-like shrines typically found in Japanese homes.

Not only does this demonstrate generational differences, but also the extent of integration into Peruvian society that has occurred. Though *nikkei*, Dante identifies more with Catholicism than the spiritual practices handed down from his Japanese ancestors. When asked about whether he thought the subject of the *butsudan* was more religious or cultural, he replied,

> Sobre lo del *butsudan*, pues me parece que es algo religioso y cultural pero en realidad es muy confuso y hasta trabajoso llevar tradiciones de dos religiones [About the *butsudan,* well it seems to me that it's something religious and cultural but in reality it's really confusing and even laborious carrying on two religions].

This is just one of the many examples that will emerge in the differences between generations of *nikkei*.

Hiroshi has a particularly interesting and complicated family history because his father, a Japanese, married three times in his lifetime. His first marriage was to a Japanese woman and they had five children. He then married a *nikkei* woman and had three more children. Finally, he married Hiroshi's mother, a non-*nikkei* Peruvian, and had yet three more children. Altogether his father had eleven children, so Hiroshi has many half-brothers and sisters in addition to his two siblings who share the same mother. His oldest brother is now about 60 years old and his youngest sister is eight. In terms of nationality, the first two brothers from his father's first marriage are of Japanese nationality while the last two siblings are American because his mother ended up moving to the US. Within just one family there is such a

huge variety of ancestry, race/ethnicity, history, and culture. Not all of his siblings identify in the same way, whether it is a national identification or a cultural one. Hiroshi's story further complicates the nature of identity as it relates to a family as a whole.

One of my participants, Mori, a 32-year-old male, gave me a detailed description of the generational characteristics. He said the *issei* had to stick together for protection due to language difficulties and their unfamiliarity with Peru. Then the *nissei* learned to grow together and form diverse groups of interests but this did not necessarily transmit the *nikkei* identity. *Sansei* are mostly integrated into Peruvian society and some have lost interest in *nikkei* groupings. Overall, Mori believes that *nikkei* identity and culture run the risk of fading away with the third and fourth generations.

Though Mori's concerns prove valid in the opinions of many young *nikkei*, there are still many others who have learned from their grandparents and parents. Much of what Andy, a 27-year-old male participant, knows about Japanese culture comes from his grandparents. His grandfather was from Okinawa and passed away when his mother was just ten years old, so he says there was not much cultural transference coming from him. However, his grandmother who was Peruvian by birth and who was very *acriollada*[24] despite the fact that her siblings were born in Japan and she spoke perfect Japanese, helped teach him about Japanese culture. She preferred cooking

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[24] *Acriollada* means creolized in Spanish, or adapted to Latin-American culture.

Peruvian food but when praying for his grandfather and serving him food

offerings on the *butsudan*, it was always in Japanese and with Japanese food.

Knowledge of things Japanese seeped into his family despite his

grandmother's preference for all things Peruvian. Andy's mother and his aunts

and uncles only speak Spanish, but they know certain Japanese words like

gohan[25], *ohashi*[26], and *okane*[27]. In his own house, his mother never used

Japanese words so he knew no Japanese except what he heard in the

interactions at his grandmother's house. Andy thinks that many *nikkei* of his

age and generation are like him in that they know little of Japanese culture.

However, he does not take into account the many organizations and

associations that offer language classes, not to mention Japanese cultural arts.

There are indeed ways for younger *nikkei* to become involved and learn more

about their heritage but whether they decide to do so or not lies with the

individual. Though some are influenced by their families and choose to

continue in the ways of the past, still others find that their views stray from the

norm that has been presented by older generations of *nikkei*.

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[25] *Gohan* literally means rice in Japanese, but is often used to refer to meals as a whole.
[26] *Ohashi* is Japanese for chopsticks.
[27] *Okane* means money in Japanese.

Endogamy in the Current Generation of *Nikkei*

High rates of endogamy have characterized the *nikkei* community in the past, but current generations are adding their voices to the constant conversation regarding the maintenance of *nikkei* values within families. As I have shown through the stories of various participants, the level to which each *nikkei* takes part in Japanese customs and practices depends heavily on their family life. This brings up the question of what it means to have two parents of Japanese descent and whether experiences are different for those who are biracial/biethnic and bicultural. Similarly, it is interesting to note the ways in which my participants spoke of these often-taboo subjects. The online form of communication allowed some to speak more freely and to express ideas that perhaps were contrary to what they were told growing up or what their parents or grandparents passed down.

The term *ainoko* came up in my original conversations with Doris Moromisato as a derogatory way of referring to biracial *nikkei*. Hiroshi confirmed that it is a racist term. Now they prefer to use words like *hafu*, which is the way a Japanese might pronounce "half." He cited many *hafu* celebrities in Japan as a way of explaining the use of the word and how it is not as stigmatized like *ainoko* has been in the past. This is interesting because *hafu* is still considered to be somewhat degrading in Japanese, yet the *nikkei* feel that it is more appropriate than *ainoko*. Dante acknowledged the fact that

though he has not experienced it firsthand, he can understand how the situations of people labeled as *ainoko* might be difficult, particularly because they are part of two cultures as well as two races. He tries not to be prejudiced towards them though his parents have always spoken negatively about *ainoko*. I appreciated his honestly in explaining the context of his opinion, for I am someone that would be considered an *ainoko* in Peru. His candid, but considerate explanations reflect some of the complicated situations that can arise through online communication. It is yet another example of how the information that a person chooses to divulge or hide can affect the outcome of the discussion. In our case, the explanation I provided about my racial/ethnic background allowed for us to enter into a difficult topic with mutual respect and acknowledgement of different ideas. Dante's thoughts on *ainoko* could have shifted as we conversed. This is another way in which online interaction permits an exploration not just of the self, but of new ideas and interpretations of the information every person receives as they grow up. To him, being part of two races/ethnicities seemed to complicate matters further than for a *nikkei* whose parents are both of Japanese descent.

In terms of dating and marriage, my participants had a variety of experiences and thoughts. Some had never thought about the issue or discussed it with their parents, while others were conscious of the fact that their families would prefer for them to date Japanese or *nikkei*. Dante wrote,

Sobre el perfil de mi pareja… a mis padres les gustaría que tenga pareja *nikkei* o japonesa, en ellos está esa tonta idea de "preservar la sangre," es decir, mantener la ascendencia japonesa, sin mezclar. Y eso conlleva a pensar lo tonto que es esto porque si uno se pone a pensar, los *nikkei* no son japonesas, si van a Japón son discriminados. No veo el motivo por el cual mantener la raza, no lo veo [About the profile of my partner… my parents would like me to have a *nikkei* or Japanese partner because they have this silly idea of "preserving the blood," which is to say, maintaining Japanese ancestry without mixing. And this entails thinking about how silly it is because if one stops to think about it, the *nikkei* are not Japanese; if they go to Japan they're discriminated against. I don't see the reason for maintaining the race. I just don't see it].

For someone who is very intent on separating culture from race/ethnicity, Dante demonstrated in this statement that his understanding of his family's wishes was that the biological was more important than the cultural. He also attributed his parents' attitudes towards their previous experiences with Peruvians and the sense of betrayal they feel by the general Peruvian population. Dante admits that not all families are like this and he has seen couples that are *nikkei* and non-*nikkei* Peruvian who have no problems. However, he personally thought that *nikkei* and Peruvian customs often clashed, so if he married a non-*nikkei* Peruvian he would have to take that into account. His general attitude was that if he married a Peruvian, he would think about how he was marrying her, not her family and all of their own customs and beliefs, but she would definitely have to grow accustomed to his family while he gave hers a chance as well. If he ever has children, he says that he would like them to experience something of Japanese culture whether it is the language, martial arts, or something else related to Japan. Overall, Dante is influenced by his parents who prefer not to have close Peruvian friends. While

he notes the fact that some intercultural couples have reached a balance, he also says that in terms of people he knows well, intercultural relationships usually end up in disaster.

In July's instance, character has meant more to her family than race/ethnicity or culture. She considers herself very open to others and says her mother thinks like her but that her father sometimes has an air of superiority and dominance, but this is probably due to the fact that he wants to protect her. Her grandmother has said before that whomever she chooses to spend her life with should be correct, or someone with proper manners and behaviors, but race/ethnicity does not matter. July confided in me that she was glad about the lack of pressure on her because she can live more harmoniously this way. Yet since she has spent most of her life among *nikkei* and about 60% of her friends are *nikkei*, chances are good that she will date *nikkei* as well.

As I have shown in Hiroshi's case, the complicated nature of his family contributes to his own perspective about relationships. Since his father was married to Japanese, *nikkei*, and non-*nikkei* Peruvian women, he feels it would be hypocritical of his family to pressure him one way or another. He says that perhaps for his older siblings from his father's first and second marriages there might have been pressure to marry other Japanese or *nikkei*, but since his Japanese father eventually fell in love with a Peruvian woman, he does not believe that there is an expectation for him to marry into the *nikkei* community. In addition to these assumptions, it is interesting to point out that

Hiroshi has indeed already been married once. His marriage to a Japanese woman ended in divorce and there is no doubt that discrimination added large amounts of stress to their union.

I have used the example of endogamy to discuss the variety of viewpoints that are presented from older and contemporary generations of *nikkei*. Though *nikkei* adolescents and young adults are able to understand the perspectives of their families, their experiences seem to suggest that their own personal beliefs have shifted with the times. Participation on *hi5* allows for *nikkei* to discuss these issues without offending their elders, or other areas of the offline world where these ideas persist. It is possible that divergences in these types of beliefs contribute to the disappointment that current generations feel regarding the traditional offline *nikkei* institutions. Yet again, this helps to prove that younger *nikkei* are in need of a new type of space where they can express themselves away from the eyes of their elders and have important discussions among each other about how they see *nikkei* issues to be relevant to their own lives.

Origin or Ethnicity: Issues of Literal and Sociocultural Translation

One of the first aspects of profiles I noticed was whether users answered the preset questions that *hi5* offers during the creation of profiles. The usual questions include age, sex, hometown, various likes and dislikes,

occupation, and race/ethnicity. I had created my own profile under the English

language, so when I was offered these questions, it showed up as "Ethnicity."

Taking this for granted, I would ask my participants how they defined

ethnicity and how they came to selecting their own from the drop-down menu

that *hi5* offers. However, as my questioning continued I realized that my

participants were answering in very different ways and referring to much

more than just ethnicity. Words like blood, descent, and origin continued to

appear. Finally, a participant who became frustrated with my continued use of

the word "ethnicity" sent me a freeze-framed picture of what he saw when

creating his Spanish language profile:

It was then that it finally became clear that *hi5* had translated "ethnicity" into "origin" for their Spanish-speaking users, and that this had very clear consequences in the kind of questioning I was attempting at the time. Both words are heavily loaded in connotations and when situated within the context of young *nikkei*, they become exceedingly complicated in pinning down a definition or understanding.

In order to gain a general idea of how people were choosing to identify themselves, I surveyed 110 profiles of people in two *nikkei* groups. Out of the 110, 79 were from people who still continue to live in Peru. The significance of separating out *nikkei* who live in Peru from *nikkei* who have migrated to other places lies in the different takes they may have on what it means to be *nikkei*. By differentiating between the two I hoped to shed light on whatever differences or similarities may exist in their concepts of identity. Out of these 79, the majority (48) chose to leave that field of their profile blank. Of those who did select one of the choices given by the drop-down menu, 13 selected "Japanese", 10 decided on "Latino/Latin American", and 7 put down "Other". Though I do not suggest any conclusions from these numbers, I think that they help demonstrate how limited, or even perhaps how broad these categories are depending on the individual's perspective. It becomes clear that oftentimes it is easier to simply ignore the question altogether and move on to parts that seem more relevant or concrete to identity, such as listing favorite bands or uploading photos from summer vacation.

It becomes clear that *nikkei* have a variety of ways in which to describe or not describe their racial/ethnic identities given the options pre-selected for them. In order to understand why people choose one over the other, I questioned my participants specifically regarding what they put on their profiles. The answers I received were many and varied.

Dante listed himself as "Japanese" because he said it asked for his origin and he believes that this referred to ethnicity. When *hi5* asks for user origin, he understood that to explicitly mean ethnicity, and his idea of ethnicity is what one looks like on the outside instead of what one might feel like on the inside. When forms ask him for his ethnicity, he always puts down Asian, though he finds this problematic because it does not distinguish between Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, or any other national identification. When questioned further he said,

> Pero aquellos *nikkei* que dicen ser latinos sin tener en su ascendencia a alguien de raza hispana pues están equivocados a mi entender. A no ser que se consideren latinoamericanos por nacer y vivir en Latinoamérica que eso si me parece correcto, con eso uno se refiere a que es parte de la cultura hispana. Pero si no tienen nada de hispanos en lo racial no me parece correcto que se autodenominen latinos. Es como decir que un rottweiler es de raza doberman porque se crió rodeado de dobermans. Un rottweiler es un rottweiler siempre. Una cosa es de ser parte de una cultura y otra cosa es ser parte de una etnia porque es algo que no se puede elegir, nacemos con eso [But those *nikkei* that say they're Latinos without having any Hispanic ancestry at all are wrong in my understanding. Unless they consider Latin Americans as people who are born and live in Latin America, in which case that seems correct, but with this they refer to being part of the Hispanic culture. But if they aren't racially Hispanic then it doesn't seem right to me for them to call themselves Latinos. It's like saying a Rottweiler is the same as a Doberman because it was raised surrounded by Dobermans. A Rottweiler is always a Rottweiler. One thing is to be part of a culture and the other is to be part of an ethnicity because it's something that you can't choose but are born with].

On a similar note, he believes that ethnicity and race refer to the same concept. He thinks *hi5* is discriminating because for someone who is part of more than one race/ethnicity, they only offer the option of "Other". Many Internet sites are set up in this way even though people should be able to enter their information on their own terms instead of having to select from an already established list. Overall, he thinks *hi5* should offer other categories for cultural groups, though he does not give examples of what he would like to see as an alternative.

July listed herself as "Latino/Latin American" unlike Dante. When speaking about the *nikkei* community as a whole, she focuses on how closed they appear and separates herself from that image by emphasizing how open she is and how she is not as strict about identity categorizations as some *nikkei* are. Though she considers herself to be an active member of the community, she also thinks that her personal experiences have made her a more amicable member of the community than others who also relate to the identity of *nikkei*. Franklin, a 22-year-old male from Lima, also listed himself as "Latino/Latin American" for several reasons. For one, his native language is Spanish. He says he is Peruvian by birth and by heart. What is different about his situation though, is that his father's side of the family is non-*nikkei* Peruvian. In this sense, he has a different perspective on what it means to be *nikkei* and how it should be defined.

Though the participants I have mentioned so far have explicit reasons that they are conscious of for calling themselves *nikkei*, not all people I have communicated with feel this way. Some, such as Yuriko have not considered the various implications of listing ethnicity or origin. When questioned, she simply stated that she chose "Japanese" from the options because it was the first categorization that entered her mind even though she also considers herself Latina. In fact, she almost always puts down Latina when given the option. Her case is particularly interesting because her Japanese connection is through her father, who is half Peruvian and half Japanese. Therefore, as compared to the other participants, she has what Dante might consider the least amount of Japanese blood, or *raza japonesa*. Even so, Yuriko instinctively chose Japanese as her origin. Eduardo, a 21-year-old male from Lima, also listed "Japanese" as his origin because he was unsure about what *hi5*'s intention was by asking for his origin. He figured that the translation of origin was ethnicity and since he is a Japanese descendent that was what he should choose. However, he was not altogether certain whether ethnicity was the same as race, so in the end he just picked one based on his first instinct.

Racism and Discrimination

The majority of my *nikkei* participants brought up discrimination based on race/ethnicity and culture during the course of our conversations. I

found that most had these types of experiences in common and shared feelings

of resentment and frustration. They each had their own theories as to why this

occurred and likewise, some had put much thought into the root of

discrimination against *nikkei*, whether it is economic or political. Subtopics

that appeared numerous times include the use of the word *chino*, the legacy of

Alberto Fujimori's presidency, and economic jealousy. Though the reasons

for racism and discrimination emerge from a variety of sources, it became

clear to me that my *nikkei* participants felt more strongly about some more

than others, and that racism and discrimination were elements that also helped

shape their identities and how they chose to express themselves.

    Chino technically means Chinese, but in Latin American it is often

used to refer to all peoples of Asian descent, or even people of non-Asian

descent who have Asian characteristics. Depending on the person using it and

the context of its usage, *chino* can be seen as an affectionate nickname rather

than a racist insult. It is not uncommon in Latin America to use these types of

pet names for people, which can often seem offensive to those who are

unfamiliar with it. For instance, in Latin American someone might try to get

another person's attention by yelling, "Oye, gordo," which some people might

interpret as, "Hey fatty!" Particularly in the North American and very much

politically correct atmosphere I come from, this would be seen as against

social norms and culturally unacceptable. However, in the Latin American

context it happens often and is not seen as an affront.

With that said, there are still people who do use *chino* as a way of insulting another person. For some of my participants this was a huge source of annoyance, particularly for those with a very solid sense of *nikkei* identity. Dante explicitly states in his *hi5* profile that he hates being called *chino* because that is not how he identifies. He writes, "Si no saben diferenciar, pregunten el nombre!" [If you don't know the difference, ask for the name!]. This refers to situations where Peruvians do not differentiate between people of different Asian descents. In this case he takes *chino* to quite literally mean Chinese instead of a general reference to Asians. As a proud *nikkei*, he wants to be acknowledged as someone of Japanese descent, so he suggests that if Peruvians cannot tell the difference, they should ask for the person's last name, which will help to classify them as Japanese, Chinese, or other Asian background. What Dante does not address in that comment is whether Peruvians of non-Asian descent would recognize the difference between Japanese and Chinese surnames or just assume that they sound foreign and alike. What he did tell me is that he put that in his *hi5* profile because both people he knows and do not know call him *chino* and writing that was a way of letting them know that if they want to be friendly with him they should not call him that.

On the whole, Dante says he has felt "existential doubt" regarding the generalized use of *chino* for all Asians or people with narrower eyes and single eyelids. He explains how if he were Peruvian and someone was trying

to get his attention on the street, they would shout, "*Joven*[28]," but because he

looks Asian, people yell for *chino* instead. Although he considers himself to

be Peruvian, people differentiate him from them by calling him *chino*, which

in turn makes him feel like he is a foreigner and is not part of their society.

Dante also makes the crucial connection between the use of the word

chino and the presidency of Fujimori. During his campaign, Fujimori ran as

the friendly *chino* to suggest familiarity. There was even a famous dance

called, "El baile del *chino*," which Dante considers to be an affront to the

nikkei community. Knowing full well that *chino* had negative connotations for

many *nikkei*, Fujimori capitalized on the term and created a catchy campaign

around it. He told me,

> Y volviendo al tema de "*chino*," estoy seguro que Fujimori lo uso porque es de todos conocido que esa es la costumbre aquí, cualquiera que se toma confianza con alguien de raza asiática lo llama "*chino*" muy aparte si a este le guste que le llamen así. Fujimori se hizo llamar *chino* en su campaña porque sabía bien que eso lo hacía más cercano al pueblo [And returning to the topic of *chino*, I'm sure that Fujimori used it because everyone knows it's a custom here. Anyone who gains trust from an Asian calls him *chino*, but this is apart from the other usage if the Asian is okay with being called that. Fujimori wanted to be called *chino* in his campaign because he knew well that this would make him more approachable to the public].

Alvarito also connects the racism he has encountered with Fujimori's

rocky presidency. He says that when people look at him strangely, it is

probably because he shares physical characteristics with the former president.

There have been times where in the streets he will encounter people who will

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[28] *Joven* refers to a young person or adolescent.

ask him, "Are you Fujimori's son?" and say, "Give me back my money!"

Though there are some people who continue to look up to Fujimori, Alvarito

found that those who were bitter about the years of Fujimori's dictatorship

found easy scapegoats in the *nikkei* community.

Hiroshi's case is completely different from my other participants

because he looked at my questions about racism and discrimination from the

perspective of someone who not only is *nikkei* in Peru, but someone who has

also been *nikkei* in Japan. Though at first he said that he had never

experienced racism at the hands of the Japanese, it became apparent later that

discrimination was a huge part of his experience while living in Japan. He

initially eased into his story by explaining how he hated being called *gaijin*[29]

because he considers it to be insulting since he has Japanese blood. Then he

gave a short anecdote about how when he first met his ex-father-in-law, the

man was expecting a more European or Hispanic face, but was pleasantly

surprised when he found that Hiroshi had Asian features. Hiroshi found that

there was some expectation for *nikkei* to look more Hispanic due to their

nationality.

It was only after we exchanged several more emails that Hiroshi

opened up fully to me with his story. He always provided me with detailed

explanations and responses to my questions, but after we established a

comfortable rapport he took it upon himself to give me an extremely

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[29] *Gaijin* means foreigner in Japanese.

comprehensive look into his life, which gave me invaluable insight into the experience of *nikkei* who choose to spend some time working in Japan, their supposed homeland.

Hiroshi began his work in Japan with Sony, assembling video cameras and personal computers. It was there that he met the woman who would later become his wife. The Sony factory complex not only had the actual technical plants, but also restaurants, a gym, parks, cafeterias, sports fields, and more. He typically ate lunch in one of the cafeterias within the complex and one day a Japanese woman asked if she could share his table because she was interested in learning Spanish. They became friends and eventually their friendship grew into a relationship. As this was happening, the other workers, both Japanese and foreign, began to feel uncomfortable with the romance between them. Hiroshi and his girlfriend were the first Japanese and foreign worker couple at Sony, so the other factory workers were uneasy about their relationship. Other *nikkei* workers there would tell him, "She will never love you. The Japanese never marry foreigners," and at the same time the Japanese workers were telling his girlfriend, "He's a foreigner and will return to his country where he might already have a wife and kids! He's only using you for the moment." Though he says that the discrimination and challenges only served to strengthen their relationship, it is difficult to imagine that they emerged unscathed from these remarks. As the first intercultural couple of their sort, Hiroshi and his girlfriend were paving new ground and facing

challenges that other couples at the factory had never dealt with before.

Eventually, the Sony officials prohibited them from walking together and

holding hands in order to satisfy those who were opposed to their relationship.

Hiroshi says that he did not have so much of a problem with the prohibition

than with the fact that the rest of the foreign workers were allowed to walk

around with their partners while holding hands and even hugging, yet the

simple fact that he was *nikkei* and she was Japanese made their actions all the

more scandalous. This was the last straw for the couple and they spent time

moving from various regions and factories. They finally made a home near a

Suzuki motorcycle factory where he worked and a Panasonic factory where

she found a job. All the stresses of the moving around led them to argue often

and this led to their separation. Though they both realized it was the right

decision, Hiroshi said that he was terribly lonely and missed her constantly.

During this period a Japanese friend of his told him to move back and work

for Sony again, and he decided to move back to that city but to work for

Toyota where he welded car parts. Only five months later he switched jobs

again and began work at Sony once more where he ran into his ex-girlfriend at

the same table in the same cafeteria where they had originally met, but this

time it was he who asked if he could join her. A happy reunion ensued and

they got married. When his wife was six months pregnant, they decided to

travel to New York where Hiroshi's mother and younger siblings lived and so

that they could have their child in the US. They eventually moved to the US,

but the marriage did not work out and they are now divorced. Despite the fact that Hiroshi misses his son greatly, he has allowed his ex-wife to raise their child in Japan. He hopes that some day his son will want to get to know him but at the same time realizes that the lack of his presence during his son's childhood will probably harm his chances of forming a strong relationship with him in the future.

Hiroshi's story is both powerful and informative about the kinds of challenges *nikkei* face even outside Peru. Though he has the Asian facial features that mark him as someone of Japanese descent, he was still seen as an outsider within Japanese society. The discrimination there was because he was too foreign and too Latino. *Nikkei* workers face this type of discrimination in their workplaces despite efforts to blend in with the rest, yet their lack of fluency in Japanese, strange accents, and different customs place them in a separate category than Japanese who never migrated abroad.

<center>*Nikkei* Identity: Responses to What Identity Means</center>

It becomes clear in *hi5*'s drop-down menu options that ethnicity and origin become words without strict definition. In response to these words, others such as race, blood, lineage, descent, and many more appear. Along these lines, my participants proved that there were many factors that went into identity construction. In order to gain a better understanding of contemporary

nikkei identity, I asked my participants what being *nikkei* meant to them and what were some defining characteristics of being one. I invited them to share anecdotes about how they came to the realization that they were *nikkei* and what helped them come to their conclusions. My generalized questioning allowed for many types of responses, and the following is what I obtained from adolescent and young adult *nikkei*.

July, who had listed herself as "Latino/Latin American", referred to the image of *nikkei* in the Peruvian public sphere in order to explain what she felt being *nikkei* meant. She understood the image to be a very integral element of being part of the community. In her view, the *nikkei* are closed precisely because of their identities; they feel more comfortable with people of similar ancestry. Therefore the circles of friends and family end up being exclusively *nikkei*. Though she respects this, she does not necessarily agree. Instead of conforming to this image, she described being *nikkei* as,

> Bueno, la identidad *nikkei* lo tomo yo viéndolo como se desarrolla aquí, el hecho de venir de una descendencia, identificarnos con la cultura y seguirla, tomando en cuenta con las buenas costumbres que nuestras padres y abuelos nos dejaron [Well, I look at *nikkei* identity in the way it develops here, like the fact of coming from descendents, identifying with and following the culture, and taking into account the good customs that our parents and grandparents left us].

Instead of calling the community closed, she prefers to see the admirable trait of solidarity. Though exclusivity and solidarity could be considered as flip sides of the same coin, July understands solidarity to be a

positive trait and one that affirms a shared identity by what people have in common. Exclusivity would be to take that a step beyond and distinguish between those who share commonalities and those who do not. July's outlook suggests that it is important to reaffirm what is shared among the community, but there are boundaries that exist and once those are broken, the community steps into dangerous territory that leads them to be viewed as exclusive. Much of what she describes refers to the simple reality of growing up amongst *nikkei* and people who choose to follow aspects of Japanese culture. She does not complicate matters by going into great detail. If someone is raised in the way she describes, then she believes that it is obvious that the person would develop a *nikkei* identity.

Solidarity and group image come up in Dante's discussion of *nikkei* identity as well. Unlike non-*nikkei* Peruvians, he sees *nikkei* as having distinct customs and attitudes that put them in conflict with the general Peruvian public. Essentially though, Dante asserts that in terms of blood he is Japanese, his culture is *nikkei*, and his nationality is Peruvian. *Nikkei* culture was never specifically defined in our discussions, but I take it to mean a particular mixture of Japanese and Peruvian experienced history and a balance between Japanese and Peruvian practices and customs. He has never put much thought into what characterizes *nikkei* besides their appearances and descent, though without even realizing it he had given me countless details about his life that many would say point directly as his identity as a *nikkei*. Since he had never

been questioned outright about what it means to be *nikkei*, he was forced to come up with his personal meaning of the term. In his case, family history and Japanese custom played a large role in what he considered to be distinctly *nikkei*.

Many *nikkei* with whom I spoke mentioned the great pride they felt in knowing and partaking two cultures simultaneously. They felt it was a privilege to be part of two such fascinating cultures. Shizu, a 15-year-old female from Lima, who had lived in Japan for some time as well said that she did not feel different from the Japanese while she was there, but still considered herself as part of the *nikkei* community. Despite being brought up in Japan and speaking mostly Japanese, she refused to forget her Peruvian side and highlighted the benefits to being part of both Japanese and Peruvian culture. Hiroshi also stressed the part about being part of two cultures, but in addition to that he said that the two cultures become one when you are *nikkei* to create a *nikkei* culture. At the same time, he allows that people might consider him half and half, but he would label himself as 100% Peruvian anyway. There was a large contrast between Hiroshi's definition of being *nikkei* and what Dante came up with as his reply to the question. Instead of focusing on blood and lineage, Hiroshi strongly believes that identifying oneself as *nikkei* means one must feel *nikkei*. When questioned further, he said that there are people who have no Japanese blood but feel *nikkei* because they grew up with the culture among Japanese families. He was the only

participant I encountered who had a story like this. It turned out that Hiroshi

had a childhood friend who was non-*nikkei* Peruvian but had been adopted by

nikkei parents. This friend was so much like him that he began to believe that

he was *nikkei* despite the fact that the friend did not have any typically Asian

physical characteristics. What surprised him most about his friend was that his

demeanor was straight out of 1930s Japan but disguised as a contemporary

Latin American. It is through this personal experience with a friend that

Hiroshi shaped his own identity as a *nikkei*. Now he says that it is not enough

to merely have Japanese blood. When it comes to identifying what it means to

feel *nikkei*, Hiroshi separates between descendents and *nikkei*. Descendents

only have the blood whereas *nikkei* have the culture. He personally feels

nikkei because he practices the customs and has lived with Japanese culture

since he was young. There is also importance placed on self-identification and

acknowledgement of the self in being a *nikkei*. As he says, "A *nikkei* isn't

nikkei unless he knows he's *nikkei*."

Mori had a similar definition. He says,

> Identidad me parece que es la idea y el sentimiento que tiene cada uno de
> ser alguien. Asimismo, identidad *nikkei* creo que es la idea y el sentimiento
> que tenemos algunas personas de ser parte de la mezcla de dos culturas:
> nuestro país de origen y el Japón. Esta idea y sentimiento nos obliga a
> recoger lo mejor que tienen las dos culturas para ser mejores y crear una
> mejor sociedad. Creo que la identidad *nikkei* existe, pero es malentendida
> por muchas personas. Muchos piensan que identidad *nikkei* significa crear
> grupos cerrados y de elite. Esto hace que algunas personas formen parte de
> estos grupos cerrados, y que otras personas rechacen estos grupos cerrados
> [It appears to me that identity is the idea and feeling that each person has of
> being someone. Also I think *nikkei* identity is the idea and feeling that we
> have that some people are part of a mix of two cultures: our country of

origin and Japan. This idea and feeling obligates us to gather the best that the two cultures have to be better and to create a better society. I think that *nikkei* identity exists, but many people misunderstand it. Many think that *nikkei* identity means creating closed elite groups. This makes it so that some people form a part of these closed groups and the others reject them].

Mori's general opinion reflects some of the younger generation perspectives that perhaps being so closed off is not healthy or acceptable anymore. In the previous chapter I discussed the disillusionment that many later generation *nikkei* feel regarding the community as a whole. Mori's sentiment describes the need for new spaces that are not about creating an exclusive elite group, but spaces where people can participate at the level they feel comfortable and appropriate for themselves. Thus involvement online does not necessarily negate participation offline. It merely offers another way in which *nikkei* can construct and negotiate their identities.

How Do Online *Nikkei* Participate in the *Nikkei* Community Offline?

Online identities do not always stand on their own in virtual space, but are complementary to offline identities that exist in what some might consider the real world. This holds true for my *nikkei* participants. Though not all participated in *nikkei* community activities and organizations, many were influenced by them and surprising amounts are active participants in both offline and online ways of being *nikkei*. For example, Yuriko had come face to face with her *nikkei* identity when she and her mother started attending a

nikkei church, but she supplemented what she learned from church with what she learned from *hi5 nikkei* groups. Many of my other participants helped me become aware of the variety of ways they were exposed to what it means to be *nikkei* besides through the family and online.

Two of my participants, Dante and Hiroshi, attended *nikkei* schools as children and adolescents. Both attended *La Victoria* where they came into contact daily with other *nikkei* children. At the time when Dante attended this school, most of the students and teachers were *nikkei*. It was a different type of school because Japanese language was worked into the curriculum and they also learned Japanese songs including the national anthem. *La Victoria* was also host to events such as the *undokai*. For Dante, contact with fellow students was lost after graduation but through *hi5* he discovered that old friends had created groups in order to reconnect with old classmates. In this way his online identity reaffirmed his connection with *nikkei* in the past of his offline life. Hiroshi generally spoke of how much he enjoyed being at a *nikkei* school growing up because he felt that people were like him and understood him better there. He did not encounter discrimination at school. His memories are pure and positive, and he believes this helped him to maintain his *nikkei* identity as he grew older. Unfortunately, the area where *La Victoria* stands is now considered a dangerous neighborhood and as the Peruvian school system becomes increasingly better and *nikkei* feel there is less reason to send their children to *nikkei* schools, places like *La Victoria* grow obsolete. *Nikkei*

schools used to be considered better than regular public schools in Peru, but now even private schools are becoming more affordable for the general public. Dante explained that the main difference between *La Victoria* and non-*nikkei* schools was that they taught language and celebrated Japanese events. As the demand for this lessens with each generation, he questions whether *nikkei* schools will continue to exist or disappear with other formally significant traits of the *nikkei* community.

Luckily, *nikkei* schools are not the only locations for participation in the community. Lima is home to many large organizations that serve the *nikkei* population. For instance, there is the *Asociación Estadio la Unión* (AELU), considered to be the *nikkei* institution for sports. Alvarito explained to me that the AELU has a stadium and facilities for *nikkei* athletes, as well as for the general *nikkei* population. He plays baseball and has been able to travel around Peru with his AELU team. Parents often drop off their children there for an afternoon of athletic play because they know that it is a safe place and that their children will be in the company of other *nikkei*, thereby creating crucial friendships and connections with their own kind. In particular, Alvarito enjoys the safe, secure atmosphere that the AELU provides compared to the outside where there are robberies and it is often unsafe to play. Besides the stadium, the AELU contains a cafeteria, pools, restaurants, a gym with equipment, and more. *Nikkei* also have the opportunity to join in on various social activities. Another participant, Franklin, recently attended an AELU

conference with young *nikkei* from Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and other

towns around Peru to discuss integration and social issues. He went as an

exchange in the *Matsuri Daiko Peru*[30] delegation. With this delegation,

Franklin was able to exchange ideas and make friends with other *nikkei* from

around Latin America. Together they played games and did community

service in a marginalized district of Lima. They also had the opportunity to

camp out on a beach and through these activities Franklin reaffirmed his

connection not only to *nikkei* identity within Peru, but with what it means to

be *nikkei* in Latin America.

In the background chapter I wrote about the APJ as a large and

significant *nikkei* institution. Some of my participants also spent time there as

a way of getting to know other *nikkei*, taking classes, and joining in on social

activities. Mori likes to participate in many of the *nikkei* activities and has on

occasion directed a few himself. He is a member of the youth coordination

initiatives at the APJ, as well as director of the *Sociedad Académica Nikkei*

(SAN). He became involved after observing his parents, who are associates of

the AELU and play sports there. His parents also spend time at the APJ

watching Japanese movies and attending other events. In his view, the APJ is

the *organo matriz,* or the original and vital organ of the *nikkei* community. His

experience helps to demonstrate the influence of family, not to mention the

ability for *nikkei* to become as little or as much involved in the activities of the

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[30] *Matsuri Daiko* in Japanese literally means Festival Drum, and is the name
of an organization devoted to the practice and spread of Okinawan culture.

community as they so desire. My participant's stories often suggest that online communication with one another supports offline friendships and social interaction, thereby maintaining contact within the *nikkei* community and continuing in the traditions of the past. Without virtual spaces such as *hi5*, it is possible that young *nikkei* would find difficulty in shaping their identities as *nikkei*. For those who are unable to participate offline, *hi5* allows for them to speak with those who do and the information is then transmitted so that more can benefit from the offline experiences. Activities that people like Alvarito and Franklin participate in are not directly linked to their amount of online participation on *hi5*. These types of participation are neither mutually reinforcing nor at odds. There are various levels of participation and more participation online does not necessarily equal less participation offline and vice versa. They simply compliment each other in ways that allow *nikkei* to feel comfortable in the means of identity exploration.

<p align="center">*Nikkei* Identifying Characteristics on the Internet and *hi5*</p>

So how does all of this translate to online identities? As demonstrated before with Dante's statement about being called "*chino", nikkei* find many ways to show their identities on *hi5* and on the Internet in general. There are countless small markers that help others inside the *nikkei* community know that the profile that they are currently viewing is the creation of another *nikkei*. To get a general idea of *nikkei* identifiers on *hi5* profiles, I looked at a *nikkei*

group and the kinds of photos or pictures that were used. These pictures are the eye-catching pieces that are the first sources of judgment and classification. Some users choose to show photos depicting them while others will use pictures as symbolic identifiers. Out of the hundreds of profiles I viewed within the two *nikkei* groups I studied, there were roughly 73 that had obvious Japanese themes. I did not include those users who put up photos of themselves because I did not want to make judgments based on Asian facial features. Recognizing that facial features are one of the primary means of racial/ethnic categorization, I wanted to deliberately exclude that in my own judgments to focus on the lesser known cultural and racial/ethnic markers.

Out of the 73 that I focused on, I found that *nikkei* are very creative in the ways that they show others who they are. In particular, adolescents and young adults who have grown up using the Internet have learned to become increasingly creative in forming profiles that reflect them in what they consider their truest form. For the *nikkei*, the circumstances require them to look more specifically into their own explicitly *nikkei* values. In considering this, I found that many used symbolically Japanese images to express their true selves. For instance, 27 used *anime* drawings to represent them in their profile image. *Anime* television shows and comic books have been extremely popular in Japan for many years. Some users put up their favorite *anime* characters' pictures:

XoX--NaDiTa--XoX (29 views)

View All 20 Photos

Anthony (30 views)

View 1 Photo

Kishi (92 views)

View All 9 Photos

Others used famous Sanrio characters like Hello Kitty:

As a brand character, Hello Kitty has become one of the most famous images coming out of Japan. Though the company's products are now available in the US and other locations worldwide, appeal to Japanese consumers continues to be massive and Hello Kitty has become a "spokeskitty" for Japan as a whole. Besides *anime* drawings, 31 users applied photos of evidently Japanese objects and places. For instance, for those who had traveled to Japan before it was common to use photos of them outside of temples or other Japanese landmarks:

Josem (615 views)

View All 6 Photos

Roxana (39 views)

View All 7 Photos

Clau (523 views)

View All 7 Photos

Daniel (360 views)

View All 6 Photos

Yuji (401 views)

View All 20 Photos

There were also food images, such as people eating traditional Japanese foods or in the process of cooking them:

Purikura[31] photos were also well utilized among the *nikkei* users:

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[31] *Purikura* is an enormously popular product of photo booths found nearly everywhere in Japan. It is immensely popular with teenage girls and involves taking photos in a booth, which you can then customize with a large variety of features. The photos come out in small sticker form and are often collected and traded among friends.

Other images I included were those of the rising sun, cherry blossoms, martial artists, a girl coyly peeking out from behind a large fan, buddhas, *kanji*[32], *kimono*[33], famous Japanese celebrities and more:

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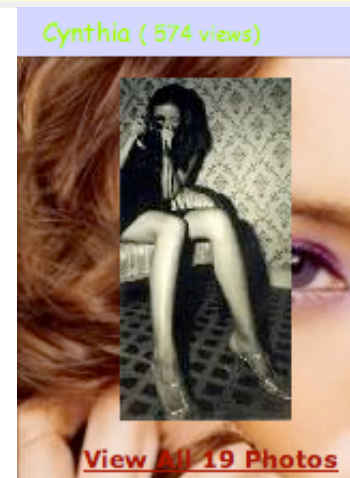
[32] *Kanji* are Chinese characters also used in Japanese writing.
[33] *Kimono* is a traditional Japanese garment.

Some of these are stereotypical symbols for Japan, but others are less known and would require someone who is already part of that culture to fully understand it. Take for instance the picture of a famous Japanese pop singer. Her music is well known nationally, but she has yet to become popular beyond the Japanese audience. By placing her picture as her image, the user is making the type of statement that both includes those who are "in the know" and excludes people who do not have access to Japanese media.

Handles, or names, that people use on *hi5* also demonstrate the familiarity or lack thereof of Japanese language and names. Most handles are difficult to place within one category because they are so abstract, but within a *nikkei* group I found that many used Spanish language handles and only half of that number utilized Japanese ones. Some mixed both languages to create a hybrid handle that reflected their sense of a dual identity. Even more complicated, some would have distinctly Japanese images with Spanish

handles, or Peruvian images with Japanese handles. When looking at whether choice in Spanish or Japanese handle correlates to choice in origin or ethnicity, I found that there was no substantial evidence pointing in any direction. Handles are not necessarily the real given names of the participants, though oftentimes they are composed partly or entirely from their offline names. Participants with Spanish handles are only slightly more likely to list themselves as "Latin/Latin American" and participants with Japanese handles are a little more likely to put themselves down as "Japanese." However, the differences are so small that I do not find this to be any conclusive evidence pointing to a relation between handle and origin/ethnicity. Fewer people overall list themselves as "Other," but I found that there was not even one participant with a Japanese handle that chose "Other." This could stem from the fact that there is more influence of the traditional values and stereotypes handed down from Japanese grandparents and parents for those who identify more as Japanese. Or it could be said that "Other" is not a popular choice overall, whether the user has a Japanese or Spanish handle. Whatever the issue, this data hints at the fluidity with which *nikkei* play with identity in just the images and the language of their profiles.

When questioned about the *nikkei* markers in their profiles, nearly all of my participants' initial responses were that they did not have any. Yet when pressed further, they seemed to realize that what seemed so clearly part of their *nikkei* identity was not necessarily something that non-*nikkei* would pick

up on or understand. The same occurred with the question of how the Internet can be useful to the *nikkei* community. At first most said that the Internet did not really change how they participate in the *nikkei* community, but as the interviews continued they began to see that their involvement online did indeed translate to participation in the *nikkei* community in one sense or another.

Aldo did not think there were any markers of Japanese culture on his profile except maybe where he mentioned that he listened to J-Pop. His profile was sparse, but when looking at the groups he had joined it became apparent that he was *nikkei*. In fact, that is how I found him as a participant in the first place, so he had not even thought about how his group selection might label him as *nikkei*. July was initially the same as Aldo because she thought only her posted photos and her name might give away the fact that she identifies as *nikkei*, but throughout our conversation she began to explain further ways in which her profile expresses her identity and how *hi5* has allowed for this *nikkei* forum to grow. According to her, the *nikkei* community is very well marked on *hi5* and it serves as a space where they can joke around among one another and share understandings. She has met many *nikkei* through *hi5* groups and most contacted her at first because they could tell by her profile that she was like them. July wrote to me that she felt it was good to form a community without so many boundaries and exclusion because some people do not feel comfortable with the practices and rules of the *nikkei* associations

that dominate the offline community. By creating *nikkei* communities online,

people like her can find a variety of ways to learn about their culture and share

it with others. Alvarito shared July's sentiment about the connection among

nikkei online and the sharing that happens in that type of setting. He wrote that

when other *nikkei* see his profile, they are more open with him because they

already feel that they are speaking with a friend. Additionally, *hi5* allows for

relationships to form between *nikkei* of different countries and helps to

educate the Japanese that there are people who are like them who live outside

of Japan. Alvarito even admitted that he responded to my message in the

beginning because he saw my profile photo and was curious about where I

was from and about whether I was also a *nikkei*, thus suggesting the

significance of the profile photo as an expression of *nikkei*ness. In this way,

hi5 not only helps with the formation of *nikkei* identity in a Peruvian national

context, but within a larger global context as well.

Mori sees participation online as a less costly way of participating in

the *nikkei* community. He believes that many young *nikkei* do not participate

in the cultural activities because they think it takes up a lot of time and money.

Though he agrees with that on one level, he also thinks that these activities are

worth the time and money, and those who participate gain a lot from their

experiences. For instance, the money sometimes goes towards outing such as

camping trips on the beach and other leisure activities. Offline participation is

valuable, but partaking in the expression of *nikkei* identity online has its

benefits as well. There is no cost involved except for the cost of a computer and Internet, which can be found fairly cheaply all over Lima. In fact, people who want to take part in both online and offline *nikkei* identities can do so within the cultural center computer labs. In this way they can join language classes and club sports while also exploring the *nikkei* content beyond their physical world. For Mori, expressing identity on *hi5* is up to individual preference.

Ichiro, unlike the participants I mentioned earlier, was quite obvious in his *nikkei* identification from the start and was eager to express it. His profile was set up in a dichotomous manner where his Japanese side and Peruvian side were explained in different ways. For instance, for his favorite foods he differentiates between his Japanese favorite, *mazegohan*[34], and his Peruvian favorite, *lomo saltado*[35]. Yet when he speaks of his identity, he states that he is proud of his roots and being *nikkei*. This demonstrates yet another way in which *nikkei* express their identity online. Though it would be easy to generalize the experience of all later generation *nikkei*, it is important to note that expression is an art, and one that takes on many forms.

Out of all of my participants, I think Dante and Hiroshi most explicitly spoke about the ways in which the Internet affects *nikkei* in the construction and expression of identity. Along with the discussion of racial/ethnic labeling

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[34] *Mazegohan* literally means mixed rice in Japanese and can be made with a variety of different meat and vegetable ingredients.
[35] *Lomo saltado* is Spanish for a dish of steak, fried potatoes, and vegetables that is usually served with rice.

on *hi5*, Dante also conveyed a sense of reluctance in using social networking sites. Like many others who have partaken in the argument over Internet safety and legitimacy as a space for ethnography, Dante also shares in the belief that people are often dishonest online about who they are. In the social place, he sees the Internet as a great innovation because it allows for forums where people can share interests, learn about new topics, ask for advice, and interact with one another. Yet at the same time he thinks that sites like *hi5* are hard to control and no one obligates the user to put down factual information or even obtain a musician's permission before posting their song. Perhaps in smaller forums there is more control, but the Internet as a whole gives many liberties in its anonymity and lets people pass as whomever they want. In the end, Dante believes that whether a person is honest or not on *hi5* depends on their personal principles.

What I found interesting about this point is that Dante fails to mention that there are many realities for one person. Perhaps characteristics like age and sex have been so firmly established that it would be difficult to argue with those. But as I wrote earlier, classifications such as race/ethnicity that for some seem so straightforward and matter-of-fact are oftentimes not. The expression of a person's identity, though not always factual depending on the viewpoint of the person making the judgment, always holds some sort of meaning. In postmodern thought, there is no single reality, but a network of realities that are created from the experiences of individuals. When this is

applied to Dante's viewpoint, it becomes clear that identity labels are inherently misleading and can never be read in a single manner.

With the purpose of explaining himself further, Dante listed the ways in which people have included the Internet in their lives, such as the creation of blogs, participating in forum discussions, chatting with people across the world, obtaining information through websites, finding entertainment, and working from home by sending in work through emails and attachments. He then detailed the negative sides of these, such as the fact that there is always a troublemaker in a forum that creates problems, pedophiles preying on young children, hackers, and behavior that changes with the freedom of the Internet. When I asked him what he meant by the last one, he said that sometimes people feel that the Internet is so detached from the offline world that their actions online will not affect their lives offline. As an example he talked about people who will flirt online and send provocative photos of themselves to strangers. Though a person might think that this isolated action will not affect them, there are countless examples of how this can backfire and reach a point where it destroys their offline life. Dante fears that the sense of freedom that people get on the Internet will lead them into making poor decisions. Basically, the Internet is just like the rest of society except there is less control by outside forces, less limits, more anonymity, and more possibilities. The benefits of the Internet also mix in with the harms it can cause. In the end, Dante declared a need for balance between the good and the bad.

Dante's point of view about the Internet and *nikkei* identity read more like a cautionary tale for the dangers of feeling too free within a space that allows it. Hiroshi, though also concerned with the dangers to a certain extent, spoke more freely on his personal achievements through the Internet. He first said that he did not utilize *hi5* for identity expression but that he created a separate website for *nikkei* all over the world to address the issue. For him, the Internet has served as a tool for promoting *nikkei* identity and uniting *nikkei* without having to leave home. Though he first saw *hi5* as completely separate from his very obviously *nikkei*-oriented website, Hiroshi, like the others, came around to realizing that *hi5* did indeed contribute to his understanding of what it means to be *nikkei* and how he has constructed that identity for himself. He believes that just by being on *hi5* and saying that he is *nikkei* that is a way of expressing identity. People join *hi5* at first with the intention of reconnecting with friends but as they take time to explore the site and use its networking features, they tend to find themselves connecting with people with similar identities. It is not an overt construction of identity that goes on, but a subtle way of obtaining input from one user to another about what it means to be *nikkei*.

Conclusion

Later generation *nikkei* are not isolated from their local and global counterparts in the discussion of the Internet's benefits and downfalls. Like all others in this conversation, the same issues of trust, honesty, expression, and identity affect them. What I have aimed to do in this thesis is to demonstrate, through the various stories and thoughts of my participants, the more specific concerns of a population that does not neatly fit into one category. On top of the subject of racial/ethnic classification, *nikkei* must address their cultural values in determining how they choose to identify. Similarly, they must take into account their family histories and experiences among other aspects of offline life that affect their decisions about identity. The formation of an identity is never a simple matter, but with contemporary *nikkei* the question of identity is further muddled by the constant push and pull that occurs from generational differences and understanding. When faced with these issues, it is expected that the *nikkei* will find a variety of ways to reconcile their feelings, experiences, and outside pressures.

I hope that my thesis has also demonstrated that the Internet can be a useful space of expression for those who want to supplement offline participation with the online kind as well. Likewise, I expect that the reader will come away from reading this with the thought that Internet exploration of identity may be the only way that some have access to this type of

information. My findings suggest that the Internet is a versatile enough space that *nikkei* are both finding group confirmation and individuality through their online participation. Instead of heading in one specific direction, the Internet use of *nikkei* creates a starburst shape of identity construction and negotiation. They find solidarity and a sense of belonging by joining *nikkei* groups, yet *hi5* also allows for the creativity of individuals to emerge aside from their participation in communities. I can only see this as a positive effect for younger generation *nikkei* who need new and different ways of both exploring their own individual identities as well as come to terms with the group identification that has been passed down. *Hi5* allows for this to occur. Based on these findings, I believe that Cyber Anthropology will become increasingly more important in the studies of a wide array of populations and the exchange of knowledge will lead to fascinating new points of study within the field.

The *nikkei* of Peru are still evolving with each generation. Though their sense of *nikkei* identity may take on new forms, there is still much opportunity for further study. As *nikkei* intermarry with other racial/ethnic and cultural groups, it would be fascinating to see which aspects of Japanese culture will continue on and which will fade. As more *nikkei* migrate back to Japan, it would also be interesting to see whether their experiences there will change or enforce their previous beliefs about what it means to be *nikkei*. Increased globalization plays a large role in how *nikkei* consider themselves and I would suggest that it may make some more self aware of themselves as

nikkei. The Internet will surely allow many to explore new forms of identity

expression and new ways of describing what it means to be *nikkei*. I look

forward to seeing increased studies in anthropology of how virtual spaces

affect crucial issues such as these.