

Title Page: Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects Proposal Information

Name of Project: Defining Asian American Music

Submission Date: _____ **Sponsoring Department:** _ Music Department _

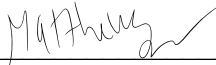
Anticipated completion date or project due date: _____ May 4th, 2020 _____

Researcher Information (print):

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Date: _____ 12/03/2019 _____

For student projects (print)

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(Print)

Project Advisor's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Goal(s) of Research

A compilation of history, culture, and experiences define and help explore what Asian American music is. Through understanding the Asian American Movement and the sparks that began a new diaspora of creations, I will compile information on what cultivated the beginning of Asian American music during the 1960s. The causes that brought Asian Americans to the point of liberation and freedom with creative arts is important in reflecting where that lies into present day Asian Americans in the U.S. It is important to investigate the placement Asian Americans have in today's population and popular culture – focusing on the examination of common trends and pinpointing into the need for a community of likeminded individuals. I will dive into Asian American musicians that are currently creating work in the Asian American music genre and choose them based on the criteria of the classification of Asian American music during the 1960s to the 2000s. Using conversations on their own experiences as creators and musicians I will compile information of what the Asian American music genre means today, but also how is it created and what constitutes such an art.

This research is the findings of what defines Asian American music and the role Asian Americans have in pop culture. First and foremost is the attractiveness of jazz where the Asian American diaspora intersects with the African American diaspora, and what other genres attract similar mindsets. Next is the defining of the Asian American artistry, the causation of new art, and the cultivation of Asian American jazz. Lastly, is compiling information to express what Asian American music is as a genre by itself.

Scholarly Background

I am an Asian American trained musician with a formal education background in an undergraduate degree at a well-known music college, learning traditional techniques, contemporary approaches, and commercial/pop culture work. With my own education and experiences as an Asian American musician, also having the privilege of growing up in the California Bay Area where the Asian American and Asian American Jazz Movements started, I will put in my own knowledge into contributing into the defining of Asian American music. I will be using research by Fred Ho, Diane C. Fujino, Jon Jang, and Oliver Wang primarily, all of them use an approach of referencing history, a professional musician within the period they are referencing in the Asian American music timeline, and putting their own experiences as contributors or witnesses of the art. In their research they do not go in depth of what parallel events coincide with compositions of Asian American music releases. In my own research I will be finding moments that bring out the reasons for the creation of new tracks in the genre through the qualitative research and data collection on interviews and experiential conversations. Most importantly in my research will be describing the more present-day struggles of where Asian American music lies.

Asian American jazz is one of the first larger instances of Asian American music. Fred Ho explains the gravitation towards jazz in *Wicked Theory Naked Practice*, “‘Jazz’ has always been expansive and inclusionary, incorporating other cultures as a truly internationalist art form, to which its international greatness is an attestation. ... Original ideas and expression, experimentation with different instruments and their combinations, multimedia—all are part of the creative vitality inherent in the music. For the music is fundamentally about freedom: freedom of expression (the individual and collective *simultaneously* and *dialectically*) in its insistence on the expansion of real democracy, historically embodied in the struggle of the African American people, the music’s primary originators and innovators.” Fred Ho approaches this idea by discussing the history that brings Asian Americans to crave a need for expression to begin with, and gives reasoning through examples and personal experiences with listener reactions on his own music. Diane Fujino’s research and deconstructing of Fred Ho’s music in, *Ho’s Music and Politics in the Asian American Movement and Beyond*, talks of the Black Power movement and its radical thinking that where Amiri Baraka talks of Marxism-Leninism and a New Communist movement that grew attractive to the I Wor Kuen (IWK) group, that later Fred Ho joined. She continues to analyze Fred Ho’s life and music, then uses concurrent historical events to tie into the Asian American Movement. A commonality in both scholars is the importance of referencing Asian American artists paving the way and beginning the genre called Asian American music.

As said previously by Fred Ho in *Beyond Asian American Jazz*, Asian American artists are not all necessarily playing Asian American music. During the Asian American Movement, we begin to hear and see a wide variety of Asian Americans performing and creating throughout the public. However, many of them approach their artistry through assimilation into the American art, rather than the response and creation through oppression and a racial and ethnic standpoint. Oliver Wang in, *Between the Notes: Finding Asian America in Popular Music*, says, “It is tempting to read Shigeta’s album—as well as those of Pat Suzuki who recorded at least four albums for RCA Victor in the late 1950s and early 1960s—as being part of the “200% American” strategy to social integration/assimilation. After all, these singers were positioned through their marketing as all-American. However, this has to be balanced by the reality that there was little to be gained in trying to emphasize ethnicity.” Oliver Wang explains how many Asian American performers chose to be selling as “The Frank Sinatra of Japan”, where adding the racial background exoticizes the artist but also makes them more welcomed by copying or trying to be an American. As Wang quotes Robert Lee, a historian, on the films *Flower Drum Song*, and *Sayonara*, “*Sayonara* and *Flower Drum Song* both celebrate American liberalism. In these films, ethnic assimilation is the vehicle through which the social identities of race, class, sex, and nationality can be displaced by the individual embrace of the modern. ... The nuclear family, the end result of both these films, is expected to produce a new American: a liberal individualist who transcends social origin.” Representing further into the need for assimilation and joining the American dream/standard. Oliver Wang’s approach encompasses references to history and explanations on the coming together of bands that expressed into Asian American music. “Multi-woodwindist Gerald Oshita, bassist Mark Izu, woodwindist Russel Baba, clarinetist Paul Yamazaki, and East Coast violinist Jason Kao Hwang were “free jazz” players exploring Asian musical and performance concepts.” In Fred Ho’s findings he lists a few Asian American jazz musicians that truly were expressing the need for representation within their music. Fred Ho

continues by explaining the use of lyrics, rhythms, melodies, and techniques that came from the oppression and discrimination Asian Americans were feeling.

Description of Subject Population

a) describe proposed subject population, including criteria for study inclusion and exclusion (e.g. age, health status, language). If any inclusion/exclusion criteria are based on gender, race, or ethnicity, explain rationale for the restrictions.

1) Research on Asian American artists and music should come from a non-colonialist perspective and should be geared towards uplifting the Asian American community. With that, the participants in my qualitative research should include only Asian Americans and given that music is the focus, musicians, composers, and artists are to be the ones being interviewed as they are the main creators and contributors to Asian American music. There are of course cases where non-Asian Americans can respectfully contribute to such a genre, but for this research, it is imperative to focus on racial and ethnic Asian Americans. My goal is to vary in age, to give a wider perspective and increase the quality of data with interviewing around 10 - 15 people. I will focus around 20 – 40 years old, to have a more concise and supported age range wherein popular culture/media, with the small amount of data. My determining factor on choosing participants is finding people who are already and currently contributing to the Asian American music world. The age range is flexible however, I will not be interviewing minors, and I will not exclude based on health, gender, sexuality, or class.

b) state total number of subjects planned for the study and how many must be recruited to obtain this sample size. Explain how number of subjects needed to answer the research question was determined.

Total number of subjects to recruit: 25

Total number of subject interviews for study: 10

The decision to recruit such a small number is the lack of representation within the Asian American music world and the difficulty on relying on replies and available times to conduct interviews for people. Many of them with possibly irregular schedules, a mixture of people who have daily jobs and create music on the side, or others who are full time musicians who travel, record, rehearse and most likely do not have a consistent schedule. I decided to reach out to 25 individuals because of these reasons and expect around 10 people who will agree and sign the consent form.

c) indicate whether any proposed subjects are children/minors, prisoners, pregnant women, those with physical or cognitive impairments, or other who are considered vulnerable to coercion or undue influence. State rationale for their involvement.

I will not be asking any minors, prisoners, pregnant women, those with physical or cognitive impairments, or other who are considered vulnerable to coercion or undue influence.

Benefits of the Research for Human Subjects

It is important to maintain respect for the different experiences, culture, and history through conversations and actions. This is imperative to benefiting human subjects towards spreading knowledge and shedding more light onto Asian American music. Especially that Asian American is such a broad approach, compared to being specific into Chinese American, Japanese American, Filipino American, etc., it needs to be concise in understanding that yes, the sub-cultures in the overall Asian American race experiences things in different ways, but the kinship spread across Asian Americans as a whole, is important given that so much history has united and brought Asian Americans together. I hope that my research can gather Asian American musicians with like-minded interests towards an Asian American knowledge in collaborating, discovering, and creating new music together, ultimately advancing towards a more solid Asian American genre. My goal is the safe space community in sharing work, but bettering one another in critique, feedback, and the constant conversation on how Asian American music can be more emphasized, normalized, and uplifting this community. This can even go towards creating space for musicians to perform, have discussions, collaborate, record, teach, and bring out inspiration and representation for such an underrepresented community.

Procedures and Methods

Participants will be chosen through the findings within their own music. Locating representations of Asian American references importantly through their music/art, but biography and texts are possible indicators. As of now, I have a few individual artists and bands that are independent that I hope to reach out. As a musician myself, I have friends and contacts through performing, schools, and events I have participated in. Lastly, I will try to contact people through organizations on school campuses, the Oakland Asian Cultural Center, and through the Asian Creative Network – specifically the SF/Bay Area Facebook group. I will be contacting through email, phone, or in person if possible. **Appendix A** is a sample of my recruiting method and what will be sent to individuals in asking if they are willing to participate.

History, culture, and experiences surround the main points of the research on Asian American music. My methods will encompass using interviews/questions with participants, which includes individuals and/or groups. In Diane C. Fujino's, "'Return to the Source': Fred Ho's Music and Politics in the Asian American Movement and Beyond", she uses Fred Ho's research and conversations with him to analyze and define important key terms. Branching from her approach I hope to use experiences and references on a multitude of artists and papers, with a range of interviews and other research sources to unpack what Asian American music as a genre means.

For my methodology, I will be referencing Naheed Islam's, "Research as an Act of Betrayal: *Researching Race in Asian Community in Los Angeles*". Islam explains the importance of defining race and Americanness within the conversation and contextualizing the reference

within the narrative of my own research. Explaining both the relevance in the conversations on history, immigration, and present-day U.S. systems. It is important to focus on the history of Asians in the U.S. and the diaspora that came out of discrimination and demarginalizations and explaining what it means to have happened alongside the African American diaspora. Explaining events that originated the Asian American movement and relating that to the present day need for a voice. Describing examples of Asian music and the overarching musical technical aspects that make up the composition. Through interviews and conversations, history is first and foremost the importance, then it is the “why” in creating Asian American music, and then lastly is the “how”. Structured is the historical influence, the relatedness to the present-day pop culture, and then defining the meaning for the individual and the whole.

Qualitative research within the methodology will include being respectful of the different cultures and traditions with the many ethnicities under the term Asian Americans, being mindful of entering spaces – including social, focusing on a meeting of wellness and sharing, and maintaining a collaborative open attitude rather than seeking specific answers. At the start of the interview process will be a sharing of my own experiences, knowledge on history, and the intentionality with my own compositions or musical works. A large basis will be to cover history and sharing the different knowledge we have of the history of Asian Americans, this can cover a wide range of musicians, movements, historical events, and other scholars, this is for the purpose of moving into relaying thoughts and opinions on the approaches within the past and pivoting into present day works and artists that inspire into similar ideals. A more elaborate and showcasing of questions to be asked specifically will be found on **Appendix B**, there you also find the flow and pacing of what is to be expected during this interview process. When analyzing the data, I will keep in mind that many of the times the creation of art is not subjected to ideals of the past and is created more through liberation, expression, protests, or shouts for solidarity. I will keep that in mind, alongside the main subject idea of what Asian American music is.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

As a Chinese American creating a discussion about Asian Americans I must be respectful and cautious in generalizing a multitude of different ethnicities and races including; Japanese Americans, Filipino Americans, Korean Americans, Vietnamese Americans, etc. I will be weary of my actions through learning and sharing about experiences and knowledge with the people I will be working with and focus on the history of Asian Americans where the collaboration of the different Asian American communities come together in solidarity while being targeted as a whole. During conversations about traditions, cultures, and experiences, I will be open and constantly want to learn and share more together in enriching the community and include any information that is needed within my own research when discussing an artist’s composition.

Minimize Risk and Discomfort

Potential approaches to be aware of is letting participants know a sample of what the interview process will be, especially in preparing any possibly difficult questions that will be asked beforehand. Before beginning I will explain that I will be recording the conversation, anything uncomfortable to answer or continue into can go towards a break or even stopping, and after the interview it is also possible to omit any answers given if necessary. Suggesting using a pseudonym can protect confidentiality or even using their real name versus their artist name, or vice versa. Being respectful of what the participant needs in order to be comfortable before, during, and after the recorded conversation will be the utmost importance, and that will go into how sharing the data will be, naming conventions, comfortability of allowing others to hear the direct recordings, possibility of editing the audio beforehand and asking for permission afterwards, and explaining and going through the waiver together.

Appendix A

Recruitment email/notice

Hi _____,

My name is Matthew Ka Git Wong, I am a student at Mills College working on my MFA in Electronic Music and Recording Media. I was born and raised in San Francisco as a first generation Chinese American with my family who immigrated here from Hong Kong. I proceeded to complete my undergraduate degree at Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts, receiving a BM in Composition and Electronic Production and Design with a minor in Video Game Scoring. I returned to the Bay Area, now residing in Oakland, California.

I am conducting research on the Asian American diaspora, more specifically, Asian American music. I will be collecting data within the wider Asian American community and finding musicians who identify as Asian American musicians. My data will be a collection of interviews and a conversation on the history of Asian Americans, culture and traditions pertaining to music, and collectively talking about what is Asian American music, where does it stem from, and what purpose will/does it hold in our present-day society.

Any information shared and collected will be used to compile information on defining Asian American music. If participants are open to sharing their identity, then I hope to connect and create a community of like-minded musicians. This network will allow us to continue discussions, collaborate on art or other projects, and create a space of the growing number of Asian American musicians. The option to be anonymous is available and will be respected upon request, and interviews will be reviewed together before used and publicly shown with the choice to omit any answers given.

Interviews will be conducted at my personal studio, a café, the participant's home, or anywhere else that can be discussed along with deciding a time and date. I will be audio recording the process and bringing food and beverages to share together. Please let me know if you would be interested in participating in this research! I will be happy to answer any questions and concerns or even connecting on an artist level. You can contact me through email at matthewkagitwong@gmail.com. Thank you!

Appendix B

Interview Outline -

Introductory

- Reading of poem by an Asian American poet – about identity.
- Premise on the research project, questions I'm looking into and discovering and purpose of interviewing others. A project about music and culture, specifically Asian Americans.
- My background, who I am, Chinese American – my main realization of being Asian American was in college. Explain, and my current purpose as a musician/sound artist.
- Do you label yourself as Asian American, when was the first moments you learned you were Asian American? And what did you discover as you grew and changed, what does being Asian American mean? (Or specifically, Japanese American, Filipino American, Korean American, Vietnamese American, etc.)

Conversation direction

- History on Asian Americans, the term Asian American – the history of the music of Asian Americans, crossover diaspora of Asian Americans and African Americans. Asian American jazz.
- Reading lyrics of, *A Grain of Sand* - "We are the Children", 1973. A song – what it meant to be Asian American at the time. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4Teezq2KE>
- How do you feel about this song, these lyrics?
- During then it was purposeful to create music that was liberating, talking about history, culture, and the need to be heard as a person of color, as an Asian American. (quote about hip-hop creating Asian American music) Do you think today we need something similar to this, to create Asian American music?
- Reading quote about Asian American music, (Yo Yo Ma, etc.)
- How do you feel about this quote?

Finishing thoughts

- Would you label yourself as an Asian American musician?
- Talk about "" a track you made. - perhaps a song sees as representative of Asian American-ness.
- Play a more present day Asian American song/musician, maybe two (based on time)?
- Do you know any musicians or songs that uplift Asian American culture, heritage, or experiences?
- Collaboration, groups, conversations, etc.

Quote References -

Yo Yo Ma -

“I do maintain that the Asian American-ness of an artistic work lies in more than content, and is rooted and linked to cultural traditions and forms. Along with expressing aspects of the “Asian American experience,” the music itself would draw from or reflect aspects of traditional Asian music influences. Yo-Yo Ma is a cellist who happens to be Chinese and Asian American, not a Chinese/Asian American musician. ... While Asian American music may very well be cross-cultural, we in the “Asian American jazz” movement saw as the focus of our music and cultural work to help catalyze Asian American consciousness about our oppression and need to struggle for liberation. The very identity and term “Asian American” in our sobriquet “Asian American jazz or music” is a political signifier.” (Fred Ho, *Beyond Asian American Jazz*. Vol 7.)

Lyrics -

We are the children of the migrant worker / we are the children of the internment camp / sons and daughter of the railroad workers / who leave their stamp on Amerika / Sing a song for ourselves / what do you have to lose? / sing a song for ourselves / we got the right to choose.

We are the children of the Chinese waiter / born and raised in the laundry room / We are the offspring of the Japanese gardener / who leave their stamp on Amerika / Sing a song for ourselves / what do you have to lose? / sing a song for ourselves / we got the right to choose. (A Grain of Sand, *We are the Children*. 1973)

Hip – hop artists -

Jamez (a/k/a/ James Chang) “in the past, I had always tried to be somebody else (black, white, Latino, etc.) because I never felt comfortable speaking in Korean. I spoke other people’s experiences, listened to other peoples’ dialects. Learning about Korean music was like learning my native tongue, albeit musically.” “So many of us are influenced by Western standards of beauty, speech and music. I want to expose Asian Americans to their rich legacy of music. Our beat of life.” (Wang, Oliver. (2001). *Between the Notes: Finding the Asian America in Popular Music*. *America Music*, 19(4). Pg.460)

“We like to think of ourselves as hip-hoppers first – and not necessarily before we’re Asian, because we’re Asian no matter what we do – but especially how we’re going to be marketed and

stuff, as somebody who's serious about their music, trying to be as good as we can be about it, as someone who loves the music. You know, we bring up certain issues because they're relevant to us, just like any other hip-hop artist would do, and in doing that, we have to bring up Asian American issues." (Wong, D. (2004). *Speak it Louder: Asian Americans Making Music*. *Rutledge*. Pg.235)

Defining Asian American Music

Informed Consent Form.

I, _____, state that I am over 18 years of age and that I voluntarily agree to participate in a research project conducted by, Matthew Ka Git Wong from Mills College.

The research is being conducted in order to define Asian American music and cultivate an understanding through the history of Asian Americans and present day Asian American musicians. Information collected through this research will be used to create an organization of like-minded Asian American musicians/artists that can continue to discuss the roles of Asian Americans in society, collaborate in music and art together, and further our artistry and knowledge with one another. Other uses will include advancing towards a genre of music classified as Asian American and thoroughly investigating through what means can define music in such a way.

The specific task I will perform requires several interview questions pertaining my experiences, knowledge, and culture within my ethnic background that relates to the creation of music and expression. I will be in conversation about the history of Asian Americans and be asked about my thoughts and opinions on specific historical events, artists, songs, and Asian American scholars.

I acknowledge that Matthew Ka Git Wong has (have) explained the task to me fully; has informed me that I may withdraw from participation at any time without prejudice or penalty; has offered to answer any questions that I might have concerning the research procedure; has assured me that any information that I give will be used for research purposes only and will be kept confidential. I understand that I have the choice to be recorded as anonymous participants within this research and can request to not share my identity in connecting with other participants. Before any data is used, I will be able to listen to my own recorded discussions and answers and choose to withhold any information if necessary.

I understand that any use of the AUDIO that result from my participation in this study will not be used for purposes that are not directly related to research venues, such as presentation in meetings or conferences open to the public or press, without my further written consent. I understand that individuals associated with this research may request now or at some time in the future an extension of the permissions for the use of this information that I consent to here.

I understand there is no monetary compensation for participating, but if interested, I may continue affiliation to the project and join a collaborative group of musicians and artists culminated through this research.

I may contact Matthew Ka Git Wong at, (415) 271-9576, or Professor Mara Diaz (advising faculty for this project) in the Mills College Department at, (510) 430-3162, if I have questions about this study at a time following my participation.

Researcher's Signature:

Date:

Participant's Signature:

Date:
