

Cruising Borders, Unsettling Identities:  
Toward A Queer Diasporic Asian America

Dissertation Abstract

Wen Liu

In this dissertation, I challenge the dominant conceptualization of Asian Americanness as a biological and cultural population and a cohesive racial category. Instead, I consider it as a form of flexible subjectivity and an affective emergence that occurs and materializes due to the multiple sites of convergence in the neoliberal assemblage of model minority ideology, imperialist geopolitical history, racialized queer politics, and criminal (in)justices. I examine the spatial and temporal configurations of Asian American subjectivity through a queer and postcolonial lens, first by conducting a critical historical review of the category of Asian American in the geopolitical history of psychological knowledge making; second with an ethnographic investigation of the divergent temporal claims of Asian Americanness toward neoliberal colorblindness and nostalgic forms of Afro-Asian solidarity in the context of Black Lives Matter; and finally through a phenomenological narrative analysis of queer Asian American activists navigating family trauma, the loss of the nation of origin, and transnational political journeys. Drawing from the cultural texts of psychological literature and Asian American representations in the public discourses as well as empirical data on Asian American political participation and life history narratives, the dissertation illustrates Asian Americanness as an assemblage of post-racial futurity and enactments of geopolitical conflicts. The analysis demonstrates how this spatial and temporal assemblage stratifies transnational racial positions by technologies of neoliberal multiculturalism and mediates the US relations with Asia Pacific simultaneously through military occupation and economic cooperation.

*Keywords:* Asian Americans, neoliberalism, assemblage, queer theory, diaspora