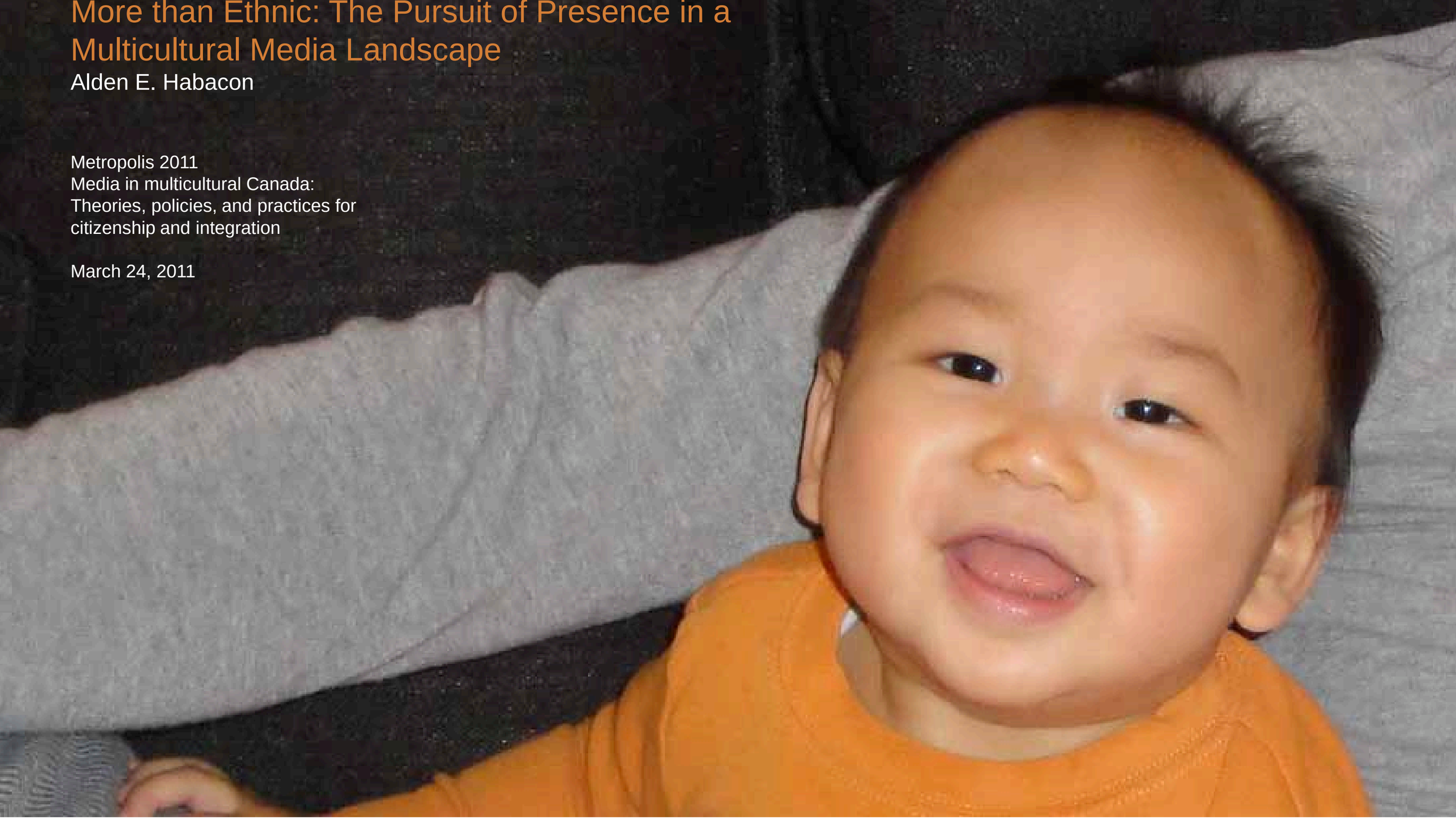
More than Ethnic: The Pursuit of Presence in a Multicultural Media Landscape

Alden E. Habacon

Metropolis 2011
Media in multicultural Canada:
Theories, policies, and practices for
citizenship and integration

March 24, 2011



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How To's Newsgathering & Storytelling Diversity at Work

The future of ethnic media depends on generation that sees color differently

by Angie Chuang
Published Dec. 14, 2010 7:29 am
Updated Dec. 15, 2010 4:26 am

Ethnic media have commanded attention by capturing a growing and diverse audience, but its influence on politics and policy is still in its infancy, pollster Sergio Bendixen told a dozen academics and advocates at the opening of a recent two-day symposium hosted by Louisiana State University.

LSU's Manship School of Mass Communication chose "The Influence of Ethnic Media on Politics and Participation" as the topic for this year's John Breaux Symposium, held in New Orleans on the eve of the game-changing midterm elections. But, Bendixen said, "It should be *potential* influence." Ethnic media's "potential is unlimited but it has not been realized."

We — Angie Chuang, assistant professor of journalism at American University School of Communication, and Kenny Irby, Poynter's visual journalism senior faculty and director of diversity — were among the panelists who participated in the wide-ranging discussion about the past, present and future of ethnic media.

We compiled our top takeways from the two-day symposium to help all journalists understand this growing and critical media sector that represents the voices of those often overlooked by mainstream journalism.

For ethnic media, economic power does not equal political power. Much has been made of ethnic media's record-high audience of 57 million and growing, as well as the earning power of corporations like Univision and Black Entertainment Television.

But general-audience media tend to look at ethnic media as a "one-way street," said Félix Gutiérrez, professor of journalism and American Studies & Ethnicity at University of Southern California. They want to leverage ethnic media to sell their products to diverse audiences, "but it's not a listening relationship."

"In a multicultural society, people pay attention to media that pay attention to them."

Félix Gutiérrez
Professor of Journalism and American Studies & Ethnicity at University of Southern California

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Bloggers and social media may appear to be a threat to ethnic media, but ethnic and new media potentially fulfill the same role for their communities.

The emergence of younger-generation ethnic blogs like AngryAsianMan.com, Twitter feeds like @AnaRC (Ana Roca Castro) and websites like TheRoot.com challenge traditional definitions of ethnic media.

"Young people are looking for ways to self-express," said Bill Imada, chairman and CEO of IW Group, a multicultural communications firm. The more-assimilated second, third and fourth generations of immigrant communities often don't relate to first-generation media, which are based on the common experiences of the home language and fighting discrimination.

Yet panelists agreed that ultimately, the roles of legacy ethnic media and ethnic new media will merge. Ethnic newspapers and broadcast outlets can bring together the social-media "I" types and make them into a "We," Close said.

That's what ethnic media have always done, Gutiérrez said. "They are conveners."

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The new multicultural and multiracial generation of immigrants and people of color will transform ethnic media as we know it.

Historically, ethnic media have built advocacy and community around common negative experiences, such as the black press' coverage of violence against civil rights protesters or Spanish-language media's rallying against California Gov. Pete Wilson's anti-immigrant policies in the 1990s.

The view was that "ethnic identity has a psychological and financial cost," said Hayg Oshagan, associate professor of communications at Wayne State University in Detroit.

But young people of color see ethnicity as both "cool" and fluid, since so many of them are of multiple cultures and races. "This is a generation for whom identity is a choice," Close said, "which is a total revelation."

Ethnic media, which traditionally has been cut across more defined lines, will be challenged to speak to this new audience.

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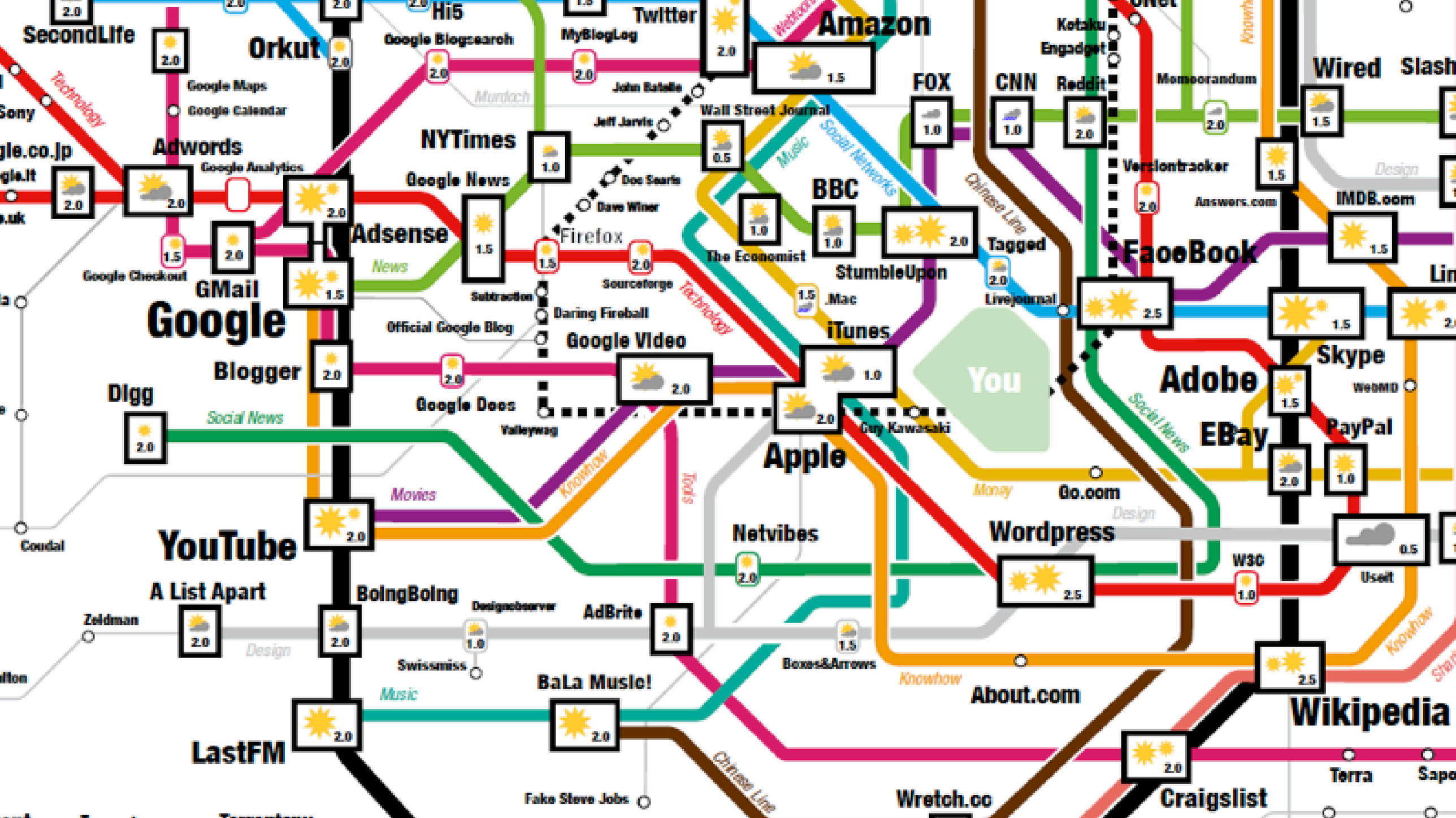
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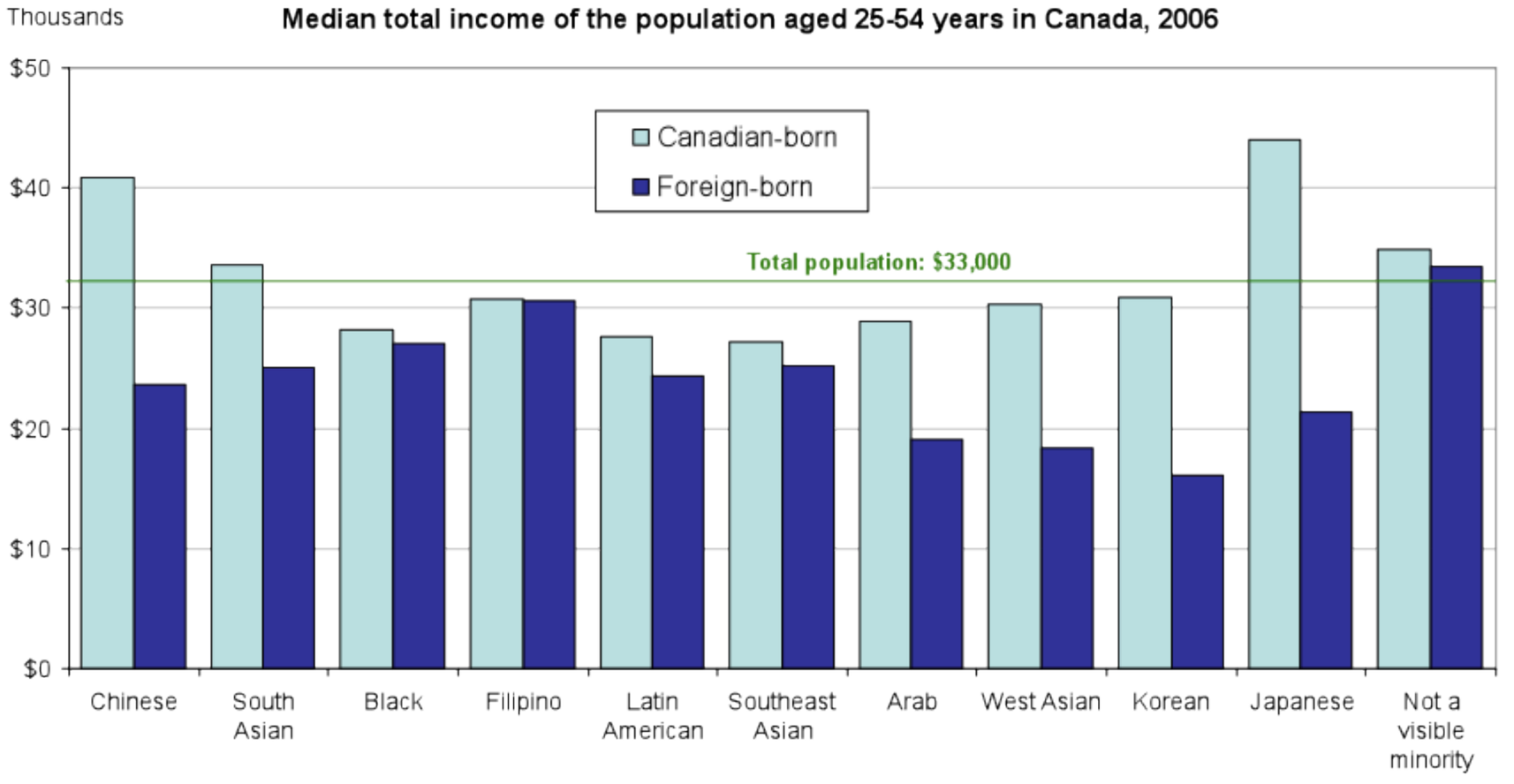
Median total income of Canadian-born Chinese, South Asian and Japanese exceeded that of the total population



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

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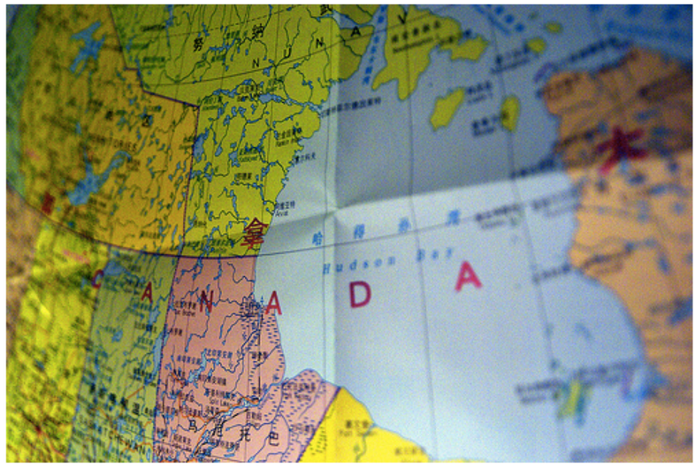

Comme les Chinois est un blogue en français et en anglais, sur ce qui est chinois à Montréal et ailleurs au Canada (et ailleurs dans le monde). Le titre du blogue est une référence à la toune « **Les Chinois** » de **Mitsou** datant de 1988, et qui marqua mon enfance malgré moi. Dans la chanson, elle répète à son amant de ne pas lui faire l'amour « comme ça », mais plutôt de tirer des leçons en regardant faire les Chinois, peu importe ce que ça veut dire.

Je m'appelle **Cédric Sam**. Je suis né et ai vécu toute ma vie à **Montréal**. Je suis d'origine chinoise cantonaise et mes parents viennent respectivement de Madagascar et du Viêt Nam.

Je suis également informaticien de formation et de profession. Je m'intéresse tout particulièrement aux médias numériques. J'ai travaillé pendant deux ans pour l'**une** des plus importantes compagnies de médias au pays. Je suis également l'auteur du blogue **Smurfmatic**, co-fondateur de **Métro Boulot Resto** et collaborateur à **Spacing Montréal**.

Depuis le début de 2010, je vis à Hong Kong, et travaille au **Centre de journalisme et d'études médiatiques** à l'Université de Hong Kong. Et depuis septembre 2010, je suis aussi à la maîtrise, en design d'interaction à l'**École de Design** de l'Université Polytechnique de Hong Kong.

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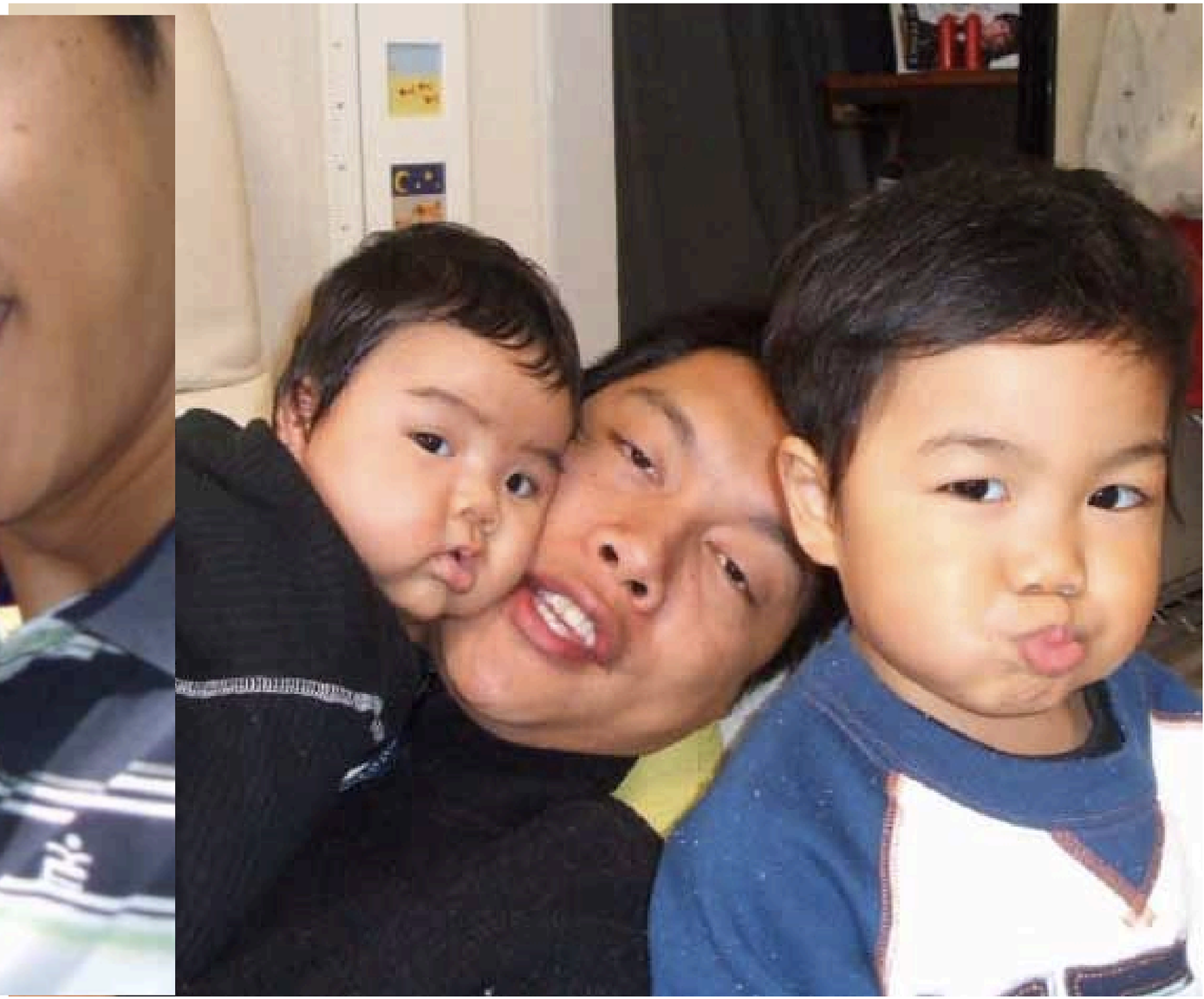

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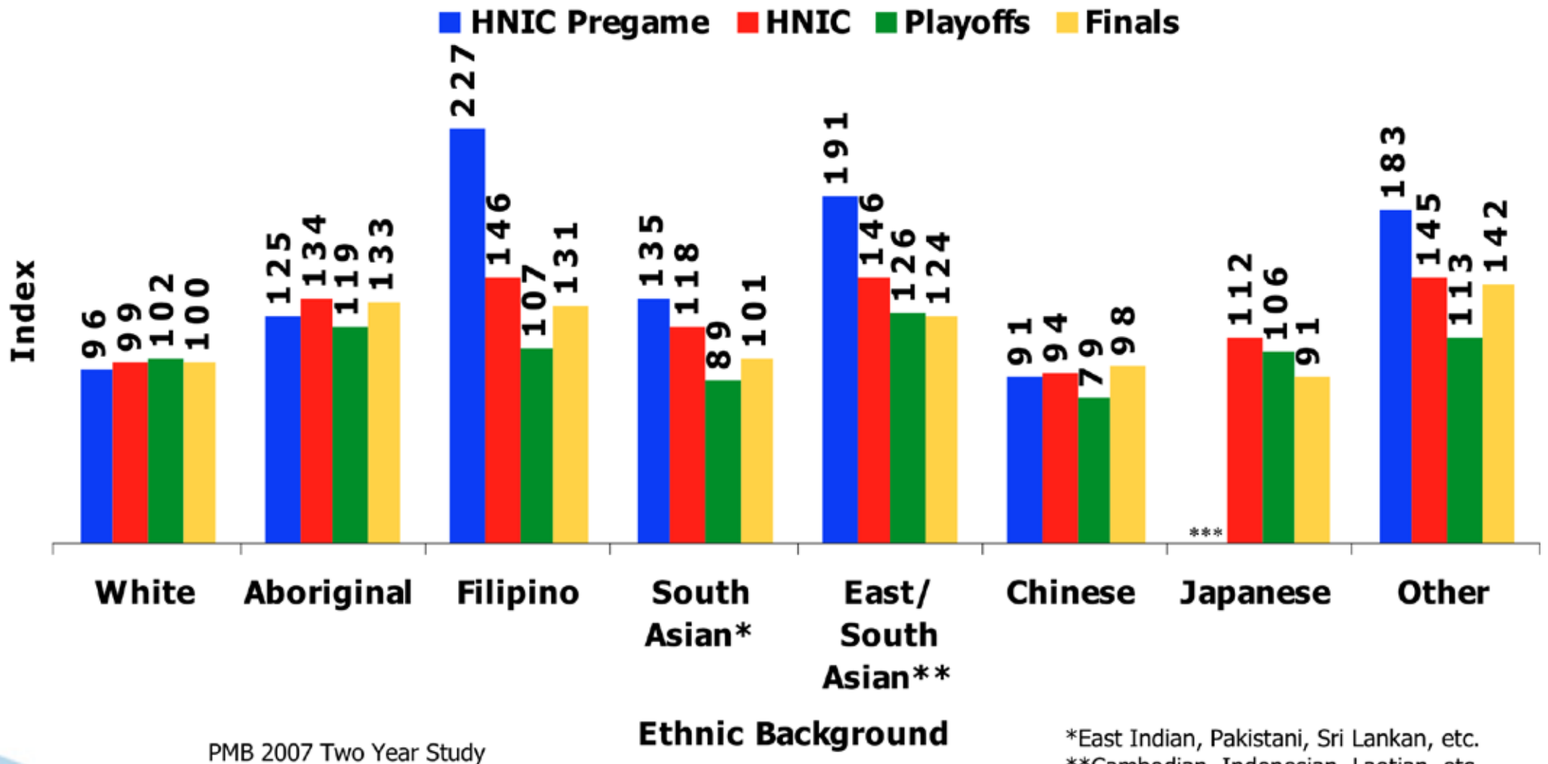
HNIC audience is ethnically diverse



PMB 2007 Two Year Study
Base: Persons 12+

*East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.
**Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, etc

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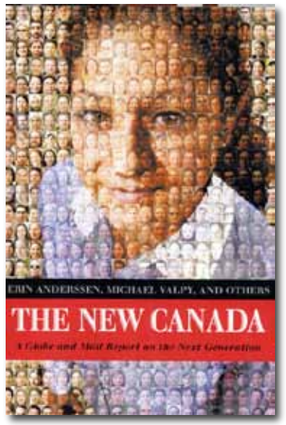
FIGURE 3 | IMPORTANT FACTORS WHEN CHOOSING A SPOUSE

BY AGE GROUP

FIGURE SHOWS % SAYING "VERY IMPORTANT" OR "IMPORTANT"



When choosing a spouse, is it very important, important, not very important or not at all important that both people share similar...

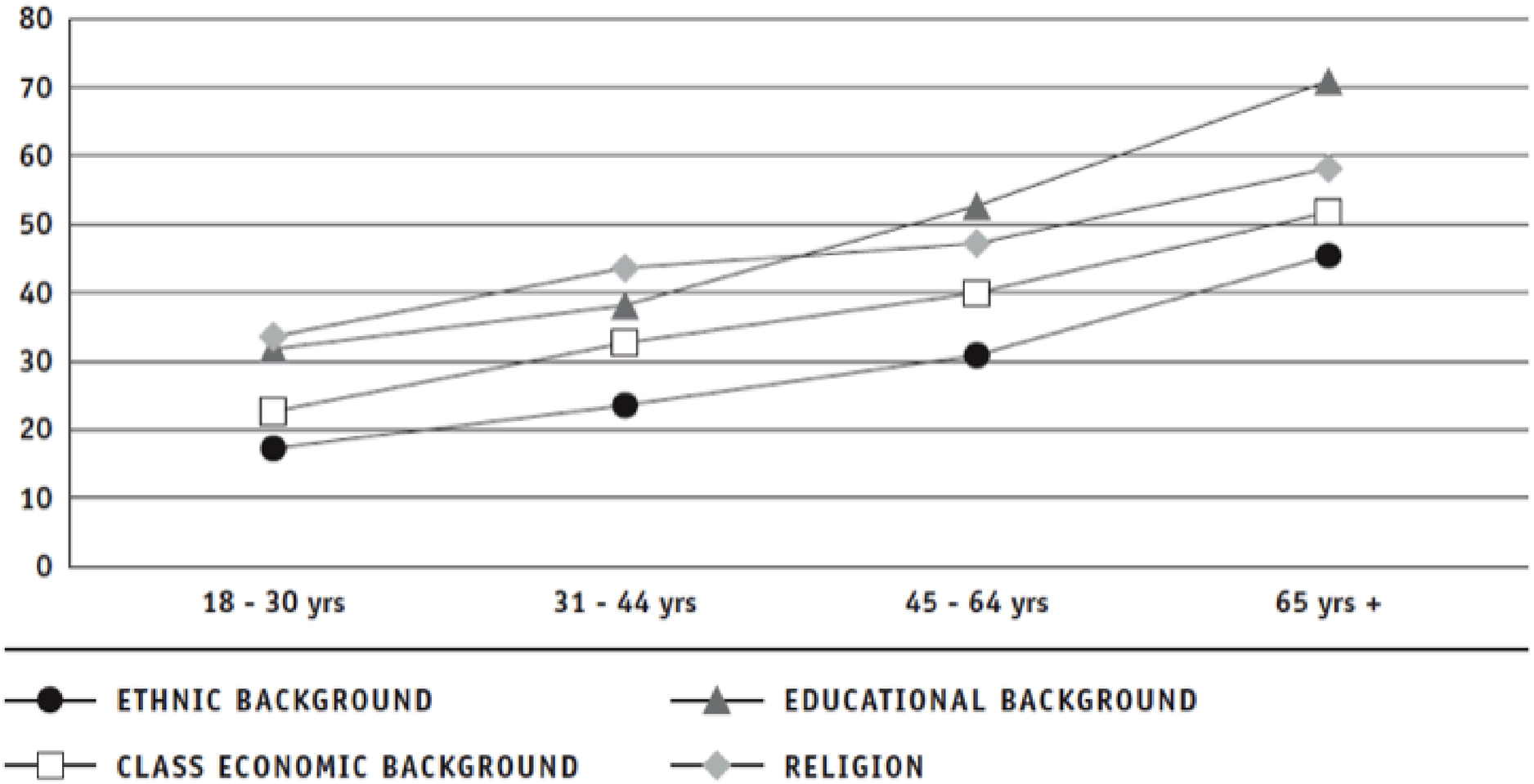


FIGURE 2 | IMPORTANT FACTORS WHEN CHOOSING A SPOUSE

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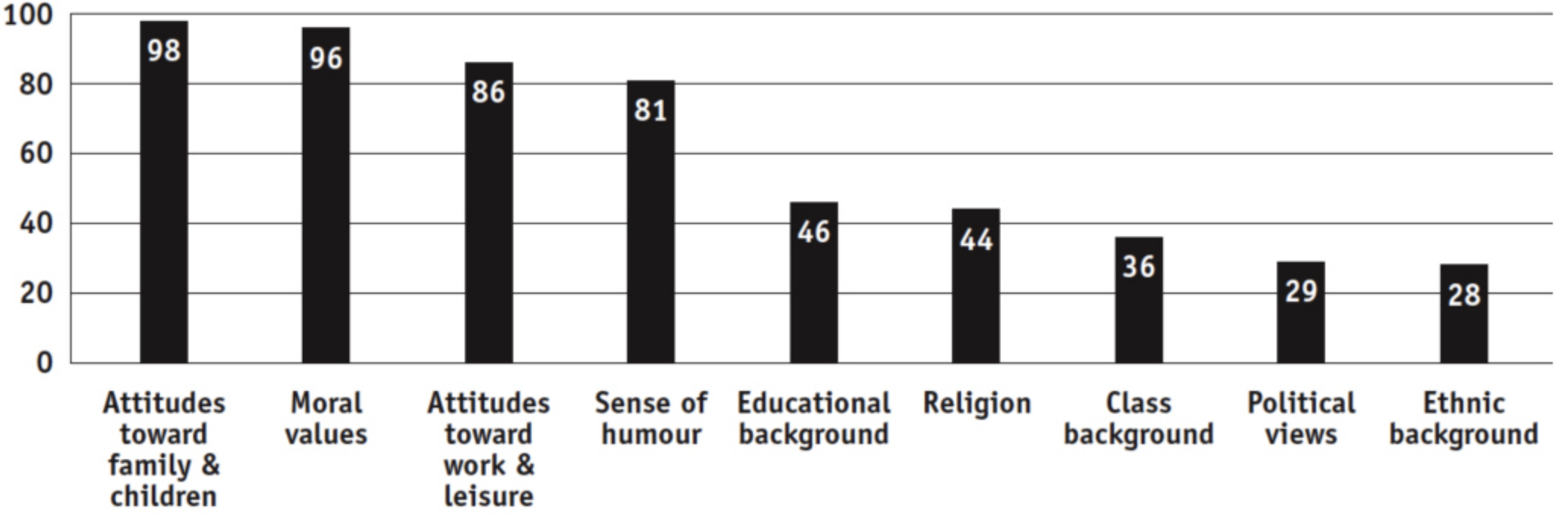


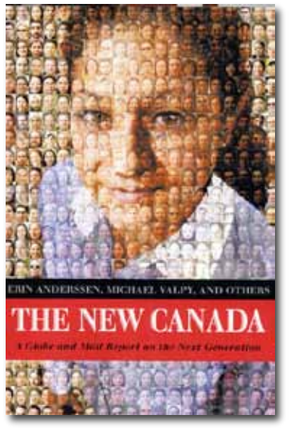
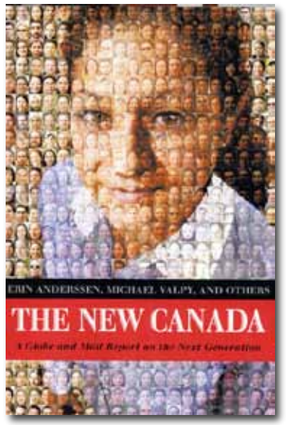


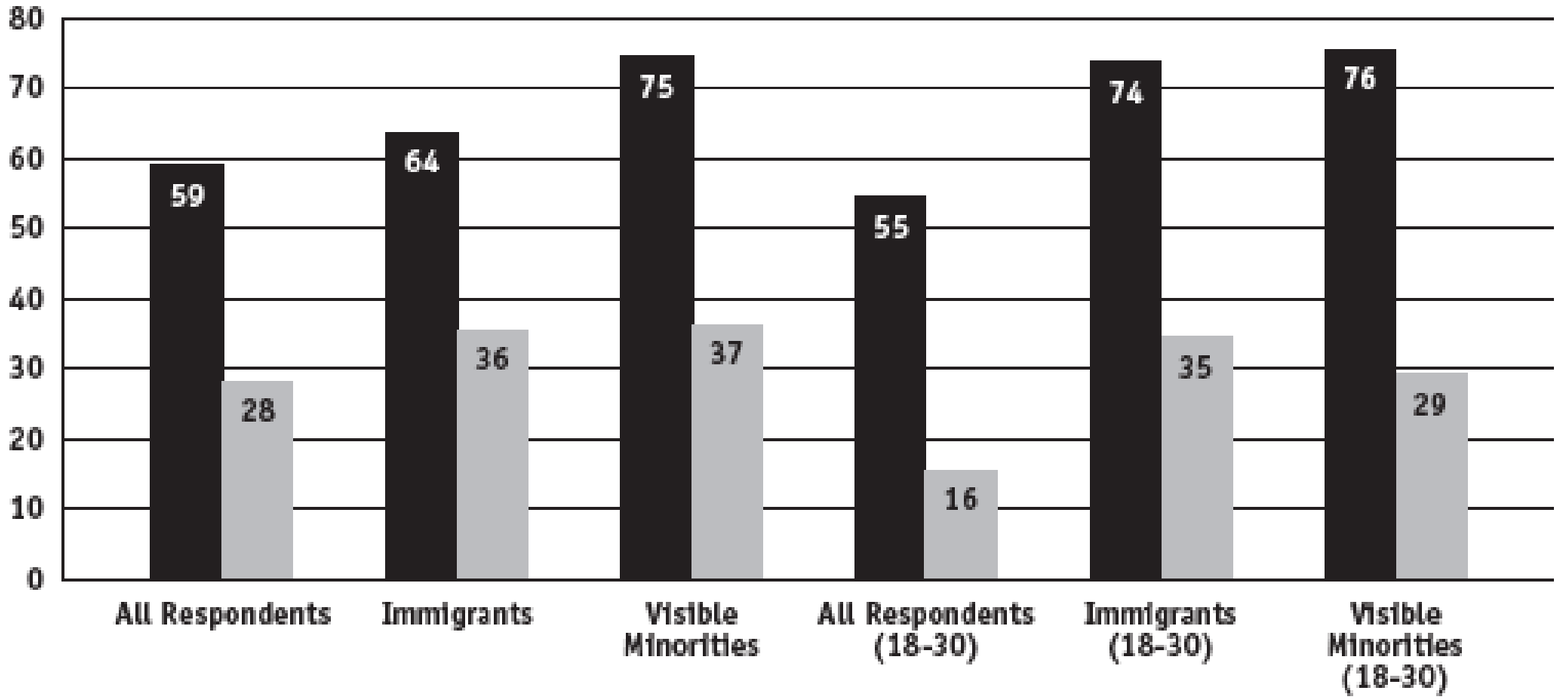
FIGURE 7 | THE IMPORTANCE OF ETHNICITY

FIGURE SHOWS % SAYING IT IS "VERY IMPORTANT" OR "IMPORTANT"



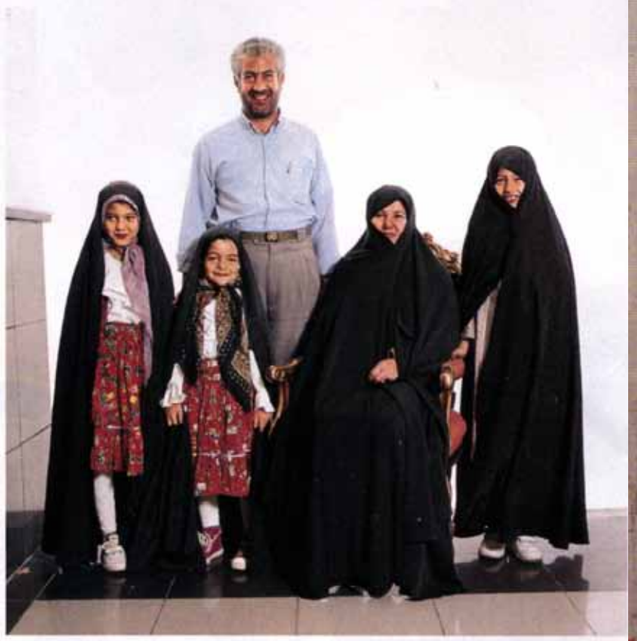
I will read you a number of factors which may contribute to one's personal feeling of identity. For each, please tell me whether it is very important, important, not very important or not at all important to your own sense of identity **ethnicity or race?**

When choosing a spouse, is it very important, important, not very important or not at all important that both people share similar **ethnic background?**



ETHNICITY IMPORTANT TO PERSONAL IDENTITY

ETHNIC BACKGROUND IMPORTANT WHEN CHOOSING SPOUSE



Meet *K-Town's* Jennifer Field

By Kenny Chan and Gayatri Bajpai

Jennifer Field of *K-town* talks fame, love, identity and showbiz.

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Word from Japan | Post-Quake

By Chelsey Stuyt (reposted by Gayatri Bajpai)

Chelsey Stuyt writes on Japan: If this were North America, people would be crying in the streets. The Japanese are being pretty stoic about it and seem to be taking it in stride while preparing for the possibility of further quakes and tsunami.

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There are plenty of ways we can help those living in Japan, thanks to technology. Every little bit counts - nothing is too little.

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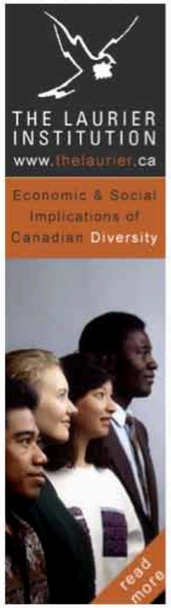

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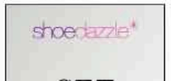


1.2 BUT WHERE ARE YOU REALLY FROM?

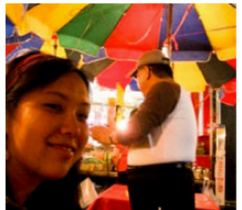
1.2 Part IX: This is real life

By Rosel Kim

When I hear the word "home," my mind conjures up the following memories: buying an illicit bowl of *Shin Ramyun* full of MSG from a snack cart on a busy street in Seoul, riding my bike down a hill overlooking half-finished condos in a developing suburb of **Ilsan**, getting Slurpees and going to my first "job" at the community library in a sleepy suburb of North Vancouver. A recent addition to my memory of home includes eating a hot dog toaste on St. Laurent Street on my way home from a night out.

As you can see, this picture is neither coherent nor unified. As a result, my answer to the deceptively simple-sounding question, *So where are you really from?* is as equally disorganized. I was born in **Seoul, Korea**. My family moved to **Ilsan, Gyeonggi-Do** when I was nine but moved back to Seoul after two years. I immigrated to Vancouver with my family when I was 12. Then I went to a university in Kingston, Ontario, but I've been living in Montreal for over two years now. It's quite a mouthful to say, especially if you're in a loud room full of people meeting each other for the first time. It is, however, a good gauge to see if someone can actually grasp and accept your hyphenated existence; if they stick around until the end of the answer, and resist asking questions like, "How do you say [something often mundane] in Korean?" Then, we have a very good chance of getting to know each other.

> In Paris, two men decided I did not deserve to sit peacefully and enjoy my ride.



I've also realized that sometimes it doesn't matter where I'm from at all, because people will ascribe me a home that has nothing to do with my life. When I was buying coffee at a neighborhood cafe earlier this week, the barista asked why a Chinese person like me could speak French so well. Two years ago, in a Paris metro, two men decided that I did not deserve to sit peacefully and enjoy the ride because they figured I was a *fille*

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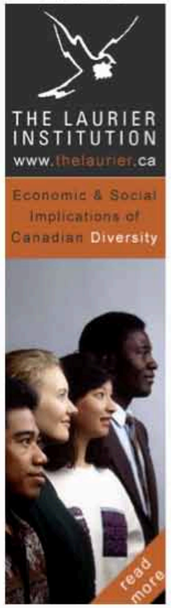

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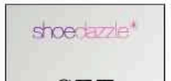


1.2 BUT WHERE ARE YOU REALLY FROM?

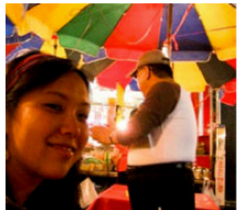
1.2 Part IX: This is real life

By Rosel Kim

When I hear the word "home," my mind conjures up the following memories: buying an illicit bowl of *Shin Ramyun* full of MSG from a snack cart on a busy street in Seoul, riding my bike down a hill overlooking half-finished condos in a developing suburb of **Ilsan**, getting Slurpees and going to my first "job" at the community library in a sleepy suburb of North Vancouver. A recent addition to my memory of home includes eating a hot dog toaste on St. Laurent Street on my way home from a night out.

As you can see, this picture is neither coherent nor unified. As a result, my answer to the deceptively simple-sounding question, *So where are you really from?* is as equally disorganized. I was born in **Seoul, Korea**. My family moved to **Ilsan, Gyeonggi-Do** when I was nine but moved back to Seoul after two years. I immigrated to Vancouver with my family when I was 12. Then I went to a university in Kingston, Ontario, but I've been living in Montreal for over two years now. It's quite a mouthful to say, especially if you're in a loud room full of people meeting each other for the first time. It is, however, a good gauge to see if someone can actually grasp and accept your hyphenated existence; if they stick around until the end of the answer, and resist asking questions like, "How do you say [something often mundane] in Korean?" Then, we have a very good chance of getting to know each other.

> In Paris, two men decided I did not deserve to sit peacefully and enjoy my ride.



I've also realized that sometimes it doesn't matter where I'm from at all, because people will ascribe me a home that has nothing to do with my life. When I was buying coffee at a neighborhood cafe earlier this week, the barista asked why a Chinese person like me could speak French so well. Two years ago, in a Paris metro, two men decided that I did not deserve to sit peacefully and enjoy the ride because they figured I was a *fille*

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Meet *K-Town's* Jennifer Field

By Kenny Chan and Gayatri Bajpai

Jennifer Field of *K-town* talks fame, love, identity and showbiz.

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Word from Japan | Post-Quake

By Chelsey Stuyt (reposted by Gayatri Bajpai)

Chelsey Stuyt writes on Japan: If this were North America, people would be crying in the streets. The Japanese are being pretty stoic about it and seem to be taking it in stride while preparing for the possibility of further quakes and tsunami.

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By Schema Mag

There are plenty of ways we can help those living in Japan, thanks to technology. Every little bit counts - nothing is too little.

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By Kathy Ko

The last African-American male supermodel was Tyson Beckford but that occurred in the 1990s. It's time for an African male model to be the main feature in magazine editorials.

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Muhammad Ali, a monument of boxing, gets his own monument made completely out of

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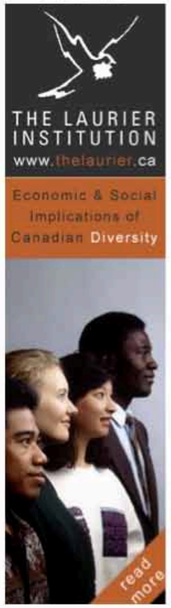

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1.2 BUT WHERE ARE YOU REALLY FROM?

1.2 Part VIII: A Place to Call Home

By Midya Tsoy

Nanaimo, Canada has its flaws. The transit system, for instance, and its few odd passengers; these people tend to get too carried away with their curiosity. After a long day of classes, I want nothing more than to get home as soon as possible but the bus ride takes twice as long as a car would, which can get old pretty quickly. When I bump into my friend, Nadya, at the bus stop, on my way home, it usually takes away the agony of the long bus ride ahead. We would get a chance to catch up and laugh about the weekend, not paying any attention to the stares of random people. That is, until one of them finally works up the courage to interrupt us and ask,

> I used to get impatient with the nosy questions.

"Excuse me, what language are you speaking?" He would look at my (white) Russian friend.

"Russian" Nadya would reply.

"Russian," he'd repeat as if clarifying it for his own sake, "So ... You speak Russian too?" he'd nod in my direction.

"I presume I do."

"Wow, so where are you from?" he'd linger

"... Russia"

"No, no, but where are you *really* from?"

"... Russia" my tone never changing...

"But ... You're Asian."

"She's Korean-Russian" Nadya would say, her patience dissolving quickly.

"And you speak English so fluently," he'd gesture towards me again.

"... I grew up in the U.S." I hesitate wondering whether that's too much information to be giving away to a stranger.

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MULTICULTURALISM 3.0: INTERCULTURAL FLUENCY

Intercultural Understanding

The University engages in reflection and action to build intercultural aptitudes, create a strong sense of inclusion, and enrich our intellectual and social life.

Stop. There beside you is another person. Meet [them]. This sort of encounter is the greatest event, the most vital experience of all.
Ryszard Kapuściński

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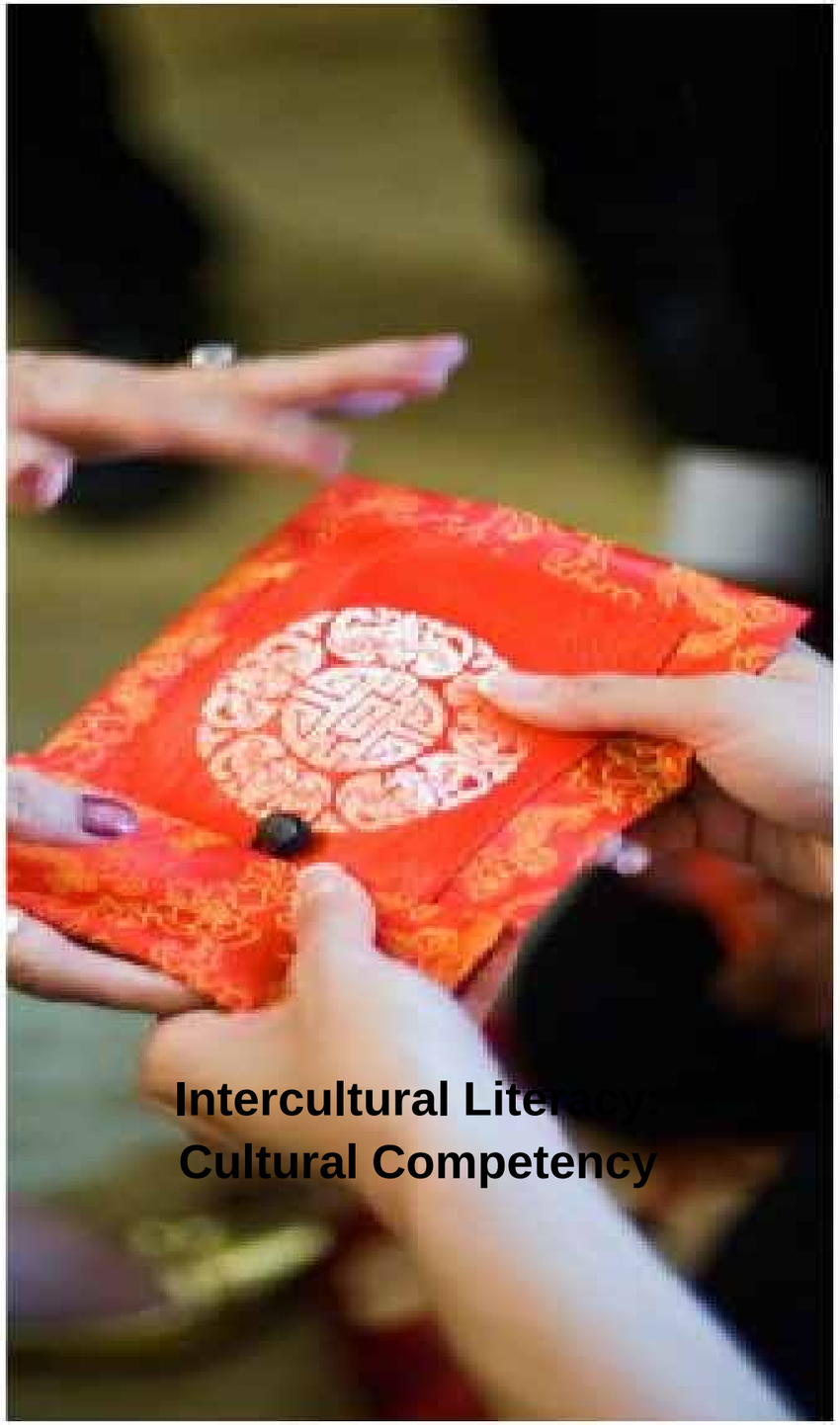
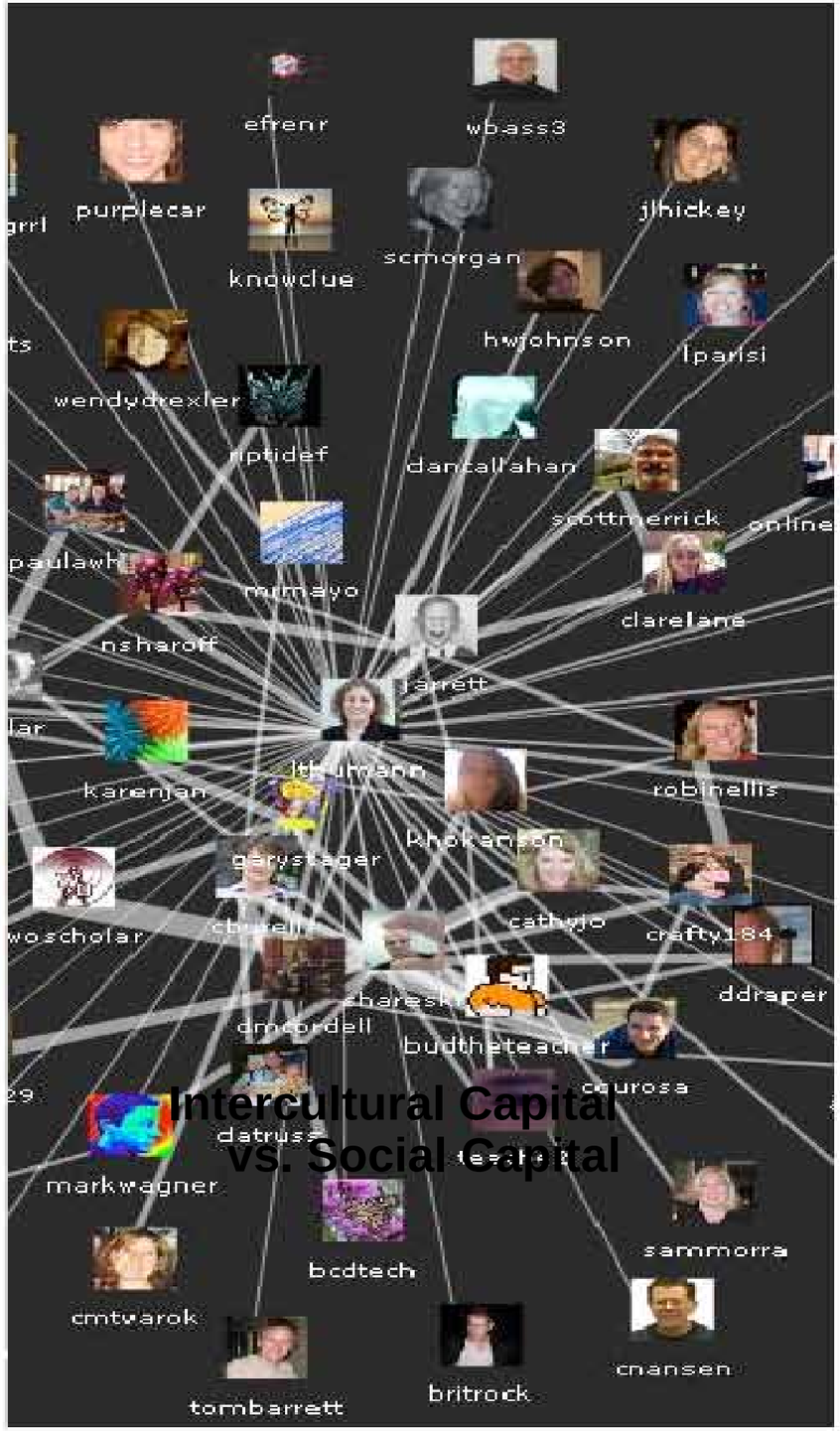
Intercultural Literacy:
Intercultural Communication

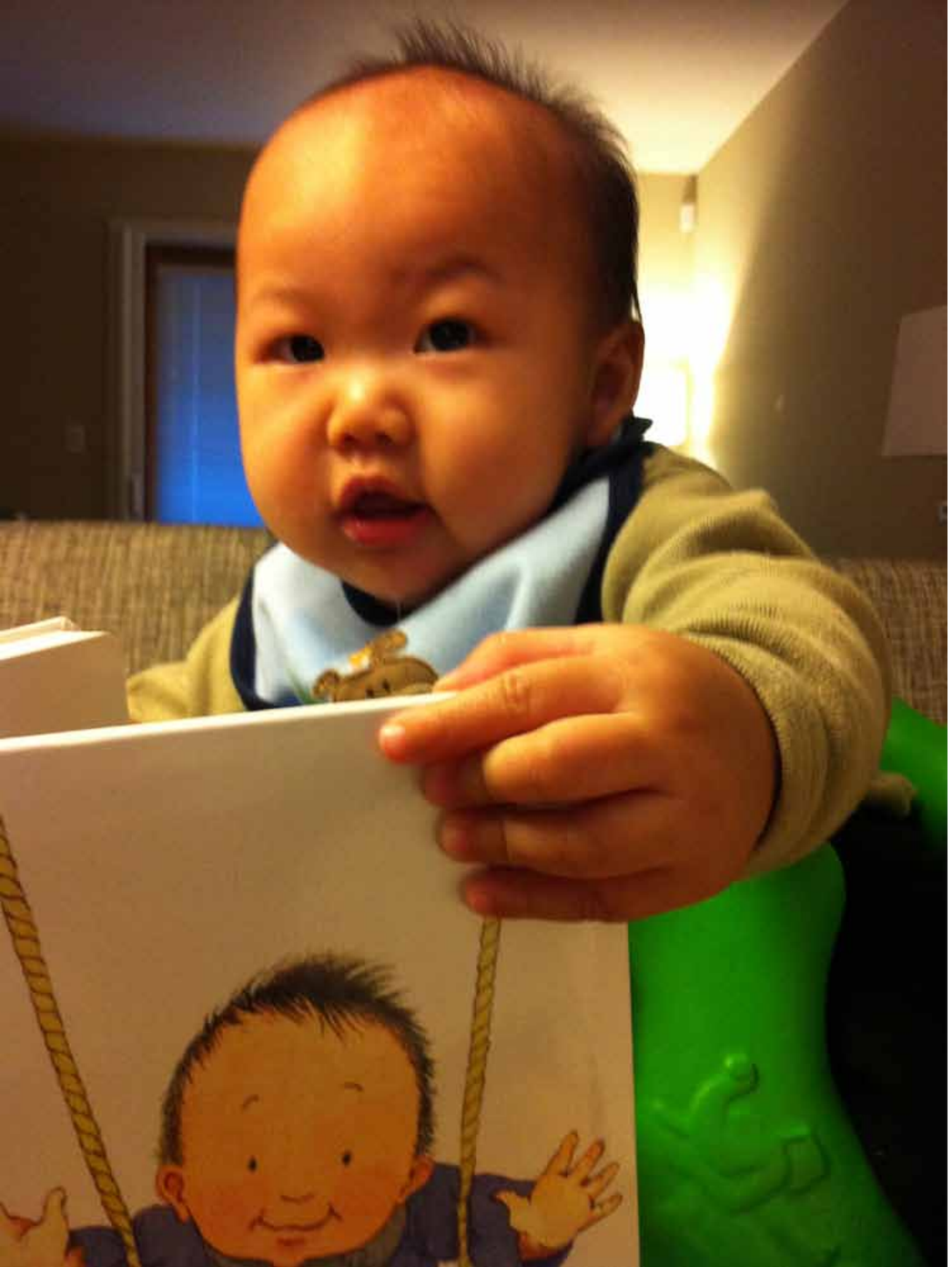


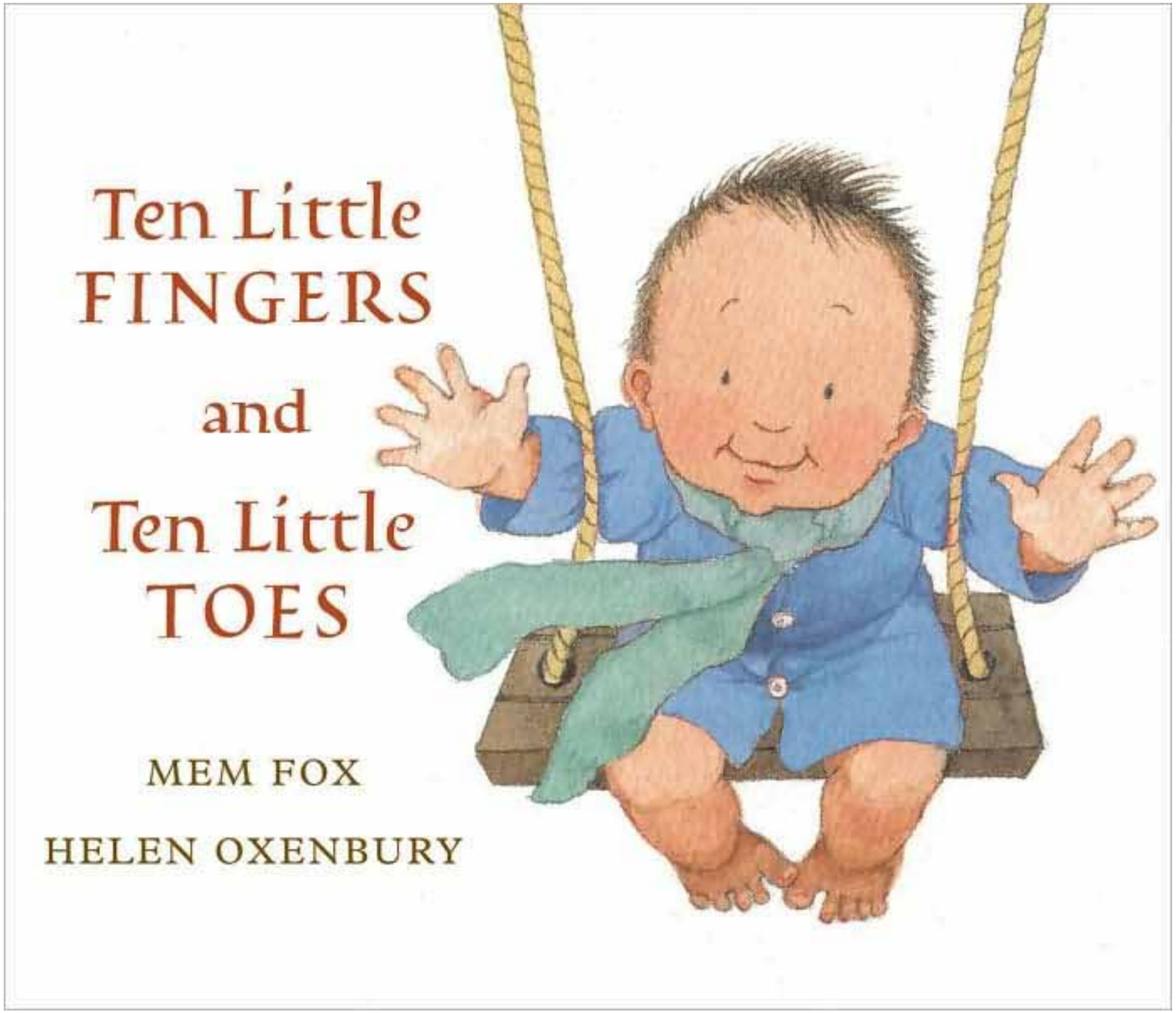
Intercultural Literacy:
Cultural Competency



Intercultural Capital
vs. Social Capital

Young Lee, Jennifer Field, Joe Cha, Scarlet Chan, Violet Kim, Peter Le, Steve Kim and Jasmine Chang





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