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The 'For You' Effect: Users' Perceptions on How TikTok's
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Abstract

This study explores how Asian and Western Caucasian participants perceive TikTok's recommendation algorithm in relation to Asian identity. Based on 16 think-aloud sessions and interviews, the findings indicate that participants viewed TikTok as amplifying racialized narratives – particularly through the sexualization of Asian bodies, the reduction of diverse identities into a single “Asian” category, and negative stereotypes about India. While some dismissed this content as humorous, others emphasized its harmful effects, revealing differences in interpretation across cultural and personal contexts. Despite varied descriptions of the algorithm, participants' accounts often converged around shared algorithmic imaginaries centered on personalization. These dynamics extended beyond digital spaces, shaping self-perceptions, reinforcing gendered and racialized expectations, and contributing to exclusion in social life. The study advances frameworks such as the algorithmized-self and Identity Strainer Theory by showing how algorithmic amplification influences both online visibility and offline identity.

Keywords: TikTok; algorithm; Asian identity; stereotypes; racial representation

Zusammenfassung

Diese Studie untersucht, wie asiatische sowie westliche und kaukasische Teilnehmende den Empfehlungsalgorithmus von TikTok in Bezug auf die Darstellung und Aushandlung asiatischer Identität wahrnehmen. Basierend auf 16 „Think-Aloud“-Sitzungen und Interviews zeigen die Ergebnisse, dass die Teilnehmenden TikTok als Verstärker rassialisierter Narrative wahrnahmen – insbesondere durch die Sexualisierung asiatischer Körper, die Reduktion vielfältiger Identitäten auf eine einzige „asiatische“ Kategorie und negative Stereotype über Indien. Während einige diese Inhalte als humorvoll abtaten, betonten andere deren schädliche Wirkungen, wodurch Unterschiede in der Interpretation je nach kulturellem und persönlichem Kontext verdeutlicht. Trotz unterschiedlicher Beschreibungen des Algorithmus liefen die Schilderungen der Teilnehmenden häufig auf gemeinsame algorithmische Imaginationen hinaus, die insbesondere auf Personalisierung ausgerichtet waren. Diese Dynamiken beschränkten sich nicht auf den digitalen Raum, sondern prägten auch Selbstwahrnehmungen, verstärkten geschlechtsspezifische und rassialisierte Erwartungen und trugen zu Erfahrungen sozialer Ausgrenzung bei. Die Studie erweitert bestehende Konzepte wie das „algorithmized-self“ und die „Identity Strainer Theory“, indem sie zeigt, wie algorithmische Verstärkung sowohl die Online-Sichtbarkeit als auch die Offline-Identität beeinflusst.

Schlüsselwörter: TikTok; Algorithmus; asiatische Identität; Stereotypen; rassifizierte Repräsentation

1. Introduction

Social media has become a central space where racial identities are constructed and, at times, distorted. For many users – particularly those from marginalized groups – platforms like TikTok are not only sites of expression but also spaces where algorithmically curated bias reinforces narrow and harmful portrayals (Phan & Wark, 2021; Simpson & Semaan 2020). These systems influence what users see and how racial identities are perceived and negotiated, online as well as in everyday life.

Within this context, Asian populations are especially affected. As one of the most diverse and fastest-growing groups in the world – encompassing a wide range of cultural and ethnic identities and representing over 40% of the world’s international migrants (IOM, 2024) – their representation online carries significant weight. As TikTok’s cultural reach expands, however, narratives about Asians are increasingly shaped by algorithmic logics that favor emotionally charged and stereotypical content (Amarikwa, 2023). The urgency of this issue became especially clear during the COVID-19 pandemic. Platforms like TikTok amplified harmful stereotypes that spilled into offline life, fueling both hate crimes and more subtle forms of digital dehumanization (Nguyen et al., 2020; Dipoppa et al., 2023).

Considering these concerns, this study is motivated by the recent rise in anti-Asian sentiment and TikTok’s growing cultural influence, which together highlight the need to understand how such representations are perceived and negotiated. Based on 16 think-aloud sessions and semi-structured interviews with Asian and Western Caucasian participants, it explores how platform logics are experienced, interpreted, and connected to processes of racialization. The analysis draws on Hall’s (1973) encoding/decoding model to examine audience interpretation, Identity Strainer Theory (Karizat et al., 2021) to understand algorithmic filtering of narratives, Bucher’s (2016) concept of algorithmic imaginaries to explore how participants interpret algorithms, and the algorithmized-self framework (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022) to analyze identity co-construction.

As an exploratory qualitative study with a small sample, the findings are not generalizable and cannot directly assess algorithmic mechanisms, which are often described as a “black box” (Springer, Hollis, & Whittaker, 2018). Nonetheless, they provide valuable insights into racial representation and participants’ everyday encounters with algorithmic mediation. In this way, the study offers rare empirical evidence on how algorithmic design is perceived to shape cross-cultural understandings of Asian identity and highlights the offline challenges faced by marginalized groups. These insights lay the groundwork for developing more equitable and transparent algorithmic systems while advancing debates on algorithmic bias and identity in the context of racialized discourse on TikTok.

As a Chinese student who has lived and studied in Europe (Austria and Hungary) for around six years, I position myself as both an insider and an outsider in this research. Sharing cultural backgrounds with Asian participants allowed me to connect with many of their experiences, while language barriers and broader cultural differences often placed me as an outsider, especially in Western contexts (Goundar, 2025). This dual positioning shaped how I approached the study: my Asian background made me attentive to racialized portrayals circulating across online and offline spaces, while my training in a Western academic environment influenced how I interpreted them. To remain reflexive, I relied on systematic coding and theoretical frameworks to balance personal insight with analytical rigor. During

interviews, I also avoided sharing too much of my own perspective, allowing participants to express their views freely.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Construction of Asian Identity in Western Discourse

Stereotypes play a central role in structural racism, shaping how racialized groups are positioned within dominant social hierarchies (Winston et al., 2004). In Western contexts, one of the most enduring stereotypes about Asians is the “model minority” myth, which portrays them as uniformly intelligent, hardworking, and economically successful (Lee & Joo, 2005). Although this narrative may appear complimentary, it obscures systemic inequalities, minimizes experiences of racism, and often delegitimizes discrimination against Asian communities (Azhar et al., 2021).

The model minority myth also contributes to other harmful consequences. It reinforces assumptions of universal academic success, leading to the underdiagnosis of learning difficulties and excluding Asian students from equity initiatives (Chao, Chiu, & Lee, 2010; Takaki, 1998). It erases struggles with mental health and is sometimes used to justify limited social and policy support (Suzuki, 2002). The myth gained traction after the 1965 U.S. Immigration Act, which prioritized highly skilled Asian professionals. Their economic success was often celebrated as proof of cultural values like discipline and strong family ties (Wang, Wu, & Rajtmajer, 2023). Yet this framing oversimplified the diversity of Asian communities and obscured the struggles of lower-income groups such as Southeast Asian refugees (Suzuki, 2002).

Underlying these narratives is the persistent notion of Asians as “perpetual foreigners,” regardless of their citizenship or generational status (Tuan, 1999). As a result, this racialization often assigns diverse Asian groups to a panethnic identity (Espiritu, 1992), though not all groups experience it equally. For example, South Asians are often underrepresented or even excluded from the broader “Asian” category (Palat, 2002). Such exclusions highlight internal hierarchies within panethnic constructs, shaped by racial visibility, geopolitics, and the dominance of East Asian representation in mainstream media.

Beyond panethnic categorization, these narratives are also deeply gendered. Scholars argue that gender and sexual identity cannot be separated from racial identity (Liu & Chang, 2007). For Asian women, this often means being hypersexualized – both “delicately and dangerously” (Yamamoto, 2000, p. 4). Such portrayals regulate femininity in racialized bodies, shaping expectations of how Asian women should act, look, and express themselves. These stereotypes combine Confucian cultural norms with Western patriarchal ideals, reinforcing traits like passivity, exoticism, and emotional restraint as desirable. Ultimately, they function to serve the white male gaze (Azhar et al., 2021).

At the same time, Asian women are often placed outside – or even in opposition to – white feminist frameworks. Their hypersexualized and culturally regulated portrayals conflict with the “universal” female subject assumed in dominant feminist discourse (Pyke & Johnson, 2003; Yamamoto, 2000). Yamamoto (2000), for example, notes that Asian American women are made hyper-visible as exoticized objects, yet remain invisible as feminist subjects. Their experiences are either erased or subsumed under those of white women. The “perpetual foreigner” stereotype adds another layer of exclusion, positioning Asian women as outsiders to feminist debates on the basis of race. This dynamic not only sidelines them within feminist

spaces but also sustains orientalist fantasies, reinforcing processes of fetishization and othering (Azhar et al., 2021).

By contrast, Asian men are often portrayed as emasculated, socially awkward, or asexual – figures far removed from dominant Western ideals of masculinity (Kimmel, 1994; Chang, 2015). Such tropes frame Asian men as passive and sexually undesirable, constructing them as embodying subordinate or deviant forms of masculinity (Liu & Chang, 2007). This contributes to their symbolic marginalization in romantic, professional, and social contexts (Chou, 2012). More recently, however, cultural trends such as the global rise of K-pop have introduced a shift. K-pop, short for Korean popular music, refers to South Korea’s globalized music industry, which has become a transnational cultural phenomenon (Yoon, 2022). Within this context, Asian men are increasingly idealized through “soft” masculinity that emphasizes youthfulness, physical appearance, and gentleness (S. Jung, 2010; Bennett, 2016; Yim, 2018). While this visibility challenges older stereotypes of emasculation, it still reduces representation to narrow, appearance-driven ideals rather than offering more diverse models of masculinity.

The literature shows that longstanding stereotypes in Western discourse continue to shape Asian representation. The model minority myth (Lee & Joo, 2005) and the perpetual foreigner trope (Tuan, 1999) illustrate how externally imposed categories function as racializing mechanisms. Panethnic identities are often constructed in this way, with East Asian experiences dominating representations (Espiritu, 1992). At the same time, gendered portrayals of Asian femininity and masculinity reproduce narrow ideals and regulatory norms (Pyke & Johnson, 2003; Kimmel, 1994; Chou, 2012). Together, these dynamics exemplify how racialized narratives operate as mechanisms of structural racism (Winston et al., 2004).

2.2. TikTok and Algorithmic Amplification

These longstanding stereotypes are not confined to traditional media; digital platforms have expanded and intensified their reach. TikTok – with over 1.5 billion monthly users and guided by algorithmic curation (Dean, 2022) – has been critiqued as a site where racialized narratives are circulated and reshaped. Amarikwa (2023) highlights how TikTok’s algorithm creates harms for people of color, while Karizat et al. (2021) document users’ perceptions of racial identity suppression in content curation.

Unlike traditional media shaped by editorial gatekeeping, TikTok’s recommendation algorithm defines how users experience and engage with the platform (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022). Every like, comment, or follow feeds data back into the system, creating a feedback loop that refines recommendations and makes the feed increasingly personalized (Adanyin, 2024). As Wang (2022, p. 60) notes, “recommendation algorithms are reshaping the ecology of digital video sharing platforms,” with TikTok standing out as a particularly striking example. Unlike many platforms that rely mostly on active behaviors, TikTok also incorporates passive signals such as viewing duration, scrolling speed, location or device settings to predict engagement (Zha, 2020; Tinuiti Team, 2024). Recent reports also suggest that TikTok is experimenting with tracking user activity beyond the app, for example through its “Engaged Session” feature, which allows advertisers to retarget users based on their on-site activity after clicking an ad (The Keyword, 2025). This highlights the broader range of signals that may shape recommendations.

This design raises questions about which narratives gain traction, and why. Winner (1980) and Gillespie (2010) argue that algorithms are not neutral tools, but political artefacts shaped by institutional agendas, cultural assumptions, and broader ideological frameworks. Others have made similar observations: Bozdag (2013), for instance, highlights how algorithms privilege certain voices while marginalizing others, while Friedman and Nissenbaum (1996) stress that such systems can reproduce unfair discrimination. This broader dynamic is also evident on TikTok, where algorithmic curation influences which narratives become visible.

In practice, emotionally charged, easily consumable content – especially racial or ethnic stereotypes framed as entertainment – is particularly likely to go viral on TikTok (Amarikwa, 2023). Comedic skits exaggerating East Asian accents or sexualized depictions of Asian bodies, for instance, often gain attention not because they express authentic cultural pride but because they align with familiar audience expectations and biases, making them more “engagement-friendly.” As a result, reductive portrayals are amplified, while counter-hegemonic perspectives are pushed to the margins.

Identity Strainer Theory (Karizat et al., 2021) captures this dynamic by framing TikTok’s algorithms as filters that privilege dominant identities while muting marginalized ones. Based on interviews with 15 US-based TikTok users, Karizat et al. (2021) show that visibility on the platform is distributed unevenly: content aligning with mainstream norms is disproportionately promoted. Participants also reported believing they could “train” the algorithm by selectively engaging with content to better reflect their preferences.

This belief connects to Bucher’s (2016) concept of the “algorithmic imaginary.” Bucher describes this as “ways of thinking about what algorithms are, what they should be, how they function, and what these imaginations in turn make possible” (p. 40). Although users may not directly see or technically understand algorithms, they nonetheless perceive their effects. This felt presence forms the basis of an algorithmic imaginary, shaping how users interact with and experience algorithms over time (Bucher, 2016).

Empirical studies highlight how such imaginaries diverge in relation to TikTok’s algorithmic system. In Karizat et al.’s (2021) study, the algorithm was perceived as an uneven filter privileging mainstream content. By contrast, Simpson and Semaan (2020), drawing on 16 interviews with LGBTQ+ TikTok users, emphasized the platform’s potential to foster identity expression and community-building for marginalized groups. Yet this more optimistic view tends to overlook the structural asymmetries built into algorithmic systems, where visibility ultimately depends on conforming to platform logics. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that while users may sense the presence of algorithms, their interpretations can differ significantly.

Just as users’ imaginaries of algorithms diverge, interpretations of racialized content also differ across cultural contexts. What one user finds humorous or affirming, another may find degrading or offensive (Matamoros-Fernández, Rodríguez, & Wikström, 2022). For example, the “angry Black woman” stereotype (Ashley, 2013) illustrates how racialized portrayals are often evaluated in terms of “offensiveness,” a standard that Bell (2021, p. 166) describes as “a subjective reaction to an experience that can vary greatly among persons.”

Drawing on Hall’s (1973) encoding/decoding model, such differences show that media messages are always open to multiple readings, shaped by cultural background and lived experience. This is particularly evident in racialized humor and cultural performance, where

the line between celebration and mockery is often blurred. As Kim, Lee, and Oh (2024) note, marginalized groups may interpret algorithmic patterns through the lens of past discrimination, while dominant groups are more likely to see them as harmless entertainment. In this way, algorithmic amplification not only shapes online narratives but also risks reinforcing offline biases, normalizing racial stereotypes across diverse audiences.

Collectively, the literature shows that TikTok's algorithm tends to amplify reductive and stereotypical portrayals while distributing visibility unevenly, privileging dominant norms and pushing marginalized perspectives to the margins (Karizat et al., 2021; Amarikwa, 2023). Users are not passive in the face of these dynamics; through their "algorithmic imaginaries" they make sense of and respond to algorithmic power in diverse ways (Bucher, 2016). Yet interpretations of racialized content often diverge across cultural contexts: what members of dominant groups may dismiss as light entertainment, marginalized users are more likely to recognize as degrading or discriminatory (Hall, 1973; Kim et al., 2024).

2.3. Algorithmic Identity Co-Production

Algorithmic amplification does not just decide which narratives get the most visibility – it also shapes how users view themselves and how they choose to present their identities. The algorithmized-self framework (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022) offers a valuable lens for understanding this dynamic, showing that identity is not only expressed but also co-constructed through ongoing interaction with recommendation systems. On TikTok, this often plays out through the "For You Page" (FYP), where the algorithm curates what users encounter and, in turn, influences how they choose to present themselves.

Bhandari and Bimo (2022) describe this as a form of dual engagement: users shape the algorithm through their activity while simultaneously being shaped by it, creating a continuous cycle of identity co-production (Parfaite, 2024). This cycle often pushes users toward self-optimization, where users adjust their content to meet algorithmic preferences (Beer, 2009; Bucher, 2012). For Asian creators, this often means leaning into racialized or gendered tropes, since these portrayals are rewarded with higher visibility, while more diverse or authentic representations are often pushed to the margins (Gómez-Bernal & Ortega-Barón, 2025). Over time, this reinforces the sense that only certain, stereotyped versions of Asian identity will be seen and amplified.

So far, most work on the algorithmized-self has focused on online self-presentation: how users adjust their digital personas to align with algorithmic logics. What remains less explored is how these dynamics spill over into offline life, shaping self-perceptions, social interactions, and broader identity development. Scholars of racialized media effects (e.g., Museus & Truong, 2013; Chang, 2015) argue that this is especially significant for Asian users, whose digital portrayals often intersect with long-standing stereotypes around gender, achievement, and belonging.

For Asian users, the pressures created by algorithms carry specific racialized consequences. Platforms like TikTok don't just reflect identity – they actively shape it by amplifying dominant narratives and sidelining more complex or resistant expressions. Over time, this creates feedback loops that can foster subtle, internalized forms of racialization, influencing users' sense of self, belonging, and even offline relationships (Ionescu & Licu, 2023). Sexualized portrayals are especially powerful in this respect, often contributing to internalized oppression and gendered racial trauma (Museus & Truong, 2013; Chang, 2015).

Prior research has also shown that Asian women may be particularly vulnerable to body dissatisfaction, partly due to cultural values that emphasize modesty and self-restraint (Pyke & Johnson, 2003).

Yet these dynamics are not accepted passively. Some users push back, using irony or counter-narratives to resist algorithmic expectations (Brinkman & Jacobi, 2023). Viewed through the lens of the algorithmized-self, TikTok is not just a space where identity is imposed from above – it is also a site of ongoing negotiation, where users both conform to and challenge algorithmic logics, continually reshaping how identity is represented and lived.

Altogether, the literature shows that TikTok's algorithm shapes identity through a cycle of dual engagement, where users both influence and are influenced by recommendation systems (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022). For Asian creators, this often means pressure to reproduce racialized or gendered tropes, since these tend to be rewarded, while more authentic expressions remain less visible. These dynamics can also extend into offline life, reinforcing racialized self-perceptions and struggles of identity (Ionescu & Licu, 2023). However, users are not entirely passive. Some resist by producing counter-narratives, showing that TikTok is a space where algorithmic logics constrain identity, while everyday acts of resistance can also reshape it (Brinkman & Jacobi, 2023).

Despite extensive scholarship on Asian stereotypes in Western discourse and growing research on algorithmic mediation, little is known about how participants perceive TikTok's algorithmic curation of Asian representation or how such portrayals are interpreted across different cultural contexts. Existing work on algorithmic imaginaries (Bucher, 2016) highlights how users make sense of algorithms, while research on the algorithmized-self (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022) emphasizes online self-presentation. Yet both strands largely overlook how algorithmic dynamics extend into offline experiences of identity, belonging, and discrimination. To address these gaps, this study examines how participants from Asian and Western Caucasian backgrounds interpret TikTok's role in filtering, amplifying, and shaping portrayals of Asian identity, guided by the following research questions (RQs):

- **RQ1:** How do participants from different cultural backgrounds perceive TikTok's algorithmic recommendation system and its role in amplifying Asian stereotypes?
- **RQ2:** How do participants from different cultural backgrounds interpret the impact of algorithmically curated racial content on the amplification of anti-Asian sentiment?
- **RQ3:** How do participants from Asian backgrounds perceive the influence of algorithmically curated racial content on the construction of their self-identity?

Drawing on these questions, the study expects that participants will perceive TikTok's algorithm as not merely reflecting but actively reinforcing harmful stereotypes – most notably the sexualization of Asian bodies and the overrepresentation of East Asian identities. These dynamics narrow the ways Asians are portrayed on the platform and shape how both Western Caucasian and Asians participants perceive Asian identity, reinforcing an East Asia-centric notion of “Asianness” that sidelines other Asian groups. At the same time, the repeated objectification of Asian bodies spills into offline life, fueling processes of othering and anti-Asian sentiment, while pressuring creators to reproduce stereotypes and prompting some participants to internalize them as part of their self-identity.

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design that combined the think-aloud protocol with retrospective semi-structured interviews. To ensure participant comfort and minimize potential bias introduced by the interviewer's presence, all interviews were conducted via online video calls with the interviewer's camera turned off. The think-aloud method was used to capture participants' immediate cognitive processes and interpretations while engaging with TikTok's algorithmically curated content. Because verbalizations during the task can often be fragmented or incomplete, retrospective interviews were conducted immediately afterward to allow participants to elaborate on their experiences and provide deeper reflections (Charters, 2003).

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Vienna (Approval ID: 20250411_024, approved on 13 May 2025) and informed consent was secured from all participants. They were fully briefed on the study's objectives, procedures, and their rights, including the ability to withdraw at any point without penalty. At the start of each session, the interviewer provided detailed instructions on the think-aloud process, drawing on Ericsson and Simon's (1993, p. 378) formulation and adapting it to the context of this study.

To familiarize participants with the process, warm-up exercises adapted from Ericsson and Simon (1998) were used. The first exercise, based on Ericsson (1987), asked participants to recall the number of windows in their parents' home. Some described the layout of their parents' house in detail, offering a "mental walkthrough," while others focused on quickly counting to reach a final number. This variation indicated that some participants were already comfortable with the think-aloud task, while others required a bit more practice (Freiling, 2019). The second exercise invited participants to imagine opening their favorite social media app and verbalize their usual actions, the types of content they typically encounter, and how they decide what to engage with or ignore. This exercise gave participants extra practice in verbalizing their thought processes and encouraged them to reflect on algorithmic influences, which are central to this study.

After completing the preparatory tasks, participants engaged with one of the three TikTok accounts curated by the researcher on their own devices. Since participants interacted with the content during the task, the accounts could gradually adapt to their behavior. To minimize this effect, a new account was created after every five interviews, with the final account used for the last six interviews.

These accounts were specifically curated to showcase content categories related to Asian representation, including lip-syncing videos, accent- and language-based humor, dating and couple stereotypes, cultural performances, food-related content, Asian Muslim identity, and memes reflecting the model minority stereotype. Each account was first created by searching for the term "Asian." The researcher then used the recommended tabs to explore additional algorithmically curated content. Following this, the predefined categories were systematically searched and browsed. During this process, the comment sections were examined, and accounts that appeared frequently were followed. A detailed overview of the setup procedure – including screenshots, descriptions of video categories, and the rationale for their selection – is provided in the Appendix.

As participants scrolled through the feed, they were instructed to verbalize their immediate thoughts – commenting on how they interpreted Asian representations, why they believed the algorithm recommended particular videos, and their emotional responses to the content.

When long pauses occurred, they were gently prompted to resume speaking. Participants were encouraged to engage with 10–15 videos; however, they were free to stop at any point if they felt uncomfortable with the content.

Following the think-aloud task, retrospective interviews were conducted to prompt deeper reflection on participants' experiences. These interviews explored perceptions of TikTok's algorithm, the impact of algorithmically amplified racialized content, and the ways such content might influence public opinion and self-identity. Participants also discussed broader themes, such as the influence of algorithms on other social media platforms, TikTok's hate speech policies, and the implications of emerging technologies for underage users. The topic of other social media algorithms was first raised spontaneously by one participant and was then incorporated into later interviews, while the other themes were introduced by the researcher – either prepared in advance, inspired by participants' accounts, or drawn from the curated TikTok content itself. This two-step approach enabled the collection of both immediate cognitive responses and more reflective, interpretive insights. Full details of the interview structure and transcripts are provided in the Appendix.

At the conclusion of the session, participants were debriefed. They were informed that the TikTok account had been deliberately curated to include Asian-related content to explore patterns of algorithmic amplification. Given that some videos had the potential to elicit discomfort, participants were provided with mental health support hotline information.

To ensure accuracy and reliability in data analysis, participants were asked to enable screen recording during the think-aloud task. This allowed the researcher to verify the exact content recommended by TikTok at the time of participation. Audio recordings of the interviews were also collected to ensure the complete capture of verbal responses. All recordings were stored securely and used solely for academic research purposes. In line with ethical guidelines, all data were permanently deleted within four weeks of the interview sessions.

3.1. Sample

To capture cross-cultural perspectives, the study recruited both Asian and Western Caucasian participants with variation in age, gender, and TikTok familiarity. Recruitment was primarily conducted through snowball sampling using the researcher's personal network.

The final sample included sixteen participants between the ages of 21 and 47, though most were younger adults (21–30). The Asian subgroup ($n = 8$) included East Asian ($n = 5$), Southeast Asian ($n = 2$), and South Asian ($n = 1$) participants. The Caucasian subgroup ($n = 8$) represented diverse Western cultural backgrounds, with participants from the United States ($n = 1$), the United Kingdom ($n = 1$), Germany ($n = 1$), Serbia ($n = 2$), and Austria ($n = 3$). Gender distribution was even (eight women, eight men). Most participants used TikTok casually, while six reported daily use. Two participants had not personally used TikTok – one because the platform is banned in India (though an Indian participant was nevertheless included to broaden the sample) and another due to recruitment constraints. Even so, their perspectives offered valuable insights, as TikTok content often circulates across other platforms and is a frequent subject of public debate and criticism. These factors kept them aware of its representations and enabled them to reflect on the platform from an external standpoint. Importantly, the walk-through method gave them first-hand exposure to TikTok, which helped trigger meaningful reflections despite their lack of prior experience. Educational backgrounds were relatively uniform, with most either holding or pursuing

bachelor's or master's degrees. Nearly all had experience living abroad, which added further cross-cultural perspective to their accounts.

3.2. Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a qualitative content analysis approach. Sixteen interviews conducted between June and July 2025 were transcribed verbatim: one with MAXQDA, twelve with the Apple Notes application, and three manually in Chinese. All transcripts were carefully reviewed for accuracy. To improve readability while retaining participants' phrasing, transcripts were edited with ChatGPT and then checked by the researcher. The three Chinese interviews were translated, refined with ChatGPT, and again verified to ensure accuracy.

The finalized transcripts were imported into MAXQDA for thematic analysis. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, open coding combined with deductive categories (e.g., model minority myth, Identity Strainer Theory, algorithmized-self) with inductive codes emerging from the data. Codes and themes were iteratively refined to capture cross-participant patterns, ultimately revealing insights tied to the research questions: (1) cross-cultural differences in perceptions of TikTok's amplification of stereotypes, (2) interpretations of algorithmically curated racial content and anti-Asian sentiment, and (3) Asian participants' reflections on identity and self-perception.

4. Findings

Before presenting the results for each research question, it is worth noting an observation from the think-aloud sessions. Although all three TikTok accounts in the study were set up similarly, Asian participants' feeds were almost entirely filled with Asian-related content, whereas Western Caucasian participants received a more mixed feed that occasionally included non-Asian videos. This pattern aligns with previous research suggesting that, even when account settings are identical, TikTok's algorithm adapts recommendations based on subtle cues such as perceived user identity or interaction behaviors, as well as device settings, location, and activity outside the app (Zha, 2020; Tinuiti Team, 2024; The Keyword, 2025). In doing so, it appears to curate culturally specific content more narrowly for those identified as "insiders," while offering a broader, more mixed feed to perceived "outsiders."

The following sections present the findings organized around the research questions, offering a structured view of participants' perceptions and experiences. An overview of the themes in Table 1 provides a map of how the analysis is laid out:

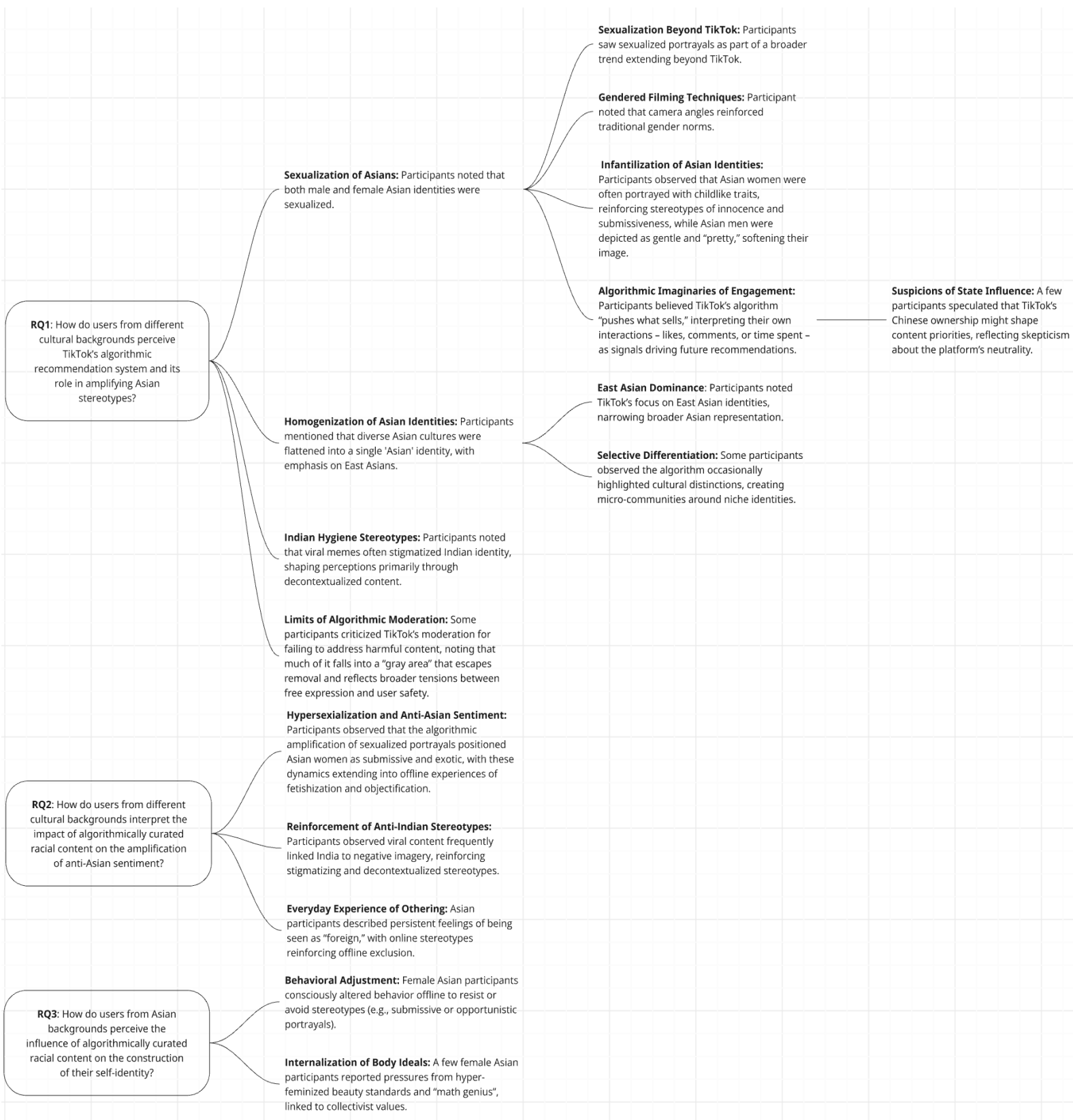


Table 1. Themes Emerging from the Findings

4.1. Algorithmic Amplification of Asian Stereotypes

RQ1 asked how Asian and Western Caucasian participants perceived TikTok's role in amplifying Asian stereotypes. Analysis revealed several recurring patterns, these are explored in the following subsections. Collectively, these dynamics created a sense among participants that reductive portrayals were being normalized and amplified, shaping both how Asians were represented on TikTok and how Asian identities were understood. At the same time, participants often criticized TikTok's limited approach to content regulation, noting that it did not do enough to protect users from harmful material.

4.1.1. Reinforcing Sexualized Asian stereotypes

Participants frequently noted that TikTok's algorithm intensifies sexualized portrayals of Asians, affecting both men and women. Several Asian participants expressed discomfort with the constant exposure to such content, describing how the platform seemed to commodify Asian bodies for clicks and entertainment. As one participant reflected:

"Now I see a woman with big breasts and she's naked, so it's more sexual, I guess. And it's also an Asian woman. (...) Again, two Asian girls who are looking at the camera, smiling, and singing lyrics." (Participant A, Asian female, 25)

Another participant expressed similar unease:

"Every video is of girls dressed very scantily, giving off these subtle sexual hints." (Participant B, Asian female, 25)

Participants felt the algorithm didn't just repeat sexualized stereotypes – it made them unavoidable, leaving some feeling objectified or even dehumanized.

In contrast, some participants spoke about the same content in a more matter-of-fact way, suggesting a level of normalization – or even quiet acceptance – of such sexualized portrayals. One Asian male participant shared:

"Because what I just browsed were mostly (...) very attractive, visually pleasing girls." (Participant G, Asian male, 26)

While another admitted:

"Most of the time, it's just beautiful women doing something beautiful and I just get a little bit jealous." (Participant E, Asian female, 24)

Caucasian participants also acknowledged the widespread presence of sexualized portrayals, but they often framed their responses less around personal discomfort and more as a critique of TikTok's broader content culture. Female participants, in particular, were quick to highlight the problematic nature of such portrayals:

"But I think it still is this very sexualized men (...) I can't say it's concerning, it's not the right word for how I'm feeling about it, but I still think it's kind of problematic, especially when he's like, yeah, because the last one went viral." (Participant J, Caucasian female)

“This type of singing and filming showing boobs. Nonsense. Like, what the hell? Too much skin and sexuality.” (Participant C, Caucasian female, 29)

Participants widely observed that sexualized content was not unique to the curated account used in the study. About ten of the sixteen participants (A, B, C, E, G, H, I, J, L, and P) mentioned that similar portrayals frequently appeared in their personal TikTok feeds – and even on other platforms like Instagram – often surfacing without any intentional engagement. Some participants (G and H) also noted that this sexualization was not limited to Asian creators but extended to other racial groups as well. Participants saw this sexualization as part of a broader, algorithm-driven pattern across platforms, not something limited to TikTok.

One participant (L) noted how filming techniques – such as upward angles for men or downward angles for women – exaggerated gendered traits and subtly reinforced traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity. Several others (B, G, J, K, O, and P) observed the frequent presence of very young individuals, or adults styled to appear younger, suggesting that the algorithm amplifies childlike aesthetics. This infantilization of Asian women was seen as reinforcing harmful stereotypes of innocence, submissiveness, and sexual availability. By contrast, Asian men were often portrayed as gentle and kind, with some participants (A, E, L, and M) pointing out that their “prettiness” was emphasized, further softening their image. Participants (E, J, and M) attributed the growing idealization of Asian men in part to the global rise of K-pop culture.

To make sense of this pattern, all participants often leaned on a shared imaginaries of how algorithms work: the idea that platforms “know what sells” and intentionally push content that will generate the most engagement. They commonly described the algorithm as reacting to their own behaviors – liking, commenting, or simply spending more time on a video – and saw these actions as signals that shaped what the platform recommended next.

A smaller group of participants (F and I) went further, wondering whether state influence might also play a role. They questioned if, because TikTok is owned by a Chinese company, the platform might prioritize China-related content or even serve broader propaganda purposes. Although these views were less common, they reveal a layer of skepticism about the platform’s neutrality that shaped how some participants read their feeds.

Ultimately, participants made sense of these patterns differently, ranging from concerns about behavioral tracking to political influence, yet most agreed they were intentional rather than random.

4.1.2. Homogenization of Asian identities

Another prominent theme was the flattening of diverse Asian cultures into a single, generalized “Asian” identity, a portrayal that participants from different Asian backgrounds found both reductive and frustrating. This homogenization often intersected with the platform’s tendency to sexualize Asian users, reinforcing stereotypes that cast Asians as a monolithic, exoticized group. One Asian participant expressed:

“And I feel like it’s always making people think that there’s only one type of Asian, because they all looked similar and all were posing sexually. So it’s like making them be one person.” (Participant A, Asian female, 25)

Another highlighted how these portrayals perpetuate broader, persistent stereotypes about Asian women in online spaces:

“Yeah, I think that’s like the general kind of (...) stereotype that maybe the internet or social media, they have these stereotypes about Asian women specifically. I have no idea.” (Participant D, Asian female, 21)

Caucasian participants also noticed this pattern of cultural flattening, though they often framed it less as a personal affront and more as a form of algorithmic simplification. One participant explained:

“I think they tend to mix them up. They tend to mix (...) like Chinese, Japanese, Korean, they mix everything. They don’t really care.” (Participant N, Caucasian male, 23)

Several participants (A, B, F, H, I, and O) from both groups noted that East Asian identities seemed to receive the most visibility on the platform. Much of the Asian-related content they encountered predominantly featured East Asian individuals, reinforcing the perception that this subgroup represents what it means to be “Asian” on TikTok. Some (F and I) even speculated that this prominence could be tied to state-driven promotion of specific cultural narratives. By repeatedly surfacing such content, TikTok’s algorithm is seen as reinforcing a cycle that narrows and simplifies Asian identity.

At the same time, some participants (D, F, I, G, and H) observed moments where the algorithm did differentiate between Asian subgroups. They pointed out that certain content highlighted cultural distinctions, and one participant (O) described TikTok as capable of hyper-targeting, forming micro-communities around niche cultural traits or interests. Although less frequent, these examples indicate that the algorithm may at times both flatten and differentiate Asian identities, depending on engagement patterns and perceived user profiles.

4.1.3. Reinforcement of Indian Hygiene Stereotypes

Another recurring theme was the amplification of negative caricatures about Indian hygiene. Both Asian and Western Caucasian participants noted that the algorithm sometimes surfaced videos portraying Indians through derogatory or mocking narratives about cleanliness and social behavior, some of which were produced by non-Indian creators. Notably, this type of content was more visible in the feeds of non-Indian participants, while more diverse or positive portrayals of Indian identity were largely absent. Unlike other themes, perceptions of this content did not differ between Asian and Caucasian participants, suggesting that such stereotypes may have become normalized across both groups.

One Asian participant expressed discomfort, noting how such content perpetuates harmful associations rather than offering authentic or nuanced representation:

“Yeah, I think there were like stereotypes regarding, like, Indian street food being kind of like dirty or the dirtier side.” (Participant D, Asian female, 21)

Similarly, a Caucasian participant and an Indian participant commented on the repetitive nature of these depictions, seeing them as evidence that the algorithm amplifies whatever “gets attention,” regardless of the harm it may cause. Yet, the Indian participant also

downplayed the offense by framing the content as “just a joke,” even while recognizing its negative undertones:

“The video that we just saw is obviously fake because they were like exaggerating, like spitting into the food and whatever and having their feet and the food. I’ve seen other videos that seem to be real.” (Participant M, Caucasian male, 27)

“A guy mimicking someone making Indian street food and it does not really look quite nice. It looks, I mean, (..) so this TikTok is actually, it’s just a mimic of how Indian street food, how unhygienic Indian street food is. So he’s doing all the unhygienic things he can do just to make jokes.” (Participant F, Asian male, 26)

These accounts illustrate how humor, repetition, and algorithmic amplification can contribute to the normalization of stereotypes, shaping perceptions of Indian identity on the platform in ways that risk reinforcing narrow or stigmatized portrayals over time.

4.1.4. The Limits of Algorithmic Moderation

At the same time, many participants expressed frustration with TikTok’s rules, guidelines, and moderation practices, which they felt did not adequately address harmful or discriminatory content. As one participant noted:

“From what I know, it doesn’t really (..) moderate content. It only blurs things that are bloody, violent, or overly explicit and gives users a warning. But a lot of content isn’t suitable for minors or certain groups.” (Participant K, Asian male, 47)

Another participant echoed this concern, explaining:

“No, I don’t think they do enough because they’re like, on Instagram or on TikTok, in the comments or some kind of stuff, it feels like there is no law, so people can talk about everything and they can say everything.” (Participant L, Caucasian female, 23)

Several participants (A, B, D, J, M, and P) pointed out that much of this content falls into a “gray area.” Examples included videos that present innocent activities with subtle sexual cues (such as eating a lollipop), tutorials with suggestive elements (e.g., teaching Chinese with sexual hints), or humorous clips that draw on stereotypical or subtly offensive portrayals. Participants noted that such content is often ambiguous enough to escape removal under platform rules. This ambiguity also highlighted, in their view, the difficulty of detecting harmful material and the broader tension between protecting free expression and safeguarding users from harm.

4.2. Algorithmic Amplification of Anti-Asian Sentiment

For RQ2, which examined how users viewed the impact of curated racial content on anti-Asian sentiment, three main themes emerged. Overall, participants described TikTok’s algorithm as amplifying and normalizing racialized narratives, with many linking these portrayals to their everyday understandings of Asian identity.

4.2.1. Hypersexualization and Anti-Asian Sentiment

For many Asian participants, the hypersexualized portrayals of Asian women on TikTok were not just an online issue but spilled over into their offline experiences of fetishization and objectification. They described how the algorithm's repeated amplification of sexualized content framed Asian women as submissive, exotic, and sexually available – shaping how others approached and interacted with them in real life. One participant shared that these stereotypes often colored her interactions with men, with casual conversations quickly turning into sexualized comments:

"I remember when I was in Berlin once, (...) we went to a bar and met some guys from a friend. And there a guy told me that he already had sex with a Russian girl, (...) German girl. No, I think it was actually also mostly Asian girls, I think not German. I don't remember which one. And then he said, (...) the only thing that is missing on my list is Taiwanese. And that also for me, was like a very sexual way of saying, well, Asians are good in bed. Like, I also remember another thing that was in the Oktoberfest in Munich. There are also an old guy, he didn't even ask me where I was from. He just told me, hey, Thai girl, (...) I know Thai girls are good in bed. And that was also so stereotypical." (Participant A, Asian female)

Another Asian participant shared a similar experience of repeated unwanted attention, especially from older men, which she connected to entrenched cultural stereotypes about Asian femininity:

"That's what I come to think of because I grew up here in Austria and I got like talked to by older white men, very older white men, often." (Participant E, Asian female, 24)

Caucasian participants, particularly women, also reflected on this phenomenon, acknowledging how such portrayals feed into broader stereotypes about Asian women. One participant observed how these ideas were normalized in her own family:

"He (my grandpa) has this idea that Asian women are submissive because he's also said like, (...) when he gets like a new wife, like she'll cook and clean all the time." (Participant P, Caucasian female, 27)

Another expressed concern that the overt sexualization of women online leads some men to misinterpret boundaries offline:

"Because you see some women on videos and then some guys believe maybe that every woman is like that or that you can touch every woman like (...) she shows them in those videos or yeah, I don't know, it's I think it's not a good development that everything is so open or sexualized about the female body." (Participant L, Caucasian female, 23)

In participants' accounts, TikTok's amplification of sexualized Asian imagery was understood as having implications beyond the digital sphere. Some described how it reinforced offline microaggressions and, in certain cases, contributed to experiences of sexual harassment by legitimizing reductive views of Asian women as submissive or sexually available. These reflections point to a potential feedback loop in which harmful narratives circulate across online and offline contexts, leaving Asian women, in particular, to navigate environments shaped by fetishizing stereotypes.

4.2.2. Reinforcement of Anti-Indian Stereotypes

Other than the hypersexualization of Asian females, across both participant groups, India and Indian people were frequently associated with negative imagery and stereotypes, often shaped by algorithmically recommended videos or news content. One participant explained:

"For example, with India, I've seen a lot of negative news, videos, or clips about daily life. But if we treat those as documentaries that reflect real situations, (...) then there's nothing to criticize." (Participant K, Asian male, 47)

Instead of critically engaging with the algorithmic curation of such content, participants often accepted these portrayals as objective "documentaries," reinforcing biased perceptions. This uncritical acceptance normalized negative associations, positioning India as inherently problematic.

Another participant reflected this internalization more explicitly:

"But like I said, I'm biased against Indians. I personally don't like India." (Participant H, Caucasian male, 31)

This admission shows how repeated exposure to online narratives can reinforce personal prejudice, underscoring the close link between algorithmic amplification and offline bias.

Interestingly, among Caucasian participants, many (J, H, I and M) did not recognize India as part of Asia, often due to educational or cultural frames of reference. One participant noted:

"But that's like what I think of like a Westerners look on Asian is mostly like Korean, China, Japan probably. And like other countries like Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, whatever they're not, or in a more extreme way, like India or Russia or whatever, or Turkey, they're not seen as like typical Asian like for Westerners." (Participant M, Caucasian male, 27)

Labeling India as "not typically Asian" can isolate Indian identity online, allowing negative portrayals to circulate without being linked to broader discussions of Asian representation. One Indian participant (F) reflected on this exclusion, observing that during movements against Asian hate, East Asian communities were often more visible as victims, while South Asians remained less recognized. These accounts suggest that algorithmic reinforcement and cultural misconceptions may contribute to the marginalization of Indian and South Asian identities, often presenting them through narrow or negative portrayals that are less connected to wider understandings of "Asian" identity.

4.2.3. Everyday Experience of Othering

Another emerging theme was that participants of Asian backgrounds frequently experienced both subtle and overt forms of othering in their daily lives, reinforcing a persistent sense of being perceived as "foreign," regardless of their actual cultural or national ties. One participant explained:

"It's very sad, but I do experience it also like in my day-to-day life sometimes because when I'm at work, I do get a lot of like, oh, you speak such a good German. And I'm like, of course, I grew up here. Or like, they always ask me, oh, where are you from? Are you from China? Or, do you speak Chinese, right? Or speak immediately with me with 'Nihao' (Chinese for hello) or 'Konichiwa' (Japanese for hello) whatever." (Participant E, Asian female, 24)

Such interactions, often framed as compliments or casual curiosity, were experienced as constant reminders of being marked as “different.” Participants emphasized how these microaggressions, though often unintentional, reinforced the perception that they did not fully belong, even in contexts where they were culturally and linguistically integrated.

Another participant shared a similar experience in a social setting:

“But what’s funny is that I think a while ago I was in a restaurant with a friend of mine and she’s, like, she’s white. And the waiter would speak to her in German, but then he turned to me and speak to me in English. And I’m like, I literally can understand what you said to her.” (Participant D, Asian female, 21)

Interestingly, Caucasian participants also acknowledged the problematic nature of such assumptions, recognizing how physical appearance is often used to categorize and “other” people. As one participant noted:

“I think there’s like guessing where somebody is from, based on how they look, is kind of a problem because it (...) it states the assumption that some nationalities look a certain way and is also very big basis to othering people.” (Participant J, Caucasian female, 24)

These everyday experiences were often linked by participants to their online environments. Several reflected that social media amplified stereotypes, circulating caricatured depictions of Asian identity that echoed the “perpetual foreigner” trope. Algorithmically curated videos were described as mirroring the same biases they noticed offline. This overlap, in their view, created a feedback loop: online stereotypes seemed to validate biased assumptions in daily interactions, making microaggressions feel more entrenched and harder to confront. For these participants, “othering” was not just a personal incident but something reinforced across both digital and physical contexts.

4.3. Algorithmic Amplification and the Shaping of Asian Self-Identity

To address RQ3, which examines how algorithmically curated content shaped Asian participants’ self-identity, the analysis revealed two central themes. The findings suggest that such narratives shape self-perception and influence social behaviors in everyday life – particularly among female participants. Male participants, by contrast, often emphasized their ability to separate online portrayals from offline life, suggesting they were less directly affected in shaping their identities.

4.3.1. Navigating Stereotypes and Behavioral Adjustment

For many Asian participants, the stereotypes amplified by TikTok’s algorithm extended far beyond the digital space, shaping how they navigated social interactions offline. Some participants described consciously modifying their behavior in public to avoid reinforcing existing stereotypes of Asian women as submissive, hypersexualized, or opportunistic.

One participant reflected on how the constant awareness of being “perceived” influenced her behavior:

“And I guess in that way, I can’t really kind of, like, be myself because I know that I’m being perceived, but the thing is, like, it’s more of the feeling that, okay, I’m being perceived, so I

need to (...) kind of behave, quote-unquote, well, behave good in, like, a public setting so that they don't have any, like, further negative connotations to say regarding Asian people." (Participant D, Asian female, 21)

Another participant shared a similar experience, describing how the widespread link between Asian women and the sex industry influenced the way Western women interacted with her:

"I guess, because I feel like sometimes women have a bad view of Asian girls since they're known to get the men like also from Thailand, the sex industry. I feel like there's a bit of a bad view on Asian women. So when I am around Western women who, for example, have a boyfriend, I always feel like I need to behave very (...) very cool around the woman, not look at the man." (Participant A, Asian female, 25)

In addition, stereotypes portraying Asian women as "gold-diggers" or seeking relationships for economic gain added another layer of tension and self-consciousness:

"If it would reinforce it, (...) probably, yes. Especially if it's like more open, (...) show a lot of skin, yeah, I can see that people would look at it and think Asian women are very, very, (...) oh, we'll say more, they will do anything to get with you and to get the card. That's a huge point, especially. And I also know it is a lot of Western women, if they notice like, oh, those men are going for Asian women, then they also like get mad at the Asian women for being like, yeah, you are just here for the green card. You're just here for the money. So it's kind of also like a woman going against woman." (Participant E, Asian female, 24)

These reflections reveal the identity strain participants experienced as they navigated social spaces shaped by digital stereotypes. Rather than passively accepting these portrayals, many practiced self-monitoring to maintain control, which often reinforced gendered othering – especially in Western contexts. Yet this constant adjustment felt exhausting, underscoring how algorithmically amplified narratives spill beyond the screen to shape and constrain offline life.

4.3.2. Internalized Cultural Ideals and Comparison

Another theme that emerged – though raised by only a few participants – was the internalization of stereotypes. They described how narrow portrayals of Asian identity on TikTok shaped their self-image and created pressures to conform. One participant, for instance, recalled trying to live up to the "model minority" stereotype in her youth:

"I think when I was a kid, yes. Especially when it came to math, I really tried to live up to that stereotype. But not anymore. When you're younger, it's easier to be influenced by those expectations." (Participant B, Asian female, 25)

Another participant discussed striving to match hyper-feminized beauty ideals promoted across digital spaces:

"I would go more for those Asian (...) expectations. Like, you know, Asian women, (...) more like a really, really tiny body with still big boobs and small face with the right kind of makeup." (Participant E, Asian female, 24)

These examples show that for a smaller number of participants, algorithmically amplified ideals had real psychological effects, fostering constant comparison and unrealistic self-expectations. While some eventually rejected performance-based stereotypes, such as being “smart” or “good at math,” beauty standards remained a persistent benchmark. This highlights how digital narratives complicate identity development, shaping self-concept in formative years and continuing to influence how individuals see and evaluate themselves into adulthood.

5. Discussion

This study examined how participants perceive TikTok’s recommendation system in shaping Asian representation and how these portrayals are interpreted across cultural contexts. The findings extend debates on algorithmic bias by showing that participants largely agreed TikTok reflects stereotypes while simultaneously reinforcing them, normalizing reductive portrayals and shaping both online visibility and everyday experiences.

5.1. Algorithmic Amplification of Stereotypes

Participants frequently reflected on how TikTok’s algorithm privileges emotionally charged and easily consumable portrayals, reinforcing reductive representations of both bodies and cultures. The persistent sexualization of Asian bodies was a recurring theme, particularly among younger users, with some noting that these dynamics extended to other racial groups. This suggests that sexualized visibility reflects an engagement-driven logic rather than an issue unique to Asian identity.

Viral Indian hygiene memes offered another example, shaping perceptions of India through decontextualized and caricatured depictions, often produced by Indian-origin creators abroad or by non-Indian creators. Despite TikTok being banned in India and mainland China, participants still encountered caricatured portrayals of Indian street food and sexualized depictions of Chinese bodies, likely produced by diasporic users or those accessing the app via VPNs. In both cases, the emphasis fell on spectacle and exaggeration rather than cultural nuance. These findings resonate with Russell’s (1991) notion of the “dominant gaze,” where marginalized groups are rendered as entertainment for mainstream audiences. They also align with research on algorithmic amplification (Amarikwa, 2023; Gómez-Bernal & Ortega-Barón, 2025), which shows how platform logics systematically elevate sexualized and stereotypical content.

Another recurring theme was the homogenization of Asian identity. TikTok’s algorithm disproportionately highlighted East Asian content, sidelining South and Southeast Asian voices. For non-Asian participants, this reinforced a one-dimensional view of “Asianness,” while South Asian participants described feeling invisible. This dynamic reflects Espiritu’s (1992) work on panethnic erasure but takes on new forms in algorithmic environments, where visibility is distributed unevenly by platform logics. These findings support Identity Strainer Theory (Karizat et al., 2021), which views algorithms as privileging dominant narratives, while also complicating it: some participants dismissed these portrayals as harmless humor, whereas others experienced them as degrading. Such variation aligns with Hall’s (1973) encoding/decoding model, which emphasizes how interpretation is shaped by cultural background.

Participants also described a shared algorithmic imaginary centered on personalization. In line with Bucher's (2016) concept, they sensed the effects of the 'black box' even without fully understanding how it worked. A few also raised concerns that TikTok's design might be shaped not only by corporate priorities but also by state influence. This observation aligns with scholarship on platform governance, which highlights how algorithms operate at the intersection of corporate, cultural, and political interests (Flew, Martin, & Suzor, 2019; Gorwa, 2019). In TikTok's case, such concerns underscore the geopolitical stakes of algorithmic mediation, raising questions about how state power and global political pressures may shape which narratives gain visibility worldwide.

5.2. Anti-Asian Sentiment and Lived Consequences

Beyond online portrayals, participants also discussed their offline consequences. Asian women, in particular, described being fetishized or confronted with sexualized assumptions in everyday interactions. Negative stereotypes about India, meanwhile, contributed to stigmatization across both Asian and Caucasian participants. Several also reported a persistent sense of being "othered," especially in Western contexts. These accounts suggest that digital portrayals may reinforce existing biases in daily life, lending greater legitimacy to stereotypes through lived encounters.

At the same time, participants were not entirely passive. Some attempted to retrain the algorithm by avoiding or blocking certain content, though they noted these strategies did not always work as intended. They also recognized that stereotypical portrayals tended to attract greater visibility, creating structural pressures for creators to align with platform logics. This tension reflects the algorithmized-self framework (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022), highlighting how identity is continually negotiated between user agency and algorithmic design.

5.3. Gendered Dynamics of Asian Identity Construction

The study further extends the algorithmized-self framework (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022) to offline Asian identity construction. This negotiation was most pronounced among women, who described being positioned between Western feminist ideals and cultural expectations that reinforced racialized femininities. Prior research shows that Asian women are especially vulnerable to internalizing sexualized portrayals because their identities have historically been constructed through hyperfeminized stereotypes (Pyke & Johnson, 2003). Participants' accounts illustrated how these digital portrayals carried into offline experiences of fetishization and microaggressions.

Male participants, by contrast, more often pointed to stereotypes of emasculation or exclusion. As previous research shows, these tropes stem from broader gendered and racial hierarchies rather than from direct objectification of men's bodies (Kimmel, 1994; Chou, 2012). As a result, male participants sometimes distanced themselves from online portrayals, interpreting them as broader commentaries on racial status rather than as reflections of personal identity. Several also struggled to recall experiences of offline objectification, suggesting that men's lived, bodily experiences were less directly shaped by digital stereotypes.

Overall, the findings suggest that participants did not see TikTok as a neutral space. Instead, they regarded it as an active force that shaped racial identity. Many felt the platform

amplified and normalized stereotypes, influenced cross-cultural perceptions, and created pressure to navigate identity between resistance and conformity.

6. Limitation & Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the relatively small and demographically narrow sample ($n = 16$) limits the scope of the findings. Most participants were younger adults (ages 21–30), highly educated, and had prior experience living abroad. While this provided valuable cross-cultural insights, it also means that perspectives from older generations, less formally educated users, and those without international experience were not captured. The predominance of East Asian participants within the Asian subgroup further restricts how broadly the findings can speak to the diversity of Asian identities. As a result, the study should be read as providing depth and nuance rather than broad generalizability.

Second, two participants had not previously used TikTok due to local restrictions and recruitment challenges. This lack of direct experience may have limited the comparability of their accounts with those of regular users. At the same time, their outsider standpoint offered a complementary perspective, highlighting how TikTok's narratives circulate across platforms and public debates even among those who do not actively engage with the app. One participant, for example, expressed surprise at the prevalence of sexualized portrayals, which reinforced concerns that TikTok's existing content regulation may be insufficient.

Third, although the curated TikTok accounts were designed to maintain consistency across sessions, participants' prior histories with the app, their algorithmic exposure, and personal usage habits may still have influenced how they interpreted and evaluated the content. Device-related factors also played a role: because participants accessed the accounts on their own devices and in different locations, background settings and device data may have shaped the feeds they encountered. This underscores the challenge of fully isolating experimental setups from participants' lived media environments and the personalized nature of algorithmic curation.

Fourth, the study focused specifically on Asian and Western Caucasian participants. While this allowed for a clear cross-cultural comparison, it necessarily excluded perspectives from other racial and cultural groups. Including voices from Black, Latinx, or Middle Eastern participants, for example, could reveal different dimensions of algorithmic amplification and shed light on how stereotypes intersect across racialized communities.

Future research should address current limitations by working with larger and more diverse samples and by extending analysis across platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, or X (formerly Twitter) to assess whether similar dynamics occur elsewhere. The prominence of viral hygiene memes in this study illustrates how Indian representation online is often reduced to narrow, derogatory tropes that reinforce intra-Asian hierarchies and shape global perceptions. Examining how these narratives circulate – and how Indian users interpret or resist them – would provide a needed corrective to the East Asia-centered focus of much existing scholarship. In particular, future studies should seek to include Indian participants with prior TikTok experience (e.g., before the ban or through VPN access), as their perspectives could shed further light on how these portrayals are encountered and negotiated by those with direct familiarity with the platform.

Future research should also take a closer look at transnational flows, examining how creators from regions where TikTok is banned still find ways to participate in its global marketplace and what motivates them to produce culturally specific or stereotypical content. Such work could help explain how local restrictions, diasporic creativity, and algorithmic visibility interact to sustain cultural markets across political and geographic boundaries.

Finally, future studies should consider the role of governance. Algorithms do not operate in isolation but are shaped by corporate interests, state policies, and geopolitical pressures (Flew, Martin, & Suzor, 2019; Gorwa, 2019). Exploring how these forces interact with platform design would add an essential dimension to understanding how algorithmic amplification reproduces racialized and politicized narratives.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT to check grammar and improve readability. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the paper.

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Appendix 1: Interview Protocol Construction

Before the interview, each participant will be required to sign a consent form, indicating their agreement to participate in the study and the recording. This process will ensure that participants fully understand the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and their rights, including the option to withdraw at any time without consequence.

The interview will be conducted via an online video call, with the interviewer's face not visible to the participant. This decision is intended to minimize potential bias in participants' responses. Specifically, if interviewees perceive the interviewer as Asian, they may alter their answers to avoid appearing prejudiced, which could lead to socially desirable responses rather than their genuine thoughts about TikTok's algorithmic recommendations.

The session will begin with a detailed explanation of the think-aloud method, drawing on Ericsson and Simon's (1993, p. 378) framework, adapted for this study:

"In this study, I am interested in understanding your thought process as you complete the tasks I will give you. To achieve this, I will ask you to think aloud while engaging with the task. By 'thinking aloud,' I mean verbalizing everything that comes to mind from the moment you begin the task until you complete it. I encourage you to continuously express your thoughts without planning or structuring your responses – simply speak as though you were alone in the room, narrating your thoughts. If you remain silent for an extended period, I will prompt you to continue speaking. Do you understand what I mean?"

“在本次研究中，我希望了解你在完成接下来的任务时的思考过程。为此，我会请你在进行任务的过程中‘边做边想’。所谓‘边做边想’，是指从你开始任务的那一刻起，把脑海中浮现的所有想法都直接说出来。你不需要组织或整理语言，也不用考虑表达方式，就像自己一个人在房间里自言自语那样，想到什么就说什么。如果你在过程中长时间没有说话，我会适当提醒你继续表达你的想法。你理解我说的意思吗？”

Think-Aloud Training Tasks

To familiarize participants with the think-aloud technique, they will first complete two training exercises (Ericsson & Simon, 1998). These exercises are designed to help participants verbalize their thought processes naturally and prepare them for the primary task. The training tasks include:

- *Spatial Recall Task* (Ericsson, 1987): “How many windows are in your parents' house? You do not need to count them yourself; I will do that for you. Just tell me which room has how many windows.”
- “你能回想一下你父母家里有多少扇窗户吗？你不需要自己去数，我会帮你统计。你只需要告诉我，每个房间大概有多少扇窗户就可以了。”
- *Digital Engagement Reflection Task*: “Imagine you are opening your favorite social media app. Without touching your phone, describe your usual actions upon opening the app. What type of content do you typically encounter? How do you decide what to engage with or scroll past? Verbalize everything that comes to mind as though you were actively navigating the app.”
- “请你想象一下，当你打开自己最常用或最喜欢的社交媒体应用时，你通常会做些什么？在不触碰手机的情况下，请描述一下你在打开应用后的一般操作习

惯。通常你会看到哪些类型的内容？你是如何决定要与哪些内容互动，或者滑过去不看的？请像自己正在真实使用这个应用一样，把脑海中所有的想法都直接说出来。”

The second task serves a dual purpose: it not only trains participants in thinking aloud but also acclimates them to reflecting on their digital experiences. Additionally, it encourages participants to consider algorithmic influence, which is a central focus of this study.

Primary Think-Aloud Task

Following the training exercises, participants will access a pre-set TikTok account with their own device provided by the researcher. During this phase, participants will be instructed to verbalise their thoughts while engaging with the algorithmically curated content. The primary task will be introduced as follows:

“As you scroll through the feed, please verbalize your thoughts about what you see. This may include your immediate reactions to the content, your interpretation of why TikTok is recommending certain videos, and how these recommendations make you feel. And you are free to interact with content on the page.”

“当你在浏览页面内容（feed）的过程中，请将你对所看到内容的想法大声说出来。这可以包括你对内容的第一反应、你对为什么 TikTok 会推荐这些视频的理解，以及这些推荐内容带给你的感受。并且你可以自由和视频进行互动，比如 like，评论或者关注账号。”

To encourage continuous verbalisation, the following prompts will be used in the event of prolonged silence:

- “What are you thinking as you watch this video?”
- “你在观看这个视频时，脑海里有什么想法？”
- “How does this content influence your perception of Asian representation on TikTok?”
- “这个内容对你如何看待 TikTok 上的亚洲形象/亚洲群体呈现，有什么影响吗？”

Post-Task Reflection and Feedback

Upon completing the session, participants will be asked to provide feedback on their experience with the think-aloud method. The following questions will be used to assess the clarity and effectiveness of the protocol:

- “Did the instructions make sense?”
- “Were the prompts helpful, or did they feel unnatural?”
- “Did you feel comfortable verbalizing your thoughts throughout the process?”
- “Were there moments where you struggled to articulate your thoughts?”
- “刚才的说明你觉得清楚吗？有没有难以理解的地方？”
- “在整个过程中，我给你的提示对你来说有帮助吗？还是会觉得有点不太自然？”
- “在整个过程中，你觉得把自己的想法说出来是舒服/自在的吗？”

- “有没有哪些时刻，你觉得比较难表达自己的想法或不太知道应该说些什么？”

Retrospective Interview Process

During think-aloud interviews, participants may occasionally struggle to immediately articulate their thoughts while engaging with content. Their verbal responses are often shaped by real-time cognitive processing, which can result in incomplete, fragmented, or implicit answers without additional prompting (Freiling, 2019). To address this, researchers frequently pair think-aloud protocols with semi-structured retrospective interviews (Charters, 2003). These follow-up interviews allow participants to reflect on their earlier experiences, clarify their interpretations, and elaborate on moments of uncertainty – thereby contributing to a richer understanding of their perceptions. If confusion arises at any point during the interview, participants will be encouraged to ask the researcher for clarification.

Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions

To address the first research question: *“How do users from different cultural backgrounds perceive TikTok’s algorithmic recommendation system and its role in amplifying Asian stereotypes?”*, the following questions will be asked during the retrospective interview:

- *“Do you think there are any common stereotypes about Asians that come to mind for you? If so, can you describe one or more of them? Where do you think these ideas come from?”*
- *“While scrolling through the TikTok content, did you notice any recurring patterns or themes in what was recommended to you?”*
- *“How do you think TikTok’s algorithm decides what kind of content to show you?”*
- *“Have you ever thought about it in general?”*
- *“Do you feel that the algorithm recommends content based on your identity or behaviour? If so, can you share an example?”*
- *“Based on what you’ve seen, do you think TikTok promotes or reinforce certain stereotypes about Asians? If yes, which ones?”*
- *“Do you feel that TikTok’s algorithm treats different Asian group—such as East Asian, South Asian, or Southeast Asian – differently, or does it tend to present them as one group? For example, do you notice whether certain types of Asians content are promoted more than others?”*
- *Any idea about islam female?*
- *“Have you seen similar content multiple times before? How did that shape your view of Asian identity?”*
- *Mocking nationality?*
- *Would you think this kind of comments are disgusting?*
- “你觉得在你的印象中，有哪些关于亚洲人的刻板印象（stereotypes）是比较常见或者容易被提到的？如果有的话，你可以举一两个例子吗？你觉得这些印象是从哪里来的？”
- “在你刚才浏览 TikTok 内容的过程中，你有没有发现系统推荐给你的内容里，存在一些重复出现的模式或主题？”
- “你觉得 TikTok 的算法是根据什么来决定要给你推荐什么样的内容？”
- “你有考虑过这些社交媒体的算法推荐背后的运作机制吗？”
- “你觉得 TikTok 的算法在推荐内容时，会参考你的身份特征（比如族裔、背景）或使用习惯吗？如果你觉得会的话，可以分享一个你觉得典型的例子吗？”

- “根据你刚才看到的内容，你觉得 TikTok 是否有在推动或强化某些关于亚洲人的刻板印象？如果有的话，主要是哪些？”
- “你觉得 TikTok 的算法在呈现不同的亚洲群体时（比如东亚、南亚、东南亚），有没有区别对待？还是你感觉它更倾向于把亚洲人当作一个单一的群体来呈现？例如，你有没有注意到某些类型的亚洲相关内容，比其他类型更容易被推荐或放大？”

For the second research question: “How do users from different cultural backgrounds perceive the impact of algorithmically curated racial content on TikTok in shaping anti-Asian sentiment?”, the following questions will be used to elicit insights:

- “Do you think TikTok content can influence how people perceive Asian groups?”
- “How do you think racialized content on TikTok shapes public opinion about Asians?”
- “Do you think people from different cultural backgrounds interpret this kind of content differently? Why or why not?”
- “How do you think an Asian viewer might feel watching this?”
- “Do you think algorithmically recommended content can influence people’s attitudes toward Asians? If so, in what way?”
- “Do you believe this kind of content could contribute to real-world bias or discrimination? If so, how?”
- “Have you personally experienced any bias or discrimination that you believe may have been influenced by content from social media?”
- “Have you ever seen TikTok content that made you feel uncomfortable because of how it portrayed Asians? What was your reaction?”
- Did you feel like the men are sexualised?
- Why you think there are so many content that about Asians are ideal boyfriend?
- “Do you think TikTok does enough to address harmful or stereotypical content about Asians? For example, TikTok has previously launched initiatives like the #StopAsianHate campaign and updated its community guidelines to include stricter policies on hate speech and harassment. Do you feel these efforts are effective, or is more needed?”
- “Do you think seeing this kind of content often makes people more used to or accepting of stereotypes?”
- “你觉得 TikTok 上的内容，会不会影响人们对亚洲群体的看法？”
- “你觉得 TikTok 上那些涉及种族或身份标签的内容，可能会如何影响大众对亚洲人的印象或舆论？”
- “你觉得来自不同文化背景的人，在看这类内容时，会有不同的理解或反应吗？为什么？”
- “你觉得亚洲文化背景的人/西方文化背景的人看到这些内容的时候会怎么想呢？”
- “你觉得 TikTok 的算法推荐内容，是否有可能影响人们对亚洲群体的态度？如果有的话，主要会带来什么样的影响？”
- “你觉得这类内容，有可能会进一步影响到现实生活中的偏见或歧视吗？如果有的话，你觉得这种影响会以什么方式体现出来？”
- “你自己有没有在现实生活中经历过你认为可能与社交媒体内容有关的偏见或歧视？”

- “你有没有在 TikTok 上看过某些让你感到不舒服的内容，原因是它们是如何呈现亚洲人的？当时你的反应是什么？”
- “你觉得 TikTok 在处理涉及亚洲人的有害内容或刻板印象内容时，做得够不够？比如 TikTok 之前推出过像 #StopAsianHate 这样的活动，或者更新了社区规范来加强对仇恨言论和骚扰的管理。你觉得这些做法有效吗？还是你觉得还有哪些地方可以改进？”

For the last research question: “How do users from Asian backgrounds perceive the impact of algorithmically curated racial content on TikTok in shaping Asian self-identity?” the following questions will be used to gain the insights:

- “How did the content you saw during the session make you feel about being Asian?”
- “Do you feel that TikTok reflects your experience or identity accurately?”
- “Do you think TikTok has influenced the way you view your own racial or cultural identity? In what ways?”
- “Have you ever changed how you present yourself – either online or in real life – because of how Asian identities are portrayed?”
- “Do you ever feel pressure to conform to certain stereotypes or avoid certain behaviours because of how Asians are portrayed on TikTok?”
- “Have you ever seen content on TikTok that made you feel proud or ashamed of being Asian? Can you describe what it was and why it had that impact?”
- “Do you think using TikTok affects your sense of belonging – to the Asian community, or to the broader society?”
- “Have you ever felt the need to post certain types of content to get more views or fit in?”
- “Do you ever feel like you have to perform your identity in a certain way to be seen?”
- “在这次访谈过程中，你看到的这些内容，有没有影响你对自己作为亚洲人的感觉或认同？”
- “你觉得 TikTok 上呈现的内容，有准确反映你的个人经历或身份吗？”
- “你觉得 TikTok 是否影响了你对自己种族或文化身份的看法？如果有的话，是通过哪些方面影响到你的？”
- “你有没有因为 TikTok 上亚洲人被呈现的方式，而改变过自己在网上或现实生活中的某些表现或行为？”
- “你有没有因为 TikTok 上亚洲人的呈现方式，而觉得自己需要去符合某些刻板印象，或者刻意避免某些行为？”
- “你有没有在 TikTok 上看过让你觉得特别自豪，或者特别羞耻、尴尬的关于亚洲人的内容？可以分享一下是什么内容，以及为什么会带给你这样的感受吗？”
- “你觉得使用 TikTok 会不会影响你对‘归属感’的体验？比如，你是否觉得它影响了你对亚洲社群的归属，或者对更广泛社会的归属？”
- 你有没有在什么时候为了觉的自己应该上传一些内容来获得更多的关注或者更加融入群体？
- 你有没有觉得自己需要变现出某种特质来迎合自己的身份从而被看到？

Personal Demographics and Study Feedback

Finally, the personal demographics and feedback from the study will be collected with the following questions to contextualize the participants' responses and enhance the reliability of the data:

- *"Where are you from?"*
- *"How old are you?"*
- *"What is your highest level of education?"*
- *"What is your current income level? Not necessarily a specific number."*
- *"What is your gender identity?"*
- *"Have you lived in different cultural environments? If so, where and for how long?"*
- *"How often do you use TikTok?"*
- *"What types of content do you engage with most frequently on TikTok?"*
- *"Have you noticed any trends related to racial representation on TikTok – for example, the 'fox-eye' trend or the 'Stop Asian Hate' movement?"*
- *"How often do you come across similar content in your everyday TikTok use?"*
- *"Did participating in this study affect the way you view TikTok's algorithm or racial content on the platform?"*
- *"Were there any moments during the study when you felt uncomfortable? If so, could you describe why?"*
- *"Do you have any additional thoughts on the topic that we haven't covered?"*
- *"Is there anything about your experience with TikTok that you think people don't understand or talk about enough when it comes to race and identity?"*
- *"你来自哪里?"*
- *"你今年几岁?"*
- *"你目前的最高学历是什么?"*
- *"你现在的收入大概处于什么水平? (不需要具体数字, 描述范围或情况即可)"*
- *"你的性别认同是?"*
- *"你有没有在不同的文化环境里生活过? 如果有的话, 分别是在哪里? 大概多久?"*
- *"你平时多久使用一次 TikTok?"*
- *"你在 TikTok 上最常接触或互动的内容类型是什么?"*
- *"你有没有注意到 TikTok 上出现过与种族呈现相关的趋势或现象? 比如'狐狸眼 (fox-eye)' 风潮, 或者'Stop Asian Hate' (停止仇亚) 运动?"*
- *"你在平时刷 TikTok 的过程中, 常常会看到类似的内容吗?"*
- *"通过参与这次访谈, 你觉得自己对 TikTok 的算法, 或者它在种族内容上的运作方式, 有没有新的认识或看法?"*
- *"在访谈或操作过程中, 有没有哪些时刻让你觉得不舒服或不自在? 如果有的话, 可以分享一下原因吗?"*
- *是否有一些你与 TikTok 的经验是其他人所不了解的, 或者没有得到足够关注的, 一些关于种族和自我认知类的内容。*
- *"关于我们今天聊的主题, 你还有没有其他想法、经验或感受, 是我们刚才没有提到, 但你觉得值得分享的?"*

Recording and Ethical Considerations

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of data analysis, participants will be asked to enable screen recording during the think-aloud phase. This will allow the researcher to review the specific content recommended by TikTok at the time of participation. In addition, audio recordings of the interview will be collected to capture participants' verbal responses in full. All procedures will follow established ethical guidelines, including the collection of informed consent, the protection of data confidentiality, and the maintenance of participant anonymity. Participants will be fully informed of their rights, including the option to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. All recordings will be securely stored and used exclusively for academic research purposes. All data will be permanently deleted no later than four weeks after the interviews have taken place. At the conclusion of the study, all participants will be debriefed on the true aims of the research, including further details about the researcher-provided TikTok account.

TikTok Algorithmically Curated Content

To examine how users perceive TikTok's role in shaping racial discourse and reinforcing racialised representations, this study will employ a pre-set TikTok account featuring algorithmically curated content. Given TikTok's reliance on algorithmic personalisation, it is necessary to engage purposefully with specific types of content that align with common Asian stereotypes in order to influence the platform's recommendation patterns. By strategically interacting with selected videos, the algorithm is expected to produce a feed that reflects broader trends in Asian representation on the platform.

The curated content covered a wide range – from mainstream trends to explicit stereotyping and fetishization. This setup was designed to explore how algorithmically promoted content shapes users' views of racial identity, cultural representation, and online discourse, as well as how these views might spill over into offline attitudes and behaviors. The following sections outline the specific content categories included in the pre-set account and explain why they were chosen in relation to the study's research goals.

Appendix 2: Content Categories

1. Accent and Language-Based Content

This category includes videos in which Asian individuals speak English with distinct Asian accents, often used for humour, exaggeration, or mimicry. While some of this content is created by Asian users themselves – sometimes as a form of self-expression or satire – it may also unintentionally reinforce linguistic stereotypes that frame Asian speakers as “foreign” or culturally “other.” Such portrayals can contribute to broader narratives of exclusion and difference based on language. This study will examine how this content is perceived by users and whether it contributes to language-based discrimination and racialised humour on TikTok.

3. Dance Content

This category includes traditional dances with modern elements, solo dance covers by Asian creators, and dance challenges that are widely popular among Asian TikTok users. Dance content serves as a space for both cultural expression and digital performance, making it a significant site for examining the visibility and representation of Asian creators. Through preliminary exploration of TikTok, many of these videos – particularly those featuring Asian women – were found to intersect with hypersexualised portrayals, raising questions about how cultural performance can be entangled with racialised and gendered stereotypes. This study will examine whether such content contributes to meaningful cultural representation, reinforces reductive tropes (such as the hypersexualisation of Asian women), or facilitates more complex forms of cross-cultural engagement.

4. “Dirty” Indian Street Food Content

This category includes videos that depict Indian street food in ways that emphasise perceived unsanitary conditions, often accompanied by sensationalist captions or exaggerated reactions from non-Indian creators and viewers. While some content showcases the richness and diversity of Indian culinary practices, other videos frame street food through a lens of disgust or exoticism, reinforcing stereotypes about hygiene, poverty, and “otherness” in South Asian contexts. These portrayals may contribute to racialised and class-based narratives that associate Indian culture with filth or backwardness, rather than culinary authenticity or cultural value. By including this content, the study seeks to examine how algorithmically promoted depictions of Indian street food shape user perceptions of South Asian identity, and whether such content reinforces colonial or orientalist tropes in contemporary digital culture.

5. Korean Idol Dance Videos

This category includes TikTok dance videos posted directly by K-pop idols, featuring both official choreography and more casual, spontaneous clips. Many K-pop artists actively use TikTok to engage with fans, participate in trending dance challenges, and promote new music releases (Abidin & Lee, 2023). These videos frequently go viral, shaping global dance trends and reinforcing TikTok’s role in the digital dissemination of Korean pop culture. According to Amarikawa (2023), TikTok’s algorithm may amplify or conflate broader Asian representation with a Korean aesthetic in order to provoke user engagement.

By including this type of content, the study explores how celebrity-driven participation contributes to the algorithmic promotion of K-pop and investigates how the visibility of K-pop idols on TikTok influences perceptions of East Asian identity, cultural desirability, and the global reach of Korean entertainment.

6. Lip-Syncing Videos

This category includes trending TikTok videos in which users lip-sync to popular Asian pop songs or iconic dialogues from Asian movies and dramas. These videos contribute to the virality of Asian media content and offer insight into how users engage with language, sound, and visual culture to shape and participate in cultural narratives. Including this category allows the study to explore how the global circulation of Asian pop culture on TikTok influences user engagement with Asian identity and contributes to broader perceptions of cultural authenticity and belonging.

7. Race and Religion: Asian Muslim Representation

This category focuses on the intersection of race and religion, highlighting content that showcases Muslim identity within Asian cultures. Examples include hijab styling tutorials, Ramadan vlogs, religious celebrations, and personal reflections on the experience of being an Asian Muslim in various cultural contexts. These videos offer insight into how religious identity is expressed and interpreted within digital spaces. By including this content, the study aims to explore how Asian Muslim representation is framed on TikTok and whether the platform fosters positive visibility, promotes cultural neutrality, or perpetuates stereotypes and misrepresentations of Muslim identity.

8. Racialised Dating Stereotypes

This category includes TikTok content that reinforces racialised dating tropes involving Asian individuals. Examples include skits such as “My Hot Asian Girlfriend” or “My Cute Asian Boyfriend,” as well as portrayals that rely on stereotypical representations of Asian femininity (e.g. submissive, cute, hyperfeminine) and Asian masculinity (e.g. exotic, mysterious, or culturally distant). These videos often blend humour and desire in ways that contribute to the commodification of Asian bodies within online dating discourse. By analysing this content, the study explores how TikTok participates in the romanticisation or fetishisation of Asians, and whether such portrayals reinforce long-standing stereotypes seen in Western media representations of intimacy and attraction.

9. Stereotype Memes about Asian Intelligence

This category includes humorous TikTok videos and memes that reference or exaggerate the idea of an inherent “Asian smart gene” or natural academic ability. These videos often depict Asian individuals as effortlessly excelling in school or being pressured by their families to maintain top performance. While framed as jokes, such content contributes to the perpetuation of the “model minority” stereotype – associating Asian identity with innate intelligence, academic superiority, and high expectations. This category allows the study to explore how racialised humour functions on the platform and how users interpret or internalise these supposedly positive but ultimately reductive representations.

Appendix 3: Account Setting Procedure

In this study, three TikTok accounts were created for data collection. Each began with a general search using the keyword “Asian.” Across all three accounts, the initial results were strikingly similar: the feeds were already dominated by hypersexualized content, often focused on Asian women (see Figure 1 for screenshots). From there, browsing continued through occasional clicks on recommended tabs, as shown in the left screenshot. While scrolling, TikTok also surfaced additional videos marked as “related” or “similar.” At times, more explicit sexual material appeared, including content described as “breastfeeding.” Notably, much of this content was not tied to Asian representation at all, but instead featured Western women.

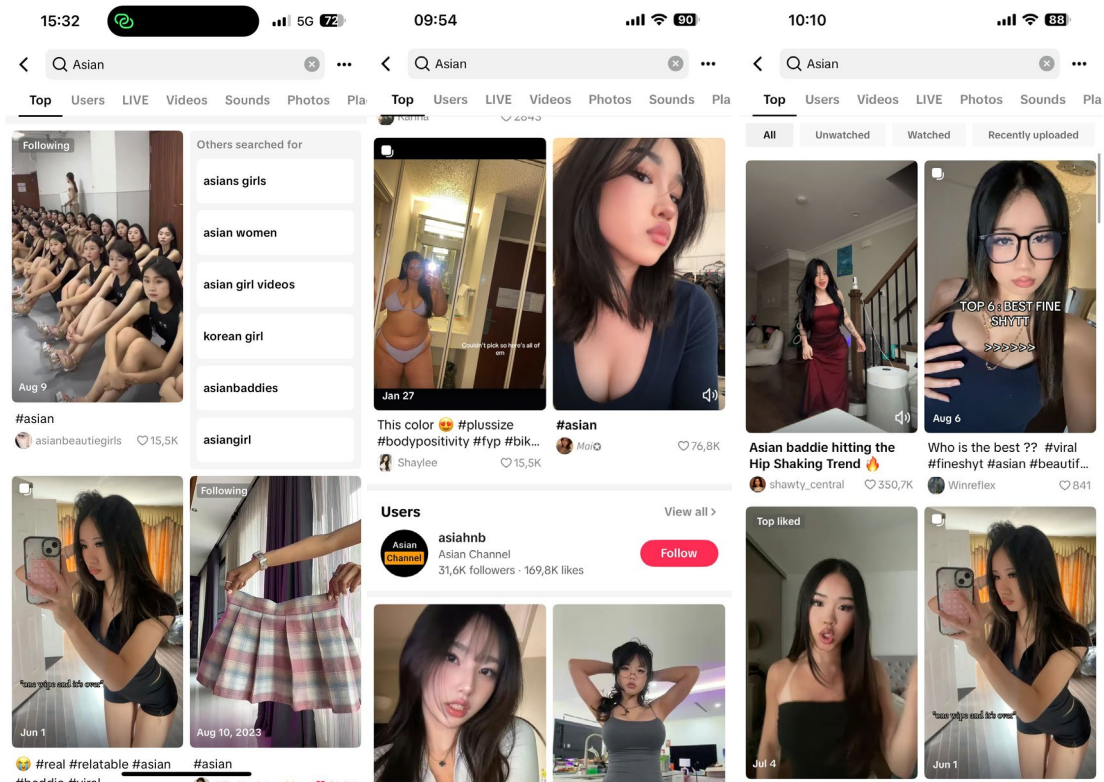


Figure 1. Example of general content surfaced under the ‘Asian’ category across three accounts

After several rounds of scrolling, more targeted searches were conducted using keywords such as “Asian accent,” “Asian Muslim,” “Indian street food,” or simply “Indian.” System-suggested search terms were also explored, including phrases like “Asian baddies on PH,” “Asian and Black couple,” and “Asian hijab.” During this stage, frequently recurring accounts were followed, and comments on their posts were reviewed. Unlike the hypersexualized content that dominated the initial feed, these categories appeared only occasionally on the “For You” page; for example, only a handful of Indian food memes were observed. To maintain comparability, the same search and browsing procedure was repeated across all three accounts. Although the search histories varied slightly, scrolling was generally limited to around 20 videos before moving on to the next query. Figure 2 presents the search history together with the algorithm’s recommendations generated from viewing activity across the three accounts. It should be noted that two of the screenshots (those on the

right) were captured later, after updates to TikTok's recommendation system, which may have influenced the displayed suggestions.

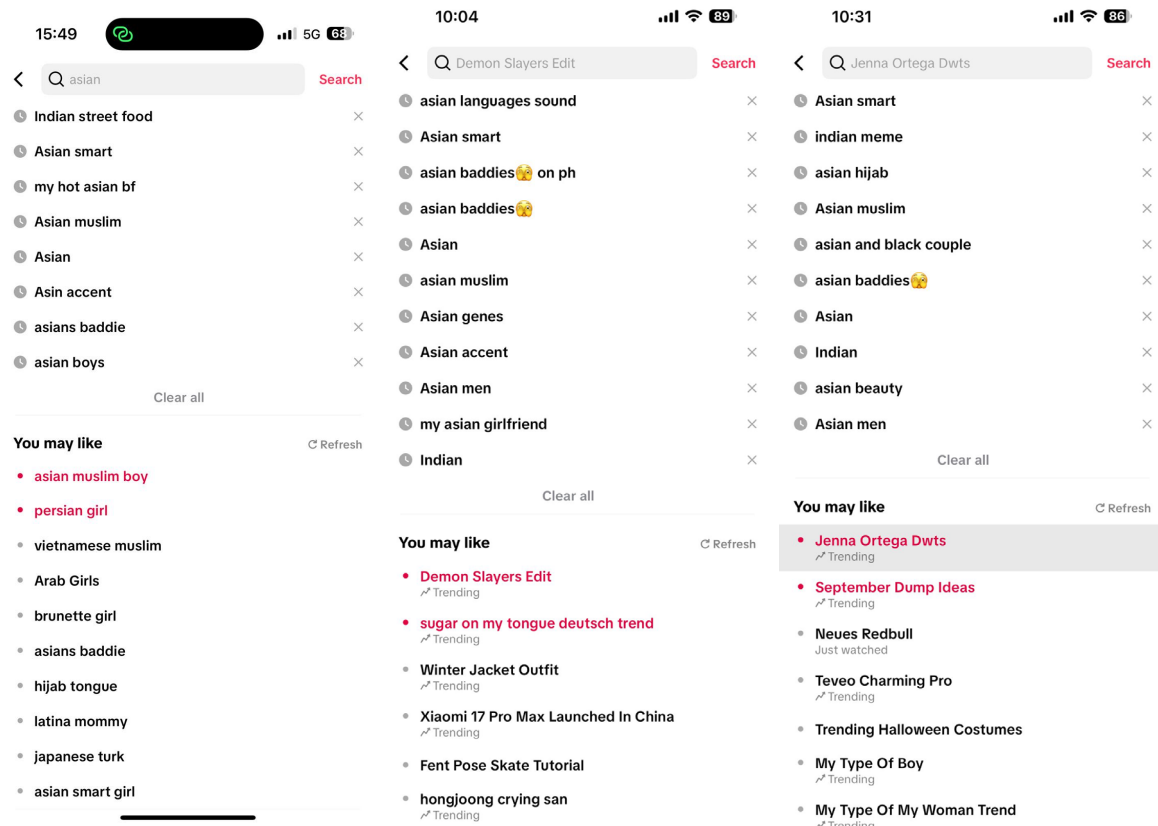


Figure 2. Search history and the corresponding algorithmic recommendations generated across three accounts

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1 *Appendix 4: Interview Transcripts*

2 **Interview A**

3 **S1 (Researcher):** So before we start the interview, did you already read through the
consent form and understand the content?

4 **S2 (Interviewee):** Yes.

5 **S1:** Okay. So first, I will briefly explain the study. In this study, I'm interested in
understanding your thought process as you complete the task I will give you. To achieve
this, I will ask you to think aloud while engaging with the task. By thinking aloud, I mean
verbalizing everything that comes to mind from the moment you begin the task until you
complete it. I encourage you to continually express your thoughts without planning or
structuring your response. Simply speak as though you were alone in the room, narrating
your thoughts. If you remain silent for an extended period, I will prompt you to continue
speaking. Do you understand what I mean?

6 **S2:** Yes.

7 **S1:** Okay, so I will start with two think-aloud training tasks to familiarize you with the think-
aloud technique. First task: how many windows are there in your parents' house? You don't
need to count them yourself — I will do it for you. Just tell me which room has how many
windows.

8 **S2:** I think my bedroom has two windows. (...) My parents' room has also two windows.
Our living room has (...) seven windows.

9 **S1:** Okay, that's a big house.

10 **S2:** Yeah. And we still have many rooms. Should I go on or...?

11 **S1:** Oh, yeah.

12 **S2:** We still have a guest room, I think one window. Bathroom, one window. Another
bathroom, two windows. (...) In the underground, we have another big room with four
windows, another toilet, one window, a place to put food with two windows, and a place for
the washing machine — one window. Yeah, I think that's it.

13 **S1:** Okay. Okay, for the second task: imagine you are opening your favorite social media
app without touching your phone. Describe your usual actions upon opening the app. What

type of content do you typically encounter, and how do you decide what to engage with or scroll past? Verbalize everything that comes to mind as though you were actively navigating the app.

14 **S2:** I think mostly when I open the Instagram app, I will first go to the story page and check out the most (...) the most important stories. So the stories from my friends, I guess, and maybe from my favorite stars. Then probably I will go to the profile of the star, since it's interesting to see what they posted. And then I would go to the "For You" page — or how it's called — where all the reels are. And there I would look into, I guess, fashion videos mostly, or if I'm in a good mood, I will also watch funny videos. And then maybe go back to the homepage and check if someone posted anything. That's it.

15 **S1:** Okay. Okay, so now we move on to our primary think-aloud task. I will give you a pre-set TikTok account. You will open it with your own device. During this phase, you will scroll through the feed and please verbalize your thoughts about what you see. This may include your immediate reactions to the content, your interpretation of why TikTok is recommending certain videos, and how these recommendations make you feel. You're free to interact with the content on the page. You can either like it, comment, or follow the account — or you can just press "Not Interested." You can also read through the comments if you would like. Do you understand the task?

16 **S2:** Yes.

17 **S1:** Okay, so now we can start.

18 **S2:** Okay, I'll open the app. First, it's just, like, a girl who is talking to another girl, and she says, like, "Don't touch me," and then suddenly they become best friends.

19 **S1:** Oh, wait. (...) Can you also (...) start your video recording on your screen?

20 **S2:** Oh, yeah, wait.

21 **S1:** Yeah.

22 **S2:** Oh. I just need to search for it. (...) Where do I find it? Sorry.

23 **S1:** You can just, like, pull your menu down with the Wi-Fi stuff, and then at the left corner there's a circle. You press it — that's the recording.

24 **S2:** (...) I don't have a circle.

- 25 **S1:** Okay. Let me see.
- 26 **S2:** Or maybe in settings? Maybe I first need to open it. Let me check.
- 27 **S1:** You know — in the control center.
- 28 **S2:** Where's the control center?
- 29 **S1:** On the top right — scroll it down. That's the control center.
- 30 **S2:** Yeah, but I checked there already. I didn't see it. Wait (...) maybe I can search for it.
Ah, yeah. I found it.
- 31 **S1:** Okay.
- 32 **S2:** Okay, I started to record.
- 33 **S1:** Yeah.
- 34 **S2:** Okay, so we're gonna start the think-aloud as well.
- 35 **S2:** Okay, now I see a woman with big breasts and she's naked, so it's more sexual, I guess. And it's also an Asian woman. (...) Again, two Asian girls who are looking at the camera, smiling, and singing lyrics.
- 36 **S1:** Yeah.
- 37 **S2:** I feel like it's also a bit sexual.
- 38 **S2:** The third video is, again, an Asian girl lying in bed. They're mostly lip syncing. (...) Now, another video — it's called "Reminder that not every Asian girl looks like this." And then many pics of, I guess, more pretty Asian girls who also look a bit fake, I guess. So I understand what they mean.
- 39 **S2:** Now it's a video of a man — a Korean man — and it's called "Average Korean man." (...) And he's very helpful and a Hongdae guy now. (...) And he's more into getting the girl back to his house and, yeah, getting her phone number. So I guess they're saying that Korean guys are much kinder and more friendly — so very stereotypical.
- 40 **S2:** Another video (...) it's an Asian girl again, lip syncing. (...) Another Asian girl lip syncing. I feel like they all look very similar. It's always a bit like Westernized makeup.

- 41 **S2:** Now it's a Korean girl, and it's called "Every European girl needs their Asian nerd," which again I feel is very stereotypical, because it's directly calling him a nerd. (...)
- 42 **S2:** And now it's an Asian woman. She's showing off her outfit, and it's very short — a very short skirt. (...)
- 43 **S2:** Now, it's an Asian girl dancing in a store to music. I can check out the comments one time. Let me check.
- 44 **S2:** The comments are like: "Anime fire", "Gotta be an Asian store," "What's cooking, good looking." (...)
- 45 **S2:** And next video — oh, I guess it's an AI video because the profile is also called "AI beautiful woman." And until now, the name was always very weird — like "pretty Asian girl," "sexy Asian girl." Now it's "AI beautiful woman."
- 46 **S2:** Now, another Asian girl on the beach, not wearing very much, showing off her body — so again, very sexualized.
- 47 **S1:** Okay. I think the next one will be the last one.
- 48 **S2:** Mm-hmm.
- 49 **S2:** Now it's a video and she's saying, "I've never dated an Asian." (...) And I think it should show that dating an Asian would be very good, since she's lying on the bed, looking sexually into the camera. (...)
- 50 **S2:** I can check out the comments one more time. "That makes two of us, but it's my dream." "I never dated an Asian, I love Asians." "I did date an Asian, but she wanted to be like her mom who was super abusive, so I dipped." "I wanted to so badly, but unfortunately I have no cute Asian girls anywhere near me."
- 51 **S2:** I feel like when I read this, I cringe a bit. Okay, that's it.
- 52 **S1:** Okay. And also stop the recording for your screen.
- 53 **S2:** Okay. Stopped.
- 54 **S1:** Yeah. Okay, now let's move on to the post-task reflection and feedback. So, did you think the instruction made sense for you for the whole session?

- 55 **S2:** Yes, it made sense.
- 56 **S1:** And did you feel comfortable verbalizing your thoughts through the process?
- 57 **S2:** (...) I think yes, but maybe also a bit no, because normally you wouldn't talk about it out loud, so it's just a bit unusual — but not uncomfortable.
- 58 **S1:** Okay. Were there any moments where you struggled to articulate your thoughts?
- 59 **S2:** Yeah, I guess very often, because I'm also not native, so my English isn't so good. And normally, I feel like most of the time I was just thinking, "Oh, sexual," "Oh, stereotypical."
- 60 **S1:** So those video contents actually made you feel uncomfortable?
- 61 **S2:** Yeah, I guess — yes. Yes. If you ask me like that, yeah, I guess. I thought the last question was about whether it was uncomfortable to talk about it, but if it's just about the videos, yeah, they made me uncomfortable.
- 62 **S1:** Okay. Now we move on to the interview session. Do you think there are any common stereotypes about Asians that come to mind for you?
- 63 **S2:** Yeah, definitely very, very many. I think one of them is being sexual. And I feel like they also pose in a way to make them look more sexual — like always pushing their breasts, showing off a lot of their body. And I think it's also always a more cute, feminine way to pose. So it's not like the Western girls who mostly... I feel like with Western girls, it doesn't look so sexual because they don't pose so cute and feminine. You know what I mean? It's more... it's different, I feel like.
- 64 **S1:** Okay. So did you notice any recurring patterns or themes when you were scrolling through the TikTok content?
- 65 **S2:** Yeah. The recurring thing was always that they were posed in a sexual way. And I feel like it's always making people think that there's only one type of Asian — because they all looked similar and all were posing sexually. So it's like making them be one person.
- 66 **S1:** Do you think this also applies to men, or are you only referring to women?
- 67 **S2:** Now I was referring to females, but now when I think of men, I would think the same. Because I feel like they always present the ideal man — ideal Asian man — and that was a Korean man. A Korean, very friendly man, who's maybe a bit nerdy. Yeah.

- 68 **S1:** Okay.
- 69 **S1:** And how do you think about TikTok's algorithm — how it decides what kind of content to show you?
- 70 **S2:** Hmm. (..) I think the algorithm checks how long I stay on the videos, and depending on that, it thinks, okay, maybe I like it more or not. And also if I check out the comments or like the video, it will also make the algorithm think this is a video that I should be shown.
- 71 **S1:** (..) But have you, like, in general, during daily life, ever thought about how this algorithm mechanism could work behind the scenes?
- 72 **S2:** Yeah, I did think about that. For example, on the "For You" page, you always see that when you check out one weird video, this type of video will pop up everywhere. Like, for example, I checked out a video of a woman who was less dressed, and since then, now on my "For You" page, sometimes there are also these videos of (..) women who are less dressed. And that's not actually the thing I want to see, but just because of one click, they think I like that. So (..) that's a bit annoying.
- 73 **S1:** But isn't it also strange for you? Because you actually only did one click. You didn't even like or follow the account, but it just started to (..) appear constantly.
- 74 **S2:** Yeah, so true, actually. Because mostly I watch funny videos — like animal videos I really like, or humorous videos. And when I watch those, they won't really show up on the "For You" page. Like, obviously maybe two or three, but most of the page is still this sexual stuff that I don't really want to see.
- 75 **S1:** Okay. (..) But have you ever reacted to it, for example, by blocking or pressing "Not Interested"?
- 76 **S2:** (..) No. I think I didn't even know there was this option, to be honest.
- 77 **S1:** Okay.
- 78 **S2:** I always just try not to look at these videos. Yeah, what I did was I tried to (..) relearn my algorithm. So I watched more other videos (..) to try to get these out of my page. But, but it didn't work.
- 79 **S1:** So it just sticks with your page forever.
- 80 **S2:** Yes, I stick with this sexual page forever.

- 81 **S1:** Okay. Then do you ever feel like the algorithm recommends content based on maybe your identity?
- 82 **S2:** Yes, I also think that. Because most videos in my feed are Asians. But when I remember the only time where I looked at this, (..) I guess this naked woman, she wasn't even Asian. So I was also thinking, why now I get so many (..) Asian videos?
- 83 **S1:** But has it always been like that since you started using Instagram or TikTok, or did it suddenly change?
- 84 **S2:** I think it also maybe changed. Because nowadays I also follow more Asian stars. So it could be that they also base (..) the recommendation based on my follower thing. So it could be that it changed. Because in the beginning, it was more Western people and nowadays it's only Asians.
- 85 **S1:** Okay. (..) And back to the content you've seen, do you think TikTok promotes or reinforces certain stereotypes about Asians?
- 86 **S2:** Definitely. I feel like (..) they tend to push up the videos which are more stereotypical. So things like what I already said. For example, the Korean men — they don't push up videos of, for example, Thai men or Indian men or maybe Taiwanese men. It's always the Korean (..) I don't want to say perfect, but the perfect face. It's even looking a bit like plastic surgery face. This is, I guess, the thing that maybe Western girls like, so it could be that TikTok pushes this up.
- 87 **S1:** When you look at those Korean men, what do you think of them? Like, why do you think they got so popular, why they are portrayed like so ideal boyfriend?
- 88 **S2:** (..) I think because of K-pop and pop culture, (..) because they're (..) yeah, that's (..) I feel like that's... K-pop brought the stereotypical Korean man to the Western world. And since then, I feel like many Western girls would strive to (..) maybe date a guy who looks like that. And maybe it could also be that they think all Asians look like that.
- 89 **S1:** Okay. (..) Do you feel like TikTok's algorithm treats different Asian groups — such as like Eastern Asian, South Asians, or Southeast Asians — differently? Or does it present them tend to be like as one group?
- 90 **S2:** (..) I think (..) it's more portrayed as one group in the woman case. Because for

women, it's like... I do see a difference because I'm also Asian, so I can see a difference. For example, in the skin color. And also in the comments, I saw some, for example, commented "Thai girl." The other one I see, I think one was more Korean. But for the men, I feel like it's always Koreans. I didn't see any other man. And even when I looked at them, I was like, are they really Korean? Like for some.

91 **S1:** But even though you are skeptical about their (..) nationality, I would say, but they are still like written there, they are portrayed as Korean men.

92 **S2:** Yeah, they are portrayed as Korean men. But for the women, it's always just "Asian girl." So very broad.

93 **S1:** Okay. (..) Do you think this kind of TikTok content actually influences how people perceive Asian groups?

94 **S2:** Definitely. Because for women, for example, they will just think all Asian women are the same. So they should be sexual, they should be very feminine. (..) Like, I didn't see any, for example, edgy girl. It's always like one, one similar look, even though they're from different countries. And for men, I would think that most people then will think the ideal Asian man is Korean, which is also a bit... yeah, I wouldn't think so.

95 **S1:** Like you mentioned before, you think the portrayal of Asian females and the Western females is different (..) on TikTok. Do you think there is also difference for Asian men and Western men?

96 **S2:** Definitely. I think one thing you directly see is that Western men, for example, are more portrayed as the muscular, manly man. So they're also mostly more naked, I guess. But for the Asian men, you see they're always like dressed up very, very... I wouldn't say pretty, but very (..) business, business-style casually, and they also look more like polite, more cute. So it's like a more feminine way of portraying the Asian man.

97 **S1:** And would you think like people from different cultural backgrounds would interpret this kind of content differently?

98 **S2:** Yes, I think so. Because I think for us Asians, we would think, "Well, this is racist," or "Well, this makes me feel uncomfortable." While Western people might not even see this as racist because maybe (..) they don't even know about many cultural differences. Because when I think of my friends, if we see (..) many Asians, for example, in the street, they will always say they all look similar. But for me, for example, I always see a difference. But this

is also because I also spend a lot of time in Asian countries, so I know the difference.

99 **S1:** (...) You didn't like encounter this content, but for example, there are some content that is about mocking the (...) Asian accents of speaking English or there's also like memes about Indian street foods, about the hygiene issues. I also asked some other participants, like they think this is just a type of humor. Do you have any other idea about this kind of content?

100 **S2:** I think for the Asian mocking videos, I also remember one that was like of a young Asian boy and he was always crying when he tried to learn English. And that did make me laugh, even though I am Asian. So I also saw that as a humor video. But I have to say for the Indian videos with the hygiene, (...) since I think this video has a drastic influence on people's way of thinking about India and also about their hygiene. I think this is not so kind to always portray them as not hygienic because in India, there is definitely also places where it's not like that.

101 **S1:** But of some opinion, they would say like TikTok didn't force you to think in certain way. Like people need to have their own thoughts about the content that they see. What do you think about this?

102 **S2:** I think it's hard to say it like that because obviously we have free will and we we can decide by our own what to think about certain videos. But if you always push up certain videos , so for example, if you always push up the Korean guy, for example, then it's hard to not think that Korean guys are more pretty or for the woman, if I always get these sexualized videos of Asian women, then of course I will think, okay, maybe nowadays most Asian women look like that. So I think it's hard to just say, (...) no, this is not reality if you always get confronted with this kind of videos.

103 **S1:** Have you personally experienced any bias or discrimination that you believe may have been influenced by content from social media?

104 **S2:** Yeah, I remember when I was in Berlin once, (...) we went to a bar and met some guys from a friend. And there a guy told me that he already had sex with a Russian girl, (...) German girl. No, I think it was actually also mostly Asian girls, I think not German. I don't remember which one. And then he said, (...) the only thing that is missing on my list is Taiwanese. And that also for me, was like a very sexual way of saying, well, Asians are good in bed. Like, I also remember another thing that was in the Oktoberfest in Munich. There are also an old guy, he didn't even ask me where I was from. He just told me, hey, Thai girl, (...) I know Thai girls are good in bad. And that was also so stereotypical.

- 105 **S1:** Do you think TikTok does enough to address harmful or stereotypical content about Asians? For example, TikTok has previously launched initiatives like Stop Asian Hate Campaign and updated its community guidelines to include stricter policies on hate speech and harassment. Do you feel these efforts are effective or it's more needed?
- 106 **S2:** (..) I think it's more needed, but I can also imagine that it's hard to restrict these kind of videos since the people themselves post it. So like the Asian women they want to portray themselves like that, otherwise it wouldn't even come into TikTok. So where's the line of, okay, this is freedom of speech? You can post whatever you want and where's the line of, okay, this is promoting a bad way, (..) like this is promoting stereotypical thinking. I think that's very hard.
- 107 **S1:** Okay. And back to self- identity, like, how did you (..), how did the content you saw during the session made you feel about being an Asian?
- 108 **S2:** I think it kind of (...) approved my way of thinking that most people just look at Asians in a fetishized, maybe, or sexualized way. And that doesn't always feel so good because also in the streets, I encounter these kind of, (..) yeah, looks or ways of talking to me. So I think looking at these videos just approved something that I didn't really like.
- 109 **S1:** And do you feel like TikTok reflects your experience or identity accurately?
- 110 **S2:** (..) I think not completely because obviously this identity is something I don't want to feel every day, so I would say no. (..) So yeah, I'm not always sexual and I feel like I also know a lot of girls who are not so feminine and they're still like very good, like very good looking, you know what I mean? So I think just portraying Asians in one way is a bit, yeah, (..) not so good.
- 111 **S1:** And how do you personally think about this Korean ideal boyfriend thing?
- 112 **S2:** (..) I think it's also a bit like. I think nothing so good because I feel like it's like using them to gain benefit. Because the men are always portrayed as nearly like a slave. They should always like behave very quietly, help you around. You're very polite and put themselves back. And I feel like this is just using them a bit. Yeah, I don't I don't really like that way of portraying them.
- 113 **S1:** So you wouldn't actually, like after you viewing these videos, you wouldn't really consider to maybe also one day have a Korean boyfriend or something like that?
- 114 **S2:** Definitely not because I don't date because of benefits.

- 115 **S1:** Okay.
- 116 **S1:** And do you think that TikTok in general has influenced the way that you view your own racial or cultural identities?
- 117 **S2:** Yeah, I think it's still like my same answer that yeah, (..) they portray Asians in just one dimensional ways. And I think we're much more, (..) we're much more different. Like every Asian is different, so it would be nice to see a bit more, (..) like more diversity.
- 118 **S1:** Yeah. Yeah.
- 119 **S1:** Have you ever changed how you present yourself, like either online or in real life because of how Asian identities are portrayed?
- 120 **S2:** This is a hard question. I would say (..) like social media didn't make me feel like I need to change. It's just something I think it's bad, but I wouldn't say that it made me like feel I should change my personality.
- 121 **S1:** But also by outlook (..) or like lifestyle, you think there's also no influence on that.
- 122 **S2:** Yeah, I think no, because me as a person am already maybe a bit more feminine and I also like sometimes to wear sexy stuff. So I think if I would like try to behave differently, I would have to change my personality. So even though I don't want to be portrayed that way, I guess I maybe am also like acting a bit like that.
- 123 **S1:** Okay. Then do you ever feel pressure to conform to certain stereotypes? Like you just said you actually real, as a real personality, you're also feminine and like to be sexy. Did you feel like there's a pressure or you feel is actually, you don't want to be like that, because it's like conforming a certain stereotype?
- 124 **S2:** I guess what I don't like is, for example, (..) sometimes I feel like I want to be more louder, but in big groups, I feel like most people, if they look at me since I'm mostly in the beginning, more shy and maybe also like Asian, feminine, then maybe they will directly think one dimensionally of me that I will behave in a certain way, but I wish that they would not think like that. So sometimes I will try to at least like from a character perspective, behave differently.
- 125 **S1:** Also yeah, for my personal experience, sometimes I would think being an Asian and especially like being a foreigner, I would feel there's like, I would look down a bit of myself. So I would be (..) more scared to talk loud or to talk about what I'm really thinking about. Do

you also have like similar experience on that?

126 **S2:** Yeah, I think I have similar experiences in, for example, (..) in how to portray myself around women, I guess, because I feel like sometimes women have a bad view of Asian girls since they're known to get the men like also from Thailand, the sex industry. I feel like there's a bit of a bad view on Asian women. So when I am around Western women who, for example, have a boyfriend, I always feel like I need to behave very (..) very cool around the woman, not look at the man. Maybe I have this, but I don't look down on me just because I'm Asian.

127 **S1:** Okay.

128 **S1:** Have you ever seen content on TikTok that made you feel proud or ashamed of being Asian?

129 **S2:** I think, (..) let me think. I think there are videos, for example of (..) Asian kids, like Chinese kids who are forced to do things for the camera. These kind of videos and also with the animals, I feel like Asians like to, (..) but I think not only Asians, I think also Western people, but mostly when I saw the videos, it were Asian people people who maybe forced their dog to do a lot of things or their baby to do a lot of things on camera and that made me feel like they should like cool down a bit in that (..) way. I don't know if that makes sense.

130 **S1:** Yeah. I get it. And also there are some memes that I wouldn't say joke about, but portray like Asians is like smart and has this like a genius gene. Would you feel like it's a kind of a compliment or you feel more of stressed by this kind of portrayal?

131 **S2:** I would think it's more of a compliment, but if it's only like, for example, saying Asians are nerdy, then I would think that's not so kind. But it wouldn't give me any pressure.

132 **S1:** Okay.

133 **S1:** And also, (..) when I'm going through some content, I have seen some (..) comments saying that there are some Asian people that they are hired by some like European company or Western companies. They would expect these Asian people behave more like this stereotype that's working hard and very smart, but they are just like working like normal Westerns, like (..) working on the normal day until the normal time and get off. And this is (..) not aligned with their expectation and then they got fired. What do you think about this?

- 134 **S2:** That would definitely give me pressure (..) because I would think, oh, god, if they experienced (..) something like this, I could experience something similar since I guess if it's a real stereotype around Asians to always behave a certain way in job situations, then definitely I would think, oh God, I hope I don't have the same experience.
- 135 **S1:** Okay.
- 136 **S1:** Then do you think using TikTok affects your a sense of belonging to the Asian communities or to the broader society?
- 137 **S1:** You mean to belong to (..) what do you mean by that?
- 138 **S2:** Belonging to Asian communities. Like if you feel with this kind of content, you feel more belonged to Asian community or more distanced.
- 139 **S2:** I think definitely more distant because these kind of videos are not really portraying our Asian culture. So that's why I was like a bit confused by the question because I feel like this completely doesn't portray any sense of culture. It's just a view from, yeah, (..) a very stereotypical view of Asia, which I don't really approve.
- 140 **S1:** Okay. I think that's all for the interview. Now moving to the last part, I will collect some of your personal demographic information and also a study feedback of the entire session.
- 141 **S1:** So where are you from?
- 142 **S2:** Germany and Taiwan.
- 143 **S1:** And how old are you?
- 144 **S2:** 25.
- 145 **S1:** And what is your highest education?
- 146 **S2:** Bachelor and nearly master.
- 147 **S1:** Okay. What is your gender identity?
- 148 **S2:** Female.
- 149 **S1:** Have you lived in different cultural environments?
- 150 **S2:** In Germany, yes, but I wouldn't consider that different cultural environments.

- 151 **S1:** And how often do you use TikTok?
- 152 **S2:** I think three times a week.
- 153 **S1:** Okay. What kind of (..) what type of content do you engage with most frequently on TikTok?
- 154 **S2:** I think fashion videos and maybe food videos and animal videos.
- 155 **S1:** Have you ever noticed any trends related to racial representations on TikTok? For example, the fox eye trend or the Stop Asian Hate movement?
- 156 **S2:** (...) I think not around Asians. I saw African stereotypical things. Like there are always these Africans who dance together for a birthday song. And then they have the name of the birthday person in their hands. I think it's a big trend.
- 157 **S1:** Would you consider it's also kind of rude towards the African (..) group?
- 158 **S2:** Yeah, definitely. It feels like they are portrayed very low because also people laugh about these kinds of videos and it makes them feel like they are more poor because they need to do these kinds of videos.
- 159 **S1:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, I also saw it. It's also like sold on some (..) platform that you can buy this kind of video and to make it.
- 160 **S2:** People really pay a lot of money for that. That's really weird.
- 161 **S1:** And how often do you come across this kind of racial representation content in your everyday TikTok use?
- 162 **S2:** I think nearly every day since my feed is full of naked Asian women.
- 163 **S1:** Okay. And did participating in this study affect the way that you view TikTok's algorithm or racial content on the platform?
- 164 **S2:** Yeah, definitely, because now I know I can maybe block that or maybe, yeah, give a sign that I don't want to see this kind of video, so I will definitely do that to refresh my page.
- 165 **S1:** Were there any moments during the study that you felt uncomfortable?
- 166 **S2:** I think when I was looking at the videos that made me feel a bit uncomfortable because it was like only these kinds of videos, so it was like more in your face and it just felt a bit,

yeah, weird, uncomfortable, too sexual, not something I want to see.

167 **S1:** But with the questions, there wasn't anything that you felt uncomfortable?

168 **S2:** No.

169 **S1:** Okay. And lastly, do you have any additional thoughts on the topic that we haven't covered?

170 **S2:** (...) I think no.

171 **S1:** Okay.

172 **S1:** Okay, thank you for attending. It was very great.

173 **S2:** No problem.

Interview B

1

2 **S1 (Researcher):** Before we start the interview, (..) have you read the consent form I sent you?

3 **S2 (interviewee):** Yes.

4 **S1:** Great. Let me first (..) explain the general procedure. In this study, I hope to understand your thought process while completing the upcoming task. I'll ask you to use a "think-aloud" approach, which means that from the moment you start the task, you should say out loud everything that comes to your mind. You don't need to organize your thoughts or think about how to express them, just speak freely as if you're talking to yourself alone in a room. If you stay silent for too long, I'll give you a reminder to continue expressing your thoughts. Do you understand what I mean?

5 **S2:** Yes, I understand.

6 **S1:** First, I'll give you two (..) training tasks. The first one is to help you get used to this process. Can you try to recall how many windows there are in your parents' house? You don't need to count them exactly, I'll help with that. Just roughly describe how many windows are in each room.

7 **S2:** Each room (...) each room has about one or two windows. (..) In total, probably more than ten.

8 **S1:** Could you briefly tell me how many are in each room?

9 **S2:** I need to elaborate in each room?

10 **S1:** Yes.

11 **S2:** My own room has two, my brother's room has two, my mom's room has one. (..) The living room has two. Each of the two bathrooms has one window. And (..) the music room where they practice has two. That's about it.

12 **S1:** Great. Now for the second training task: Please imagine that you are opening your most frequently used or favorite social media app. Without touching your phone, please describe your typical browsing habits. What types of content do you usually see? How do you decide which content to engage with or skip? Just describe your thoughts as if you're actually using the app.

13 **S2:** Usually I open Xiaohongshu. I see food, (..) people traveling, and (..) makeup. I usually (..) don't skip content, I just keep scrolling and open food videos. I just keep scrolling down. Normally I don't skip any video.

14 **S1:** Okay, now we'll move on to the main think-aloud task. I've provided you with a pre-set TikTok account. Please open it using your own phone. During this phase, you'll see some content. Say out loud your thoughts on what you see, your initial reactions, your understanding of why TikTok might be recommending these videos, and how the content makes you feel. If you're silent for too long, I'll

(..) prompt you. Please begin.

15 **S2:** How many videos should I scroll through? Should I just keep going until you tell me to stop?

16 **S1:** About 10-15 videos. Yes, you can scroll until I say stop.

17 **S1:** During the whole process, you can also interact with the videos, for example, like them, comment, or follow the account, just like you normally would on your own TikTok.

18 **S2:** Okay, so I should tell you each time I like a video or do something like that?

19 **S1:** Yes, you can. (...) And while you're using it, please turn on screen recording, so I can see later what videos you came across.

20 **S2:** Okay. I opened the comments. (...) Such a weird video. (...) Everyone is dressed really skimpy.

21 **S1:** Mm-hmm.

22 **S2:** I opened the comments, there are so many weird people saying all kinds of things. (...) Ugh, what kind of video is this?

23 **S1:** Can you describe the video content briefly?

24 **S2:** It's a girl eating an ice pop and putting it in her mouth in a very suggestive, sexual way. In the comments, because I like reading comments, it felt like she was doing it on purpose. But this is the first time I've seen a Muslim girl show up in (...) this feed. Every video is of (..) girls dressed very scantily, giving off these subtle sexual hints. This girl is in an arcade, riding a motorbike simulator or something like that, and she's dressed very, very skimpy and (...) doing something strange. Wow, this is the first time I've seen Indian street food. Gross. Ugh. And again, it's the same kind of thing.

25 **S1:** The same kind of what?

26 **S2:** Cleavage, cleavage, swimming pool, a girl trying to jump and make her boobs (..) jiggle. The first comment is "name please", what does that even mean? Someone else said they've watched it 200 times. (..) I feel like these videos are really objectifying women, just showing off body parts. I don't even understand what this video is about.

27 **S1:** Could you describe it a bit?

28 **S2:** A woman yawning. Then (..) someone commented "wow" with a heart and an arrow through it. What does that even mean? This is creepy, seeing all this stuff first thing in the morning.

29 **S1:** Okay, you can stop around the tenth video or so.

30 **S2:** I think I've seen around ten already.

31 **S1:** Okay, that will be your last one.

32 **S2:** OK, I'm done. Oh, no, no.

33 **S1:** Alright. Now you can stop your screen recording.

34 **S2:** Okay.

35 **S1:** Now we'll move on to a reflection and feedback stage about that section.

36 **S2:** Okay.

37 **S1:** Do you think the instructions I gave earlier were clear? Was there anything hard to understand?

38 **S2:** No, it was clear.

39 **S1:** Great. During the whole process, did you find the reminders I gave you helpful, or did they feel a bit unnatural?

40 **S2:** They were helpful.

41 **S1:** Did you feel comfortable speaking your thoughts out loud during the task? Was it easy or difficult?

42 **S2:** Not comfortable, difficult.

43 **S1:** Why?

44 **S2:** Because normally when people watch TikTok, they're just scrolling, unless a video is really weird, you might make a facial expression or something, but otherwise, you don't react much.

45 **S1:** So you feel like there just weren't that many thoughts running through your head?

46 **S2:** Not really. Just thought some of the videos were kind of strange.

47 **S1:** Got it. Would you say using TikTok is more of a mentally relaxing activity for you?

48 **S2:** Yeah.

49 **S1:** Alright, let's move on to the interview section.

50 **S2:** Okay.

51 **S1:** In today's society, do you think there are any common stereotypes about Asians that come up a lot? If so, could you give one or two examples?

- 52 **S2:** (...) One really common one is that Asians are good at math. Another is that Asian women tend to be objectified, especially in Western culture. Like, they're portrayed as petite and obedient. I think a lot of that comes from anime influence.
- 53 **S1:** What about Asian men?
- 54 **S2:** I used to think Asian men didn't really have much presence in Western culture, but now with K-pop and boy bands becoming more popular, Asian men have more visibility. But it still tends to be the more (..) "feminine" looking guys that Western audiences like, because they fit that boy-band style.
- 55 **S1:** In interviews with others, some mentioned that TikTok often shows videos of "ideal boyfriends" on their homepage, usually Korean or East Asian men. Because they're seen as more gentle or attentive. What's your take on that?
- 56 **S2:** For me, it kind of depends on age. Like, I used to believe in that. (...) I thought it was really romantic, they make it seem like this dream guy is real, and that you could totally fall in love with someone like that. It felt immersive, like you're in a relationship with them. Like all the Korean guys are actually like this. But as I got older, that illusion started to fade.
- 57 **S1:** So would you say it's a process of "de-romanticizing" Asian men?
- 58 **S2:** Yeah, exactly.
- 59 **S1:** When you're watching TikTok videos in your daily life, do you ever see similar videos featuring (..) Western male leads? Or is it mostly Asian men?
- 60 **S2:** Mostly Asian men.
- 61 **S1:** So Western men don't appear as much?
- 62 **S2:** Not really. Sometimes you see Western guys, but most of them are high schoolers, those European boys who look kind of Asian, very youthful and energetic, and quite gentle.
- 63 **S1:** But not adult men?
- 64 **S2:** Rarely. It feels like they've been "youth-ified" in a way.
- 65 **S1:** Do you think this might be because Asian aesthetics tend to favor youthful appearances for both men and women?
- 66 **S2:** I think so.
- 67 **S1:** When you were scrolling through TikTok just now, did you notice any patterns or themes in the

content the system recommended to you?

68 **S2:** (...) Yes. There was (..) content teaching Chinese, but in a pretty sexualized way. That video came up two or three times.

69 **S1:** And the person posting it was a woman, right?

70 **S2:** Yes, the same person.

71 **S1:** So the same woman kept appearing?

72 **S2:** Yeah, it was repeated.

73 **S1:** What kind of Chinese phrases was she teaching?

74 **S2:** "I'm about to cum."

75 **S1:** (...) Okay. That's very direct.

76 **S2:** Saying stuff like that in front of your parents (...).

77 **S1:** What do you think the purpose of those videos is? Are they meant to be funny? Or do you think she's actually trying to teach Chinese?

78 **S2:** I think it's more for shock value. She's trying to attract Western men. Her clothes were also super revealing, just trying to grab attention. And I noticed she had a lot of likes on her videos.

79 **S1:** Oh, so she's a pretty popular creator on TikTok?

80 **S2:** Yes.

81 **S1:** What do you think the TikTok algorithm uses to decide what content to recommend?

82 **S2:** I think it's based on (..) where I live, my nationality, gender, and maybe how long I pause on certain videos. Like, I stayed on that "I'm about to cum" video for a while because I thought it was really weird. After that, I kept getting videos of the same girl.

83 **S1:** Had you thought much about how social media algorithms work before?

84 **S2:** I had a general idea, like, if I like a certain type of video, it'll show me more of that. But that's about it.

85 **S1:** What kind of content do you usually see on social media?

86 **S2:** Food, pets, makeup, travel.

- 87 **S1:** Based on the content you just saw, do you feel like TikTok is promoting or reinforcing certain stereotypes about Asians?
- 88 **S2:** Yes. Like I mentioned before, a lot of the Asian women are shown in a very youthful, almost childlike way. There were even videos of young Asian girls stretching in dance studios. I think a lot of pedophiles would be into that kind of stuff, those videos had a lot of likes too. I don't really know the creators' intent, but it's concerning.
- 89 **S1:** So the people in those videos were actually children, not adults?
- 90 **S2:** Yes. And then the adult women are dressed really revealingly, but in this kind of "accidental" way, like they're pretending not to be trying. You can tell they're trying to show something, but it's all very subtle. Like that girl eating the ice pop, just sitting on a lawn, doing those suggestive things.
- 91 **S1:** So overall, you'd say there's a strong sense of sexual innuendo?
- 92 **S2:** Yes. Right on the edge between suggestive and not. If your mind (..) leans that way even slightly, you'd definitely feel like it's full of sexual hints. But if someone doesn't pick up on those cues, they might just think it's normal.
- 93 **S1:** Do you think TikTok treats different Asian groups differently when it comes to representation, like East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia? Or does it tend to lump all Asians together into one category?
- 94 **S2:** I think it treats them more as one single group.
- 95 **S1:** Earlier you mentioned seeing a video featuring a Muslim girl, do you think her presentation style was similar to the others? For example, regardless of whether it's a Muslim woman or a woman from another ethnic background, were they all presented in a sexualized way?
- 96 **S2:** I did see one video of a Muslim woman and an Indian man cooking together, and the Muslim woman wasn't sexualized.
- 97 **S1:** So you feel there were some differences?
- 98 **S2:** A little bit, maybe because of (..) religion. But that was the only non-sexualized one I came across, everything else was sexualized.
- 99 **S1:** And the other sexualized videos, were the creators mainly from which countries?
- 100 **S2:** China, Japan, Korea.
- 101 **S1:** So mainly East Asia? Not much from South or Southeast Asia?

102 S2: Right, very little.

103 S1: You also mentioned an Indian street food video, correct?

104 S2: Yeah.

105 S1: From what I know, that type of content on TikTok is often used to mock India's hygiene issues.

106 S2: Yeah, (..) the one I just saw was exactly like that.

107 S1: Was it presented in a humorous way, or did you genuinely find it gross?

108 S2: I genuinely found it gross. The guy put his hand right into the food.

109 S1: Do you think it was intentional? Or is that just the (..) real situation?

110 S2: I think that's just how it is in reality.

111 S1: Do you think TikTok content like this affects how people perceive Asian groups?

112 S2: Yes.

113 S1: What kind of impact do you think it has?

114 S2: Well, for women, like I said before, (..) very childlike, very submissive. The videos tend to show women in (..) very obedient, passive roles.

115 S1: Do you think people from different cultural backgrounds react differently to this type of content?

116 S2: What do you mean?

117 S1: For example, as an Asian person yourself, you would feel disgusted or uncomfortable about the content. But if someone from a Western background sees it, how do you think they'd react?

118 S2: Oh, I think they'd see it as normal.

119 S1: Because you feel those stereotypes are deeply ingrained in them?

120 S2: Very much so. And I think what we consider revealing or overly sexual might be seen as totally normal to them. Maybe they even think it's not enough, (..) like "not sexy enough." But for me, it's already very suggestive.

121 S1: Do you think there's a difference in how Western and Asian women present themselves on TikTok?

122 S2: Yes, definitely. Western women tend to be more bold in all aspects, while Asian women often

come across as “on the edge”, like they’re hinting at something sexual, but in a subtle way. Do you know what I mean? It’s like they’re doing something suggestive but trying to present it as if it’s natural, not really natural, but slightly subtle. Just slightly suggestive. But for those Western women, they are like more bold.

123 **S1:** I see what you mean. And when you see Western women’s videos, do you also feel a strong sense of sexual innuendo? Or does it feel more like a confident, healthy expression of their bodies?

124 **S2:** When I see Western women showing (..) their bodies, like going to the gym or something, that feels fine. But with Asian women, it sometimes feels weird. (..) They tend to give off that “subtle teasing” vibe.

125 **S1:** Right. And I think that also ties into how, in Asian cultures, dancing to music is really common. But in Western contexts, especially among female creators, it’s not something you see as often.

126 **S2:** Yes, exactly. It’s really rare.

127 **S1:** Do you think the way TikTok’s algorithm recommends content could affect how people perceive Asian communities? For example, could it create misunderstandings or even negative emotions?

128 **S2:** (...) I don’t know about negative emotions, but I think it does reinforce stereotypes about Asian women. (..) People might start to think that Asian women are all like that.

129 **S1:** So they might believe Asian women are more (..) submissive or docile, and that could contribute to stronger oppression or pressure placed on them?

130 **S2:** Yes, and I think TikTok really infantilizes Asian women too much.

131 **S1:** Right, that’s very true.

132 **S2:** Like, I’ve never seen a Western girl posting videos of herself dancing in that way, especially not in ballet training or whatever, and putting it online like that.

133 **S1:** And the account I saw just now looked like it belonged to a ballet group or dance studio. But I really wonder what their intention is in posting that content. It just feels really weird.

134 **S2:** Yeah, yeah. Because even in Western societies, Asian women already have this “small and cute” image due to anime and stuff, and that attracts people with pedophilic tendencies. Then you post videos of (..) girls doing stretches and being forced into certain positions, it’s just going to draw in more of that audience. Especially in that TikTok feed I was just scrolling through, it was like: sexual innuendo, sexual innuendo, sexual innuendo, then a child. I don’t know how the algorithm is figuring this out, but it definitely feels like it’s building a suggestion loop around sexualized Asian content.

- 135 **S1:** And it gives users the feeling that Asian people have really low boundaries, like “they’re okay with anything.”
- 136 **S2:** Yes! Like they don’t have their own stance or limits.
- 137 **S1:** Have you ever personally experienced any bias or discrimination in real life that you think might be related to how Asians are portrayed on social media?
- 138 **S2:** (..) In real life, (..) not really. But I have seen a lot of young girls getting really obsessed with Korean guys or girls because of what they see on TikTok. Like, they become obsessed with Asian culture. In Vienna, the people I’ve met are actually quite nice, they sometimes come up to me and compliment me, (..) like saying I’m pretty or something.
- 139 **S1:** So would you say that’s more of a positive influence?
- 140 **S2:** I think for Western women, yes, it’s more positive. But for men, I haven’t really encountered that, so I’m not sure what kind of negative impact there might be.
- 141 **S1:** Have you ever been harassed or approached online in uncomfortable ways?
- 142 **S2:** Yes, not really harassment, but people have (..) asked for my contact info or tried to chat with me on Xiaohongshu.
- 143 **S1:** When you see content on TikTok that makes you uncomfortable, especially in how it presents Asians, what’s your usual reaction?
- 144 **S2:** I just dislike the post.
- 145 **S1:** Do you ever comment or report it?
- 146 **S2:** No. I just let the app know I don’t want to see that kind of content again.
- 147 **S1:** Do you think TikTok has done enough to manage harmful or stereotypical content about Asians? For example, campaigns like #StopAsianHate or updates to community guidelines that address hate speech and harassment, do you think those efforts are effective or do you think there is more needed?
- 148 **S2:** I think they’re completely ineffective. (..) The algorithm just can’t detect this stuff. Like, these borderline videos, it’s hard to say (..) whether they’re “bad” or not. (...) The comments aren’t overtly hateful either, they’re more like “I like this,” or stuff with sexual undertones. The problem is, the creators are already reinforcing stereotypes, and the commenters are just going along with it.
- 149 **S2:** And the algorithm probably can’t tell whether something is borderline or not. It can always say, “Oh, she’s just eating an ice pop,” or “It’s just a ballet training video.” So I think the efforts don’t work

at all.

150 **S1:** Do you think it's even possible to improve things?

151 **S2:** It's hard.

152 **S1:** Did anything you saw during this interview session affect how you feel about your identity as an Asian person?

153 **S2:** Not really.

154 **S1:** Do you think TikTok content reflects your personal experiences or identity?

155 **S2:** (...) I don't think so. The stuff on TikTok is way too extreme, it doesn't represent me at all.

156 **S1:** Have you ever changed your behavior online or in real life because of the way Asians are portrayed on TikTok?

157 **S2:** You mean, (...) like, after seeing certain videos or about the Asian females?

158 **S1:** (...) Like do you think that the existence of these kinds of stereotypes about Asians might influence or change how you behave online or in real life?

159 **S2:** I don't think so.

160 **S1:** Yeah, for example, one participant mentioned that because Asian women are often sexualized, she tries to downplay any signs of interest in men when she's around her Western friends. (...) She doesn't want to come across as seductive or flirtatious. Have you ever felt that way?

161 **S2:** Not really.

162 **S1:** Have you ever felt like you had to conform to certain stereotypes? Or deliberately avoid behaviors to not be seen a certain way?

163 **S2:** I do avoid certain things (...). Like, I'm not into anime culture at all. And on TikTok, some girls dress very "anime-like" or act really cutesy, I definitely stay away from that. I don't want to be associated with that kind of image.

164 **S1:** So you actually kind of don't want to come across as anime-like or overly cute, right?

165 **S2:** Yes.

166 **S1:** Have you ever seen any content on TikTok that made you feel proud or, on the contrary, embarrassed or awkward about being Asian?

- 167 **S2:** I haven't seen anything that made me feel proud. But as for embarrassing, those borderline sexual videos definitely made me feel awkward. But it's not that I'm embarrassed for myself, I'm embarrassed for the creator. I just wonder what their intention was in posting that. And reading the comments makes it even more awkward.
- 168 **S1:** Are you worried that Western users might develop negative impressions of Asians because of content like this?
- 169 **S2:** Honestly, those negative impressions are already deeply rooted in their minds. I'm not even worried anymore. I just feel like these stereotypes are constantly being reinforced. Because when content fits those stereotypes, it gets more views.
- 170 **S1:** Would you want this kind of content to change or disappear?
- 171 **S2:** I'd like it to change, but I don't think it can disappear. And I have no power to change it myself.
- 172 **S1:** Do you feel like using TikTok affects your sense of belonging, like, does it make you feel more or less connected to the Asian community?
- 173 **S2:** (...) Not really. I don't think so.
- 174 **S1:** So even after watching those videos, you still feel a sense of belonging to the Asian community?
- 175 **S2:** No, not really. (...) What does "sense of belonging" mean to you, like, feeling like you're part of the group?
- 176 **S1:** Like you are more close to the group.
- 177 **S2:** Oh, then no. I don't really feel that.
- 178 **S1:** Have you ever felt like you needed to post certain content in order to get more attention or fit in on social media?
- 179 **S2:** Yes.
- 180 **S1:** For example like what?
- 181 **S2:** (...) Not really because I wanted to fit in. Can you repeat the question?
- 182 **S1:** Do you ever feel like you should post certain content in order to gain more attention or to fit into a certain community?
- 183 **S2:** I think it's fine if I feel like posting something, it's not a big deal.
- 184 **S1:** I think it's not really about trying to fit into a group, it's more about staying in line with what's

trending online.

185 **S2:** No, I'm not that kind of person. I don't really post or follow trends, so I don't think I've ever tried to post something just to fit in.

186 **S1:** (...) Do you ever feel like you need to change something about yourself to be more visible—to match an identity that others expect of you?

187 **S2:** (...) Can you say that again? That's a bit complicated.

188 **S1:** Do you ever feel like you need to change something about yourself in order to match your identity, so that you can be more visible or recognized?

189 **S2:** (...) You mean on social media or in real life?

190 **S1:** Either one.

191 **S2:** No, not really.

192 **S1:** Earlier you mentioned the stereotype that Asians are good at math. Has that ever affected you personally?

193 **S2:** It kind of makes you feel like you have to be good at math.

194 **S1:** And if you're not good at it, does it affect how others see you? Like, do they look down on you?

195 **S2:** They'd say things like, "Oh, you don't seem like an Asian."

196 **S1:** So you've experienced that before?

197 **S2:** I think I have, but it was okay, my math was decent when I was younger.

198 **S1:** So you think it's acceptable for you.

199 **S2:** Yeah. And there's also the stereotype that Asians are really hardworking and have to be good students. That kind of makes you feel like, if you're not doing well academically, feels like somehow weird, you're somehow "not Asian enough."

200 **S1:** Do you feel like that stereotype has pressured you? Like, maybe you didn't want to work or study so hard, but felt like you had to just to live up to that cultural expectation?

201 **S2:** I think when I was a kid, yes. Especially when it came to math, I really tried to live up to that stereotype. (...) But not anymore. When you're younger, it's easier to be influenced by those expectations.

202 **S1:** Earlier in another interview, someone mentioned that they saw a lot of comedy videos on TikTok that (..) made fun of Asian accents or culture. Do you find those funny? Or do you think they're harmful?

203 **S2:** I feel offended by them.

204 **S1:** So they don't feel funny to you?

205 **S2:** No.

206 **S1:** Some people argue that TikTok isn't forcing you to feel anything, it's just a joke, and you shouldn't take it so seriously. What do you think?

207 **S2:** I think if there's an algorithm behind it, then there must be a reason for it. The system is actively promoting and reinforcing those stereotypes about Asians.

208 **S1:** So you feel like big data and the algorithm are encouraging this kind of representation?

209 **S2:** Yes.

210 **S1:** Okay, now we'll collect some demographic information. Where are you from?

211 **S2:** China.

212 **S1:** How old are you?

213 **S2:** 25.

214 **S1:** What's your highest level of education?

215 **S2:** Bachelor's degree.

216 **S1:** What is your gender identity?

217 **S2:** Female.

218 **S1:** Have you lived in different cultural environments? If yes, for how long?

219 **S2:** Yes, in Hungary, for over 13 years.

220 **S1:** How often do you use TikTok?

221 **S2:** Basically every day.

222 **S1:** And what kind of content do you interact with the most on TikTok? Oh, right, we talked about that earlier.

223 S2: Yes.

224 S1: Have you noticed any race-related trends or representations on TikTok—like “fox-eye” trends or the Stop Asian Hate campaign? Someone else mentioned seeing a lot of videos that portrayed Black people in a comedic way, like dancing or holding signs wishing someone a happy birthday. Have you seen those?

225 S2: Oh, I did see something like that earlier.

226 S1: Did you find them funny? Or did you feel like they were also reinforcing stereotypes about Black people?

227 S2: I think they’re reinforcing stereotypes, of all kinds, for different regions.

228 S1: Do you often come across that type of content while scrolling TikTok?

229 S2: Sometimes.

230 S1: After participating in this interview, do you feel you have any new understanding about TikTok’s algorithm or how it handles race-related content?

231 S2: Kind of.

232 S1: Could you elaborate?

233 S2: It’s pretty much what I said before, it calculates based on how long you stay on a video, whether you like it or not. The algorithm uses that to keep recommending similar content. But nothing surprising (...).

234 S1: So you weren’t surprised by the kind of content that showed up?

235 S2: Not at all. It’s very normal to me now.

236 S1: Were there any moments during this interview that made you feel uncomfortable?

237 S2: No.

238 S1: Ok, are there any experiences you’ve had on TikTok related to race or identity that you think others don’t notice or that haven’t gotten enough attention?

239 S2: (...) Not really.

240 S1: Is there anything else you’d like to share about your thoughts or experiences that we haven’t covered today?

241 **S2:** Let me think (..) I guess one more thing—I felt like a lot of the videos I saw just now were from Taiwan. And they seemed even more sexualized.

242 **S1:** So you feel like Taiwan has even more sexualized content compared to other places?

243 **S2:** Yes, and it felt like they were doing it willingly, (..) like they wanted to film those types of videos.

244 **S1:** Was that true for both men and women? Or just women?

245 **S2:** Just women.

246 **S1:** On TikTok, aside from East Asian countries, did you see much content from other regions?

247 **S2:** Not really.

248 **S1:** Because when I set up the account, I tried to include content from Muslim countries and emphasized Indian content as well, but very little of it actually came through.

249 **S2:** Yeah, I noticed that too. Maybe one in every ten videos.

250 **S1:** Alright, that wraps up our interview. Thank you so much.

251 **S2:** No problem.

Interview C

1

2

S1 (Researcher): So before we start, I would like to briefly introduce the study. In this study, I'm interested in (..) understanding your thought process as you complete the tasks I will give to you. To achieve this, I will ask you to think aloud while engaging with the task. So by thinking aloud, I mean verbalizing everything that comes to mind from the moment you begin the task until you complete it. I encourage you to continuously express your thoughts without planning or structuring your response. Simply speak as though you were alone in the room, narrating your thoughts. If you remain silent for an extended period, I will prompt you to continue speaking. Do you understand?

3

S2 (Interviewee): Mm-hmm.

4

S1: So I will give you two (..), first, two think-aloud training tasks. First one, how many windows are in your parents' house? You do not need to count them yourself. I will do that for you. Just tell me which room has how many windows.

5

S2: Like, every room?

6

S1: Yeah.

7

S2: At my parents' house.

8

S1: Mm-hmm.

9

S2: One, but like, consisting of two smaller windows.

10

S1: Mm-hmm.

11

S2: Joined together. So..

12

S1: So, one big one. In your parents' house, only one window?

13

S2: No. I thought it was only for one specific room.

14

S1: No, for all rooms, for the entire house.

15

S2: Oh, all the rooms, okay. So let me count. One, two (..)

16

S1: You just need to describe. You just need to describe which room has how many windows.

- 17 **S2:** Living room, so my parents' room, (..) one window. (..) My bedroom, like one big window, and kitchen, one smaller window. (..) That's it.
- 18 **S1:** Yeah. And (..) second task, imagine you are opening your favorite social media app without touching your phone. Describe your usual actions upon opening the app. What type of content do you typically encounter and how do you decide what to engage with or scroll past? Verbalize everything that comes to mind just as though you were actively navigating the app.
- 19 **S2:** Okay. (..) So basically posts and stories from my followers.
- 20 **S1:** (..) Which app? Instagram?
- 21 **S2:** Instagram, yeah. Instagram. Some (..) basic, (..) random daily life stories. And of course, advertisements.
- 22 **S1:** So you post or you go through the stories?
- 23 **S2:** Yeah.
- 24 **S1:** Uh-huh.
- 25 **S2:** So (..) nothing special.
- 26 **S1:** Do you do any other things on the app?
- 27 **S2:** (..) Reply to messages.
- 28 **S1:** Mm-hmm. And (..) I avoid, like, going to this loop.
- 29 **S2:** Mm-hmm.
- 30 **S1:** (..) section because I'm easily overwhelmed.
- 31 **S2:** Yeah, okay.
- 32 **S1:** Too much stuff.
- 33 **S2:** Yeah.
- 34 **S1:** And do you also look at your friends' (..) stories or anything?
- 35 **S2:** Yeah, yeah. Until I'm not bored of it.

- 36 **S1:** Okay. That's basically it.
- 37 **S2:** Yeah.
- 38 **S1:** So, I will give you a pre-set TikTok account and you will need to scroll through the feed, and during the time, please verbalize your thoughts about what you see. This may include your immediate reactions to the content, your interpretation of why TikTok is recommending certain videos, and how these recommendations make (..) you feel. You are free to interact with the content on the page, you can like the content, or follow the account, or (..) comment or whatever you like. And during the time, also, please turn on the screen recording.
- 39 **S1:** Okay. Yeah, you can start. I'm already recording. Yeah.
- 40 **S2:** Okay. Okay. (..) Too much naked body. Okay. Nonsense (..), this is also some kind of sexual content. (..) Oh, this is Thailand in the prostitute, okay. Yeah. (..) Oh, this is again, the girl with a hand. I feel sorry for her. This is maybe the most normal. Asian girl (..) okay. Again, naked, too much skin. Okay. Again, too much, too much body. Do you want to turn off the music so you can hear my voice on the like that?
- 41 **S1:** No, it's fine.
- 42 **S2:** Again, showing off the bodies. (..) Again. (..) Again, boobs, too much skin. (..) Ah, this is cute. I saw this trend.
- 43 **S1:** What's that?
- 44 **S2:** About, (..) like, showing a cat in the shadow with your hands. Yeah, this (..) this thing. That is cute. (..) This type of singing and filming showing boobs. Nonsense. Like, what the hell? Too much skin and sexuality. No. Again, this girl. Nonsense, I mean. (..) I didn't see the point of these videos. (..) What is he doing? What is she doing, actually? Like massage? What's the point here? Again, sexuality. I saw this somewhere.
- 45 **S1:** Mm-hmm.
- 46 **S2:** But I'm not sure where.
- 47 **S1:** You mean dancing?
- 48 **S2:** Yeah.

49 **S2:** Especially with this song.

50 **S1:** Mm-hmm.

51 **S2:** (..) Sexuality again. Too much naked skin, boobs showing out. No. This, like (..) this is so not nice. This is literally abuse.

52 **S1:** It's also, like, sexualized, though.

53 **S2:** Yeah, yeah.

54 **S1:** Mm-hmm.

55 **S2:** (..) I mean, hopefully this is not sexual.

56 **S1:** Well, I don't get it. I don't know what they are doing.

57 **S2:** Yeah.

58 **S1:** Okay.

59 **S2:** Okay.

60 **S2:** Again, boobs, too much skin, dancing, (..) showing their bodies. I just I'm trying to. (..) Like, what the hell is this? (..) Sexual content again. This also. I don't want (..). Again, this girl. (..) Okay, don't get it, good content, but what's the point of it?

61 **S1:** I think we're done now with this part. I'm going to stop recording.

62 **S2:** Okay. Did you start voice recording?

63 **S1:** On the laptop. Yeah.

64 **S1:** And did the instruction make sense for you?

65 **S2:** No. No sense.

66 **S1:** No, I mean the instruction.

67 **S2:** Oh, instruction, yeah.

68 **S1:** Okay. And did you feel comfortable verbalizing your thought through the process?

69 **S2:** Not really.

- 70 **S1:** Because of the content?
- 71 **S2:** Yeah. Because of the content, yeah.
- 72 **S1:** Yeah. So it was very hard for you to articulate your thoughts.
- 73 **S2:** Yeah.
- 74 **S1:** Okay. And so when you think about Asian stereotypes now in general, do you feel like there are any common stereotypes about Asians?
- 75 **S2:** Hardworking and (..) smart people.
- 76 **S1:** And where do you think it comes from?
- 77 **S2:** Basically from (..) history. History, (..) history, industry, economic rising, and so on.
- 78 **S1:** Do you know any Asian in your life?
- 79 **S2:** No, you are the only one.
- 80 **S1:** Okay. And while scrolling through the TikTok content, do you notice there are any, like, repeating patterns or themes in what was recommended to you?
- 81 **S2:** Yeah, sexuality, naked bodies.
- 82 **S1:** And just mainly females.
- 83 **S2:** Yeah. Only females, actually.
- 84 **S1:** Yeah, actually true, only females, yeah. And how do you think TikTok algorithm decides what kind of content to show you?
- 85 **S2:** (..) For example, if I watch more videos like this one, it will start showing only this type of videos.
- 86 **S1:** Mm-hmm. Have you ever thought about, like, the algorithm? How does it work in general?
- 87 **S2:** (..) I guess they (..) the social media see what (..) what are they paying most attention to, so they are pushing that more.
- 88 **S1:** And what is usually in your account?

89 **S2:** (..) On my art profile, painting, drawing, traveling, nature, (..) on my private profile, (..) like on the newly, well, I mean when I opened Instagram, then (..) mostly stories and live stories about my friends and so on.

90 **S1:** Do you go through the reels on Instagram?

91 **S2:** I avoid, honestly.

92 **S1:** So you don't really?

93 **S2:** No, no.

94 **S1:** Why do you avoid it?

95 **S2:** I already spend enough time on social media. I mean on Instagram.

96 **S1:** Yeah, Instagram, but you only go through your friends' content.

97 **S2:** Yeah, and now I remember it about the (..) what's happening in our country. I mean in Serbia. I mainly waste my time on that.

98 **S1:** So the news, you watch a lot of those then.

99 **S2:** News about protests and so on.

100 **S1:** Uh-huh. Only about that. So you also never pay attention to like memes or what is trending right now or fashion videos.

101 **S2:** Only (..) only like about memes and trending videos? Only if someone else sends me that.

102 **S1:** Mm, mmm. (..) Have you ever encountered any, like, also similar sexualized content?

103 **S2:** No.

104 **S1:** Instagram?

105 **S2:** No. I mean, a few followers can also show too much skin on their posts and stories.

106 **S1:** So are they your friends, or?

107 **S2:** No, more like, (..) I know these people, like from my town.

108 **S1:** Yeah.

109 **S2:** I'm not hanging out with them.

110 **S1:** Uh-huh, uh-huh.

111 **S2:** Yeah, but yeah, I guess if you don't really go through reels, you wouldn't really encounter this kind of videos.

112 **S1:** Yeah. Yeah.

113 **S2:** Yeah.

114 **S1:** So you would agree that the algorithm recommends content based on your identity or behavior.

115 **S2:** Yeah. What you like and what you comment.

116 **S1:** And based on what you have seen, do you think TikTok promotes or reinforces certain stereotypes about Asians?

117 **S2:** Well, from these videos, what I saw, yes.

118 **S1:** Like what kind?

119 **S2:** Sexual.

120 **S1:** Sexuality.

121 **S2:** Yeah.

122 **S1:** But you think it's not only for Asians, like in general, females are portrayed like that.

123 **S2:** There were also a few females who were like German or American, they were also showing boobs.

124 **S1:** German?

125 **S2:** Yeah, I think she was German.

126 **S1:** But she looked like Asian, right?

127 **S2:** No, she was German.

128 **S1:** Oh, so you got one German content?

129 **S2:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay. She was speaking in German.

130 **S1:** That's interesting.

131 **S1:** Have you seen any (..) on males? That's also sexualized videos?

132 **S2:** No. No. They are only females.

133 **S1:** Yeah, yeah. But also like in your (..) daily usage of your social media, there aren't many, are there any?

134 **S2:** No.

135 **S1:** Okay.

136 **S2:** With male?

137 **S1:** Yeah, with male.

138 **S2:** Yeah. No. I (..) never saw it actually.

139 **S1:** Hmm. Interesting.

140 **S2:** Ah, I actually now remember there (..) was one video that was more like a social video, that one friend (..) sent me like, look how disgusting this was. They were like an American fitness couple or something like that. I remembered.

141 **S1:** And what was this about?

142 **S2:** Like some fitness exercises, but it was more like (..) tending to be sexual.

143 **S1:** Hmm. Hmm. Okay.

144 **S2:** Like these on this couple...

145 **S1:** Yeah. On this video. But I wouldn't say it's like sexualizing men, it's still like (..) on the female side.

146 **S2:** Yeah.

147 **S1:** Do you think TikTok algorithm treats different Asian groups, such as East Asian, South Asian or Southeast Asian differently? Or does it tend to present them as one group?

148 **S2:** One group.

149 **S1:** Because you actually never see any content (..) other than East Asian.

150 **S2:** So there were (..) there were some (..) Thailand girls because it was Thai.

151 **S1:** But still similar content.

152 **S2:** Yeah. Yeah.

153 **S1:** So actually, no matter where they're from, it's always similar content.

154 **S2:** Yeah.

155 **S1:** Hmm. And do you know there's also like Islamic females in Asia?

156 **S2:** No.

157 **S1:** Okay, they're also not shown on TikTok as well. I also tried to find it, but yeah, not shown.

158 **S2:** Okay. Interesting.

159 **S1:** And also like as I mentioned, (..) the Indian street food content, it's also like very negative content, but also this time it didn't show at all. I don't know why, for some reason, yeah. And do you think this kind of TikTok content can influence how people perceive Asian groups?

160 **S2:** Yeah. Definitely.

161 **S1:** And so how do you think it can (..) shape public opinion about Asians?

162 **S2:** Maybe, (..) I mean, now it doesn't influence my opinion that I start thinking like, (..) these Asian people are only pretending to film or record some sexual (..) videos.

163 **S1:** Yeah.

164 **S2:** I mean, (..) it's more like I know that other girls in Europe or America are also (..) recording these kinds of videos. But maybe someone can think hey, like, (..) what is what's going on with these Asian people? But in my opinion, no.

165 **S1:** But for example, for the Indian food video, it did actually shape your opinion.

166 **S2:** Yeah. I would never like, for example, travel there or eat food.

167 **S1:** Do you think it would influence you also on Indian people in general?

168 **S2:** Hmm. I think that's a good question.

169 **S1:** I mean, I guess you don't have Indian friends, but would you, if you meet someone (..) from India, would you also reflect this kind of like stereotype impression on them?

170 **S2:** I will try not to. Maybe I would at first ask them like, (..) what's going on with this dirty street food.

171 **S1:** But I guess at some point, still have.

172 **S2:** Yeah, yeah.

173 **S1:** Yeah, and it's like only just like a few videos. If you're getting this kind of video over time on your TikTok.

174 **S2:** I will delete it.

175 **S1:** Yeah, but I, yeah, I guess so. And also, so I can share one of the experiences from another interviewee. Like she's half Taiwanese, half German, but she (..) met some like a German guy and this guy was saying like he's collecting to have sex with different Asian girls and now just like a Taiwanese is missing on my list.

176 **S2:** No.

177 **S1:** It was like a very disgusting conversation or anything. I don't know but it was (..) I guess if you like, for me, if I really think of this kind of thing, if she is completely white, I do not think this guy would say the same thing to her. And this also happened to me when I was in Morocco.

178 **S2:** Uh-huh

179 **S1:** Because I guess there aren't many Asian tourists.

180 **S2:** Okay.

181 **S2:** So you were a few (..) weeks ago there, right?

182 **S1:** One or two weeks ago. Yeah, yeah. It was a long time ago. And I was walking on the streets. It was just me and my friend. We both are female and then we didn't really wear like hijab or anything. We were just dressed normally. And like the guys are sitting on the

streets who are like by the side of the sidewalk and sitting in the cafe or just walking, they would say like, oh, pretty Chinese girls or something like, oh baby, you look so pretty, I like you like that. And they are saying nihao to us all the time, like every two steps or every five minutes, nihao is like Chinese hello.

183 **S2:** Okay. Yeah.

184 **S1:** But I think it's also very annoying for me because we could be (..) from other countries. Like we could be Japanese or Korean, or from anywhere in Asia. And you just assume that we're Chinese and say "nihao" and just talk about our looks, saying like "baby, would you like to come over, like have fun," blah, blah, blah. This is also very disgusting, but there are like a couple of European or Western Caucasian tourists and there are females that just wear a dress, didn't even wear like (..) a bra or something. Like, I would assume they wouldn't say the same thing to these females. So sometimes I would think like, why? Why do you always have this impression that Asians can, we would just accept everything. Like we would just go with what you say to us. Like, I was also very furious, but I was scared, obviously, because if I hit you (..) or do anything, you can like hit me back. You might kill me. I don't know what will happen. Yeah, but this kind of thing is happening all the time for me or for me and my friends, we have encountered a couple of times already.

185 **S2:** So sad.

186 **S1:** Yeah.

187 **S2:** Very sad.

188 **S1:** And I didn't know that this would be so terrible in Morocco because (..) the city we went, it's a very like tourist city. It's like Tangier. It's just next to Spain. So there are a lot of tourists there.

189 **S2:** Okay.

190 **S1:** So we would assume that it's already quite developed. It's not so conservative, but obviously it's not like what (..) we thought.

191 **S2:** Yeah.

192 **S1:** And I don't know why they get this kind of impression. Is it from social media or from the news media? Like they are assuming this and they, I guess, didn't really get much education about Asian culture because there was one girl talking with us. She didn't even

know if Japanese and Chinese are two different languages.

193 **S2:** Oh my god.

194 **S1:** Yeah, she was saying like, (..) because konnichiwa is like Japanese and means like hello. And she was asking like, "konnichiwa" and "nihao" are the same language, and we were like, no, it's two different languages. It's two different countries. Like you can't just mix them together. Yeah.

195 **S2:** 21st century.

196 **S1:** Yeah, it's the 21st century and still it's like this. And this is a tourism (..) city. There are thousands or millions of tourists going there every year. You don't know that. I also don't get it.

197 **S2:** But also this kind of thing is not only happening in Morocco, also in Europe, it happened (..) I think quite a few times because sometimes when it's dark outside, some people are drunk or something and when we are walking on the street and there are also like often people like talking to us, saying "nihao" or asking like, are you from China, blah, blah, blah. This is like, I feel very, very annoyed.

198 **S1:** Yeah.

199 **S2:** I would also feel like that.

200 **S1:** Yeah, but some people, they would think they are (..) maybe just trying to be nice. Well, I was also trying to change my mind on the second day or third in Morocco. I was like thinking maybe they just don't know what it means. Like maybe they're trying to be nice to us or they're just trying to talk to us and then let us buy some stuff from them. But at the moment I definitely felt uncomfortable, yeah. So it's very annoying.

201 **S2:** So sad.

202 **S1:** Yeah.

203 **S1:** Then do you think people from different cultural backgrounds would interpret this kind of content differently?

204 **S2:** (..) Like, for example, if American people would watch this?

205 **S1:** Yeah, or from an Asian viewer watch this.

206 **S2:** I don't think it's more like (..) I mean, in my personal opinion, (..) it wouldn't matter from which country you watch these videos. I mean, (..) it wouldn't reflect on my opinion, like, hey, now Asian people are more like tending to be (..) tending to record these sexual kind of videos. I don't know.

207 **S1:** Mmm.

208 **S2:** But you would definitely think like female and male would definitely think differently on the video.

209 **S1:** Yeah, definitely.

210 **S2:** Definitely.

211 **S1:** And do you think like algorithm-recommended content can influence people's attitudes towards Asians? Like they would maybe be more discriminated.

212 **S2:** Yeah, if you constantly push this kind of videos, then what kind of picture would you have about Asian people?

213 **S1:** Yeah, it's just sexualized content and the dirty street food.

214 **S2:** And Thailand prostitutes.

215 **S1:** Have you seen any, like, (..) positively depicted Asian (..) content?

216 **S2:** Now, with this video or generally?

217 **S1:** In general.

218 **S2:** (..) Good question. (..) The way they are treating nature well, they're protecting it. But on the other side, I also saw in "Seaspiracy" documentaries that they are overfishing and treating the ocean wildlife really, really badly.

219 **S1:** In general, in Asia, or in which country was that?

220 **S2:** I think it was Japan.

221 **S1:** Japan. Okay.

222 **S2:** Yeah, they were really overfishing it.

223 **S1:** And there is always these comments about Chinese people (..) that they are eating

dogs.

224 **S2:** I think this is also a stereotype.

225 **S1:** Yeah. Always like. (..) It always comes to my mind.

226 **S2:** But would you like believe in that? I mean...

227 **S1:** I always, I'm trying not to believe in that.

228 **S2:** Yeah, but still, if it is pushed to you all the time, it's really hard. It's really hard to get out of it. I understand.

229 **S1:** Yeah.

230 **S2:** Yeah, this also, I (..) I think I barely see this kind of video on TikTok, but I also, with one interview, she got this similar content. They're saying like (..) now we are showing (..) the list of food that we usually eat and then there will be dog, cats and also some insects and something like that. And yeah, she felt very disgusted, yeah, she didn't like it, yeah.

231 **S1:** Yeah.

232 **S2:** I didn't know. (..) I never had like a bad opinion (..) about Asian people, especially because my brother likes Asian people.

233 **S1:** But does he have a lot of like Asian friends? Or he actually doesn't have any, but he just likes them?

234 **S2:** I'm really not sure. No.

235 **S1:** But why does he like Asians or does he like Asian culture? Because of anime?

236 **S2:** Yeah, anime. He watches that like every day.

237 **S1:** Oh, okay.

238 **S2:** And he's really interested in Japanese language. And he really wants to go.

239 **S1:** Because of anime?

240 **S2:** I don't know why, but he really wants to go to Japan next year.

241 **S1:** Okay. Have you seen any anime?

- 242 **S2:** No. I mean they are all the same for me.
- 243 **S1:** Yeah, I would say the same, but also like anime, it's also promoting (..) kind of female (..) pictures, like big boobs, very tiny, like a minor. Yeah, and very big eyes. Yeah, very minorized (..) like a very cute look. Yeah, so I think like people, (..) this is also promoting kind of Asian images like they are always very tiny, cute, very skinny and very pale but have big boobs. That's like, very annoying. That's a must, you have to have big boobs but that's also very annoying for me. I don't know why. This is like very promoted and very (..) liked by a lot of like European people or Western people.
- 244 **S2:** If I would be Asian, I would be frustrated about it.
- 245 **S1:** Yeah, I guess, yes. And also, (..) if you've probably never seen, but usually Japanese anime also often is very sexualized.
- 246 **S2:** These are actually not, (..) because (..) I often like sitting in his room and (..) while he's watching it and then (..) I caught myself, I was starting to watch it. I was watching it also trying to figure out what's going on in the episode and it's like some (..) family, (..) I don't know, it was not sexual at all.
- 247 **S1:** Okay. And I think (..) I have a few friends who were already in Japan and they liked it a lot. I mean, like, (..) totally, they say it's (..) totally different kind of universe. And everything is so clean and they are polite, but on the other side, they also told me they don't like (..) European people or non-Asian people.
- 248 **S2:** In Japan?
- 249 **S1:** Yeah.
- 250 **S2:** Yeah, I've heard of it.
- 251 **S1:** (..) One friend was in Korea.
- 252 **S2:** Yeah.
- 253 **S1:** I think (..) which one is a good one, South Korea?
- 254 **S2:** South Korea.
- 255 **S1:** Yeah.
- 256 **S2:** He was in South Korea as a programmer. And he was living there for a few months and

they were amazed by like nature, everything was clean, streets and so on. But they (..) also felt that (..) Koreans didn't like them. Like, he told me (..) they entered into the metro station and everyone, like Korean people, just moved away from them.

257 **S1:** Really?

258 **S2:** Yeah.

259 **S1:** It was so strange. Yeah. But do they know why?

260 **S2:** No. I think, (..) I mean, (..) they felt that they don't like them. It was a few years ago, but it was interesting to hear that, yeah.

261 **S1:** But nowadays still the same, do you know?

262 **S2:** (..) I don't know. He was only in Korea, and (..) my friend was one month ago in Japan. (..) And she said that everyone was polite.

263 **S1:** Hmm.

264 **S2:** She didn't mention like the...I don't remember, honestly, (..) because she told me, I can imagine myself (..) living in (..) Japan, but working like, how do you say that (..) remote work. But on the other side, she also commented that she wouldn't like to spend a lot of years there.

265 **S1:** Why?

266 **S2:** I don't know. It's confusing, yeah.

267 **S1:** Okay, that's strange. Okay. Okay, let's go back to TikTok. Do you think TikTok, (..) they are trying to really prevent this kind of content on the platform?

268 **S2:** Obviously not.

269 **S1:** And what do you think there should be (..) more done by the platform?

270 **S2:** If you want to post this kind of videos, then TikTok should just not allow it. That's it.

271 **S1:** But do you think there's actually a clear line between what is allowed, what is not allowed?

272 **S2:** Maybe. For sure, you can't, like, (..) show your boobs, I mean, (..) like totally naked. Or

your (..) ass, I don't know.

273 **S1:** Yeah.

274 **S2:** Maybe it is, but I don't know. In my opinion, this is also too much for social media.

275 **S1:** You think they should be banned?

276 **S2:** Yeah, definitely. I mean, what can you learn about it? What can you (..) can inspire you about these videos? Nothing, it's like 100% nonsense.

277 **S1:** But that's like, social media (..) content is like that.

278 **S2:** Mostly not.

279 **S1:** Yeah, I don't think you can learn anything from social media content.

280 **S2:** Yeah.

281 **S1:** It's just for your entertainment.

282 **S2:** I mean, I try to follow (..) accounts that can really teach you something. For example, there was (..) one woman who constantly records videos about gardening, about pets and diseases, about seeding the plants and how you can save them and so on.

283 **S1:** And how does it go?

284 **S2:** Nice.

285 **S1:** Okay. So you are trying to avoid this kind of, like, pointless content.

286 **S2:** Yeah, no point, yeah, definitely.

287 **S1:** And also like someone mentioned before in the previous interview, for example, for the Indian (..) street food, (..) they think it's just humor because usually it's just memes. It's not like a very serious video. So he thinks like TikTok (..) or any social media platform is now forcing you to think of anything. You should have your opinion about this kind of videos. What do you think?

288 **S2:** Well, I immediately remember about one famous travel blogger from my hometown. She's quite popular on Instagram. And I remember when I was following her, (..) she went to some (..) I think it was an Asian country and I'm not sure which country it was but she ate

something (..) on the street, street food, and she got sick. And she, I mean, she (..) said that she doesn't have a sensitive stomach for food, but somehow she got sick. So (..) I get immediately this opinion, okay, I would never eat that food.

289 **S1:** So even though you think it's memes, no matter if it's funny or not, you think it's harmful anyway. I mean, like for, maybe it's not harmful for you, but it's harmful for the (..) Indian people, I would say.

290 **S2:** Yeah.

291 **S1:** But also, like I had an interview with an Indian guy. He thinks this is just funny for him. He didn't really feel much, actually.

292 **S2:** Okay.

293 **S1:** Yeah, he thinks this is just a kind of humor on the internet. Well, I don't get it, but he's saying like that.

294 **S2:** He doesn't admit that some street food is dirty or not.

295 **S1:** He said like, yeah, some parts might be like that, but he thinks this kind of video is just to (..) entertain.

296 **S2:** Okay.

297 **S1:** But yeah, if he thinks like that, he can think like that.

298 **S2:** Yeah. But to be honest, I think this is, it definitely causes (..) a certain level of influence on other people.

299 **S1:** Yeah.

300 **S2:** Okay, I think now it's done and we recorded it. I'm going to collect some of your personal information.

301 **S1:** So where are you from?

302 **S2:** Serbia.

303 **S1:** And how old are you?

304 **S2:** 29.

305 **S1:** What is your highest level of education?

306 **S2:** Master's degree.

307 **S1:** Your gender identity.

308 **S2:** Female.

309 **S1:** Have you lived in a different cultural environment?

310 **S2:** No.

311 **S1:** How often do you use TikTok?

312 **S2:** Not much, maybe like once or twice a week.

313 **S1:** And (..) have you ever seen any trends related to racial representation on TikTok? For example, folk or stop Asian hate movement?

314 **S2:** Stop Asian movement, yeah.

315 **S1:** Yeah, but it was like nothing really big.

316 **S2:** Yeah, maybe during (..) COVID. (..) Short time.

317 **S1:** And (..) did participating in this study affect the way you view TikTok's algorithm or racial content on the platform?

318 **S2:** (..) Well, I knew on social media that these kinds of videos exist. So..

319 **S1:** But do you think, like, did you already have like, some kind of bias on TikTok? Because I think there was some saying like (..) saying TikTok is very, like people (..) are using it very, like underaged or teenagers and the content on TikTok is usually very childish and very, like nonsense.

320 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, I heard about it.

321 **S1:** Yeah.

322 **S2:** Especially my niece, she's (..) using TikTok and I was telling her like, stop using that, you will not see anything like smart or something you can learn (..) from it. So just really scrolling, wasting time.

- 323 **S1:** Also, (..) also nowadays, like the user group of TikTok is getting younger and younger. So I would just think.
- 324 **S2:** You're like, how can they allow it.
- 325 **S1:** I think there's no age limit for (..) it.
- 326 **S2:** That's really bad.
- 327 **S1:** Yeah, and also for this, for example, this kind of sexualized content. If you're some like a young boy or girl looking at it, it can be very harmful to their mental (..) status.
- 328 **S2:** Yeah, exactly.
- 329 **S1:** Yeah. So..
- 330 **S2:** Or even like if you show these kind of videos, specifically, specifically with Asian people, you can form like (..) as a kid like "look at these Asian people, what are they doing."
- 331 **S1:** And also for the young Asian girls, they might start to film this kind of thing as well. They might think this is normal. Like, I also need to show my boobs or show more skin. I will get views, I'm going to be famous.
- 332 **S2:** You basically ban TikTok.
- 333 **S1:** That's your final solution for this. And also, like, (..) you didn't see it for my previous interview. Also, there were some minor contents about Asian females. It's like for little girls and it's a ballet organization, I think. They were just showing that they were training for ballet. And they were shooting off their butts or like legs. It's like, (..) you can't say that it's like directly sexualized, but it's somehow it's like giving a triggering sexualized content.
- 334 **S2:** Yeah, why would you do that?
- 335 **S1:** But there are still a lot of people who are commenting like "so hot," blah, blah, blah. It was very disgusting for me. I think this is literally like out of line here. I guess it's like an illegal content even.
- 336 **S2:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah.
- 337 **S1:** Were there any moments during the study when you felt uncomfortable for the content or for the questions?

338 **S2:** Yeah. Yeah. But for the videos.

339 **S1:** Yeah, but for the questions there wasn't any.

340 **S2:** No.

341 **S1:** Do you have any additional thoughts on the topic?

342 **S2:** (..) Hopefully (..). racism towards Asian people will not grow (..) with this kind of videos.

343 **S1:** I guess it would be hard.

344 **S2:** Yeah. So sad.

345 **S1:** Okay, I think it's done for the interview.

346 **S2:** Thank you very much.

Interview D

1

2 **S1 (Researcher):** Okay. So before we start the whole interview, I would like to explain the study...
briefly explain the study for you. So in the study, I'm interested in understanding your thought
process. As you complete the task, I will give it to you. To achieve this, I will ask you to think aloud
while engaging with the task. By thinking aloud, I mean verbalizing everything that comes to your
mind from the moment you begin a task until you complete it. I encourage you to continuously
express your thoughts without planning or structuring your response. Simply speak as though you
were alone in the room, narrating your thoughts. If you remain silent for an extended period, I will
prompt you to continue speaking. Do you understand what I mean?

3 **S2 (Interviewee):** Okay, yeah.

4 **S1:** Okay. So first, I will give you two think-aloud training tasks. First one: how many windows are in
your parents' house? You do not need to count them yourself. I will do that for you. Just tell me
which room has how many windows.

5 **S2:** Sorry, what?

6 **S1:** How many windows are in your parents' house? Like, you just need to tell me which room has
how many windows.

7 **S2:** Okay, the living room has three windows.

8 **S1:** Mm-hmm.

9 **S2:** (...) And (..) my bedroom has two windows.

10 **S2:** My brother's bedroom has one window and my parents' bedroom has one really huge window.

11 **S2:** The bathroom only has a small window. And the master bedroom (...). The master bathroom also
only has one small window. And the kitchen has three windows as well. And that's it.

12 **S1:** Okay. For the second task, imagine you are opening your favorite social media app without
touching your phone. Describe your usual actions upon opening the app. What type of content do
you typically encounter? How do you decide what to engage with or scroll past? Verbalize everything
that comes to mind as you... you were actively navigating the app.

13 **S2:** Ok, should I tell you what app it is?

14 **S1:** Oh, well, you don't have to, but you can say it.

15 **S2:** Okay. (...) I usually use Instagram the most. The first thing I do is I open my DMs to check if any
of my friends have sent me something. We have two group chats. If they've sent me something, I'll

look at the things that they sent me. Either it's usually a video or like a post, and then they will put like a short message underneath. And if I find it funny, I would like it. If I don't find it funny, I will give it the thumbs down. But I usually I try to reply to their messages.

16 **S1:** Yeah.

17 **S2:** But if I feel like I have nothing to say, then I'm just going to either like it or I've given it a thumbs down or, I don't know, any weird emojis and then I just leave it as that. And then I go back to my the main dashboard (..), the homepage.

18 **S1:** Yeah.

19 **S2:** And sometimes if someone interesting posted a story, I will look at it first. It doesn't have to be in like order. Sometimes I like swipe until I find (..) a person whose story I want to watch. But if there's none, then I would like skip that and then I go to the Explorer page to look at stuff. But other than that, I think I don't really do anything there.

20 **S1:** Okay. So that was the training tasks. Now we are moving on to the primary think-aloud task. So I already gave you a pre-set TikTok account and you will need to open that with your own device. And during this phase, you will be (..) scrolling through the feeds and please verbalize your thoughts about what you see. This may include your immediate reactions to the content, your interpretation of why TikTok is recommending certain videos, and how these recommendations make you feel. You are free to interact with the content on the page. And please, during the time, please turn on your (..) screen recording. Yeah.

21 **S2:** Okay.

22 **S1:** You may start. You will watch like 10 to 15 (..) videos. You can stop at about 12, 13 or 15, so whatever you like. Yeah.

23 **S2:** Okay, hold on. Give me a second. I'm gonna (..) Yeah.

24 **S1:** Sure. No stress.

25 **S2:** I'll plug in my phone to the laptop so you can see my screen as well.

26 **S1:** Oh, yeah, sure.

27 **S2:** I hope this works.

28 **S1:** Well. Oh, yeah.

29 **S2:** Can you see it?

30 S1: Yeah, I can see it.

31 S2: Okay, wonderful.

32 S1: Well, I think you can skip everything.

33 S2: Okay, I'll also screen record it just in case. Okay, I'll skip it.

34 S1: Yep.

35 S2: Okay. Oh, my God. Is it loud for you?

36 S1: No, I don't really hear anything, actually.

37 S2: Oh, wow, this is really loud. Okay, cool.

38 S1: Oh, don't turn off, yeah.

39 S2: Okay, sorry.

40 S2: Okay, I did not like that. (..) I did not like that either. Okay. This is interesting because my parents just went to China.

41 S1: Mm-hmm.

42 S2: Okay, I did not like that. Uh (..) I don't like that. Hold, hold on. I don't think I can hear you, so if you, like, need to tell me something, just like WhatsApp me and then like the notification should appear.

43 S1: Okay, okay.

44 S2: Okay, wonderful.

45 S2: Oh, my God. Can I look at the other tabs as well?

46 S1: Yeah.

47 S2: Okay.

48 S1: Yeah, but I think like now it's already more than 10. I think you can stop.

49 S2: Okay, sorry.

50 S1: Yeah, you barely said anything, so I would assume you didn't like any of the contents.

51 S2: Should I stop sharing?

- 52 **S1:** Yes, you can. And also, please stop the (..) screen recording.
- 53 **S2:** Okay.
- 54 **S1:** Yeah.
- 55 **S2:** Okay, I'm done.
- 56 **S1:** Okay, so first, we will go through a post-task reflection, the feedback about the session. Did you think the instruction makes sense?
- 57 **S2:** Yeah.
- 58 **S1:** Okay, so, well, yeah, I didn't give you any prompts. Did you feel comfortable verbalizing your thoughts through the process?
- 59 **S2:** I think technically, I am comfortable because, like, I'm comfortable in sharing my thoughts. It's just the things that I was seeing made me uncomfortable.
- 60 **S1:** Okay, so most of the content you didn't like. So you didn't really have much thought about them.
- 61 **S2:** Yeah, I didn't verbalize anything because I didn't like any of them. I don't know. It made me kind of uncomfortable.
- 62 **S1:** Uh-huh, okay, okay. Now we move to the retrospective interview. So first, do you think there are any common stereotypes about Asians that come to your mind? If so, can you describe one or more of them?
- 63 **S2:** I think, like, in general, or from what I've seen?
- 64 **S1:** (..) In general.
- 65 **S2:** Yeah. Okay. I think in general, especially since, I don't know, I'm living in Europe now. A lot of the stereotypes of Asian people, especially Asian women, is that we're very submersive—like submissive women who, you know, um, I mean, like, in real-life cases, I guess it's true. Like, even within the Indonesian community, we do have women who marry European men and things like that. But I just (..) there's this stereotype that Asian women, especially, are more submissive. They make better housewives and things like that. And I guess from what I've seen just now, I guess it still holds kind of true in Western societies, sort of, where they're like, yeah, you need to look for an Asian wife and things like that. And I don't like that stereotype, obviously, but I think that's just a very common stereotype that people, especially Westerners, have towards Asian people and Asian women in general.
- 66 **S1:** And where do you think these ideas come from?

- 67 **S2:** I think it's also through like occupation from, like, war times and things like that. But also, I think the way that Western media portrays Asian people since, like, the earlier ages of Hollywood and even until now—maybe the film industry not so much, but rather in social media, with people saying this stuff—and also kind of like the sex tourism that a lot of Western men, like maybe men from Europe, men from the US, partake in, especially within Southeast Asia because I am Southeast Asian. So I can kind of feel it more. That there are (...) Sorry?
- 68 **S1:** Uh-huh. No, no, continue.
- 69 **S2:** Yeah, there are quite a lot of, like, it's still a very popular kind of form of tourism, even though obviously it's like it's never encouraged or anything, but, you know, people still find their way to do it. So.
- 70 **S1:** Also, there's like a saying about Asians having a “genius gene.” Have you ever heard of it?
- 71 **S2:** Yeah, I have heard of it, actually. (...) I think that's also very commonly portrayed within Hollywood movies. I think in the Jurassic Park films, I think the scientist was a Chinese actor, acting—was on him.
- 72 **S1:** Yeah, yeah.
- 73 **S2:** I think that's like one of the first instances that comes to mind historically. But even until now, I think it's still very common, which is kind of strange because these kinds of stereotypes of, like, Asians being smart, I think it applies mostly towards East Asians.
- 74 **S1:** Yeah.
- 75 **S2:** And not like Asia in general because Asia is very huge, right? So, yeah, even with Indonesia, like, we are from Southeast Asia and I grew up in a community where we have a lot of Chinese descent, including myself. And I don't know, it's like sort of portrayed that whenever my friends go to math Olympics or language competitions, it's like, oh, they're going to win because, you know, they look smarter. And like, what does looking smarter even mean, you know?
- 76 **S1:** Yeah. And also, while scrolling through the TikTok content, did you notice any recurring patterns or themes in what was recommended to you?
- 77 **S2:** I think there were a lot about, like, yeah, like, (...) I saw a lot of, like, the—a lot of content about Indian street food, as well as (...) kind of like...
- 78 **S1:** The females.
- 79 **S2:** Yeah, like attractive-looking women.
- 80 **S1:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

- 81 **S2:** Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And also, like, (..) I don't know, like, Asian-looking guys that are begging for a wife, what?
- 82 **S1:** Ah, yeah, true.
- 83 **S2:** Uh-huh. It's like those kinds of, like, I don't know, subtle kind of, I would say, like, thirst trap online.
- 84 **S1:** Yes, that's what I saw. Like those three—those three are like the most recurring theme, I think. How do you think TikTok's algorithm decides what kind of content to show you?
- 85 **S2:** I sort of felt like they don't always come in a row. So those three are like the most common factors of content that I saw, but they barely—they don't really show, like, the content (..), like, for example, if I saw, like, a girl in one content, the next content would be, like, something different or, you know, things like that. So it's kind of like rotating in a way.
- 86 **S1:** So, yeah, I also noticed that because you actually didn't stay long with the content. You like throw it away really quick, but it keeps giving it to you. I was also thinking if you like directly scroll it away, they will stop to push this kind of content to you, but it didn't actually change, right? Even at the end, there was still similar content.
- 87 **S2:** Yeah, yeah. So I don't think it mattered, like, how long or how short I stayed on one content because it's just going to appear again. Like something similar is going to appear again.
- 88 **S1:** Yeah. Have you ever thought about, like, the algorithm in general, not just for TikTok, but for all the social media? How does it work? What is the mechanism behind this?
- 89 **S2:** I think, like, obviously I don't use much TikTok, so the other social media that I use is Instagram. And Instagram also, they have like reels, right? And I think reels is pretty much the same thing, I would say, because (..) when I engage with the things that I like, then they would show more of it. But here's the thing. Sometimes I like something because, for example, I like one thing of a topic. And then, so they assume that I like it, so they keep pushing me that. And even if I ignored them, they still show it to me. Like, for example, I only like (..), for example, there's a reel about glasses and I like that reel, but then they will show me another reel about glasses, but I don't like that reel because I really only like that particular one reel about glasses, right? But they would show me—they still show me content about that one topic. So I don't really think about how the (..) yeah, I don't think I've ever thought deeply about how the algorithm will work. But from what I have experienced, it's actually—like, I don't think it's super good at engaging our interests. Sometimes, you know, if I really don't like what I'm seeing, then I will have to click, “please don't show this to me anymore.” Like there's that one button that's like, stop recommending or something. But then, you know, sometimes similar topics would still show up. So I have no idea how they set up the algorithm.

- 90 **S1:** Okay. Do you feel like the algorithm recommends content based on your identity?
- 91 **S2:** (..) I would say so, because I have two Instagram accounts. One is like (..) the account that everyone knows—like my family and a lot of my acquaintances, my friends, they follow—but the other account is just a private, a more private account where it's just me and my seven best friends. And I would say the content for those two accounts, like the explorer page, is quite different. Because I think for my (..) the more public account, it's more towards like food and travel and things like that because sometimes I share these content to my mom as well.
- 92 **S1:** Yeah.
- 93 **S2:** So it's more for like traveling or like recipes or restaurants and things like that. But on my more private account, it's more towards like movies and maybe like content like arts and crafts that I want to do with my friends, you know. So I think it also really depends on, yeah, the kind of things that I was searching for and the things that I was sending to other people as well.
- 94 **S1:** Uh-huh, based on what you have seen on TikTok, do you think that TikTok is promoting or reinforcing certain stereotypes about Asians?
- 95 **S2:** I would—I would say so, yeah. I mean, there was certainly some, like, stuff here that's, yeah...
- 96 **S1:** And yeah, so which kind of stereotype? Like you talk about, like the female, yeah (..), I guess Indian street food, like about the hygiene issue.
- 97 **S2:** Uh-huh. Yeah, I think there were like stereotypes regarding, like, Indian street food being kind of like dirty or the dirtier side and like Asian women being, like, you know, pale and very attractive-looking and things like that.
- 98 **S1:** Uh-huh. Do you feel like TikTok's algorithm treats different Asian groups, for example, like Eastern Asian, South Asian, or Southeast Asian, differently? Or does it tend to present them as one group?
- 99 **S2:** I think, yeah, I think there's definitely like different perspectives on, like (..) different ways (..) that different regions of Asia are presented in media.
- 100 **S1:** Yeah.
- 101 **S2:** Yeah, I think something like (..) just now there was like a post about how futuristic China looks and things like that. And I do agree that (..), yeah, like parts of China, like the big cities are, of course, they look very cool, they look very modern and things like that. But then again, like (..) who are we to say (..) parts of certain parts of India are not, you know, also advanced like that. So (..) because, like, I've never been there. So it's kind of hard for me to judge, personally, for me personally. But I think other people who have access to social media, they might think like, oh, like,

this is what I see, so this must be true, like things like that.

102 **S1:** But did you feel like, for portraying, for example, Asian female or male, like on the human side, they portray them differently? Because from my personal experience, I would say (..), I think they just mix it up. Like, no matter from which (..) region. Like for the female portrait, it's always similar. It's always like very pale, skinny, tiny and always being cute, something like that.

103 **S2:** Yeah, I think that's like the general kind of (..) stereotype that maybe the internet or social media—they have these stereotypes about Asian women specifically. I have no idea. It's also really strange because I know that parts of Southeast Asia, we are also portrayed as, you know, that sort of (..) stereotype. Especially if you're like pale, like even within the (..) society itself, you know, it's still seen as, like, quote-unquote better or something. So yeah, I think the internet really reinforces that even further.

104 **S1:** And also, I feel like they made Korean makeup very popular right now. So the makeup has changed, right? I feel like it has been like that. I'm not sure how about in Indonesia.

105 **S2:** Indonesia is like, for me personally, it's such a weird case because we are (..), like (..), I don't know. We do have a lot of Chinese descent. So some Indonesians, they might look more East Asian. (..) And of course, if you have more East Asian features, then you would fit (..) for example, Chinese makeup or Korean makeup more. But we also have a lot of more Southeast Asian, more like native-looking people. We call them native-looking, which is just kind of weird because technically, I'm also a native there (...). But yeah, there are like people with, for example, with deeper skin tones, with like darker skin tones and they have more Southeast Asian features. And yeah, the makeup doesn't really, you know, flow well with them. But I think nowadays, at least in Indonesia, from what I know, we are trying to adapt more towards like—we are looking at other Southeast Asian countries instead, instead of like East Asia. So sometimes we will see, we would take inspiration for makeup from Thailand or Vietnam and things like that. But again, I would say that I think a huge part of Thailand and Vietnam, like a lot of them are also East Asian descent. So it's really, I don't know.

106 **S1:** It's like really together.

107 **S2:** So I guess like the root of it is technically, yeah, we, it's all like from the same place, like, I think.

108 **S1:** Uh-huh. Okay. And have you seen similar content multiple times before? Like before you joined the study, have you seen similar content on your social media platforms?

109 **S2:** I don't think so because I don't think my algorithm tends to gravitate towards (..) those kinds of content. Yeah. Like it's not something I look for. It's not something I would enjoy. So I don't think I've come across (..) the contents that I've seen from the TikTok account.

110 **S1:** So you try to avoid this kind of content, actually.

- 111 **S2:** I would say so. I would say like, I wouldn't (...), it's not that I avoid it. It's just, it's never come up in like my interests. It just never showed up.
- 112 **S1:** Okay. Then do you think TikTok content influences how people perceive Asian groups?
- 113 **S2:** (...) Definitely, because social media is very influential in how, you know, people kind of (...) how they perceive things. It's very influential, especially TikTok. I think so many people use it.
- 114 **S1:** And (...) I would say that if they (...) if the content that they see of Asian people is, you know, from (...), is similar to what I've seen from the TikTok account that I was scrolling through, I think it will definitely reinforce some (...) stereotypes. I'm like, uh, yeah. But I also, like, (...) when I was doing interviews with other interviewees, I (...) but some people said that, like, for example, for the Indian street food video, it's like, obviously it's in a humor or a joking way because they actually exaggerated the real situation there. And (...) the other participants said that, like, TikTok is not forcing you to think that's true. Like as a (...) user, you need to have your own thought toward this kind of content. Yeah, and also you think this, like, is (...) is humor, it's no problem. What do you think about it?
- 115 **S2:** Yeah, I guess to a certain point, that's true, but then again, you need to (...), like, it also depends on the person seeing the content. Because like, obviously, you don't just build your perspectives regarding other people, other cultures through, you know, from social media alone, like, like I would say that wouldn't be fair to people. So, yeah, I do agree. Like, um (...) people need to realize that the content that they see on TikTok, on other social media, it's like a little bit exaggerated. You know, they're doing it for the views and things like that. But also, it's not—these kinds of videos aren't really helping anyone, I would say.
- 116 **S1:** Yeah.
- 117 **S2:** Especially if it's like, you know, it's kind of (...) highlighting stereotypes that are, you know, not good, you know.
- 118 **S1:** Yeah, but also like, (...) you will find out for those content creators, they are actually, I would assume, they are actually Indian people. So they are actually replicating this kind of stereotype on social media. Why do you think they are doing this? I don't know. (...) Maybe.(...) Maybe it's just the kind of content that they make. But like, I wouldn't say it's a very positive content. Like if I'm part of Indian, I wouldn't want to make this kind of content to spread further this kind of stereotype. I think it's humiliating for me. But I, but also like, not only for the Indian contents, you also look at those, like, a Chinese female or male, they're dancing or whatever. These people, they are originally already from Asia, but they are still like (...) recreating this kind of stereotype and spreading it further. So why do you think this phenomenon is like this?
- 119 **S2:** Well, I think it's because, like (...). I don't know if this is like proper to say, but there's always a

market for these kinds of things. Like, personally, I don't know if this, like, plays into—plays a part into like (..) the reason why I'm not interested in these kinds of content is I'm also Asian and I don't feel like, you know, I don't feel like these kinds of content would be beneficial for me. Like, I'm not interested in these because, like, to a certain point, I sort of think like, oh, that's not true, you know? So I don't feel like the need to engage with these kinds of (..) content. People out there, you know, there are people who are genuinely interested in seeing those kinds of content and they actually like it or like things like that. I don't know. It's like, again, I think it goes back as well to personal taste and how, like, what kind of things you see online while you're growing up and, like, how do you perceive it and things like that? Maybe, like, the culture also plays a role in it.

120 **S1:** Yeah. And do you think (..) like people from different cultural backgrounds, they would interpret this kind of video differently?

121 **S2:** (...) Maybe on a general level, I don't think so. I think they would also realize that, you know, some content are exaggerated. I think that's, like, something very (..) important that people should know is that, you know, social media, it's like—most of it is either fake or exaggerated. Like (..) I think (..) I think people, (..) in general, I think they should already kind of know something similar to that. (...) But maybe they would have a different perspective because I know that living in Europe, people don't realize how big and diverse Asia is actually, and that's always been, like, (..), a little little bit strange to me because I've always felt like, you know, different parts of Asia are obviously very different.

122 **S1:** Yeah, because we are growing up there.

123 **S2:** Yeah, but maybe for these (..) for, like, (..) Europe, people who are native to Europe or, like, I don't know, Americans, like, they would have, like, a different thought.

124 **S1:** Yeah, true, actually. It's also like strange for me, like also some people that have never been to Asia, but they already have, like, (..) a general impression about Asian.

125 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, obviously that also has to do something with the way that they grew up. Maybe, for example, for older people, they don't really have internet, so they rely on, you know, TV and, like, films and media, how they describe Asian people and things like that. But then again, I doubt that people in Europe or people in the US—I doubt that they actually watch, you know, Asian cinema. I think they just watch whatever content Hollywood has that has, you know, Asian actors in it.

126 **S1:** Yeah.

127 **S2:** And, you know, the stereotypes aren't exactly, like, the most wonderful, especially in the older films. So of course I have...

128 **S1:** Yeah, yeah.

129 **S2:** So I do think they do have, like, some kind of (...) prior opinion, like perceived (...). Like, they already have their own opinions regarding, like, Asian people, but I don't think—here's the thing. I don't think they think too much regarding, like, what kind of Asian you are in a way. Because I have seen some, like, opinions online that were like, oh, they don't really consider Indian people Asian, for example. They don't really consider Central Asia people Asian, for example. So it's more towards, like, so their perspective of Asia is more towards, like, like maybe East Asia or South, like parts of Southeast Asia, I think.

130 **S1:** Do you think it's also because the social media are not representing the other part of Asia or why do you think they think like that?

131 **S2:** I would think so as well because I'm from Indonesia. We're, like, quite a huge country, but not a lot of people will know anything about us, especially in the West. I think it's only in recent years that people started to know about Indonesia. And I've talked to people who know of Bali, but they don't know Indonesia. So that's also, like, conversation to have (...). So, yeah, I mean, I do admit that we don't really have any kind of, like, strong cultural (...) export that we can, like, I don't know, that we present to other countries. Like, for example, Korea has Korean films, Korean drama, Korean music. I think that's really picking up over the decade. And Chinese films have always been kind of, like, popular, I guess. I don't know. This is my perspective of it. It's like Chinese films have always been kind of popular, especially because my families also watch it (...). And, like, Chinese films, Chinese songs, like, you know, those are the things that I grew up with. Meanwhile, when (...) like I—since I went to an international school as well when I was younger, and I would have friends from, I had a classmate from Brazil and, like, other places, and they said, yeah, we don't really know anything about Indonesia until we came here, and that was, like, for their parents' work or something. So I would assume that there's not really any kind of, like, Southeast Asian—maybe (...) South Asian is maybe a little bit different, I don't know. (...) But in Indonesia, we do have, like, an (...) Indian drama going around, like our TV station, like a TV station in Indonesia. They do show, like, an Indian drama that's, like, dubbed in Indonesian and I think a lot of, like, older people watch it.

132 **S1:** Okay.

133 **S2:** I think beyond that, it's like, we don't really know anything about them as well.

134 **S1:** (...) Strange. Okay. Yeah, okay. Then do you think this kind of content could contribute to real world bias or discrimination?

135 **S2:** I would assume so, yeah. I think (...) maybe there are people who wouldn't watch it with, like, malice, but then there's also people who would watch it and then, you know, (...) maybe they have, like, previous bias against these groups of people and then they're like, and then it might be used for (...), I don't know, like, hate speech or things like that.

- 136 **S1:** Have you personally experienced any bias or discrimination that you believe may be influenced by the content from social media? Well, it can be real life or online (...) hate speech.
- 137 **S2:** Well, I was talking to kind of like a friend's boyfriend and he was (...) he's from Europe. He's European. So, and I was talking about how, yes, I came from Indonesia and things like that. And he's like, oh, he doesn't know much about Indonesia, but he kind of, like, insinuated that, you know, (...) we were a poor country. And I was like, oh, why do you think that? And it was like—it was pretty interesting because indirectly he was also calling me poor. Meanwhile, I was the one who flew across the world just to study here and he only had to, like, take a train or something. So it was quite an interesting experience, I would say.
- 138 **S1:** Yeah, but that's, that's, like, offensive, I would say.
- 139 **S2:** Yeah, I know, I know it's, like, offensive. I try not to take offense to it because I kind of understand where he was coming from. Like, obviously, I know Indonesia is not a rich country. But yeah, it was still pretty weird for him to say that, like, that directly to my face. I don't think he (...). The thing is, I don't think he thought it was offensive. Like, that's what I'm trying to say here. It was just like an off-hand comment that he made. So obviously there's, like, some, like, differences, I guess, in culture maybe (...). Maybe he didn't mean it offensively, but I don't know.
- 140 **S1:** Yeah. If I—if it's me, I would be pissed, I guess.
- 141 **S2:** Yeah.
- 142 **S1:** Yeah. And like from the contents (...), you could see, like, definitely those females were portrayed very sexualized. But do you think there are also, like, sexualized content towards males, like Asian males?
- 143 **S2:** I think so, but I think it's done a little bit more subtly. So, like, they're not really (...) how do I say it? They're not really, like, showing their bodies (...) or things like that, but kind of—they know that (...) they're, like, conventionally attractive, I guess. And then they would (...) like use that as a tool.
- 144 **S1:** It's mostly just showing their face, right? Like, they are, like, it's mostly the face rather than the body, which is very interesting, actually.
- 145 **S1:** Yeah, I also talk about this, like, with some other interviews. Like, they feel the portrait between Asian—no matter female or male—compared to Western creators (...) it's very different. Like, for Asian, I feel like it's being cute and very, very focusing on the face. It's a huge thing. But for Western creators or TikTokers, like, they think they're more showing, like, their daily life, they go to gym and they do, like, the outfits, makeup, or whatever. But for the Asian creators, it's just about face. And also they do just, like, very cutie posing in front of the camera and then there will be—like, you look at the comments, you will see, like, there are a lot of, like, positive comments saying, like, oh my

God, you look so pretty, or fire fire fire, like this kind of thing. But personally, I think it's kind of disgusting and what do you think about this?

146 **S2:** I think, yeah, now that you bring it up. I actually kind of think that maybe in the Western, kind of like, for example, you—European or American content creators—they usually have something else going on. Like (..), maybe, like, they're models or something else. But I think for, like, (..), the content that we see from, for example, like, from what I've seen in the TikTok account through the TikTok account, it's more towards (..), like, their face. It's like there's—we don't really know anything about them. We don't know their interests and we don't really know (..) what they do besides, like, (..) from what we've seen. So I think that's also very interesting.

147 **S1:** And also, I'm not sure if you've seen the content comments. It's also very strange, like, you don't know anything about this person.

148 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, yeah (..). It's like you don't—you don't know anything. And it feels like people don't really mind not knowing as long as they have, you know, a pretty face to look at, you know.

149 **S1:** Yeah, but that's also very strange for me. And also those comments that I would assume they are from Westerners (..). They are all looking, searching for an Asian girlfriend or boyfriend. They think they are super attractive and they are just comments here and they, I don't know, (..) they're hoping to get them. This is like (..). Yeah.

150 **S2:** I think—I think there was also, do you remember that one time TikTok was banned from the US?

151 **S1:** Yeah, yeah. A lot of American users, they moved—moved to Red Note.

152 **S2:** Yeah, exactly, yeah.

153 **S1:** Yeah, and then I would, like, see some (..) people posting like, I'm American and I want to make Chinese friends. I'm looking for a Chinese girlfriend, things like that. And I'm like, is that not weird to you?

154 **S2:** Yeah, I also—it's just through the internet. Like there might be (..). Like you might never see each other in your life and you just, like, do it through the internet.

155 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, exactly. And it's—it's like, I think I would say like it's a little bit different than online dating where you can kind of see the person's interests and things like that. But if it's just based on, for example, your fantasies of having a Chinese girlfriend from (..) looking at her social media where it's just her (..) wearing pretty outfits and looking cute and like dancing and stuff like that. I think it's, like, a little bit weird because you're not looking for someone to talk to you. You're just looking for someone to look at, you know. (..) Yeah. I feel like it's getting an internet pet.

156 **S2:** Yeah, yeah. It's really weird. To me, I don't know, maybe (..) I really do hope that people do feel

weird about this, but maybe it's also because, one, I am, like, a woman as well. I think that also plays a part in seeing how weird this is. So maybe (..) like other (..) Westerners who are, like, women probably can kind of understand what (..) I am feeling, but I don't know about the men, like, genuinely. I don't know if they would find it weird like I do.

157 **S1:** But also, like, I (..) don't understand the intention. Like, are you really, like, want to have fun or whatever?

158 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, exactly. So, yeah, it's like what I said before. It's like people, they're looking for someone to look at, not someone to speak to, yeah.

159 **S1:** (..) Then do you think, like, TikTok does enough to address the harmful or stereotypical content about Asians? Like, for example, TikTok (..), they had, like, movement, the campaign, the Stop Asian Hate, and also they made the guideline to include stricter policies on hate speech and harassment. Do you think these efforts are actually effective?

160 **S2:** I think (..) I think the efforts are only effective if people kind of (..), I don't know, wait, let me think (..) how to, like, make it into a sentence.

161 **S1:** Yeah, no stress.

162 **S2:** (...) Okay, so I think, like, the guidelines and things like that, like the awareness and, (..) yeah, the steps that they're—like TikTok is taking, or maybe other applications as well, they are there as a safeguard, but I don't think they can actually (...) kind of regulate what people are posting. It also, like, really depends. I guess it also—it's also, like, based on, like, for example, if you, if, like, a lot of people (..) report content or a comment or something like that, then they will do something about it, right? I think that's also a huge part of it. But on a more general sense (..), I feel like it's more towards the content that people are posting there. It's not really—like, I don't think TikTok would be able to kind of control what's being posted because there's also, like, those kinds of (..) tactics that people try to overcome the guidelines with. By censoring the content and things like that. So it's, like, it's a little bit hard for them to (..) control, like, the hate, the stereotypes and things like that.

163 **S1:** I think you have never seen this, but I (..), when I was, like, setting this kind of this account, I had some content. That is, like, a Chinese, like, young girls. It's a ballet, like, a dancer organization or something. They're posting this kind of video. It's just, like, how they're practicing, their training, like, daily life of this ballet place. And it's very sexualized because you see they shoot the video from, like, their butt, from upper, like, an angle and to—to look at their leg and also are their small, tiny body. And also when I look into the comments, it's also very disgusting. It's like saying, oh my God, they are so hot.

164 **S2:** That's what I'm trying to say. It's like, you know, you can post something, like, entirely innocent and, like, you may have posted something without the intention of, you know, of anything, but then

you can't really control what other people kind of comment on and things like that, no matter how unwarranted you think it is.

165 **S1:** But I would say, like, for this TikToker, they know, like, what they're posting because it's—because one video is, like, I think, nine or ten videos, it's just full of this kind of content. And the comments, it's always the same. So I think they're really getting attention or, I don't know if they're getting money through, like, posting this kind of videos. So I think they see a market here and they're just, like, they don't stop it. So they just continue and further spread this kind of, like, content and then try to make more money. But I think this is already out of the line. I think this is too much. Like, for using kids to make money using their body, yeah, I think TikTok should go (...) be more strict on this kind of content.

166 **S2:** Uh-huh. Well, it's like (...), I understand, like, um, (...) you know, people, they sometimes post things with malicious intent, but then it looks kind of innocent.

167 **S1:** Yeah.

168 **S2:** But then again, like, (...) uh, it would be quite—I would assume it would be quite hard for TikTok or, like, any other social media—I was like, it will be quite hard for them to regulate that kind of stuff as well because then if we, for example, if we report that as, like, inappropriate content, then the people who posted it, they're just going to say, oh, it's just a—for you, it's just a video of kids dancing and things like that. So, like, (...) it's, like, a little bit gray. And, like, I do agree on—I hate recording kids. I don't like it when (...) influencers or people who, like, content creators—I don't like it if they post their kids online. So (...), yeah, that's also, like, I think kids is also, like, a very, uh, I don't—I just don't like seeing their faces, you know, because I feel like, you know, kids should have their own privacies as well. Especially if you're recording other people's kids as well, that's like worst.

169 **S1:** Yeah. I feel like they're just using them to, I don't know.

170 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I hate it. I hate any content with, like, kids because it gets taken out of context, not just, like, in a sexual manner, but then you also have people saying, like, oh my God, your kid is so ugly. And I'm like, why would you say that? That's a kid.

171 **S1:** Yeah, exactly. And also, like, they are just there. Like, why do you comment on these kinds?

172 **S2:** Yeah, exactly. It's like, I don't—I just don't think it's necessary to put kids online, you know.

173 **S1:** And also, I don't know who is watching this kind of video. Like, are you interested in this kid's daily life or why are we watching? I know also, I also watched a documentary on Netflix. It's also about using kids to make the contents on TikTok. And also the mother is putting different kids in a relationship, like a romantic relationship, and just to shoot them, like, what they do, how they go on the dates, and there are, like...

- 174 **S2:** It's a little bit (..) unnecessary for me and also it pushes, like, certain narratives as well regarding the children and I don't think, like, I don't think kids should grow up like that.
- 175 **S1:** So yeah, exactly. And also why are you interested in that? You know it's not a healthy thing, but you are still going to watch that and push it even further. That's like...
- 176 **S2:** I think especially recording children, like, putting children on social media, it's also something very prominent within, like, Asian communities as well. I also feel it in, like, from Indonesian content creators, like, they have no problem putting their kids on social media where they have, like, millions of followers and then they take their kids out to public and then people recognize their children as well. Like, why? Like, I feel like (..) they should be a little bit more uncomfortable regarding that because, yeah.
- 177 **S1:** Okay, let's move on to the last section (..). So how did you think the content that you saw made you feel about being an Asian?
- 178 **S2:** (...) See, the thing is, no, I don't think any of the content that I saw was, like, specific towards Southeast Asian.
- 179 **S1:** Yeah.
- 180 **S2:** And that's, like, what I identify as the most.
- 181 **S1:** Yeah.
- 182 **S2:** So it doesn't make me—it doesn't really, like, make me feel, like, negative nor positive. Like, I don't really care. But also that's probably also because, like, I just generally, like, I don't think I have any kind of, like (..)—how do I call it? Like, the feeling of Asian is just, it's just a part of, like, who I am. It's not—it's not like, no matter what I do, I can't change it. Like, it's just something that's very unchangeable about me. So it doesn't matter. (..) But I feel like if someone were to approach me with, and like they would say, like, these stereotypes from the content that I saw, like, if they were to mention, like, some of the stereotypes that I saw there, I would be a little bit hurt, but then also I'm like, that's—I know that's not true. So, yeah. (..) So I don't think it really made me feel anything. I don't think so.
- 183 **S1:** So have you ever changed how you present yourself, like either online or in real life, because of how Asians are portrayed on the internet?
- 184 **S2:** (..) I don't think so. I mean, I don't really care about those kinds of stuff, so. I (..) don't really, like—I'm not really seeking to be, like, a content creator. Like, I don't want to be famous. So I don't think it has changed anything because, yeah, the people who see me on social media are just my friends, my family. So and, like, they know who I am. They know what I look like. So it's not like I can just change how I look and expect them to, like, not say anything. So I think I'm, like, quite content with

how I present myself in real life and in social media, especially, like, I don't know, living in Vienna, it's quite, like, a diverse place as well, so I don't really feel the need to change anything.

185 **S1:** Do you feel, like, pressure to conform to certain stereotypes or avoid certain behavior because how Asia is portrayed on TikTok? Because, like, when I was talking with someone else, she told me that because she feels like mostly Asian are portrayed, like, bisexual and getting the man. So she would feel a bit uncomfortable, like, when she is around with her Western friends, she would pretend that she is more cool, even though her own style is more sexy, but she just tries to avoid the sexy style, to portray themselves more like cool and they don't want men, they just like, like (..) this kind of style. Have you ever had this kind of feeling?

186 **S2:** I don't think I have (..), but I think the reason for it is that I just generally, I don't try to kind of approach people or, like, I don't know, like, Europeans, like Western. I don't really, like, go out of my way to hang out with them. I think that's also part of the reason why. I've never felt—I've never, like, felt the need to change that kind of thing. Because, like, the people I hang out with here in Vienna and, like, Austria, they're also—it's also a very diverse group. But I do feel like sometimes (..) I do feel foreign here. Like, that's the thing. It's like, I would go to, like, a place. I would go to, like, a bar or a cafe and I would feel like, oh, yeah, there's a lot of white people here. Like, that's when I noticed the first thing.

187 **S1:** Yeah. I also feel that.

188 **S2:** Yeah, yeah. So, like, I would, for example, I'd go to a (..), I'd go to, like, a bar or, like, something and I'm like, ah, (..) there's a lot of white people here. And I would—it would definitely make me feel, like, a little bit awkward, I would say.

189 **S1:** Yeah.

190 **S2:** And I guess in that way, I can't really kind of, like, be myself because I know that I'm being perceived, but the thing is, like, it's more of the feeling that, okay, I'm being perceived, so I need to (..) kind of behave, quote-unquote, well—behave good in, like, a public setting so that they don't have any, like, further negative connotations to say regarding Asian people.

191 **S1:** Have you also had the experience, like—yeah, I think you don't speak German, right?

192 **S2:** I—yeah, no, just, like, very basic stuff, so.

193 **S1:** Yeah, but most of the cases, like, where you are in the restaurant or wherever, like, they would first assume that you don't speak German.

194 **S2:** Yeah.

- 195 **S1:** Yeah. It's also very strange for me because I have some friends that are born here. They are growing up here. So obviously they speak German, but a few people, like, start to speak English with them and they all sometimes they feel, like, very (..), they would feel a bit offended, but.
- 196 **S2:** Well, I mean, like, I've been living here for, like, more than a year and nearly two years, right now? And going to a restaurant and speaking in German in restaurants, it's, like, already kind of common to me. Like, I don't—like, I can speak German in a restaurant. Like, (..) it's a normal setting to me already. Like, I don't—I can speak German when I'm, like, in the restaurant because it's just, like, ordering and, like, paying and things like that, right? But what's funny is that I think a while ago I was in a restaurant with a friend of mine and she's, like, she's white. And the waiter would speak to her in German, but then he turned to me and speak to me in English. And I'm like, I literally can understand what you said to her. So it's, like, yeah, it's kind of, I (..), I don't get offended by it because I kind of understand where they're coming from. I don't know. Maybe I'm being a little bit too understanding, but I can kind of understand where they're coming from. (..) So I don't really get offended by that. But yeah, I think it's just a very interesting shift.
- 197 **S1:** Have you ever seen any content that made you feel proud or ashamed of being Asian, like on social media?
- 198 **S2:** (..) I would say, like, not really. I don't think I've ever seen any content that makes me feel, like, ashamed of being Asian.
- 199 **S1:** Yeah.
- 200 **S2:** Because, yeah, I think. Especially in, like, recent years, a lot of, like (..). There's, like, a lot of—there's been a lot of, like, achievements that (..) that are, like (..). What was it called? That's, like, achieved—sorry, that sounds very—achievements that are achieved. There's, like, a lot of, like, achievements that are, like, achieved by Asian people, so I don't really feel—I don't, I don't, I don't think I've ever felt, like, ashamed of being Asian in online spaces because I also feel like the media that I consumed, they are mostly from, like, Asia.
- 201 **S1:** Uh-huh, okay, yeah.
- 202 **S2:** Like, the people I follow are usually, (..) I follow a lot of Indonesian content creators and also, like (..) Singaporean, Malaysians, and, like, Korean and Japanese. And also, like, I think some Chinese content creators as well. But then (..) yeah, I think it's just also because of the media that I was, you know, that I grew up seeing. It's, like, mostly Asian. So I don't think there's—I feel any, like, pride or shame regarding being Asian. Just, yeah, like I said before, it's just who I am. I can't—no matter how hard I try to change it, I just can't change it.
- 203 **S1:** Yeah. And also it also didn't really change much of your sense of belonging to the Asian community, right?

204 S2: Yeah, I think it's just—I've always been a part of it, so it's, like, never really questioned you.

205 S1: Like, when you were using, like, social media. Have you ever felt, like, the need to post certain types of content to get more views or to fit in?

206 S2: I don't think so, because again, I don't use social media with the—with the goal of being famous.

207 S1: Yeah.

208 S2: So it feels more like a personal diary to me. So yeah, only my friends, only my family sees it, so I don't really feel the need to post those kinds of things.

209 S1: Okay. Yeah, that was all for the main interview and now I will just collect some personal demographic information.

210 S2: Okay.

211 S1: Yeah. So where are you from?

212 S2: I am from Indonesia.

213 S1: And how old are you?

214 S2: I am 21 years old.

215 S1: Yeah. And what's your highest level of education?

216 S2: Bachelor's degree?

217 S1: Yeah. And what's your gender identity?

218 S2: I am a female.

219 S1: Have you lived in different cultural environments? (..) Yeah, like, like in Vienna.

220 S2: Yea, Vienna. And before Vienna, I was living in Singapore as well.

221 S1: Oh, okay. Do you think, like, living in different, like, cultural environments would change a lot of your identity (..), self-identity.

222 S2: I think the reason why I was kind of, (..) how do you call it, like, a little bit indifferent regarding, like, what I've seen on social media regarding, like, being Asian and things like that—I think it's also because I lived in Singapore. Singapore is, like, very well known to be a diverse place to live in. I think the three biggest ethnic groups are, like, Chinese, Malay people, and Indians. So, yeah (..), I think, well, I was living in Singapore, I've already seen, like, you know, different kinds of, like, how

different communities (...) within, like, across ethnicities can interact with each other, how they live (...) kind of, like, in harmony in one country together. So I think that also plays a part.

223 S1: Okay.

224 S1: And how often do you use TikTok?

225 S2: I rarely use it, maybe, like, only a couple of times before.

226 S1: Okay. And what type of content do you usually engage most frequently on social media?

227 S2: I engage with a lot of film content regarding movies and maybe, like, culinary as well.

228 S1: And have you noticed any trends that related to the racial representation, like a folk's eye, trend, or stop Asia hate movement?

229 S2: (...) I think there was, like, (...) I think what's very famous right now—it was very famous—what's sort of famous right now, at least from what I've seen from my social media is, like, Chinese makeup, actually. Like, Chinese makeup brands and, like, the way—there was, like, (...), there's a trend called douyin makeup. I don't know. Am I saying that correctly? I haven't spoken Chinese. Like, Chinese version of TikTok, yeah.

230 S2: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So, like, Chinese TikTok makeup.

231 S1: And I think it's also getting, like, quite popular, especially among, like, Indonesian people, a lot of people are, like, hiring makeup artists to do, like, something similar for their graduations or, like, weddings and things like that.

232 S2: Yeah.

233 S1: And how often do you come across similar content?

234 S2: (...) Right now, not that much because (...) I think my explorer page is focused on something else right now.

235 S1: Okay. And did participating in the study affect the way you view TikTok's algorithm or racial content on the platform?

236 S2: I think so, yeah, because this was, again, I didn't do it very often, like, scrolling through the for you page on TikTok. So I sort of never understood how they kind of, like, generated the content for it because it's just the recommendation page technically, right? So, like, while interacting with it, I can sort of understand, like, okay, if I engage with these kinds of content, then they would appear kind of, like, in rotation. It sort of feels like a Ferris wheel in a way. (...) Yeah, it just keeps on rotating from your interests. And maybe, I don't know, maybe, like, the (...) things that I like, or maybe if I do have a

TikTok account and it's more, like, what I interact with is, like, more diverse, maybe the rotation will take a little bit longer, but I assume that it's just going to be there.

237 **S1:** But did you expect that the content on TikTok would be like this? Or had the thoughts?

238 **S2:** Honestly, from what I've seen, my family sounds like weird TikTok cooking videos as well. So they sound like a lot of cooking videos from—that they saved from TikTok and things like that. But yeah, it's just kind of interesting, I guess, to experience it. I do sort of know, like (..) there was, like, the, especially the Indian street food content, like, the audio for it is, like, fast-paced, it's, like, sped up and things like that. I think (..) that's what I associate a lot of TikTok content with, like, that sort of audio. Like, it's, like, fast and it's sped up and, yeah.

239 **S1:** And also for the—for the Indian street food memes, I'll say? Like, it's also very popular. It's not only on TikTok, I think also on Instagram or, I don't, on Facebook maybe. So, yeah, I think it's everywhere. I don't know why suddenly it's becoming so popular everywhere.

240 **S2:** Yeah, exactly. Maybe, like, maybe people find it intriguing, but then again, you know, I think to a certain point, they need to realize it's just an exaggeration, you know.

241 **S1:** Yeah, but after you watching this kind of video, would you think, like, India actually looks like that?

242 **S2:** I don't think so. I think what I'm more, like, (..). The way India has described to me when I was younger is, like, the Taj Mahal and things like that.

243 **S1:** Yeah.

244 **S2:** So there's definitely, like—I feel like it's more like a city and also, actually, there's this one Indonesian content creator and she got married to an Indian guy and she currently lives in India, so she—there's, like, (..) she makes content about, like, her daily life. Like, she in the morning she goes to the market and then she cooks and yeah, like what I know about India is that it's really hot.

245 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, that's true.

246 **S2:** And yeah, I mean, like, there are street food, but then again, there's always—like, every country has street food. Like, that's just how it is, you know?

247 **S1:** Yeah. But, like, for—I think for India, like, hygiene problem, it's also a very big topic on Chinese social media. Like, there are some, like, content creators, they go to, like, India to try out the street foods and then you will see the comments always saying, like, oh my God, so disgusting and blah, blah, blah. So I think this kind of stereotype is already very, like, rooted in people's minds. I would say they really think India is like this. The country is like this.

248 **S2:** So yeah, I think, like, there are certain stereotype, like, for example, Indian street. But then again, I have to—sometimes I think back to, like, I don't know, Indonesian street food or I've been to Malaysia, like, Malaysia also has street food and things like that. And I'm like, it's not so different, actually. So, I mean, like, obviously, like, the kind of food that's, like, being sold is a little bit different, but then again, it's like, they're all just street food in the end. Like, (..) what people posting through social media is just, you know, what can get the most engagement with. So obviously, the more, the more like, (..) I don't know, the more exaggerated or, like, the most, the more like, (..) I don't know, difference in culture will, you know, gain the most engagement from other people. So I think that's also, like, a factor of it.

249 **S1:** Okay. Were there any moments that during the study that you felt uncomfortable?

250 **S2:** Yeah, looking at all the women.

251 **S1:** But for the questions, you didn't feel uncomfortable with.

252 **S2:** No, I think it's fine.

253 **S1:** And do you have any additional thoughts on the topic that we haven't covered?

254 **S2:** (..) I don't think so, I think.

255 **S1:** Yeah, I think the interview was actually very long, I think.

256 **S2:** Oh, oh my God.

257 **S1:** Yeah, we have talked about a lot of things.

258 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. I mean, like, obviously (..), yeah, I think—yeah, it's like what I said before. I mean, looking at the TikTok content before. (..) Maybe, like, I mean, as a woman and I am also Asian, so I do feel uncomfortable looking at a lot of it, especially regarding, like, women's bodies and, like, how men talk about themselves. Like, they're, like, I don't really like looking at men's faces in general. It was also, like, quite hard for me to take it seriously. So, but hopefully, when, like (..), like other, maybe, like, European women, they would also—maybe they can also feel, like, some sort of discomfort regarding, you know, like, the sexual—like, oversexualization of women's bodies and things like that.

259 **S1:** I think not really.

260 **S2:** Really?

261 **S1:** Yeah, I think, like, I have done, like, right now, I've only done one interview with the Western Caucasian. Like, he didn't feel anything uncomfortable. He felt like it's just, like, humor, it's just type of video. It doesn't really mean anything.

262 S2: Okay.

263 S1: I think, like, the interpretation between Asian and the Caucasian people is, like, very different.

264 S2: Ah, interesting. Okay, then.

265 S1: Well, I think it's like that, but yeah, that's true, I guess.

266 S2: Okay, then.

267 S1: Yeah, I think that's all for the interview. Thank you.

268 S2: Thank you. That was very interesting.

Interview E

1

2 **S1 (Researcher):** Okay. So before we start, I would like to bri (..) briefly (..) explain about the study.
So in the study, I'm interested in understanding your thought process as you complete the task I will
give to you. To achieve this, I will ask you to think aloud while engaging with the task. By thinking
aloud, I mean verbalizing everything that comes to mind from the moment you begin the task until
you complete it. I encourage you to continuously express your thoughts without planning or
structuring your responses. Simply speak as though you were alone in the room, narrating your
thoughts. If you remain silent for an extended period, I will prompt you to continue speaking. Do you
understand what I mean?

3 **S2 (Interviewee):** Yes.

4 **S1:** Yeah. So before we start, I will give you two think aloud training tasks. First one, how many
windows are in your parents' house? You do not need to count by yourself. (..) I would do that for
you. Just tell me which room has how many windows?

5 **S2:** Two windows in the big living room.

6 **S1:** Mm hmm.

7 **S2:** And then one window in my room, which is my old room.

8 **S1:** Yeah? Mm.

9 **S2:** That's it.

10 **S1:** Oh, that's all.

11 **S2:** Okay.

12 **S1:** It's a small apartment.

13 **S2:** Okay, okay.

14 **S1:** So for the second task, imagine you are opening your favorite social media app. Without
touching your phone, describe your usual actions upon opening the app. What type of content do
you typically encounter? How do you decide what to engage with or scroll past? Verbalize everything
that comes to mind as though you were actively navigating the app.

15 **S2:** So nowadays, I would say TikTok is my main social media app that I like to use.

16 **S1:** Yeah.

17 **S2:** When I open it up, I usually think, okay, I need something to entertain me. And I usually like (..)

TikToks that are about fashion and makeup and maybe a new drama that's going on in this world or news that's also very interesting. What I usually just skip past is like those kind of ads, like ads and (...) movie, movie scenes and everything like that, I just move past it because it's not that interesting to me.

18 **S1:** That's all.

19 **S2:** Yes, what should I say again? What should I..

20 **S1:** No, yeah, yeah. Just asking if that was all.

21 **S2:** Yes, I think that's all. I'm not a very, I don't search for anything specific on social media. I am most of the time just want to get entertained.

22 **S1:** Ah, okay, okay. So now we move on to the primary think-aloud task. I give you an account, TikTok account, and you will need to log in with your own device. And during the time you will scroll through the feed. (...) During the time, please verbalize your thoughts about what you see. This may include your immediate reactions to the content, your interpretation of why TikTok is recommending certain videos, and how these recommendations make you feel. And if you interact with the content on the page, you can like the content or follow the account or write comments. Yeah, whatever you like.

23 **S2:** Okay.

24 **S1:** Also during the time, please turn on your screen recording.

25 **S2:** Okay. When you are inside the TikTok account?

26 **S1:** Yes, yes.

27 **S2:** Okay. Just a minute, I have to get in. Sorry.

28 **S1:** No, no, no problem. Take your time.

29 **S2:** Okay, I just went in. It says verify.

30 **S1:** Yeah, the code is 602076.

31 **S2:** All right.

32 **S1:** Are you in?

33 **S2:** Mm hmm. I'm in.

34 **S1:** Yeah. Also, I guess there will be some ads because in the morning, I was checking there were

some ads. So when you see ads, you can just like (..) scroll past it.

35 **S2:** Then I start with the screen recording?

36 **S1:** Yeah, you can start and you can stop the whole process after (..) 10 to 15 videos.

37 **S2:** Mm.

38 **S1:** Yeah.

39 **S2:** Okay. The first video I'm getting is about Vienna and it's about opening the door. It doesn't matter. I don't care. The next video is about a street vendor in Durian. I don't like that fruit. (..) It's stinking. But she has nice boobs. All right, the next video is about someone just walking. She has a nice figure. Need to really lose weight and get the same figure. Okay, it's an ad. Something about probably India.

40 **S1:** Yeah.

41 **S2:** It's a mixed video. It's about something about street food in India, and I already know it's going to be eww. So I just skip it.

42 **S1:** Yes.

43 **S2:** The next video is about a girl laying there very provocatively. Provoc (..) provocatively. Sorry. I'll just skip it. It doesn't interest me. Ads. I don't care. Most of the time, it's just beautiful women doing something beautiful and I just get a little bit jealous.

44 **S1:** Yeah.

45 **S2:** (..) That's a lot of beautiful women. Wow.

46 **S1:** Yeah.

47 **S2:** Okay, I just, I'm just scrolling past beautiful women, to be real.

48 **S1:** Yeah.

49 **S2:** They're very thin. Wow. I'm really just thinking the whole time I need to lose weight when I'm looking at them. So that's... Oh my God, what is that? Someone is playing with her tongue. That's kind of disgusting. Okay, next video. Wow. I know in Asia, the beauty standard is very (..) about (..) thin women. I'm a little self-insecure, if I had this kind of feed on my (..) device the whole time. Okay, I'll just scroll past it. Uh huh, okay. Very pretty, very pretty. Oh, boobs. Nice. I should think about getting the same bikini, maybe it helps me with my boobs as well. A lot of ads, a lot of AI (..) trends going on. Not very interesting. Okay, I don't know, (..) someone doing something. Then it comes

back to food, which is nice. I like food, but it's about India, so I just skip it because I know it's unhygienic. And, yeah, a lot of women who are thin.

50 **S1:** I think we can stop here. Yeah, you can also stop your screen recording.

51 **S2:** Good. It's a lot of women who are thin and pretty.

52 **S1:** Yeah, that's like full of this content at the moment. I don't know why.

53 **S2:** Okay.

54 **S1:** Well, I have a kind of a similar feed, I would say, on my phone, but it's not about like being sexual. It's all about like fashion and makeup.

55 **S2:** Okay, (...).

56 **S1:** So now we're getting to the post-task reflection and feedback. Did you think the instruction makes sense for you?

57 **S2:** Yes, they were very clear. Yeah. I can go with it, yes.

58 **S1:** And did you feel uncomfortable verbalizing the thought through the process?

59 **S2:** No, I don't think so. I'm pretty vocal about my insecurities and then I know what I like and what I don't like. (...) So I mean I don't feel bad.

60 **S1:** So also during the moment, you never struggle to articulate your thought?

61 **S2:** (...) I wouldn't say it was hard to articulate my thought. I would say sometimes I'm like, (...) I don't know what I should think because it's always the same kind of (...) videos coming up. So I could say the same thing, oh, it's a thin woman, I should lose weight. Oh, it's another beautiful woman. I should do that to get (...) to the same level. So it's about the same continually, it's the same (...) thing going on. So my thoughts are not going like very broad. It's always about around the same space. Basically.

62 **S1:** Did you feel uncomfortable during watching the videos?

63 **S2:** Yeah. (...) I would say like two videos. I can still remember them because they were like, what the hell?

64 **S1:** Yeah.

65 **S2:** This was about this one woman doing like tongue tricks. And I was like, okay, that's fucking weird. And then there was another one who's showing her breast and I was like, okay, well, (...) if you like that kind of content, it's more for men, I guess.

- 66 **S1:** Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah, I guess so because for some men interviews, they feel the content is just absolutely normal, never feel like uncomfortable. So there's a big difference between female and male, I guess.
- 67 **S2:** Yeah, it's a very big difference, I guess. I would get the whole time those kind of videos, I would get mad, I think. But for men and I can, for men, it would be probably (...) something enjoyable, I guess. Depends on the man, of course, but.
- 68 **S1:** Yeah, yeah. Okay. So we move on to the main interview. Would you consider yourself as an Asian?
- 69 **S2:** Yes, I am Asian.
- 70 **S1:** Yeah. And do you think there are any common stereotypes about Asians that come to mind for you?
- 71 **S2:** Well, the first stereotype is about why people most of the time think about Asian women.
- 72 **S1:** Yeah.
- 73 **S2:** That Asian women are so docile and nice and that (...) they listen to all of your words. That's what I come to think of because I grew up here in Austria and I got like talked to by older white men, very older white men, often.
- 74 **S1:** Yeah.
- 75 **S2:** That's what comes first in my mind.
- 76 **S1:** Then where do you think this kind of idea comes from?
- 77 **S2:** (...) Probably about like Asian women in other countries, like more in the poorer countries, wanting to get with a white man to live this more luxury life, even though it's not much luxury there. But it's a huge difference between their poor country and then here living maybe in Austria. So they are, of course, being super nice, super (...) behaved and everything. So I bet it comes from this type of scenario.
- 78 **S1:** And during the scrolling through the TikTok content, did you notice there were any recurring patterns or things in what was recommended to you?
- 79 **S2:** Yes, it was all the time an Asian woman. It was either an Asian woman doing something sexually or (...) showing off her body or showing off her face. And it was super nice about you.
- 80 **S1:** Yeah.

- 81 **S2:** That's the continue, (...) that's the whole (...) feed that I was getting and as well as bits and pieces of Indian food.
- 82 **S1:** Yeah, I got that, there are a couple of like Indian foods and mostly female, right?
- 83 **S2:** Yeah.
- 84 **S1:** Do you think like the TikTok's algorithm is actually promoting this kind of stereotype? It's like oversexualizing the Asian female, like on the algorithm?
- 85 **S2:** I think it really depends on the person. If a guy really likes Asian women, of course this would pop up the whole time. But I can also see that if men really like, if some men really like Caucasian women, there would be also like the same thing going on with Caucasian women being like super provocatively, provocatively (...) dressed. Sorry.
- 86 **S1:** Yeah.
- 87 **S2:** And yeah, I think it really depends on the man what he likes. So it really adapts to the (...) to the person who is using the device.
- 88 **S1:** And do you think the portrayals of Asian women are the same as the portrayals of Western women?
- 89 **S2:** Oh no, it is a huge difference. (...) If we're talking about what men think about the difference, there is a difference. The Western women are usually seen as (...) more, (...) how do I say that, more harder to get, I guess? They are more harsh to men. More self-confident, more self-reliable, I would say, and they kind of boss the men around. I saw that going on with white men, especially. And Asian women are (...) seen, like I said, more docile, more behaved and they listen to your words and they will do everything to get the green card.
- 90 **S1:** What do you think about, like, social media platforms? Are they actually reinforcing this kind of stereotype? Because it's actually similar, no? The portrayal of the Asian female, the stereotype that you talk about before?
- 91 **S2:** If it would enforce it, (...) probably, yes. Especially if it's like more provoc (...) Sorry. This word. It's just getting on my nerve. But if they are like more open, (...) show a lot of skin, yeah, I can see that people would look at it and think Asian women are very, very, (...) oh, we'll say more, they will do anything to get with you and to get the card. That's a huge point, especially. And I also know it is a lot of Western women, if they notice like, oh, those men are going for Asian women, then they also like get mad at the Asian women for being like, yeah, you are just here for the green card. You're just here for the money. So it's kind of also like a woman going against woman.
- 92 **S1:** So how do you think like the TikTok's algorithm decides what kind of content to show you?

- 93 **S2:** I mean, if you start, (..) first of all, if you do an account on TikTok and then I guess you search up things. If you scroll and scroll and you like certain things, those kind of certain things are also going to be shown to you. So it depends what you are searching for, literally.
- 94 **S1:** Then do you think this kind of algorithm recommends content based on your identity as well?
- 95 **S2:** I'm sorry, again, this question I didn't get it.
- 96 **S1:** Do you feel that algorithm (..) recommends content based on your identity?
- 97 **S2:** Identity?
- 98 **S1:** Like (..) Asian as an Asian, they recommend more things that (..) align with your Asian identity like that.
- 99 **S2:** I have to think first. (..) I don't think so. I think it really depends what you are looking up. Because if my content would be about, I don't know, let's say, (..) all about here in Vienna and Western culture, I think only those kind of things would be recommended to me instead of the Asian things because I look up more Asian things to be real.
- 100 **S1:** Yeah.
- 101 **S2:** I think it really depends what you are searching, what you are liking. I don't know if it is about the identity.
- 102 **S1:** Okay. Would you consider yourself like more Westernized?
- 103 **S2:** (..) Growing up here in Austria, I was definitely more Westernized, but because I tried to fit in when I was younger. Now getting older and knowing myself more, I just realized, no, I'm actually Asian and I actually like to be Asian. So I would say I'm truly a mix of both. I don't see myself as more Asian or here and more Western here. (..) Truly both because I can imagine myself living in Asia would be also very strange for me.
- 104 **S1:** Okay. So were you actually struggling with your identity, like recognition when you were younger?
- 105 **S2:** Oh, yeah, definitely. Because I was, (..) there were not a lot of Asians in my school. I remember beside me being another girl. She was from China. And, of course, a lot of Filipinos. Had their own kind of vibe about it because it was still a little bit different than me.
- 106 **S1:** Yeah.
- 107 **S2:** It was a few Asians as East Asians.

- 108 **S1:** Yeah, definitely, yeah.
- 109 **S2:** So it was (..) it was definitely a struggle. In a lot of times with wearing the Homelands outfit, you know, the Dirndl.
- 110 **S1:** Yeah.
- 111 **S2:** Also trying to do my Asian facials, something against it, but it did not work, so at the end of the day, I just just was like, okay, I don't, it doesn't work. So I just wear something super basic and I don't give a shit anymore. And later on, when you're an adult, you just accept your Asian side more. And so I now I'm, I love my Asian side. I think it makes me very happy.
- 112 **S1:** Were there any like time (..) that you feel is very difficult as an Asian to live in a Western country?
- 113 **S2:** Well, I would say as a child, (..) and especially as an Asian child surrounded by Western (..) people most of the time, (..) you get racist, how to say that, you get racist things towards to you from other people. Especially for children, but that's children, I guess. (..) So I would say that's the only struggle that I had growing up most of the time.
- 114 **S1:** Yeah.
- 115 **S2:** People were racist to me as a child and I was really, really upset by that because it doesn't define me in any kind of way because I'm Asian. They kind of use it as an ammunition (..) against me. But now, like I said, growing older, if they would say something racist to me, I don't think I would be really much affected nowadays.
- 116 **S1:** So you are now like more accepting your (..) real, like identity of yourself now?
- 117 **S2:** Yes. Definitely.
- 118 **S1:** And back to TikTok, do you feel like that TikTok's algorithm treats different Asian groups, such as like Eastern Asian, South Asian, or Southeast Asian differently? Or does it tend to present them as a one group?
- 119 **S2:** I think for people (..) in the Western, Caucasian people, when they hear Asian, they usually think of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean people. Even though also like India and Philippines are also included, they most of the time think of East Asian. (..) Yeah. (..) I think their thoughts are immediately East Asian. If they look at me because I'm Mongolian, they think immediately like, oh, she's Chinese. Oh, she's, she's Japanese.
- 120 **S1:** Yeah.
- 121 **S2:** Exactly.

- 122 **S1:** Yeah, continue.
- 123 **S2:** Sorry. And I don't think they put much thought into Thai and Philippine people. They usually like more East Asian (..) I think so personally, yeah.
- 124 **S1:** Why do you think this kind of like phenomenon exists? Is it because like the social media (..) or the traditional media in general, they would present more of the Eastern Asian more than others, or why you think this kind of things would happen?
- 125 **S2:** (..) Thinking on top of (..) thinking, (..) I think, because East Asian women, nowadays (..) showing like more skin and everything, especially to get like those TikTok likes and everything. You know what I mean?
- 126 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, okay.
- 127 **S2:** I would be, they're seen more as revealing. And so men in the West, they're like, oh, those are nice. Those are more revealing women, so they immediately think of East Asian women. And I don't see much about like more Philippine and Thai women doing that. Even though we know nowadays there's, of course, this whole (..) prostitution going on, like, what was it called? The Thai and Philippines like..
- 128 **S1:** Yeah, I get that.
- 129 **S2:** Yeah. You know, but normally, if a Western man thinks of an Asian woman who is sexy, they think probably of like East woman. East Asian woman, sorry.
- 130 **S1:** Have you seen like similar, the similar content that you saw today before, like when you were using TikTok, in your general life?
- 131 **S2:** I do see it sometimes, but I will usually scroll past and it doesn't show me very often. But it does pop up sometimes.
- 132 **S1:** Yeah. And that does it like change your view of Asian identity?
- 133 **S2:** No, no, I wouldn't say that. I do think like, why are they doing this? But I guess nowadays it's just to attract like male audience to to get (..) like pay because it's actually a good job.
- 134 **S1:** Yeah. Have you ever seen those comments? Like if you open the comments, it's all full of like, you're so pretty, like so hot and name please, these kind of things.
- 135 **S2:** Yeah, my God. I mean, it's very disgusting, but maybe for the TikToker themselves, maybe they think it's just a way of like doing the market and to earn more money.
- 136 **S1:** Yeah. Definitely. I saw those comments and yeah, it's most of the time like men and being like,

oh, I wish I had an Asian woman or yeah, you know, those kind of dirty stuff, usually.

137 **S1:** And what about the Asian men? Like, feel like Asian men is like disappearing from this social media platforms. Like for me, I barely get any Asian man content. Also, like I also actually, when I set this TikTok account, I also put Asian man content in it, but yeah, (..) obviously it didn't work. It's not showing at all. Have you got any content about Asian men?

138 **S2:** I do (..) get them more on Instagram.

139 **S1:** Yeah.

140 **S2:** Reasoning is, I guess because of K-pop and all of those things. And I think nowadays, East Asian men are especially very, (..) also more fetishized.

141 **S1:** Yeah. Yeah.

142 **S2:** So I do see them sometimes pop up, but I do have to say I see more women.

143 **S1:** Yeah, same for me. I have seen some like Asian men TikTok. They are, (..) I don't know, they are like a really idealized Korean men, I would say. And also there are some men TikToker, they are posting videos that begging for Western girlfriends or Western wife.

144 **S2:** Oh my God, yeah.

145 **S1:** Yeah, this is also for me very strange.

146 **S2:** I do see that, but it's most of the time those begging for Western women, those men are not that handsome.

147 **S1:** You think so?

148 **S2:** Yeah, because if they're handsome, they wouldn't be begging because those Western women who like Asian men, they would become in flocks.

149 **S1:** Yeah, actually true.

150 **S2:** Because they're not that handsome, they, of course, are begging.

151 **S1:** So what do you think about this kind of content? Like, idealize the Asian men? Do you think it's, like, real? Or do you think this is just, I don't know, this is also kind of an illusion of sexualizing the Asia in general for the Western society.

152 **S2:** Sorry, can you repeat the question again? Sorry, I got lost in thoughts.

153 **S1:** No, no, I just like, uh it's about how do you think about this kind of Asian man content? Like, do

you think it's also kind of sexualizing (..) the Asian man just to fit in the Western society (..) their taste or their kind of ideal. It's making a kind of illusion of them.

154 **S2:** Okay. It really depends from my experience, from Korea, men, I know they like to look good, you know it's They just like to look good and clean and more fresher, more style, set a fashion. So I didn't say they are doing that for the Western type of people. They are doing that literally for themselves.

155 **S1:** Yeah.

156 **S2:** (..) It really depends on their attractiveness, actually, I think. If that man is more attractive, I don't think they're suffering for anything from the Western type of things. And I personally think those Asian men, yeah, it's nice to look at as an Asian woman.

157 **S1:** Okay. Mm.

158 **S2:** It depends if they're really struggling to being (..) attractive. If they are struggling, of course, they will target the Western woman who have a fetish on them.

159 **S1:** Yeah.

160 **S2:** I saw (..) in real life happening, you know? I saw (..) I see (..) a woman just having a fetish for Asian men.

161 **S1:** Yeah, yeah. That's also, I think it's getting more and more because before (..) I would say Asian men, it's like not so popular. They were often like portrayed as like the Japanese (..) nerd yeah okay. Japanese is a bit stereotype but like more nerdy, like more interested in anime, stay at home like this kind of guy but nowadays I feel like people are more seeing this stylish side of the Asian man so it's getting also in a trend.

162 **S2:** Yeah, definitely. I think especially the biggest part was K-pop and K-drama. I do have to say K, Korea (..) made Asian men more likable.

163 **S1:** Yeah, definitely, yes.

164 **S2:** Yeah. Definitely.

165 **S1:** Okay. And do you think that TikTok content can actually influence how people perceive Asian groups?

166 **S2:** Definitely, yeah. Nowadays, TikTok is our (..) news, you know? It's the same for me, it's the way to get to (..) get to know what's happening in the world right now, what is trending. You saw (..) what happened yesterday at between (..) Elon Musk and Trump.

167 **S1:** And Trump, yeah?

168 **S2:** Those kind of news, and you don't see that (...) on time on (...) those newspapers nowadays, you see it immediately on TikTok.

169 **S1:** Yeah, yeah. Definitely.

170 **S2:** One of the things, I wanted to say, what was that? I do have to say my opinion also changed (...) on Asian men because of K-pop.

171 **S1:** Because of TikTok?

172 **S2:** K-pop.

173 **S1:** Uh-huh, yeah.

174 **S2:** I used to not like Asian men. That's true. They were not my type.

175 **S1:** Uh-huh.

176 **S2:** (...) I was, for a while, I was not having crushes. I was not having a type at all. And then through K-pop, I was like, okay, they're handsome. They're pretty handsome. So I think that's the reason why like Asian men right now.

177 **S1:** But don't you feel like also I ask in the previous interviews, they think that Asian men are more portrayed, like very (...) feminized and more pretty. It's like the beauty standards of Asian men is like very different with Western men.

178 **S2:** It's a huge difference. Personally, from my side of point, I really like the Asian men more than the Western men because they just seem more put together and clean and hygienic. And they are, you know, with skincare and (...) being also more fashionable, that's also such a good point, you know, it just shows that you actually take care of yourself. And Western men, (...) a lot of men, they don't give a shit about hygiene and it's just, nah. Of course, I can say the same thing about some Asian men who don't give a shit about the hygiene.

179 **S1:** Yes.

180 **S2:** I'm just talking about the stereotypical type (...) type.

181 **S1:** Type. Hm. And how do you think like this kind of racialized content on TikTok has shaped public opinions about Asians?

182 **S2:** Well, about Asian men in a good way.

183 **S1:** Yeah.

184 **S2:** They're more likable now. About Asian women. (...) I would depends actually on the audience.

Women, Western women, or not, it doesn't need to be really Western Western women. I think, especially also because of K-pop, they also like women now more. (..) They think, oh, she's so cute, she is so elegant, et cetera. Oh, they have their own fan bases and K-pop became such a huge thing. (..) But regarding the other like more Philippine, Thailand, those kind of, (..) I don't know, I think they got more (..) sexualized I would think, from Western men. (..) I think they got more sexualized because of the tourism, prostitution tourism there and it got blown up because of the TikTok and social media. So they are now more sought after by men. (..) Things like that more up. Yeah.

185 **S1:** So you do think like the people from different cultural backgrounds would interpret this kind of content differently?

186 **S2:** Yes. It really depends on which Asian you're talking about, because if you say just Asian, you need to specify. And for some of them, it went good. For some of them, it didn't go that well.

187 **S1:** Yeah. And do you feel like that this kind of content could actually contribute to real world, (..) real world bias or discrimination?

188 **S2:** Hmm. (...) Sorry, just trying to think. I'm trying to think of my own experiences as well.

189 **S1:** Yeah, because I would say from my previous interview, I can give you an example. Like, she is a half Taiwanese, half German, and she has experienced once, like she was just (..) on the street and there were some guy talking to her and saying like she's sleeping with (..) different Asian women and he's only lacking a Taiwanese on the list, so he would like to have something with her.

190 **S2:** Oh my God.

191 **S1:** That was like a huge, also sexual harassment already and she felt very disgusting. I think this is also a kind of contribution from the TikTok or from social media in general. They think like Asian female are very open to sex or they think they are easy to get. So, yeah, what do you think?

192 **S2:** I think it depends on the Asian woman from where she comes from. If I would (..) I would have been in Thai or Philippine or Vietnamese, yes, I can imagine those men would think of me being more open about sleeping with them, being more easy about this. But I can see that more women, (..) the women who are more from Japan or Korea, South Korea, I can imagine that they are not going to be (..) so open about it. You know? It would not be the same stereotype towards Thai and then South Korea, that would be different. But also in the Asian community, there is such kind of this kind of stereotype as well.

193 **S1:** You mean among the Asians, they have different stereotypes about each other?

194 **S2:** Yes, definitely.

- 195 **S1:** Yes.
- 196 **S2:** Can you give me an example or explain it more?
- 197 **S2:** Yes, of course. Let me think. I think the Thai, the Philippine is pretty well known about sleeping with each other a lot. And I think more the conservative part is the Japanese, I don't think they're that open. That's also a part that Asians know about each other as well. So (..) they also, men use that. Asians, each other, I would say the women also like more Koreans.
- 198 **S1:** Yes.
- 199 **S2:** Koreans much more as well, well, I would say like other Asians kind of Asians like South Korean men, much more than I would say, I don't know, Philippine men or something like that, you know? They're more (..) more beauty, like the Asian beauty standard is more South Korean men.
- 200 **S1:** Yeah, that's true, actually, yeah. Then have you ever like, you personally experienced any like real world bias or discrimination? It's like offline, online can be anything?
- 201 **S2:** It's very sad, but I do experience it also like in my day-to-day life sometimes because when I'm at an example of work, I do get a lot of like, oh, you speak such a good German. And I'm like, of course, I grew up here. Or like, they always ask me, oh, where are you from? Are you from China? Or, do you speak Chinese, right? Or speak immediately with me with Nihao or Konichiwa whatever.
- 202 **S1:** Yes.
- 203 **S2:** Or even ask me from where I'm from in a polite way, oh, hey, are your roots? Or something like that. It's just an immediate, oh, you're Chinese. Because they don't know anyone else from Asia, apparently. They don't know geography.
- 204 **S1:** Yes.
- 205 **S2:** So it's such a thing that happens all the time, I would say.
- 206 **S1:** This has also (..) happened to me when I was in Morocco because there, I guess there weren't many Asian tourists. So when me and my friend were walking on the street, everybody just said like nihao to us, like literally everyone. And I was like thinking, if, what if I'm Japanese? What if I'm like from other countries? Like, you cannot just (..) always say this one specific language to all the Asians. So I think this is very offensive for me and also for other country, (..) the people from other countries.
- 207 **S2:** Definitely, yeah.
- 208 **S1:** Yeah.

- 209 **S2:** That's a big thing here, I would say, especially towards a person who grew up here in Austria and can speak the language actually pretty fine. And it's more, (..) I would say it's more (..) how do I say that? It's more offensive for me, especially because I grew up here when you talk to me and you notice immediately that I can speak German pretty fine and that is my mother language, basically. And you still talk to me as if like still like, oh, you're Chinese. And I'm like..
- 210 **S1:** Also, yeah, for the language thing, it's also like one thing, but like with this kind of experience, have you, (..) do you, do you think like yourself as an outsider of the culture?
- 211 **S2:** (..) Culture of Austria, maybe, you mean?
- 212 **S1:** Yeah, yes. Mm.
- 213 **S2:** Being real here, I will never fit in. I can be born here, I could be (..) half Austrian. I will never fit in (..) perfectly fine. Like, as long as I look kind of Asian, I will never really fit in. But it's completely okay because I really like my Asian part and (..) even if I don't fit in, I don't need to fit in with you.
- 214 **S1:** Yes.
- 215 **S2:** That's my opinion about that. I will never fit in.
- 216 **S1:** Yeah.
- 217 **S2:** Yeah. Like a lot of interviews said the same.
- 218 **S1:** Yeah, I will never fit in because of the way I look.
- 219 **S1:** Have you ever seen TikTok content that made you uncomfortable because of how it portrayed Asians, except today? Like today, I know all the content were very unpleasant, but before in your daily using, have you ever (..) encountered any content like that?
- 220 **S2:** (...) I would, it's more about the red light street area in Thailand, Philippine.
- 221 **S1:** Yeah, so those areas.
- 222 **S2:** Yeah, them being more, so excited to go there, you know, that's like eww.
- 223 **S1:** Yeah. And how would you react to these contents? Would you like report them or would you just like press, you don't like it?
- 224 **S2:** (..) I just actually scroll past it because I'm just thinking, (..) even if I like reported, it doesn't do anything.
- 225 **S1:** Yeah, actually true, yeah.

226 S2: Yeah. So I just get past and hope it's not coming back.

227 S1: But do you still get those videos?

228 S2: (...) Actually yes, I still see them sometimes.

229 S1: Then do you think like TikTok actually does enough to address harmful or stereotypical content about Asians? Like, for example, TikTok has previously launched initiatives like Stop Asian hate campaign. I think it was during the COVID.

230 S2: Yeah.

231 S1: They updated this community guideline to include stricter policies on hate speech and the harassment. Do you feel these kind of efforts are effective or it's more needed?

232 S2: (...) To be real, any kind of minority that's not Western. (...) Also like people from, (...) how I say, from Syria, women from Syria, what's going on, Palestine and all of those things. Everything needs to be supported. But it's so much going on in this world that I cannot say that we should be now number one.

233 S1: Yeah.

234 S2: We should not be now preferred. I think we Asians are doing pretty fine right now.

235 S1: Yeah.

236 S2: It was really bad. Yeah. That Stop Asian campaign, (...) you know. That was needed during the COVID time. Nowadays, I don't think it's very much needed because the Asian culture got such a big hype now. And nowadays, there are more important things to promote about.

237 S1: Yeah, definitely, yeah. Do you think, also for those creators on the TikTok, I think they are actually (...) portraying themselves to align with the stereotypes. (...) Do you think this kind of content often makes people think used to or accepting the stereotypes?

238 S2: (...) Accepting of the stereotypes. I don't think so. Because nowadays, also TikTok is such a bright, (...) broad, (...) has so much themes going on. And I also also think people can show that we are Asians are not only so open. You know? There are women who are also like, no, we are very self-confident people and everything. So it kind of depends really what you're searching for. (...) How can I say that? Because I have so many, there are so many Asian beautiful social creators who are such strong women and who are doing as a, by their work, are also like promoting Asian women as really self-confident and self-reliable women. But they are, of course, other creators who are sexualizing themselves so much that, of course, Western men think, like all of those Asian women are this easy.

- 239 **S1:** Yeah.
- 240 **S2:** The users, sadly.
- 241 **S1:** And when you were watching this kind of content, like, (..) how does it make you feel about being Asian?
- 242 **S2:** (...) It really depends on how confident you are in being Asian. I think, I myself, that (..) sometimes I need to lose weight. Yeah. It doesn't make me feel like I'm sexualized or something like that, you know? And because there are their own people, there are other Asians, it's not me. I am... I am (..) I'm not going to sexualize myself the way they do, even though it is quite disturbing how much they sexualize themselves. But (..) I'm (..) I'm only thinking like, oh, she's so thin. I want to lose weight too.
- 243 **S1:** So actually, have you ever changed, like how you present yourself either online or in real life, because how Asian identities are portrayed? (...) For example, like my friends, because (..) we talk about Asian female, for her, like she always (..) thinks about anime girls. So those are very (..) tiny, very cute, skinny girls. And she would, because she doesn't want to conform to this kind of stereotype, so she always tries to be (..) more other style, like, cool, (..) like not cute at all because she doesn't want to be portrayed in that way. Has it like ever happened to you as well?
- 244 **S2:** I don't think I would go for the same aesthetic as those anime things. I would go more for those Asian (..) expectations. Like, you know, Asian women, (..) more like a really, really tiny body with still big boobs and small face with the right kind of makeup. I would like more those kind of things. Now I try to adapt to those kind of Asian beauty standards more than those anime things.
- 245 **S1:** Also, you mentioned that this kind of content actually gave you sort of like a body anxiety about yourself. Do you think it's actually give you pressure for you to align with more of this kind of content, (..) like how Asians are portrayed in this kind of content?
- 246 **S2:** (..) Since it's the beauty standard to be thin and pretty, I do try to (..) go more this way, yeah, true. (..) Nowadays, it's also getting a little bit curvy to be in Asia. So also try to maybe go out and work out more the muscles in the machine. But I think it really depends what kind of beauty standards you have. Here in Western, it would be different. I would be more going out to get sun and get more bronzy.
- 247 **S1:** Definitely, yeah.
- 248 **S2:** Yeah, depends what kind of beauty standards you are searching for.
- 249 **S1:** Yeah. And on TikTok, have you ever seen content that made you proud of or ashamed of being Asian?

- 250 **S2:** Being ashamed of being Asian (..), no.
- 251 **S1:** Or proud.
- 252 **S2:** (..) Oh, God, I cannot say both. I don't think ashamed, because like I said, I'm pretty confident in who I am. And if another Asian woman does something, then (..) it has nothing to do with me. And I don't know, why should I be ashamed? But proud? (..) No.
- 253 **S1:** Also, no?
- 254 **S2:** (..) Why should I be such a proud person about being an Asian? No.
- 255 **S1:** So have you like, does it affect your sense of belonging to the Asian community?
- 256 **S2:** (...) I actually don't give a shit about the Asian community. Oh, sorry. I'm in an interview. I don't really care about an Asian community here. Since myself (..), I do have to say my friends are most of them Asians, but they are not people who are like (..) going from who have also like communities here in Asia or something like that. I try to distance myself as much as possible. Yeah, I cannot give a good answer to that.
- 257 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, no problem. Why do you distance yourself from the Asian community?
- 258 **S2:** Because those communities aka Chinese, Philippines, etc. Communities in Vienna are very toxic and judgmental groups of people, I don't like to hang out with people like that. My Asian friends are usually also people who aren't involved with them fortunately. But I don't think it's only an Asian thing, it probably goes out to all the other foreign communities as well. (..) Even mine, Mongolians, are very weird people. I rather distance myself and save my peace.
- 259 **S1:** Ok. Have you ever felt like that you need to post a certain type of content to get more views or to fit in when you were on social media?
- 260 **S2:** Well, we all do like filters. I can say, (..) if I want to post something, I do want to fit more beauty standards, so I do make my face like smaller. I'll make my lip thinner with a whole (..) editing from the photos. So, yeah.
- 261 **S1:** And do you feel like you have to perform your identity in a certain way to be seen?
- 262 **S2:** Perform a certain way. (...) No.
- 263 **S1:** No.
- 264 **S2:** (...) No, I'm just really posting what I am, who I am. I do like to go out and eat new things, matcha, makeup, (..) flowers, passion. You know, I just post what I like.

265 S1: Okay.

266 S2: I can be a confident person, but as well as have my own insecurities, and it should be a good balance between it.

267 S1: Yeah.

268 S2: I don't think there is a person who is so (..) confident with themselves. (..) I think that everyone has insecurities, but it should balance it out.

269 S1: Have you heard of also the Asians are (..) smart in gene, genetically? This kind of stereotype?

270 S2: Yeah, yeah. I do, I do hear it a lot, yes.

271 S1: Does it also affect you?

272 S2: I used to joke about it when I was younger, when I was (..) younger, about like, oh, why, even though I'm an Asian, I'm so bad at math. You know, Asians are known for being good at math. But they are. They are. Asians, East Asians have this really big pressure to make it (..) to the universities, especially in China and Korea, and Japan. (..) Of course, they have such a huge pressure that they are like literally studying to their dead.

273 S1: Yes.

274 S2: So, of course, they are much smarter and I don't want to jinx it. I don't want to say it. It's not stereotypical, but Asians in East Asians are more smarter than here in Western (..) Western people.

275 S1: But have you felt the pressure from that? Because you have this kind of stereotype and they would expect you (..) also to behave like that?

276 S2: No, I don't have that. People don't tell me because I'm Asian. I should be good at math. No. People don't say that to me.

277 S1: Okay. I think that was all the content (..) for the interview and now I will like hear some personal data from you.

278 S2: Okay. Yeah.

279 S1: So where are you from?

280 S2: I'm from Austria. I grew up here, but my roots, my parents are from Mongolia.

281 S1: Yeah, and how old are you?

282 S2: I'm 24, turning 25 in a few months.

283 S1: Yeah, and your highest education?

284 S2: (..) High school, I think. It's high school. Like, (..) yeah, it's high school, I think.

285 S1: And what is your gender identity?

286 S2: I'm straight and I'm a woman.

287 S1: Okay. (..) Would you consider that living in Austria is like living in a different cultural environment?

288 S2: No, because I grew up here and I do want to live for a certain time somewhere else, maybe in Asia, but I'm kind of afraid, you know, because Asia beauty standard is very high and (..) a little bit scared of that. Or I want to also live maybe here somewhere in Europe, sorry.

289 S1: Yeah. And how long have you been in Austria? Is it since you were born or you moved here when you were very young?

290 S2: I moved here when (..) I was five, I think, four, five.

291 S1: So more than 20 years now.

292 S2: Again?

293 S1: So you've been here more than 20 years already?

294 S2: Yes. Yeah, yes. And yeah, I went here from kindergarten all the way up to here.

295 S1: Do you think like living in a different (..) environment changes your perspective on a lot of things, on your life, on your own identity and everything?

296 S2: Yes, I would say that, yes. (..) If I would have grown up in Asia, I would think and behave differently and style myself differently. (..) Yeah, my whole personality would change.

297 S1: And how often do you use TikTok?

298 S2: Every day.

299 S1: Okay. And have you ever noticed the trend on racial representation on TikTok? For example, the Fox eye trend or some Asian hate movement?

300 S2: Oh my God, the fox eye trend. I love that. During corona time, COVID time because I just found it so funny. Those fox eyes are like to get more lifted. Those Western women are trying to get more with lifted eyes. And again, Asians came back and were like, oh, so (..) you can do, you can lift your eyes and don't get bullied like we Asians normally do because we have like kind of lifted eyes.

301 **S1:** Yeah.

302 **S2:** So I do see (..) literally both kind of points. It's such a beauty standard to look more snatched in the Western world. How can, if I can say that. And it was one way to achieve it, those fox eye trends. But I can also see the Asian part, like as an Asian myself who got like picked on and people doing that, you know, those (..) doing that fox eye thing towards me in a racist kind of way. While (..) Asian people would be also upset about it.

303 **S1:** And also, once my friend encountered this kind of racist, he's a guy and there were some like teenagers showing this kind of, you know, the eye movement to him while he felt very uncomfortable.

304 **S2:** Yeah, true, true. Nowadays, it doesn't happen that often. I don't think it happens (..) maybe once a year, maybe once two years, but not that often anymore, because I do like to think because of those social medias, people get more educated on that kind of thing. So you stop being an ass.

305 **S1:** Yeah, true, definitely. And how often do you cross these kinds of contents on your daily TikTok use?

306 **S2:** What kind of content?

307 **S1:** Like the Fox eye or racialized content?

308 **S2:** (..) Not that much anymore. Even if the people do it, I just see it as like, oh, it's a beauty trend. I do see it was a problem during the COVID time because there was also also (..) Asian hate. These days it's not that bad.

309 **S1:** Okay. So did participating in the study affect the way you view TikTok's algorithm or racial content on the platform?

310 **S2:** (..) No, I would say I saw all of it. I already knew about it.

311 **S1:** So you're not surprised with the content as well?

312 **S2:** No, it's just normal things. It happens all the time. I'm not surprised by it.

313 **S1:** Yeah. And were there any moments during the study when you feel uncomfortable? Like, no matter during the session that you watch video or during the interview session, have you ever felt uncomfortable?

314 **S2:** No, no. Not at all.

315 **S1:** That's great. And do you think there's any additional thought on the topic that we haven't covered?

316 S2: Oh, let me think about it a minute. (...) No, I think everything was covered pretty well.

317 S1: Yeah, I also think so. It was a great talk. Thank you.

318 S2: Thank you.

Interview F

1

2 **S1 (Researcher):** Okay. So before we start, I would briefly introduce the study. So in the study, I'm interested in understanding your thought process as you complete the task I will give to you. So to achieve this, I will ask you to think aloud while engaging with the task. By thinking aloud, I mean verbalizing everything that comes to mind from the moment you begin the task until you complete it. I encourage you to continuously express your thoughts without planning or structuring a response. So you speak as though you were alone in the room, narrating your thoughts. If you remain silent for an extended period, I will prompt you to continue speaking. Do you understand what I mean?

3 **S2 (Interviewee):** Yes, yes.

4 **S1:** First, I will give you two think-aloud training tasks to (..) help familiarize you with the task. How many windows are in your parents' house? You do not need to count them yourself. I will do that for you. Just tell me which room has how many windows.

5 **S2:** So we have, we have like three floors and each floor has like three rooms and probably 10 windows. Yeah.

6 **S1:** And imagine you are opening your favorite social media app without touching your phone. Describe your usual actions upon opening the app. What type of content do you typically encounter? How do you decide what to engage with or scroll past? Verbalize everything that comes to mind as though you were actively navigating the app.

7 **S2:** I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Your voice was just a little inaudible. Can you come again with the question, the whole question again?

8 **S1:** Yeah, yeah. Imagine you are opening your favorite social media app and without touching your phone, describe your usual actions upon opening the app. What type of content do you typically encounter and how do you decide what to engage with or scroll past, verbalize everything that comes to your mind. So you were actively navigating the app.

9 **S2:** So Instagram is the app that I use most times, like every time. And because I'm a pet lover. I follow a lot of pet pages, so I think that is how my algorithm is shaped. Whenever I open Instagram, I always come across a lot of reels, cats and dogs and different kinds of pets. And yes, (..) this is what my Instagram is all about. And besides this, (..) I also come across a lot of fashion related content and also (..) some content related to international relations because I follow similar kind of pages like geopolitical content as well most of the times. That's what it is about.

10 **S1:** Okay. So now we are going to our primary think-aloud task. I gave you an account on TikTok and you will open it with your own device, so you will be scrolling through the feed. And during the scrolling, please verbalize your thoughts about what you see. This may include your immediate

reaction to the content, your interpretation of why TikTok is recommending certain videos and how these recommendations make you feel. And you (..) are free to interact with the content on the page, you can either like it, comment, or follow the account. Also at the time, please open the screen recording. Yeah, you can start now. You will be like going through maybe around 10.

11 **S2:** So sorry, just asking. Should I also record my screen while I do it?

12 **S1:** Yes, please.

13 **S2:** Okay, one second. Let me just start it.

14 **S1:** Yeah. And yeah, you will be going through around 10 videos after around 10, you can stop by yourself or I can also stop you around 10 videos.

15 **S2:** Okay, so do you also have access to this account? I mean, I can I can scroll any videos like on the homepage, right?

16 **S1:** Yeah, just like on the feed.

17 **S2:** Yeah, you just scroll it and you can interact with it. You can interact with it (..) freely.

18 **S1:** So, and I I have to tell you about every video, every video I come across.

19 **S2:** Yeah, how you think about the video and why you think it's recommending to you and you can also check the comments. Like, yeah. As long as what you like.

20 **S2:** So I see this video (..) from it's a video from like it's an international student from Japan. He made his own song track, I guess. And this is a small clip from that. And and it's also, it's (..) it's actually his, how do you say it? It's his vlog.

21 **S1:** Yeah.

22 **S2:** And it's it's a lot about bling, bling and bougie things about an international student when he comes back home. And I guess I'm coming across this content because somehow the algorithm knows I'm also an international student in Vienna. Maybe that's why it's more relatable. I'll go to the next one.

23 **S1:** Yeah.

24 **S2:** (...) So it's (..) it's it's one of those devil meeting TikTok videos where (..) the guy's sitting in the car orders orders of Starbucks coffee in the drive-through and a girl comes, hey, this is this is your coffee. And then she passes on a pickup line or something and then the guy goes, huh, and then the girl goes. So this is something very, very, very viral on TikTok. And I also come across this kind of content on Instagram pretty often. Yeah, it's quite viral and Everyone makes this kind of this very

specific kind of script. And the next reel is it's a screen recording of a chat in Japanese or in Chinese and Japanese, so I don't really know how to interpret it. I'll move on to the next one.

25 **S1:** Yeah.

26 **S2:** (...) It's (..) It's a guy biting. I mean, it's a guy trying to pull out a fruit directly from the tree, but not using his hands, using his mouth. I'm not sure why. I'm coming across this content.

27 **S1:** Yeah.

28 **S2:** Mm hmm. (...) So this is the next video. Probably a couple, an Asian couple doing some eye contact thing and yeah, I mean, very random.

29 **S1:** Mm.

30 **S2:** So this one is it's a TikTok from (...) like people wearing different costumes in China. And I'm not sure if it is real or AI generated. It looks very AI generated to me. (...) I finally came across an Indian TikTok. There's a guy pathing with mud.

31 **S1:** Yeah.

32 **S2:** And he's disrespecting the flag, the Indian flag, throwing shit and things on the Indian flag. (..) Oh, and it demonstrates the Indian food. So that's the negative (..) publicity of Indian food and there's there's also a lot of this thing going on Instagram as well. The same kind of reel. It's the same TikTok.

33 **S1:** Mm.

34 **S2:** A guy mimicking someone making Indian street food and it does not really look quite nice. It looks, I mean, (..) so this TikTok is actually, it's just a mimic of how Indian street food, how unhygienic Indian street food is. So he's doing all the unhygienic things he can do just to make jokes. (..) It's a joke. It's a joke about Indian street food. (...) So this one is actually a girl doing a get ready with me thing. No, (..) she's not doing get ready with me thing. She's just dancing on a random song.

35 **S1:** Mm-hmm.

36 **S2:** (...) A similar kind of a TikTok, a girl flaunting her black dark outfit. Yeah. (...) This one. Okay, so I came across the next one, which is (..) a girl is telling, I mean, joking about how to find a Chinese wife. Yeah. (..) And then they laugh about something. And then just some random random TikTok dance video. The next one is a girl holding her phone using chopsticks and then making her own video of (..) dancing, or reciting the song, maybe. Yeah. (...) Same dance TikTok, two girls in in their classroom, making a dance TikTok.

- 37 **S1:** Mm-hmm.
- 38 **S2:** And (..) a TikTok about the experience of walking home alone in China, going, (..) going (..) back home after a few drinks, eight in the night, but still it's very safe and very (..) full of lights and very vibrant.
- 39 **S1:** Yeah.
- 40 **S2:** I think that's what it wants to show.
- 41 **S1:** Mm-hmm.
- 42 **S2:** So there's this (..) reel by two Indians trying to (..) set a dumbbell, like trying to construct a gym dumbbell (..) but it's very double meaning, actually. Yeah, it's it's it's a joke. It's a dirty joke kind of a thing.
- 43 **S1:** Okay, I think the next one will be the last one.
- 44 **S2:** I don't really understand it because it's in Chinese or maybe an Asian language I don't know about. And yes, he's also speaking in the same Asian language and he's probably making the joke. I don't get what it is because of linguistic issues. Yeah.
- 45 **S1:** Okay. I think that's all for this session. You can turn off the screen recording.
- 46 **S2:** Okay.
- 47 **S1:** Yeah. So now I would like to have a feedback on the session. (..) Did you think the instructions made sense?
- 48 **S2:** Your instruction?
- 49 **S1:** Yeah.
- 50 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, definitely.
- 51 **S1:** And did you feel comfortable verbalizing your thoughts through the process?
- 52 **S2:** Yeah, I was not something, I mean, (..) uncomfortable, but it's just that, you know, I did not, I'm sure I did not have enough thoughts by just having a glance on the video.
- 53 **S1:** Were there moments you struggled to articulate your thoughts?
- 54 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, definitely, because 60% of the videos were in one of those Asian languages, I don't know. About either, most probably Chinese. So, which is why I was not getting the context of the video. I was not getting, (..) I think I took a few more seconds to get the context and then I I was

trying to articulate it later on, because it wasn't probably because of linguistic limitations.

55 **S1:** Okay. And now move on to our interview session. So in your opinion, do you think there are any common stereotypes about Asians that come to mind for you?

56 **S2:** In the European Union?

57 **S1:** Yeah, like in the (...) Western world, I would say.

58 **S2:** All right, so in the whole of Western world, yeah, definitely. I mean, they are positive and negative stereotypes. I mean, I'm a South Asian and (...) Indian to be very specific and I come across a lot of stereotypes online, but not directly, not in person from someone which is not really good to do so and people don't do so, which is why. But also online just, for example, I just just now came across two reels of (...) guys, you know, (...) mimicking Indian, mimicking, cooking Indian street food. And they were just cooking with mud and grass and (...) all the dirty stuff. So the joke they want to make was how unhygienic Indian food is. It is one of those stereotypes that India is not a clean country and the food is not clean and the people are not clean. So, yes, there are some stereotypes.

59 **S1:** But where do you think these ideas come from?

60 **S2:** The stereotypes, I mean, for me, the definition of stereotype is nothing, but (...) I would define stereotypes as exaggerated truths. So I would say that definitely there is something true about it, but to, (...) you know, (...) why is it a stereotype? Because it has been exaggerated over the years. So even now, when things have changed, (...) the stereotypes have not changed because these have been getting exaggerated since a very long time frame. It's like some of, I won't say that it's not true. Some of it is true, a good proportion of it is true, but also a good proportion of it is exaggerated. So that's why they, that's how they travel, (...) you know, across the borders and (...) . Sorry?

61 **S1:** Yeah.

62 **S1:** Do you feel that this kind of stereotype is like causing any harm to you personally?

63 **S2:** The online content?

64 **S1:** Yeah, these online contents, like, I think this kind of content is quite viral, no matter on TikTok or Instagram or anywhere.

65 **S2:** Everywhere, yes. Well, no, it's (...) talking like about just myself. Very specifically, it doesn't bother me because I have a very, (...) very high tolerance for humor. So, (...) yeah, it doesn't bother me personally, but I'm sure it may bother a lot of people.

66 **S1:** So you think you actually find them funny?

67 **S2:** Yeah, I find them, (...) I find them very funny. As I said, my tolerance for humor is quite quite high,

yeah.

68 **S1:** And while scrolling through the TikTok content, did you notice any recurring patterns or themes in what was recommended to you?

69 **S2:** Yes, (..) maximum Chinese content.

70 **S1:** So most of them are Chinese.

71 **S2:** Yeah, more Chinese and also (..) content that shows like content that promotes beautification, maybe, content that promotes makeup, content that promotes glowing skin on girls.

72 **S1:** Yeah. Yeah.

73 **S2:** Because...sorry what?

74 **S1:** No, no. Continue.

75 **S2:** Yeah, so, I mean, the 10 TikToks I came across, all of those TikToks, which had girls in them maybe dancing or doing the get ready with me thing, all of them had like very nice makeups and their skins were (..) glowing a lot. So, which (..) kind of throws enough light on the beautification standards.

76 **S1:** Yeah. Did you also encounter any like sexualized or do you think those contents are sexualized for you?

77 **S2:** I mean, (..) there was. Among these TikToks, I did not come across any sexual content, but of course, I came across one or two double meaning content, which was it was, of course, a sexual joke, but it was it was funny. It wasn't, there was no nudity. There was no nudity in it or there was, I mean, (..) nothing to be bothered about, yes, but it was some just double meaning jokes. That's all. Like dirty jokes kind of content. But no, but no nudity.

78 **S1:** And how do you think TikTok's algorithm decides what kind of content to show you?

79 **S2:** Sorry, can you come again, please?

80 **S1:** How do you think TikTok's algorithm decides what kind of content to show you?

81 **S2:** I think based on the usage, (..) what I personally think is that algorithm, I call them, tracks my eye idleness on one particular reel and its kind. For example, if I'm (..) scrolling down the reels and if I stop scrolling and I stay idle on one reel and I watch it for a couple of seconds, it is going to identify that I'm stuck on this reel for a couple of more seconds as compared to the other ones. And it is going to identify the type of the reel, type of the content, and then it is going to show me the same kind of content.

- 82 **S1:** And do you think it's based on your identity as well?
- 83 **S2:** You mean that the content kind of demonstrates my identity?
- 84 **S1:** Yes.
- 85 **S2:** Yes, definitely. Yeah. Not entirely because I also believe that TikTok can be also very much propaganda driven. So it can also show me the content that I don't want to see, but still the government or maybe the state wants me to see. (...) But I also believe that their algorithm also mostly depends on me and my (...) scrolling behavior. So the more (...) reels, I mean, sorry, the more TikToks I see. And for example, if I'm watching TikToks related to cats and dogs and I'm spending more time on them and just scrolling the other ones in very, like, very less time in mini seconds, let's say, it is just going to show me (...) mostly cats and dog content because I stay more on those kind of TikToks .
- 86 **S1:** Yeah.
- 87 **S2:** Well, also it can be propaganda driven. I mean, I know of such instances.
- 88 **S1:** Okay. And based on what you have seen, do you think TikTok is promoting or reinforcing certain stereotypes about Asia?
- 89 **S2:** Yeah. Yeah, it is. One of these stereotypes I just talked about, not stereotypes, but standards, actually, I talked about, is the beauty standards. TikTok is definitely promoting a certain kind of a beauty standard, like a glowing skin, pink cheeks, and even people that—guys and girls—even people that don't have pink skin or glowing cheeks. I mean, they, of course, they age at the same pace, but they use (...) products to make their skin look alike, (...) like to make their skin glow. Sorry. And yes, it's promoting a certain kind of beauty standard. I mean, based on the TikToks I've come across so far.
- 90 **S1:** And also from my previous interview, I think you didn't get any content like this, but for my previous interviews, (...) there were (...) quite an amount of content that is about like cute Asian girls, like very tiny, small. Some of them are even minors. Do you think this is also one of the stereotypes that Asians are representing on TikTok right now?
- 91 **S2:** Maybe, yes, maybe no, because I think—so this is my personal opinion and I can be absolutely wrong, but this is my opinion, okay? And my opinion is that Asian (...) specifically talking about women and girls, Asian girls, they don't age so fast as compared to Western girls or women. I mean, they, of course, they age the same, online at the same pace, but they don't look very old. And so it's quite possible that they are not really minors and they are just trying to look like (...) very young, because back in my country as well, women and girls and everyone, they put a lot of effort into looking younger (...) than how old they already are. They put a lot of effort into looking younger by

makeup and by things like that. So maybe looking young is one of the newly emerging beauty standards. Which (..) is what we can see in all the content. But no, I haven't come across any minor stuff or any TikToks in which they're like—in which I can say, oh, these girls are really minors or something. No. Yeah. I mean, maybe 16, 17, 18, but—or maybe, let's say, just a rough guess 15, 16, but someone who's like 21 can also look like 15, 16 by doing a lot of makeup.

92 **S1:** And what do you think the intention behind these creators is? Like, why do they post this kind of video on TikTok?

93 **S2:** I mean, it's all about the audience. I mean, the viewer's behavior. I'm sure they do some kind of homework to know which kind of content works best and which kind of content does not work best. I'm sure they don't want to make any social message. It's not about, you know, spreading a word or making a statement. It's just about getting views and getting enough number of likes and comments. So they just want to post things that go viral enough. Yeah.

94 **S1:** And also like for the Indian street food kind of videos.

95 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. So it's—the TikToks I came across (..) right now about Indian street food, it was not non-Indian people doing these things. Indian guys degrading the Indian street food and making the TikToks. And this (..) scenario itself proves the conclusion that it's all about the views, because it's an Indian degrading his own Indian street food culture.

96 **S1:** Mm.

97 **S2:** Yeah. So at the end of the day, it's all about the views and comments and likes and, you know, being viral. Yeah.

98 **S1:** Yeah. And do you feel like that TikTok's algorithm is treating different Asian groups such as East Asian, South Asian or Southeast Asian differently? Or does it tend to present them as one group?

99 **S2:** No, I think—I think differently. Yeah, I think they (..) Well, of course, like, I belong from a South Asian group, but I still come across TikToks from East Asian and North Asian communities.

100 **S1:** But do you think they're promoting that Eastern Asian content more than other parts of Asian countries?

101 **S2:** I cannot make a statement, but my opinion is that it can be true because it is a Chinese app. So (..) can be true, but I cannot really vouch on that.

102 **S1:** So you think it's because the company is from China, so they are more promoting Chinese content?

103 **S2:** Yeah, because Chinese content also indirectly demonstrates (..) Chinese culture and content

also throws a lot of light on culture. So maybe they want to throw more light on the culture and on the, (..) you know, in the big picture of China. And so can be possible, yeah.

104 **S1:** Yeah, makes sense. Have you seen similar content multiple times before?

105 **S2:** No. No, because I don't use TikTok a lot. I'm very much into watching Instagram reels and like Facebook shorts, but I don't use TikTok pretty much.

106 **S1:** Okay.

107 **S2:** Yeah.

108 **S1:** Do you think that TikTok content can influence how people perceive Asian groups?

109 **S2:** Definitely, yes, I think so, yes.

110 **S1:** And how do you think it's going to shape public opinion about Asians—is it negative or positive, you think?

111 **S2:** Depends on what kind of content they're coming across, but (..) I think (..) not very positive because (..) if you talk about the Western world, it doesn't matter how many developments are there in Asian countries. The Western world is still considered more modernized in terms of ideologies. So they are drifting away from stereotypes. They're drifting away from beauty standards and everything. And these TikToks, back from our home countries—doesn't matter if it's China or from India, like from all Asian countries—they throw pretty much the light on the stereotypes that we are stuck around and they throw the light on, you know, (..) the prejudice that we have in our countries. So, yes, I'm pretty sure that it contributes more in the (..) more towards the negative image of the community, not in the positive sense.

112 **S1:** Do you feel like the portrayal for Asian, like female or male, are different on TikTok than the Western female or male? (..) Because you said it's mostly about the beauty standards of Asian people, but for Western content, I think it's like quite different, right?

113 **S2:** (..) Yes, yes, it's different. It is different. Western content can be more (..) abstract and it can be more, (..) I mean, talking about the content that comes from Asian countries and specifically about women content, it focuses more on the beauty and on, you know, (..) like seductive moves and like sexy things and stuff like that. And talking about men, it majorly focuses on dominance and patriarchy and, you know, big muscles and doing gym things and driving cool, loud cars and, (..) you know, stuff like that. But when I come across content in (..) like in the West, content from the West, TikToks and Instagram reels, it's—it is still there, it is still there, (..) but I think it is more modernized in terms of ideologies. Okay, so for example, I just came across the street just yesterday, a guy cooking in his kitchen. He's not a professional cook, but he's cooking and he's doing all the like home jobs and everything. So he's actually breaking the stereotypes, but he's still showing off his,

you know, very nice physique, good huge muscles. So it is still there, but I think it is (..) more evolved and more modernized and more drifted away from stereotypes about men and women. Because also because the West has developed more in terms of gender identities and everything else and we are still struggling with it. So.

114 **S1:** And how do you think people from different cultural backgrounds would interpret this kind of content differently?

115 **S2:** (..) Definitely, I mean, I interpret, (..) so for example, I came across a lot of Chinese content just now while I was doing this TikTok scrolling thing for your project. And I'm sure I interpreted most of the content, most of the Chinese content very wrongly because (..) simple because of cultural and linguistic differences. So, (..) and (..) I mean, most of the Chinese content, I'm sure it's not in English, it's in Chinese, just like how most of the Indian content is in Indian, not in English. So I'm sure someone from—someone who's not from my country would interpret it differently than me. And I would interpret it more accurately since I'm very much familiar with the culture and with the language and with the thing that is being talked about, or with the idea that is being demonstrated and demonstrated in the TikTok. So yes, so the answer to your question is, yes, because of linguistic and cultural differences, it can—it can (..) vary how it is interpreted.

116 **S1:** Yeah. But do you think like people from different cultural backgrounds would interpret those “showing beauty standard” videos differently? I actually don't know. As Asian, I don't know how to interpret this kind of video. I just think it's (...) I think that's quite empty for me because I don't see a point here. Yeah, I get it. They're definitely getting a view here, but yeah. Do you think Western people would interpret it like (..) differently or they would think something else?

117 **S2:** So, I mean, of course, (..) very differently, actually.

118 **S1:** Mm-hmm.

119 **S2:** Yeah, I mean, at the end of the day, it's—it's just because of the views that they want to—that the creators want to get. But, you know, when someone from the Western world is looking at it, he or she is looking—looking more from a different perspective (..) and kind of makes an image in his or her own mind about the culture and about what things. So if I come across a TikTok, that is— that is an Indian TikTok, okay, the same thing about the food, about the Indian street food. And so I would just make an idea in my mind that, okay, this TikTok is making this joke, so it is maybe because most of—like 90% of Indian street food is like unhygienic and not edible. So (..) they would interpret it differently, but I think it still gives (..) a very similar message.

120 **S1:** And you believe this kind of content could contribute to real world bias or discrimination?

121 **S2:** Yes and no. It can, (..) yes, why? Because of the same reasons, it can (..) make someone interpret things very wrongly, which can lead to bias and which can lead to discrimination and which

can lead to, you know, showing dominance (...) certain dominance over certain cultures. No, because content is also a thing that brings us together. So, for example, I have friends who are (...) not Indian, but they are using Indian soundtracks, Indian music, and they are making a fusion. Like, for example, one of my friends from upper Austria, he's a musician and he's like making a fusion thing. And so this is an example how content also brings us together. I'm sure I know this is not an example for (...) the TikTok specifically, but it's an example for the content. So content can also divide us and can also bring us together—different—depends on what kind of content it is.

122 **S1:** And you mentioned before, you have never experienced any bias or discrimination. (...) You think it's because—are influenced by the content from social media, right?

123 **S2:** Can you come again with the question, sorry?

124 **S1:** You mentioned before that you personally never experience any bias or discrimination that may be (...) influenced by content from social media.

125 **S2:** I mean, it's like that I, of course, come across the bias and discrimination and I can see that in the videos, but I said that it does not really bother me because my tolerance to humor is quite high, so I find it funny.

126 **S1:** Yeah, but have you, like, (...) for example, you get discriminated in the real world or like...

127 **S2:** In the real world, yes, I've come across once.

128 **S1:** Would you like to share that?

129 **S2:** Yes.

130 **S1:** If you don't mind.

131 **S2:** It was (...) an experience—it was (...) about a PhD program, actually. And I was kind of shortlisted and everything was—everything went well. But then the things went wrong because they had to choose someone (...) based on (...) differences, yes, because of being different. So that's what happened.

132 **S1:** Okay, so it's, yeah, more of your identity.

133 **S2:** Yeah.

134 **S1:** Okay. And do you think TikTok does enough to address the harmful stereotypical content about Asians? Like, for example, TikTok have previously launched (...) initiatives like the Stop Asian Hate campaign and updated its community guidelines to include stricter policies on hate speech and harassment. Do you feel these efforts are effective or is more needed?

- 135 **S2:** No, it's more (..) like a hawk in the air, actually, because when you talk about stopping Asian hate, it just not talks about East Asia. It talks about Asia—Asia as in (..) the entire Asia, all the parts of Asia. And when they're talking about stopping Asian hate, they're only talking about stopping the East Asian hate, not like the entire Asian hate. Because you can still find a lot of content about South Asians that is hateful. And there are no regulations against it. So it is working, but on a very specific—for a very specific community, not for the entire Asian community.
- 136 **S1:** Do you feel like as an Indian identity, like your identity has actually disappeared from the Internet world?
- 137 **S2:** Indian identity, (..) sorry, what?
- 138 **S1:** Is it like it's disappeared or it's like getting erased from the internet world?
- 139 **S2:** No, I don't feel so. No.
- 140 **S1:** Okay.
- 141 **S2:** But I think—so this is something totally off topic, but I think that (..) the Indian identity is getting drifted away from the Asian identity. So Indians are not really considered Asians, but so, (..) for example, when you talk about Asians, I can say I'm an Asian, but I have come across (..) experiences of identity where I've mentioned that I am Asian. And then these guys (..) or someone random just mentioned, again, no, you're like, you're a South Asian. You're not an Asian, you know? And people from East Asia and people from northern parts of Asia, they like to call themselves Asian and they don't really want to consider South Asian as Asians.
- 142 **S1:** So would you consider yourself Asian?
- 143 **S2:** What?
- 144 **S1:** Would you consider yourself Asian?
- 145 **S2:** Definitely, why not? South Asia counts in Asia.
- 146 **S1:** Yeah, mmm.
- 147 **S2:** But that's the thing, right? Geographically, it is in Asia.
- 148 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, obviously.
- 149 **S2:** But culture—because there are (..) so many cultural differences, there's (..) a big difference of color. There are huge differences of language, food, and everything else. Maybe that's why it is a little detached from Asia.

- 150 **S1:** Yeah, that is also what that meant. I feel like now people are talking about Asia. It's only about East Asia. That's like, then what about the other parts? Then what do other parts belong to? This is like getting confusing for me.
- 151 **S2:** Yeah, it is very confusing, actually. But I think the main reason behind it is that (..) Asia is so vast and so, so big that it is just not possible to have a cultural (..) consistency. And there are going to be differences always because of the enormous, like, gigantic size of the continent. (..) If I just talk about my country, about India, India has more than 60 languages. And now let's talk about Asia, I can be sure it has more than like (..) a thousand languages, regional, non-regional and national, or even unrecognized ones. And similarly, like more than like hundreds of cultures and everything. So there are going to be differences, but this detachment of, (..) you know, detachment from the entire continent is also because of the (..) differences in culture. So cultures that are very similar in East Asia, Northern Asia, they kind of go well all together and so it's in the Asian (..) segment still, but the cultures that are very different, for example, Pakistani culture, Indian culture, Sri Lankan culture, (..) these are very, very different from Eastern Asian cultures. So, which is why there's this divide. But it is natural, it is very natural. It is very understandable to me as well.
- 152 **S1:** (..) How did the content you saw during the session make you feel about being an Asian? Do you feel like, ashamed? But yeah, but you didn't think those content bother you, but do you still feel like a bit uncomfortable?
- 153 **S2:** No, I don't feel uncomfortable. But—but when you talk about (..) when you talk about my awareness, I'm definitely very much aware about the stereotypes and the prejudice against the Asians and why I am not uncomfortable because (...) I think, I don't know if it makes sense or not. I'm very accepting and I—I have this tendency of surrendering and accepting most things. And (..) that's—that's what works best for me. Which is why I never feel bad about it—about the content specifically, that it is so like, is it discriminating, it is making me feel bad. And it is, because to me, that's really not what matters a lot. I mean, in the real world, I kind of divide the real world and the digital world very well. And I know that's—that's only a thing in the digital world. Of course it has—it has its own traces in the real world as well, but in the real world, you can really make the difference. It's really easy to make the difference in the real world than in the digital world. I mean, the answer to your question is, no, it doesn't—it does not bother me that much. It does not make me feel bad. Of course, it makes me feel bad about the entire community as a whole, that it is being degraded, but not as an Indian myself, not in a very personal manner.
- 154 **S1:** And also in the content, we didn't get much about like Indian content, actually, like for the female, especially, mostly just about the street food.
- 155 **S2:** No, there was. There was one. So, I mean, out of the 10 reels, I saw three reels were Indian, I think, which is 30%. And one of them were like (..) one of the reels were by women. And she was doing a dirty talk kind of a thing, yeah, but it was—it was—it was sweet female content.

156 **S1:** So you got one, actually.

157 **S2:** Yeah, I got one.

158 **S1:** Do you think it's similar, that Indian female content and those—those compared to those East Asian female content?

159 **S2:** I'm not sure because I have not really come across a lot of East Asian content, because as I told, I don't use TikTok and I use Instagram and my algorithm doesn't really show me East Asian content. But I think—I think there will be a lot of—there will be a lot of difference.

160 **S1:** Have you seen any like Indian female content, maybe on Instagram or other platforms?

161 **S2:** Sorry, can you come again?

162 **S1:** Have you ever seen any like Indian female content, like maybe on other social media?

163 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I come across it all the time.

164 **S1:** And what are those content about?

165 **S2:** Different things, like everything. (...) Beauty, health and education or just random stupid stuff, (...) let's say, finance is where a lot of content is about finance. (..) And what else? (..) Music, paint, art, artist, art is something very much dominated by women in India.

166 **S1:** Artist.

167 **S2:** Yeah, thanks. Like that. So yeah, pretty much everything. I mean, (..) also gym content since there's this—since the last five years, more than five years, there's this wave of, (..) you know, women turning into gym rats in India. And so there's also a lot of gym content (..) that is women produced.

168 **S1:** So it's not really like, not only dancing or like about makeup, there are like multiple different types.

169 **S2:** Yeah, yeah. Different types. But that's, you know, that's the thing. I'm not really sure if people outside India come across this content.

170 **S1:** Yeah, that's true. I think they only come across the content that talks about Indian street food (..) and that talks about, you know, our head movement and stuff like that.

171 **S2:** I think it's also different—you as a native user of this social media to get the native content. But for me, when I was setting up this content, I also tried to get more Indian content. But when I searched for—no matter Indian, I don't know, whatever, it's just about like Indian girls dancing, I

would say it's bit sexualized and then it's just Indian street food. Like I don't get anything else. I didn't see anything else and also now it's not really shown on the (..) for you page anymore, for my previous interviewees, I think they only get one Indian content out of 10 or 15 or something. Others are all about like Eastern Asian female dancing, very sexualized. That's always the main content.

172 **S2:** Make sense. Makes a lot of sense to me, actually.

173 **S1:** Yeah, so I think the algorithm actually checks your identity, so pushed more Indian content, but still it's not as much as the other regions.

174 **S2:** Of course. Of course. Maybe because it recognizes the frequency (..) of your consumption of content, consumption of Indian content specifically, and it knows that it's not a high frequency on which you consume Indian content, which is why it only shows you things that are globally famous about Indian content.

175 **S1:** Yeah. So you think it's actually very different, like between this account and your normal, your personal..

176 **S2:** Yes, definitely, definitely.

177 **S1:** Okay. It's like a lot of difference. And have you ever changed like how you present yourself either online or in real life because of how Asian identities are portrayed? For this, I can give you an example for my previous interviewee, like because she's (..) half Asian and for her, she always thinks like Asian female are portrayed very sexualized online. So when she's surrounding with her foreign friends, she would tend to (..) be more cool, like not interesting men, like less sexualized and also to avoid being cute, being sexy, because she feels a bit ashamed sometimes so (..) for me personally, because I always feel like I'm the outsider of this culture. I (..) I'm not a native speaker. Sometimes I feel ashamed when I—when I speak aloud or I feel like, why am I here, why am I talking about these kind of things. Do you have the similar feelings?

178 **S2:** Sometimes, yes. Yeah.

179 **S1:** Can you give an example, maybe?

180 **S2:** It's (..) I mean, it's (..) well, yes, I have gone across this, like maybe once or twice while during my efforts to integrate in (..) a different culture. And, you know, there are very different societal ideologies (..) in the place from where I come from. And men behave there differently than how men behave in this country in Austria. (..) And it's, (..) unfortunately, I cannot come across a very specific example, but I think, (..) yes, it's sometimes—it's (..) quite tough to fit in because our definition of identity of a man is very different than what it is in the West.

181 **S1:** So you think more of being a male.

- 182 **S2:** Yeah, I'm coming from a very (..) patriarchal society, so. (..) Yeah. (..) So, you know, like, I'm coming from a society where we have the thoughts about—I mean, where men is all about responsibilities and nothing else.
- 183 **S1:** Yeah.
- 184 **S2:** Yes. So, I mean, if you—if you see a man drinking a whiskey late at night, you would never, you know, (..) make an idea, oh, he's drinking because he has had a nice day. You would always make an idea. He's drinking because he had—he has had a rough day because he—he has been managing his responsibilities throughout the day and now is his time, you know, such a patriarchy and where people think that it's only men that do all the work and it's only men that take care of the economic and financial responsibilities, which is not at all true in today's, (..) I mean, in today's world in India, but it's still, you know, the ideologies are still still the same, but it's not the same here. It's just the opposite.
- 185 **S1:** But how does it bother you?
- 186 **S2:** (..) Well, to be very honest, it doesn't—it has—has not bothered me a lot. (..) It has not made me think very hard about it. But the thing that bothers me a lot about identity is individualism versus collectivism. So I come from a very, very collective society, and you know, we—all of us, we stay very together in a very close knit community, close knit group. Big families, joint families, big houses. So we kind of seek for validation from each other for almost everything, (..) even for personal life decisions. And now this society where I've been living now since the last two and a half years, it's more often individualistic society, and you don't really seek for validation and you don't really seek for (..) let's say, okay, for example, if I am planning for a trip to (..) someplace, let's say Bali, I would—I would, you know, discuss it with my family. Hey, have you been there? This is what—how should it be like? And I would seek, (..) you know, my grandmother, I would seek for permission from (..) my grandmother and from my—my mother as well. Not because, like, I mean, I'm 26 years old. I do not need that, but this is what we do. This is what—this is how it happens in a collective society, you know? You are dependent on each other for almost everything. But it is just opposite here. So it took me a little while to, (..) you know, transition from this collective ideology of mine to this individualistic ideology where I don't have to seek for validation for everything from everyone. And for example, if we talk about friends, we also seek for validation from friends back and back home, almost about everything. But here in Vienna, even with like friendships and everything, even friendships are very, you know, individualistic. You are friends just to drink together, you are friends just to have fun together and do all the good things and not really talk about your personal stuff. (..) So it took me—this is more what bothered me because I had to make a tough, tough transition.
- 187 **S1:** Yeah. Sorry if it's loud because I don't know, the renovation sound.
- 188 **S2:** What? Sorry.

- 189 **S1:** Do you hear the renovation sound? It's like very loud.
- 190 **S2:** From your—your end or is it from my side?
- 191 **S1:** From my side.
- 192 **S2:** No, but I do not hear anything.
- 193 **S1:** It's all right. Maybe you have nice headphones or something.
- 194 **S2:** That's great.
- 195 **S1:** Yeah. I can tell you the noise cancellation in your headphones. If you're using them, it's nice.
- 196 **S2:** It's very nice.
- 197 **S1:** Yeah, that's great. Yeah, I also wanted to ask you something.
- 198 **S2:** Yeah.
- 199 **S1:** Do you ever feel, also for the language side? (..) Yeah, I remember. For the language side. Because as I remember, there were also quite a few content is mocking about the Asian accent. Well, it's not necessarily only India, but it's like all the Asian accent. Also for you, like being foreigner here, like you don't (..) I think you don't speak German or speak some German.
- 200 **S2:** Yeah, just some German, which is not enough. Yeah.
- 201 **S1:** Yeah. Have you ever like encountered the situation that you feel like a bit awkward when you are speaking German or speaking English with them?
- 202 **S2:** All the time. Most of the time when I'm in a German speaking group, I feel awkward because I'm trying to make an idea about what they are talking and then they suddenly have, if, okay, if they care about me, they suddenly make a transition from German to English. So they also, I also see them struggling and talking in English. So there's, of course, some hesitation. But since it has been a lot of time, I'm already used to it. And also I'm improving with my German, I think, a little bit, little, so it's an ongoing process, but not so much with English because I have had a lot of international experiences earlier as well. So I think my accent is, of course, it is Indian accent, because I'm Indian, but it is still quite understandable.
- 203 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, of course. Everybody has accents, yeah.
- 204 **S2:** So, which is why when I'm talking—talking in English, it does not, (..) I do not feel a lot of, I do not face or come across a lot of difficulties. But of course, when it is about German, of course, all the time.

- 205 **S1:** But would you have a feeling like of being a foreigner, being an outsider?
- 206 **S2:** Yes, yes. I'm sure I'm going to have it always. I mean, because that's the eternal truth. I am an outsider here.
- 207 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, that's true. Yeah.
- 208 **S2:** So it is going to stay always, doesn't matter how long it, I mean, it doesn't matter even after, for example, I don't have any long term plans in Vienna, I'm sure, but even if I had any, even after 20 years, I would (..) I would have the same feeling of an outsider. It doesn't matter even if I, you know, know the best of German, then as well. But even though you think you are like fluent in German, you still feel like it would be a—would be an outsider.
- 209 **S1:** Definitely, yeah. Of course, but language makes a lot of difference. I mean, language tells a lot to integrate, but still would never help me make, (..) you know, make feel like home. It is my internal feeling. I would never feel like home here.
- 210 **S2:** Mm.
- 211 **S1:** It's, you know, it's—it's not just linguistic difference. It is cultural difference and it is the difference of how we think. It is a big difference.
- 212 **S2:** But have you ever thought about like maybe trying to integrate?
- 213 **S1:** I mean, yes, I mean, not thought about it, but I have been doing it until now, which is why I'm also learning the language, you know, participating in Austrian cultures and Austin festivals and everything.
- 214 **S2:** Yeah.
- 215 **S1:** But integration means fusion, (..) you know, not fusion, but integration means, yeah, integrating, but not becoming one of them, you know?
- 216 **S2:** Yeah.
- 217 **S1:** You can integrate an Austrian society, but (..) to be, you know, (..) to be familiar with it, but you can never become an ethnic (..) Austrian by integrating. So you would also, always stay outside. It doesn't matter how much integrated you are already. I mean, I have a lot of, not one or two. I have like, yeah, a lot of people I know personally who are citizens here in Austria and they are Indian Austrians. So it's—it's—I know it's secondhand information. It's not my firsthand experience, but that's what they say, even if you have a passport, you won't feel like home.
- 218 **S2:** But even though they are, I'm not sure if they are born here, but even though you are born here, you still feel an outsider here.

- 219 **S1:** Maybe. Yeah. Maybe, yes, there would be some differences, of course. But then things become very different because your birthplace is Austria then, you know, you consider. See, for me, it depends more on how you think about, like how I think about it personally. And if I'm born here, then this is my country, then I don't have to think anything about it. So would—I would be having an entirely different set of thoughts, you know. I would be behaving accordingly. But so (..) in this case, specifically, if you were born in Austria, and you also bought up in Austria, I think things would be different. But when you are not born in Austria, you have a different home country, you have a different nationality and you come to Austria and you try to make your own space, you try to adjust, you try to integrate, and you come down the role of many years and then you finally become (..) citizens, like one of the citizens if it is one of your goals. Then I don't think that would be enough, just enough to make you feel like home, because it was, (..) I mean, the home for me is the country where you're born.
- 220 **S2:** Yeah.
- 221 **S1:** Nothing can ever change it. Have you stayed in other country before Austria?
- 222 **S2:** I stayed in Sweden, (..) but Sweden, but not for long, for sure. I stayed in the U.S. For six months. And the UK as well, but not for long, for short, for like a work trip—six weeks.
- 223 **S1:** Okay. So in Austria is the longest so far.
- 224 **S2:** Six months was the longest. And so far, and now this is the longest among everything, two and a half years.
- 225 **S1:** Yeah. Do you ever feel pressure to conform to certain stereotypes or to avoid certain behaviors because how Asia are portrayed on (..) TikTok?
- 226 **S2:** Pressure to avoid? Sorry, I did not get this question.
- 227 **S1:** To conform to certain stereotypes, or to avoid certain behavior, because how Asians are portrayed on TikTok. Like, for example, for the street food video, like, are you trying to—do you feel pressured that they may see you as like the same with in the...
- 228 **S2:** No, not really, because that's what I—I mean, I don't know if you remember or not, but earlier I said, there's a—I have a very good division between the digital world and the real world. And yes, I know this is the thing going on in digital world and it has its own traces. People think that this is how it is in real, but when people come across me, they realize, no, this is not true. No pressures at all. I mean, a live real life example is I have friends coming over to my place all the time so that I can cook something Indian for them.
- 229 **S1:** Yeah.

- 230 **S2:** You know, that's—they would never do that in the first place if they had (..) this thought in the real life that (..) Indians do not cook hygienically.
- 231 **S1:** So you actually, your surrounding—your friend circle are making you comfortable with this.
- 232 **S2:** Yeah, I mean, yes, of course, because that's. (..) So the truth, if you—I mean, of course, we know that what is there on TikTok, it is not entirely true, right? And just like how I am trying to integrate in their culture, I mean, (..) I can see the efforts from my friends who are Austrians and if not Austrians, Germans, or from different ethnicities, also trying to fit into different cultures, even when they don't have to. And (..) so food is something that brings all of us together.
- 233 **S1:** Pretty nice.
- 234 **S2:** Yeah.
- 235 **S1:** Yeah.
- 236 **S2:** Yeah.
- 237 **S1:** Do you have you like felt that—have you felt that the need to post certain types on social media to get more views or to fit into the, I don't know, internet trend or internet world?
- 238 **S2:** I'm not really sure if I do to... I mean, I don't know if I do it for fit in. Because I do post a lot of things on Instagram. I do post a lot of things on stories, but I only post them if I find them very funny or if I find them very relevant to the society. So it is either something very serious and relevant to the society. Maybe something if there's a war going on, maybe something related to that. Or, for example, there was this tariff war from the U.S going on, maybe because of, I mean, maybe based on that, or just a random joke, which I find very, very funny. But I'm not really sure if I can say if I do it for fitting in the society or—or if I do it just because I find it very relevant or just because I want to—I want people to know about it, you know? So I cannot really say that. Maybe—maybe, maybe it's also, it's a 50-50 thing, maybe because I want people to know about it.
- 239 **S1:** Yeah.
- 240 **S2:** People to know about what I think and what is the truth out there. And maybe, let's say, the rest of the 50% is just to fit in.
- 241 **S1:** Yeah, I think like subconsciously, everyone...
- 242 **S2:** Everyone wants to fit in subconsciously.
- 243 **S1:** Yeah.
- 244 **S2:** I think you cannot really control it at some point.

245 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, definitely. Yeah. I think that was all for the interview, and now I would like to claim some demographic information of you.

246 **S2:** I hope I was a little resourceful for your study.

247 **S1:** I think it was very interesting because I think in your opinion, it's again, very differently to others' opinion.

248 **S2:** Of course, of course..

249 **S1:** So where are you from?

250 **S2:** From India, New Delhi.

251 **S1:** Yeah, and how old are you?

252 **S2:** I'm 26 years.

253 **S1:** Would you like to describe a bit of your own culture background?

254 **S2:** (..) Yes, so, I mean, (..) I'm ethnically, as I said, an Indian and very specific, I'm Punjabi. There's a state in India called Punjab. I was not born there, but my parents were both there and then they migrated to the capital city. So, but I was born and brought up in the capital city of India, which is called New Delhi, but I come from a very big, huge joint family and yes, (..) that's. I mean, sorry, what kind of details did you want about the—

255 **S1:** No, just in general, I would like to get to know more about this culture background. That's all.

256 **S2:** Yeah, so we, I mean, we love art and we love music a lot, and my family's really into it. (..) Art and music. I mean, no one is following it professionally, but everyone is following it as a—at as a hobby. And (..) it's—we are very religious people.

257 **S1:** Yeah.

258 **S2:** Yeah, and not very religious, but let's say (..) pseudo, I mean, (..) we consider our religions as a pseudoscience, you know? Something that science does not agree to, but also does not deny. Which is why there's this honor and there's this ego problem also related to the Hindu religions—to religion. Not really. Very specifically. But when we talk about religion in India, it's not just the Hindu religion because it is a country with very diverse religions. There are more than five. Maybe more, like six religions in India. Yeah. And so there's this saying (..) that after every 100 kilometers in India, or let's not say 100 kilometers—so if you're traveling in the same direction, in a straight line, after every one hour of traveling, you would see that the language in India would change, the food in India would change. The weather in India would change, and the people in India would change, and also the color of people in India would change. So it is that culturally, culturally diverse. And being in

Indian myself, I have not explored all the cultures in India because there is nothing called as the Indian culture. Everything is very regional in India and everything is very divided in terms of culture. But of course, collectivity is one culture.

259 S1: Yeah.

260 S2: And what is your language in India?

261 S1: It's Hindi.

262 S2: Okay, so you speak Hindi.

263 S1: Yeah.

264 S2: But my regional language is Punjabi, but (..) I mean, I speak Hindi.

265 S1: I see. What is your highest level of education?

266 S2: I'm about to complete my master's degree, but it is not done yet. So as of now, it's my bachelor's.

267 S1: Yeah. And what is your gender identity?

268 S2: I identify as a male.

269 S1: And so what type of content do you usually engage with most frequently on social media?

270 S2: Animal related content.

271 S1: Yeah. And have you ever noticed the racial (..) representation trend on TikTok? Like, for example, before the fox-eye trend or stop Asian hate, and also people mentioned like there were black people showing their dancing there and giving a flag to happy birthday, saying happy birthday, this kind of video.

272 S2: Ah yes, yes, yes. And they get paid for it.

273 S1: Yeah, exactly, exactly. Have you seen those videos?

274 S2: I have come across something like that, not on TikTok but on Instagram.

275 S1: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Okay. Mm. (..) And how often do you come across this kind of content?

276 S2: Let's say (..) once every two, three days.

277 S1: Oh, okay. Yeah, that's actually quite frequent.

278 **S2:** Yeah, I mean, that's—I was quite surprised about that. I mean, once after every two, three days, I come across this reel on Instagram where they are like a group of five, six black tribal people who sing and holding a happy birthday wish and doing it. And then you know it's a business, it's a business that they're doing.

279 **S1:** Do you also think this kind of video are like pushing certain kind of stereotype about black people?

280 **S2:** I mean, they chose it themselves, you know, doing this. I don't think anyone is forcing them to do it. They're doing themselves. So it's them contributing more to it.

281 **S1:** Yeah. But I mean, guess why not? Of course, it is contributing more to the stereotypes and everything.

282 **S2:** Yeah, but I mean, there are, again, they are fitting to get the views, to get into more like money, definitely. So yeah.

283 **S1:** Yeah. And did participating in this study affect the way you view TikTok's algorithm or racial content on the platform?

284 **S2:** Sorry, sorry. Can you come again?

285 **S1:** Did the participating in this study affect the way you view TikTok's algorithm or racial content on the platform?

286 **S2:** I think it may—it may change how I view it in the future, yes.

287 **S1:** Were you surprised about the contents on TikTok?

288 **S2:** No.

289 **S1:** So you already thought about it, yeah.

290 **S2:** Yeah, I mean, I already have come across similar contents, but of course, (..) this time it was way different because there was a lot of Eastern Asian content. But I don't come across Eastern Asian content too often.

291 **S1:** Yeah. Do you have any additional thoughts on the top topic that we haven't covered?

292 **S2:** (...) I don't think so.

293 **S1:** Okay, yeah, I think that was all for the interview. Thank you very much.

294 **S2:** Perfect.

Interview G

1

2

S1 (Researcher): Before starting the interview, I want to first briefly explain the entire (..) procedure of the study. In this research, I hope to understand your thought process while completing the upcoming tasks. Therefore, I will ask you to think aloud as you perform the tasks. Thinking aloud means that from the moment you begin the task, you should say out loud all the thoughts that come into your mind. You don't need to organize or structure your language, nor consider how you express it, just like (..) talking to yourself alone in a room, say whatever comes to mind. If you remain silent for a long time during the process, I will remind you to continue expressing your thoughts. Do you understand what I mean?

3

S2 (Interviewee): I understand.

4

S1: Your voice is too low.

5

S2: Low? Is it okay now?

6

S1: Good. So to help you get more familiar with this format, I will give you two training (..) training tasks. First, can you recall how many windows your parents' house has? You don't need to count them yourself, I will keep track for you. Just tell me roughly how many windows there are in each room.

7

S2: Does the bathroom count?

8

S1: Yes, everything counts.

9

S2: Then on average, there's one window per room.

10

S1: So each room has about one window.

11

S2: Yes.

12

S1: Good. Now the second task: please imagine when you open your most frequently used or favorite social media app, what do you usually do? Without touching your phone, please describe your general operating habits after opening the app. What kind of content do you usually see (..), and how do you decide which content to interact with or skip? Please speak out all your thoughts as if you were really using the app.

13

S2: So (..) you're asking what kind of content I usually watch?

14

S1: Just your most frequently used or favorite social media.

15

S2: The most used might be (..) IG. On IG, (..) I usually browse reels, and most of the content is usually anime-related, or memes, or (...) pretty girls.

- 16 **S1:** Good. Now I will give you a pre-set TikTok account. You will open it on your own phone, browse the content, and verbalize your thoughts about what you see. This may include your first reaction to the content, your thoughts on why TikTok is recommending these videos (..), and your feelings about the recommendations. You can also open comments, interact with the videos freely, like, follow, or mark as not interested. I hope that while browsing you also turn on (..) screen recording so I can later see what you were watching. I will now send the account info.
- 17 **S2:** So I need to say my impressions after watching these reels, and also explain why I think they were recommended to me, right? Or...
- 18 **S1:** Yes, yes, your reactions. You can also describe them.
- 19 **S2:** So I say all my reactions (..) out loud.
- 20 **S1:** Yes, yes. You should log into this account using this email, then it will send me a code which I will give you.
- 21 **S2:** Where did you send it?
- 22 **S1:** In the chat of this (..) meeting. After you browse about 10 or so, you can stop.
- 23 **S2:** 10 or so?
- 24 **S1:** Yes, around 10 to 15, you can stop then. It won't take long, if you don't have many thoughts, you can scroll fast. This is mainly just to give you (..) a sense of the process. (...) Did you receive it? Have you logged in?
- 25 **S2:** I've logged in. It needs email verification...
- 26 **S1:** 934923.
- 27 **S2:** 934923.
- 28 **S1:** Yes. Once you start, turn on the recording, and you can begin.
- 29 **S2:** Wait (..) was this specially prepared? Looks pretty good.
- 30 **S1:** What content do you see?
- 31 **S2:** It's (..) girls in swimsuits. Very nice.
- 32 **S1:** Yes, it's prepared. You can start. It's specially arranged.
- 33 **S2:** OK, OK. This is (..) exactly like what I usually browse.

- 34 **S1:** So you usually see these kinds of videos.
- 35 **S2:** Part of it is like this. Some are more intentional. The second one (..) is okay. Mainly it depends on whether (..) it's my type to continue watching.
- 36 **S1:** Okay, continue.
- 37 **S2:** Now I see some (..) things I don't understand, not sure why these show up...
- 38 **S1:** Can you briefly describe what's in the video?
- 39 **S2:** Oh, it's a woman, and (..) she's doing some sexual (..) suggestive moves. There's a person in a mascot costume behind her, and she's making sexually suggestive content. I think it's okay, not very interesting for me.
- 40 **S1:** Mhm.
- 41 **S2:** This is the fourth one, it's quite common (..) streamers filming reels and dancing. (..) Visually pleasing.
- 42 **S1:** Girls?
- 43 **S2:** Girls. (..) If it's a guy, I would immediately skip, haha.
- 44 **S1:** Haha, alright.
- 45 **S2:** The fifth one is sort of (..) cosplay content. (..) I feel okay about it.
- 46 **S1:** Mhm.
- 47 **S2:** It's not my type, so just okay.
- 48 **S1:** Just okay.
- 49 **S2:** Haha, watching this is very straightforward, if it's my type, it's (..) obviously great.
- 50 **S1:** Mhm.
- 51 **S2:** The sixth one is a girl working out. (..) Some workout videos are also attractive, (..) but I feel okay about this one. The seventh one is (...) why are they all (..) female? Haha. There's no other content?
- 52 **S1:** Only female videos?
- 53 **S2:** Yes, only females so far.

54 **S1:** There should be others, but not sure why.

55 **S2:** This one is also (..) kind of innocent looking but still revealing, also visually pleasing. This one is swimsuit too, but (..) I feel okay. This one also, I feel okay.

56 **S1:** Why always just okay? Because it's not your type?

57 **S2:** Yes, not my type. Even though they have good bodies, I'm not really interested. Now this one is (..) cosplay, dancing streamer type. Cosplay is a bit more interesting, but still the same. After scrolling for a while, I feel kind of (..) numb.

58 **S1:** Numb?

59 **S2:** Yes. After scrolling so many, it feels (..) repetitive.

60 **S1:** Because they're all the same type, no variety.

61 **S2:** I don't see others, it's all girls.

62 **S1:** Scroll three or four more, then you can stop.

63 **S2:** I've already scrolled more than that. Finally something different.

64 **S1:** What is it?

65 **S2:** It's (..) Italy? No, it's a very (..) local Italian drink being made, looks unhygienic to me.

66 **S1:** You mean Italy? Or India?

67 **S2:** India (..) no, not Italy. It's India. Right, sorry.

68 **S1:** Not Italy.

69 **S2:** My mistake, sorry. Someone tested it and said it's okay, but I wouldn't dare drink it. I'd get diarrhea. That's about it.

70 **S1:** Alright, let's stop here. Turn off (..) the screen recording, and we'll move to the next part.

71 **S2:** Turned off.

72 **S2:** Do you want me to log out?

73 **S2:** I'll log out.

74 **S1:** About the instructions just now, were they clear to you?

75 **S2:** (..) Yes.

76 **S1** During the process, did you feel comfortable or was it difficult to express your thoughts?

77 **S2:** (..) Somewhat difficult.

78 **S1:** Why?

79 **S2:** Because usually, unless I see something special (..), I don't verbalize my thoughts while browsing reels. Usually, when I see something interesting or an attractive (..) girl, and I send it to friends, that's when I produce (..) words to describe my feelings.

80 **S1:** So normally when browsing social media, your mind is quite blank?

81 **S2:** (..) Yes, you can say that. I feel it's more like, only certain types of content would trigger (..) thinking. For example, just now, those types of videos (..) are purely for visual pleasure, so I didn't think much. But if it's educational reels, I would think about whether (..) the content is correct or not.

82 **S1:** In your usual social media use, do you encounter videos completely different from today? Or are they similar?

83 **S2:** Not exactly similar. What I just browsed is only a portion of what I usually see, maybe one-third.

84 **S1:** Oh.

85 **S2:** One-third. Because what I just browsed were mostly (..) very attractive, visually pleasing girls.

86 **S1:** Good, now we are entering the (..) formal interview section. In your daily life, do you feel that there are some stereotypes about Asians in Western society?

87 **S2:** Hmm, can you, can you, can you say it again?

88 **S1:** Do you know any stereotypes about Asians in Western society?

89 **S2:** When scrolling reels?

90 **S1:** Hmm, not specifically. I mean in general life. Have you ever thought there are some stereotypes about Asians, not only online, but also in your daily life and surroundings?

91 **S2:** Yes, hmm, (..) yes, there are still, still some. I believe there are still some stereotypes.

92 **S1:** For example?

93 **S2:** For example (...) now that you suddenly ask me (..) I can't think of anything.

94 **S1:** Then you can think about it first. Let's move to the next question while you think.

- 95 **S2:** I'll think about it, you can ask the next question.
- 96 **S1:** Good. So just now when we scrolled through TikTok, it was very obvious that there was a repeatedly appearing pattern and theme, right?
- 97 **S2:** Yes.
- 98 **S1:** Mainly about women.
- 99 **S2:** Yes.
- 100 **S1:** Why do you think TikTok's algorithm decides to recommend these contents to you?
- 101 **S2:** Because indeed (..), I think because I usually browse these things. Maybe (..) when I stayed longer on certain reels or certain types of reels, it (..) detected that I might like this type of video more, and recommended more to me based on this derivation method. That's how I think they work.
- 102 **S1:** Do you think it recommends content based on your identity characteristics, like your ethnicity or background?
- 103 **S2:** I think (..) not really. (..) I think not really. I haven't thought about this question. But in the videos I saw, (..) the race, nationality of the women, all seemed to be Asian, (..) basically all Asians, not Westerners. But there are some Western ones. Yes, but maybe because interests are different, so they didn't recommend Western content to me, that's possible.
- 104 **S1:** But usually when you use TikTok, you also don't see Western content? It's all Asian content?
- 105 **S2:** Usually recommended content might include (..) one or two, but very few, because it's really not my type. So it probably doesn't push me much of that type of content.
- 106 **S1:** So according to the content you just saw, do you think TikTok is promoting or reinforcing certain stereotypes about Asians?
- 107 **S2:** Reinforcing (..) I feel not really, I feel not really. Because from my perspective, there weren't really things like (..) specifically because someone is Asian, so they show (..) certain behaviors, sentences, or specially edited things that only Asians would do. The content I saw (..) as far as I know, people from any nationality seem to do similar things. Unless like that one (..) the Indian drink, that may be more local. But I don't think that is (..) a stereotype, to me.
- 108 **S1:** Since there's a lot of content about women, do you think the portrayal of Asian women and Western women is the same?
- 109 **S2:** Is the portrayal the same? (...) Indeed, I think (..) the portrayal may be different. Because there are racial differences, and also cultural differences. Although I browse Western content less, (..),

thinking back, (..) the way they present in videos is different from Asians. Also for female videos, maybe they want to show (..) their body shape, but in terms of race (..) there are differences. So the portrayal methods may also be different.

110 **S1:** Do you feel that these videos oversexualize Asian women?

111 **S2:** Oversexualize? (...) I can only say halfway. Indeed, as a male, seeing these types of videos (..) can trigger imagination. That's from a male perspective. But from another angle, to me, (..) it's their choice to use their own advantages to present themselves. To me (..), they know they have such advantages, and they know posting these videos will get traffic, they can make money, so it's their own choice. Yes, kind of like supply and demand? Something like that.

112 **S1:** Do you feel that a lot of videos about Asian women portray them in a very infantilized way? More like little girls? Because I talked to some previous interviewees who felt that this impression may be influenced by Japanese anime culture, leading to perceptions of Asian women as young, childlike, or very cute. Do you feel this way?

113 **S2:** This part (..) I haven't particularly noticed or thought of. For me (..), it doesn't feel that exaggerated to the point of infantilization. But they are indeed young, most of them. Indeed, very young. I think maybe because of racial reasons, Asians theoretically (..) look younger, so (..). But I wouldn't particularly associate it with infantilization or (..) this kind of issue. This is something I haven't (..) observed.

114 **S1:** What kind of portrayal do you think there is for Asian men?

115 **S2:** The portrayal of Asian men?

116 **S1:** Because earlier there wasn't much content about Asian men.

117 **S2:** There was none. Completely none.

118 **S1:** In your daily usage, have you noticed any portrayals of Asian men?

119 **S2:** The portrayal of Asian men (...) if we take Japan as an example, maybe it's (..) like otaku. Very typical, a bit stereotypical: wearing shirts, jeans, not paying attention to appearance, wearing glasses, with short hair, like engineering students.

120 **S1:** Very nerdy kind of men.

121 **S2:** Yes, yes, yes. This is one part of Japanese male stereotypes, especially for those into anime culture. But for others (..), it seems okay.

122 **S1:** But actually now, due to the influence of Korean Wave, TikTok often portrays Korean men as ideal boyfriends: very considerate, caring, and very good at flirting. Have you seen this kind of

content?

- 123 **S2:** I haven't seen this kind of content. But regarding Korean fashion, yes, (..) among the reels I've seen with males, their clothing styles indeed tend to follow Korean trends. To me (..), it's not something special, just a style. Nothing particularly special for me.
- 124 **S1:** Do you think TikTok's algorithm presents different Asian groups? For example East Asia, South Asia, or Southeast Asia? Or do you feel it tends to present Asia as a single group? Like the girls you just saw, are they from the same region or from different regions?
- 125 **S2:** (..) I feel this is a bit (...) I feel my answer may be a bit different. As an Asian, I can actually distinguish (..) the differences among girls from different Asian countries. For me, (..) they're not a single Asian type, but rather from different countries. Or different country reels, I tend to think of it like that. But (..) I can understand that for foreigners, it might be hard to distinguish which country the woman is from. For example, Indonesians or others are easier to tell, but Japanese, Chinese, Koreans are more difficult. Mainly like that.
- 126 **S1:** Do you think TikTok promotes other Asian cultures? Because Asia is very large, with diverse languages and cultural backgrounds.
- 127 **S2:** Among the women videos I browsed today, except for cosplay, there wasn't any particular (..) promotion or strengthening of Asian culture. Just cosplay, but cosplay itself is kind of Japanese culture? You could say that. That's how I feel.
- 128 **S1:** Now do you think of any stereotypes about Asians?
- 129 **S2:** Stereotypes about Asians, (...) I've encountered some, but it seems more like racial features, for example, smaller eyes. That counts, right?
- 130 **S1:** Like fox eyes, slanted upwards. Yes, that part exists.
- 131 **S2:** That's what comes to mind as a stereotype. Besides that (..), I can only think of this.
- 132 **S1:** For example, there's the stereotype that Asians are very good at studying, have you heard of that?
- 133 **S2:** Yes, I've heard of it.
- 134 **S1:** So that's a stereotype, right? Kind of?
- 135 **S2:** Yes, I've heard of it.
- 136 **S1:** But do you feel it doesn't have much influence on you?

- 137 **S2:** Right. Because if Asians are supposed to be good at studying, then I should be doing better academically too, but it seems I'm not. So it doesn't have much influence.
- 138 **S1:** Do you think the content on TikTok would influence people's perception of Asian groups?
- 139 **S2:** I think (..) yes. If people only rely on TikTok videos to understand Asian culture, it would be, not just a little, but I think quite limited. Because in my understanding, reels (..) are presenting the most beautiful small portion (..) of this world or group. So (..) this part may be a bit too biased, (..) making it hard to fully understand every Asian country's cultural characteristics or anything like that.
- 140 **S1:** Do you think people from different cultural backgrounds, like Western backgrounds, would have different interpretations or reactions when seeing the content you just browsed?
- 141 **S2:** I don't think so. If we're speaking as males, if the content fits their type, then it should be the same reaction: "This girl is pretty, she has a nice body," that's about it.
- 142 **S1:** So you think there wouldn't be many other thoughts?
- 143 **S2:** Yes. For the reels we just saw, I don't think (..) there would be particular thoughts.
- 144 **S1:** For the one Indian video, do you feel it has influenced you? Do you really think India's food environment is like that?
- 145 **S2:** (..) Probably yes. Of course, not saying it's completely like that, but subconsciously I would feel (..) India's local street food might be (..) more unhygienic or something like that. There's this kind of subconscious thought.
- 146 **S1:** Have you seen similar memes or anything? Because actually, this kind of memes making fun of India's hygiene are quite popular on both Instagram and TikTok.
- 147 **S2:** (..) Yes, I've seen that kind of thing. They would film how locals make things, and explain them in a more humorous way. It indeed makes me (..) less willing to try those foods when visiting, and (..) lowers my desire to go there.
- 148 **S1:** Do you think TikTok's algorithm recommending this content may further influence real-life prejudice or discrimination?
- 149 **S2:** (..) If we're talking about prejudice, for example, lowering the desire to go there or eat their food, then I think yes. But for discrimination, I personally feel (..) not really. I personally don't agree. Maybe it's also because the videos I've seen didn't show this. But according to my knowledge, (..) no.
- 150 **S1:** So you feel it's okay?
- 151 **S2:** Yes. But if we talk about prejudice, like the example just mentioned, then maybe yes.

- 152 **S1:** Coming back to content about women, do you think these kinds of content would make users feel that Asian women are more submissive or more sexually open?
- 153 **S2:** (..) No. But this reminds me, may I add something? This reminds me of a stereotype: previously it was said that Asians are less open about sex while Westerners are more open. I might have had this stereotype before. But seeing these videos wouldn't particularly make me think Asian women are more open sexually.
- 154 **S1:** But have you heard that many Western men go to Southeast Asia to buy wives or pay for sexual entertainment? This is quite a common thing, have you heard of it?
- 155 **S2:** You mean Westerners coming to Asia? (..) I haven't heard of it, but I can imagine it. Because, maybe it's a stereotype, Westerners seem to have higher affection towards Asian women than local Western women. So I have this stereotype.
- 156 **S1:** Why do you think this stereotype exists?
- 157 **S2:** (..) I don't know who I heard it from. Indeed, friends who are abroad seem to live quite well, very welcomed, so subconsciously (..) this idea develops.
- 158 **S1:** Have you seen any content on TikTok that makes you uncomfortable? Specifically because of how it portrays Asians?
- 159 **S2:** (..) I haven't seen this type of video content, so I can't really imagine what it would look like.
- 160 **S1:** Do you think TikTok's regulations or management regarding harmful or stereotypical content about Asians are sufficient? For example, during the pandemic TikTok launched campaigns like Stop Asian Hate, or updated community guidelines to strengthen the management of hate speech and harassment. Do you think these measures are effective? Or do you think improvement is still needed?
- 161 **S2:** Maybe because I don't use TikTok that much, but I do believe such guidelines are helpful. They can reduce (..) the situations during the pandemic; I do think they help reduce some hate speech. Indeed, Westerners may not be able to distinguish among different Asian races or nationalities, which results in people from other countries (..) becoming unfairly involved or attacked in such discussions.
- 162 **S1:** So during the pandemic, did you personally experience such things?
- 163 **S2:** I didn't experience it personally, but I can imagine that if I were in the West at that time, I might have faced (..) some extreme incidents, and would feel scared.
- 164 **S1:** In this interview, has the content you saw affected your feelings or identity as an Asian person?

- 165 **S2:** I think it's hard. Because the content is basically about women; for males, it's hard to relate in that way. I can only say no. But if it was content about Asian males, I wouldn't feel any special identification either.
- 166 **S1:** If the subjects in these videos were men, would you feel sexualized or uncomfortable?
- 167 **S2:** If the content featured men wearing little clothing and dancing, (..) my first reaction would be slight disgust. It's not what I want to watch, but I wouldn't reject it entirely. I wouldn't feel it shouldn't exist on TikTok, just that I am not the target audience for these kinds of videos. I'm more curious as to why I get shown this content.
- 168 **S1:** So you're more curious about why you see these videos, rather than having specific feelings about the content?
- 169 **S2:** Yes.
- 170 **S1:** In previous interviews with Asian women, they also watched similar content and felt very uncomfortable. They couldn't even watch, they would immediately scroll past. So I think the gender difference here is very interesting.
- 171 **S2:** Is that so. But honestly, if you asked me to scroll like I just did, about 10 to 15 female videos, if you asked me to scroll through the same amount but of males, I probably couldn't either. I wouldn't want to watch. My orientation is towards women (..), so I wouldn't want to see that kind of content in a gender-reversed situation.
- 172 **S1:** Do you think women would like to see similar content featuring males?
- 173 **S2:** I think they might. If the man has a good physique, muscles, and is handsome, it seems they would. Yes.
- 174 **S1:** Hmm, you think so.
- 175 **S2:** Wouldn't they?
- 176 **S1:** No. But the people I interviewed don't. They have no interest in that kind of content.
- 177 **S2:** Oh, okay. Maybe (..) the people I know are just different.
- 178 **S1:** Do you think TikTok has influenced your self-identity? You said it hasn't. Then in real life or online, have you ever changed your behavior or presentation because of how Asians are portrayed on TikTok? For example, I have some friends who feel that Asian women are overly "cutified" or sexualized, so they try to avoid cute styles or avoid wearing more sexy or cute clothes. They feel (..) a kind of shame, yes. Have you had similar experiences?

- 179 **S2:** (...) Yes, indeed, self-awareness does exist. For example, like the Japanese nerd stereotype I mentioned earlier, their stereotype is like that, and they like to watch anime and similar things. I also feel a bit of resistance because although I watch anime myself, I don't want to become like them. So I would try to (...) dress better, (...) wear nicer clothes. The motivation is different, but I think it's somewhat similar.
- 180 **S1:** Would you deliberately cater to a certain image? If someone thinks you look like that Japanese nerd type, would you feel pressured? Would you want to change how others perceive you?
- 181 **S2:** (...) I think it's half and half. Within what I can change, (...) I would preserve some original elements but also make some changes, at least to reach a state that satisfies myself, and at least not let others gossip.
- 182 **S1:** So you don't really like this kind of Asian nerd stereotype.
- 183 **S2:** Yes.
- 184 **S1:** One of my previous interviewees thought that Taiwan's porn industry is quite developed. Do you agree?
- 185 **S2:** She thinks Taiwan's porn industry is developed? Japan's porn industry is more developed, isn't it? Why Taiwan?
- 186 **S1:** She felt that, based on her experience on TikTok, Taiwanese women are more likely to post somewhat sexualized content. Do you agree?
- 187 **S2:** I don't agree, because I don't know. I've never encountered it. She can send me links if he wants; I'd like to know.
- 188 **S1:** She even specifically added this point after finishing the whole interview.
- 189 **S2:** Please ask her to send me the links. Although I've heard that Taiwan does have (...) some related industries, I feel it's not as prevalent as in Japan or Thailand.
- 190 **S1:** Thailand? Why do you think Thailand is more developed? Because sex work is legal there?
- 191 **S2:** Yes, it is.
- 192 **S1:** Have you ever felt the need to upload certain content on social media in order to gain more attention or to better integrate into the Asian community?
- 193 **S2:** Can you say that again?
- 194 **S1:** Have you ever, at any point, felt the need to upload content on social media, for example, to

gain more attention or to present yourself as more Asian in order to gain more attention?

195 S2: No. I'm not that kind of person.

196 S1: Because you feel you don't really need to gain attention online?

197 S2: Yes, pretty much.

198 S1: Then that's basically the interview content. Next, I need to collect some personal information about you. Where are you from?

199 S2: Taiwan.

200 S1: How old are you?

201 S2: 26.

202 S1: What is your highest level of education?

203 S2: University.

204 S1: What is your gender identity?

205 S2: Male.

206 S1: Have you lived in different cultural environments? If yes, where and for how long?

207 S2: Yes, Austria, for one year.

208 S1: Do you feel that during your year in Austria, your thoughts on culture, cultural conflicts, or self-identity as an Asian have changed?

209 S2: You mean whether I experienced discrimination there?

210 S1: Like whether you gained any new understanding or new realizations you hadn't thought of before?

211 S2: (...) I was more surprised because I thought discrimination against Asians abroad would be very serious. But after actually living there, I found that it wasn't as exaggerated as previously said, and I didn't really experience any (..) discrimination or such incidents. Only the part about the eyes that I mentioned earlier, but that was (..) uncertain whether they were actually talking about me, a group of teenagers, I just glanced past them, so I'm not sure.

212 S1: So you've had an experience you believe might have been discriminatory, about the eyes?

213 S2: It was like this: while I was working part-time, my colleague saw a group of teenagers seemingly

making (..) small-eye hand gestures at us. I didn't see it myself, my colleague told me. So I can't be certain what exactly happened. If I really had to say whether I experienced discrimination, that would be the only instance.

214 S1: Oh, that's quite rare. I haven't encountered that myself.

215 S2: I haven't seen it either, I don't know.

216 S1: Do you know that previously on TikTok there was a trend, the fox eye makeup trend? Have you followed this type of video?

217 S2: (..) No, I haven't seen it.

218 S1: Then how did you hear about this stereotype?

219 S2: I already forgot. Maybe I heard it (..) from watching TV before, or from watching videos, or maybe someone told me. I really can't give (..) a definite source. Yeah, I really don't remember where I learned it from.

220 S1: How often do you usually use TikTok?

221 S2: Some time ago, last year I used it more, maybe two to three times a week. This year, maybe two to three times a month.

222 S1: Oh. What type of content do you usually engage with or interact with on TikTok?

223 S2: Yes, mainly Japanese (..) anime, animation. This was asked earlier.

224 S1: Okay. Have you heard of the Stop Asian Hate campaign before?

225 S2: I actually haven't heard of it.

226 S1: Oh.

227 S2: At that time, I probably wasn't using TikTok yet.

228 S1: Oh, okay.

229 S2: Oh, but I just remembered one thing, there's a stereotype in Taiwan regarding TikTok. It's that TikTok viewers are all very brainless, (..) kind of like if you use TikTok, your IQ drops. This led to, back when TikTok first came out, many, uh, in my circle (..) among people my age, none of them were using it. People would say: if you use TikTok, not that you're anything, but that your intelligence is lowered, so you should use it less.

230 S1: So people deliberately avoided it.

- 231 **S2:** Yes, because people would specifically say there's nothing nutritious on it. Though indeed there's not much nutrition.
- 232 **S1:** But personally, do you feel it has affected you?
- 233 **S2:** If it's just to relax, those (..) brainless videos are actually not bad. But (..) if you watch too much, you still feel it's kind of lowering your intelligence, like (..) wasting time, not helpful.
- 234 **S1:** When you usually browse TikTok, do you also see the kind of content we looked at today? Do you feel it's common?
- 235 **S2:** Yes, very common. Because normally it's this type, about one-third of my feed.
- 236 **S1:** Do you think their purpose in making this type of content is basically to gain traffic and ultimately make money?
- 237 **S2:** Yes, I think so, yes, to make money.
- 238 **S1:** Through this interview, do you feel you've gained any new understanding or perspective about TikTok's algorithm or its operation with racial content?
- 239 **S2:** Yes. I feel it's not just TikTok, but all (..) social media with reels, it gives me a new perspective. About racial stereotypes and racial discrimination, it has given me different thoughts.
- 240 **S1:** Do you think it traps you or users in a bubble where you keep getting similar content?
- 241 **S2:** Yes. Sometimes I specifically (..) scroll different types of videos to break the algorithm.
- 242 **S1:** So you deliberately try to escape the algorithm's recommendation system?
- 243 **S2:** Yes.
- 244 **S1:** During the interview process, was there any moment where you felt uncomfortable or uneasy? For example, were there questions that made you feel distressed or made you uncomfortable when recalling certain experiences?
- 245 **S2:** No.
- 246 **S1:** Regarding the topics we discussed today, is there anything else experiences, thoughts, or feelings that we haven't mentioned but you feel are worth sharing?
- 247 **S2:** (..) If there's anything else, it would be that in Taiwan, the age group using TikTok seems quite young. And so there's this kind of maybe it's also a stereotype where people feel that kids start using TikTok too early, and it kind of ruins your whole life, that kind of saying or comment.

- 248 **S1:** Do you agree with this (..) impression? Do you think there's some truth to it?
- 249 **S2:** (..) Now that you ask me like this, I feel it might not be such a big deal. But before, I did hold (..) this kind of idea. When I first learned about this phenomenon, I would feel like , because those people are all playing TikTok, they're not seriously studying, so it really seems like it's ruining their life. But now thinking about it, it doesn't seem like such a big deal, it's just that times have changed, and the popular things are different.
- 250 **S1:** In a previous interview, one person said he saw a video about Indian street food. When you see these types of videos, are they usually presented in a humorous way? Because that interviewee felt that TikTok doesn't necessarily guide you to think in any particular way, it just puts the content there without pushing you to any conclusions. Do you agree?
- 251 **S2:** I think (..) that's not true.
- 252 **S1:** Why?
- 253 **S2:** Because (..) the way it presents it must be pre-planned, how to edit the video, how to write the caption, how to express it. The video is designed to achieve that effect. Maybe it's presented (..) in a joking or playful way, but it still indirectly creates (..) cognitive influence.
- 254 **S1:** Right.
- 255 **S2:** I feel that the way it's edited, partly because the creator personally thinks it's funny, is why they edit it that way.
- 256 **S1:** Because it has indeed influenced your perception, as you mentioned earlier, you feel that perhaps reality is like that.
- 257 **S2:** Yes, it can be misleading.
- 258 **S1:** Also, another aspect: in a previous interview with a female participant, she also saw similar content about Asian women, but the infantilization was very serious. There were even videos showing young girls in ballet classes, practicing or training, but some of the camera angles would capture their hips or legs. It wasn't giving a very direct sexual suggestion, but mixed in with other Asian women dancing and similar videos, when scrolling, it makes people unconsciously wonder why this video is mixed in here, what kind of goal it's trying to achieve. When it involves children, it feels a bit too much. What are your thoughts on this phenomenon? I feel you probably haven't seen videos featuring children, right?
- 259 **S2:** (..) Children? If you mean underage, sexually suggestive child-type videos, then no, I haven't seen those. But if it's (..) cute kids or something like gymnastics, those do exist on TikTok. This seems like (..) a phenomenon too.

- 260 **S1:** Another interviewee also mentioned that, for Asian users, posting children online is quite common. She personally finds it very strange, why do they do this? Because in Western countries, this kind of thing is actually quite rare.
- 261 **S2:** Oh oh oh (...) I didn't know that. It's rarer in the West? But I feel Westerners also have this, some baby-related content.
- 262 **S1:** Babies? But she was referring more to performance-type videos, where parents force children to perform in front of the camera and so on.
- 263 **S2:** Performance types? Actually I rarely browse performance-type reels, so I don't really come across this kind of reels either.
- 264 **S1:** Okay, that's basically all for the content. I'll turn off the recording now.

Interview H

1

2

S1 (Researcher): So before we start the interview, I would like to briefly explain about the study. So in the study, I'm interested in understanding your thought process as you complete the task I will give to you. To achieve this, I will ask you to think aloud while engaging with the task. So by thinking aloud, I mean verbalizing everything that comes to mind from the moment you begin the task until you complete it. I encourage you to continuously express your thoughts without planning or structuring your response. Simply speak as though you were alone in the room, narrating your thoughts. If you remain silent for an extended period, I will prompt you to continue speaking. Do you understand?

3

S2 (Interviewee): That's fine.

4

S1: Before we start the primary (..) task. So (..) I will give you two training tasks. First, how many windows are in your parents' house? You do not need to count them yourself. I would do that for you. Just tell me which room has how many windows.

5

S2: Okay, the (..) main living room has two windows, I think.

6

S1: Mm.

7

S2: And then. (..) The other room also has two, I think, and that would be it besides kitchen.

8

S1: Mm. (..) So the second task. Imagine you're opening your favourite social media app without touching your phone. Describe your usual actions upon opening the app, what type of content do you typically encounter and how do you decide what to engage with or scroll past. Verbalize everything that comes to your mind as though you were actively navigating the app.

9

S2: Do I need to say the name of my social media app?

10

S1: You can say it or not. It's up to you.

11

S2: (..) Opening Instagrams, watching (..) first checking on stories and then checking out the for you page. And it's either (..) scrolling through memes and funny videos.

12

S1: Yeah.

13

S2: Or what's currently happening is either the (..) Iran Israel situation or generally immigration in (..) in the UK how bad it is including Ireland.

14

S1: So usually just political news.

15

S2: Actually, no, that's my (..) recent algorithm in the last two, three days.

16 **S1:** Mm-hmm.

17 **S1:** But what's (..) what was the content before that?

18 **S2:** Mostly memes.

19 **S1:** Mm.

20 **S2:** Memes. (....) Funny videos in general. Anime, and that would be it. Maybe video game content.

21 **S1:** Mm. Okay. So I will give you an account. I will send in the chat and you can log in it with your PC. (...) I think it will send a code in this email address and I will give you the code. And log in to the account.

22 **S2:** Okay, it's logged in.

23 **S1:** Mm-hmm. Okay. So I want you to scroll the (..) feed and during the time, please verbalize your thoughts about what you see. This may include your immediate reactions to the content, your interpretation of why TikTok is recommending certain videos and how these recommendations make you feel and you are free to interact with the content on the page. You can either like it, follow the (..) account or comment it and you will go through around 10 to 15 videos and is it possible that you can turn on your screen recording? So later I can go through the content that you went through.

24 **S2:** Screen recording.

25 **S1:** If it's not possible, it's okay.

26 **S2:** I can just share my screen.

27 **S1:** Yeah, if you can do that. Can you share it now?

28 **S2:** Yes.

29 **S1:** Yeah.

30 **S2:** Okay.

31 **S1:** You can start.

32 **S2:** Okay, did you see this?

33 **S1:** Yes. Just to let you know, this account is pre-set by myself. I put in more of Asian content, but what is shown to you is completely based on the algorithm and later the interview will also be about the algorithm. So a heads up, yeah. I'm not like asking to watch this on purpose.

34 **S2:** Yeah, yeah.

35 **S1:** Yeah.

36 **S2:** So this is the feed currently.

37 **S1:** You can go for 10 to 15 videos. It's up to you.

38 **S2:** I'm not going to enable music because I don't care. It's obviously female content, something about nails and nail polishing. Skip. I don't care. No idea what this is. Don't care next. Uh... Is it okay to swear?

39 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, it's okay. You can say anything you want.

40 **S2:** Okay, what the fuck is this? Next. Oh, God. Oh. That's my weakness. Okay. Uh. Okay. Yeah, I understand now. Okay, what the fuck is this? These videos, I don't understand the purpose of it. Nor (..) also the previous one. Don't care. What the? No. (...) Maybe in Thailand. (...) Yeah, never mind. Okay, selling your body. (..) I don't know what the point of this is, waiting for someone who loves me to appear. (..) Oh, this is that's a live video, okay. (..) What the hell? (...) How? Okay, so this is your account. This is your feed. This is very weird.

41 **S1:** No, this is not my account. It's not my feed. It's just for this study.

42 **S2:** Okay. Okay, so this is something in Russian. (..) This is basically porn.

43 **S1:** Yeah, I don't really see what it. I don't really. Yeah, (..) okay, never mind.

44 **S2:** This is. Okay, I know this person from Instagram.

45 **S1:** Oh, you haven't seen her?

46 **S2:** Yeah, I've seen her. She just goes, blah, blah, blah, blah, Baba makes food and that's it. Gym content, thirst trap, whatever. (..) Volarant, no thanks. (...) What the hell is this?

47 **S1:** What's this?

48 **S2:** (...) Okay, don't mind. Okay, this is live. (..) Why are all the videos the same? (...) What's going on? Oh, Indian street food. No, thanks. (...) This podcast don't care. Why. (..) It's the same algorithm. Who was watching this account before me? Like, what the hell is going on? (..) Okay, I know this this person. Wait. Oh, yeah, I do. Yeah, that's Nina from like a streamer group or whatever. (..) Yeah, whatever. Is that enough or?

49 **S1:** Yeah, you can stop if you want to.

50 **S2:** Okay. I mean, that's 90% of the same trope, genre or whatever.

- 51 **S1:** Yeah, but that's. (...) Yeah. I mean, yeah, I know it's the algorithm, but it's my first time being on this account. Yeah, okay.
- 52 **S2:** Yeah, this is like usually what people see most of the time, but there are some new stuff going on, actually. (...) So I was quite surprised.
- 53 **S1:** Okay. Well, was it hard (...) for you to (...) articulate your thoughts?
- 54 **S2:** No.
- 55 **S1:** Did you feel uncomfortable to talk during the time?
- 56 **S2:** (...) No, but considering this is the first time we were talking, and there's basically soft porn on the screen. And in the background, I don't know how (...) cultural? (...) I don't know how civilized it is, let's say, for a first contact. So I (...) it's, I mean, even the algorithm is weird, so let's just leave it to that.
- 57 **S1:** But was the whole construction make sense for you?
- 58 **S2:** Construction as in...?
- 59 **S1:** Yeah, the first session, like the entire session. The instruction.
- 60 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. It was clear.
- 61 **S1:** Yeah. Okay. Now we can move to the interview part. You can log out if you want to, and you can stop sharing your screen.
- 62 **S2:** (...) Okay.
- 63 **S1:** So (...) just first, (...) have you ever thought about there are any common stereotypes about Asian that comes to mind for you?
- 64 **S2:** Stereotypical (...) comments about Asians?
- 65 **S1:** Yes, stereotypes. In the Western worlds.
- 66 **S2:** That they eat rice every day?
- 67 **S1:** That, that's it. Okay.
- 68 **S2:** (...) They eat rice every day, crooked eyes, and that's pretty much it.
- 69 **S1:** How did you hear about that?
- 70 **S2:** Online comments. I don't know. Maybe some people don't prefer Asians as a race, so that's why

they make comments like that. I don't know.

71 **S1:** Oh. What did you say? You said eating rice and what was the second one?

72 **S2:** Crooked eyes. You know, the eyelids, small eyes.

73 **S1:** Ah, okay, okay, crooked eyes. Mm-hmm. (..) Okay, then let's go back to the TikTok content. Did you notice there were any recurring (..) patterns or them seeing what was recommended to you?

74 **S2:** Yes. (..) Pretty much just Asian women showing their bodies, pretty much.

75 **S1:** Yeah, but there were some non-Asian (..) contents.

76 **S2:** Yes, the first one started out as typical female content something about nails, which I skipped immediately. (..) But I don't care about that content at all.

77 **S1:** But there were also a couple of like (..) black people content. I remembered.

78 **S2:** Black people content?

79 **S1:** I think so. There was one...

80 **S2:** I can go back and look.

81 **S1:** No, you don't have to, but I just remembered there was something like that.

82 **S2:** Black people, this is, I'm back on the TikTok account, so black people, this is the Indian street food that I skipped right away because I don't want to burn my eyes in. Black people (...) yeah, so that this is another black people video. It's just quick frame. Sorry?

83 **S1:** No, no, no. Continue.

84 **S2:** Quick frames going from one to each other where you have to pause the video deliberately and everything every third of fourth frame is basically porn content. And that's it, everything else was (..) 95% was pretty much Asian woman. And that's it.

85 **S1:** (..) Have you ever thought about how does algorithm works in general?

86 **S2:** To my understanding it tracks maybe a how long you watch the video. Do you (..) give any interaction to the video; Do you like it; Do you comment, do you share it; And that's probably what's (..) fed back to you? Fed back to you as recommendations for you to see every day.

87 **S1:** And do you feel like that algorithm recommends content based on your identity or your (..) nationality, something like that? Or it's only based on your behavior?

- 88 **S2:** Based on your behavior, I don't think it has to do anything with your nationality or identity. (...)I mean, probably TikTok has some information about you if you're a white Caucasian or rather of your ethnicity, but if you like a video and a comment or give some interaction to it, it's going to send it back and (...) whether or not you're a distinct ethnicity. So I don't think. Let's just say that (...) the algorithm doesn't discriminate.
- 89 **S1:** (...) But during, like when you use other social media. So when you are using, for example, Instagram, have you come across these similar videos?
- 90 **S2:** Similar?
- 91 **S1:** Yes. Similar (...) like today.
- 92 **S2:** Similar to today, yes. (...) Similar today as in so (...) I get a lot of Japanese content on my Instagram because I liked a couple of pages about tourism in Japan.
- 93 **S1:** Mm-hmm.
- 94 **S2:** So (...) I get more and more of them as I scroll through Instagram.
- 95 **S1:** Have you get like African content or black people content?
- 96 **S2:** (...) Maybe when it's tagged as a meme or a funny video. But, (...) you know, that when something funny happens at a video, but strictly content about Africa or maybe how it is to live there and about their daily lives, no.
- 97 **S1:** That's (...) Okay, that's very strange because you are the only one that got black people content (...) among all the interviews. So I don't know why, but it's interesting. So I was thinking maybe because (...) based on your like (...) behavior on other social media, but I guess that's not the case.
- 98 **S2:** Mm-hmm.
- 99 **S1:** Then based on what you have seen, do you think TikTok promotes or reinforces certain stereotypes about Asians?
- 100 **S2:** Based on the videos I've seen?
- 101 **S1:** Yep.
- 102 **S2:** (...) Peromyscus Asian women. (...) That was the majority of the videos.
- 103 **S1:** So it's promoting (...) certain stereotypes?
- 104 **S2:** (...) Yes, but this stereotype can be labelled onto any group of women. It doesn't have to be strictly Asian women, right? But the videos that I've seen (...) that confirm this trait, (...) there's Asian

women in the videos.

105 **S1:** And how do you feel about this? I just want to know.

106 **S2:** I mean, neutral. I mean, I have a preference towards Asian women. It's not like that. I like I hate or love it, but like (..) no comment. I don't know. Sorry?

107 **S1:** No. No, no, continue.

108 **S2:** I mean, I don't like seeing this seeing (..) this type of content constantly, right? Because it's the one occurring pattern after the other. It's the same thing just to (..) to show their bodies and get more likes and get more interaction of the videos. That's in English, it's called Thirst Traps. I don't know if you've heard about that.

109 **S1:** Yeah, yeah.

110 **S2:** So (..) I realize what's a thirst trap, and I try not to give the video (..) any interaction at all.

111 **S1:** Yeah. Would you kind of like (..) click on not interested if you..

112 **S2:** Oh, I do that a lot of times on Instagram.

113 **S1:** So you would actually (..) react to this kind of content.

114 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

115 **S1:** You would say like the portrait of Asian female and Western female are the same on the internet?

116 **S2:** (..) Depends what their goal is. Like if they want to get (..) more views and more likes, they're just gonna show their bodies. It's just how social media works.

117 **S1:** Before you, that's the only way (...) like, just talk about the fact. (..) That's at the moment, that's the only way for female to gain the views?

118 **S2:** It's the quickest way to get views.

119 **S1:** But there are also some other way, I guess.

120 **S2:** No, of course there are other ways, but I'm saying it's the fastest way.

121 **S1:** Yeah.

122 **S2:** If the girl realizes that she's (..) above average looking physically and she posts these kind of thirst trap videos, (..) the algorithm just (..) recommends it to a lot of people and that's it. It's (..) It's

not really it's not really rocket science.

123 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, of course. But do you think it has the influence to (..) like the real world (..) to the audience, to the users?

124 **S2:** (...) Influence to achieve what? To get more interaction on the videos, to share it more, to do what exactly?

125 **S1:** To like influence the audience, for example, if a (..) 14 years old teenager girl also is watching this kind of video and they say, okay, this is the quickest way for me to get money. (..) Why not? I also try it.

126 **S2:** Oh, so you mean if another girl sees another woman doing that, right?

127 **S1:** Or (..) a guy sees it, and then he would think, oh, okay now females are just doing this and they would, (..) I don't know, start to have a female hate or they would think, (..) okay, they are doing this that means they are also willing to sell their body and it's very easy for me to get them like this kind of thinking.

128 **S2:** Maybe (..) I can't say for sure what the motives of these people are, but (..) I think that social media promotes (..) unnatural and unrealistic beauty standards, especially for younger women that try to achieve something similar. And they try to pursue, (..) or rather go in the same footsteps as (..) this content that they see online from a person that's, let's say, relatively famous. I don't know (..) what's famous in terms of social media. Let's say if you have over 100,000 followers, right? I don't know. (..) And if they see that they only post like (..) bikini pictures or in a (..) swimwear or at the beach or whatever, I don't know, to present this false life, then a lot of children follow it. I think it's unhealthy. But (..) we're a younger generation, so we grew up without this. Kids today are just exposed to social media 24-7.

129 **S1:** Do you feel like there's an influence on the kids?

130 **S2:** Absolutely.

131 **S1:** And back to gender? Do you think like the portrait of male on the internet is the same with female?

132 **S2:** (...) I barely, of course, any like sexualize the content of male, to be honest.

133 **S1:** You barely what?

134 **S2:** I barely come across any like (..) sexualized content of male. Yeah, I do. There are, I know, but it just never show up on my page. There's definitely a percentage of (..) males that that try to do (..) the same, but they're usually not as popular as (..) as women. But to be fair, (...) I think men realize

today (..) that's a type of content is being shown on social media or rather pushed forward.

135 **S1:** So sexualized content?

136 **S2:** Yeah, so basically I go to the gym six times a week and I'd rather have gym content on my feed. I do have gym content on my feed, but it's not as nearly (..) as much as, let's say, like the memes or the video games or the anime content that I have. Right? And so what they try to promote is a healthy lifestyle.

137 **S1:** Mm.

138 **S2:** So I'd rather be interested in that more than seeing (..) pointless, I don't know, half-naked women on Instagram that's somehow still legal and does not violate the rules of the website. So, yeah.

139 **S1:** What kind of anime content do you encounter?

140 **S2:** I mean, (..) it's anime content, right? So I don't know, usually about the shows that I've seen or a new anime that's coming out.

141 **S1:** Do you watch a lot of anime?

142 **S2:** (..) I'd say it depends on the season. Right now, right now, I'm watching (...) Is that a four or five? To be to be Hero X and then Shobo die?

143 **S1:** That's a lot.

144 **S2:** It's It's not a lot. If they come out on different days and each episode is 20 minutes, that's fine.

145 **S1:** Okay.

146 **S2:** Usually before it was (..) I don't know, like, I like to have when out of seven days a week, maybe (..) each show that I'm interested in comes at (..) in a different day. So every time when I eat dinner, I. I have something to watch along with.

147 **S1:** Okay. Then when I say about Asia, like, what is your (..) first impression? Is it any..

148 **S2:** Japan. Japan and Japan, anime and then like Japanese food, (..) maybe ramen. I don't know.

149 **S1:** Ramen?

150 **S2:** Yeah.

151 **S1:** Then do you you know anything (..) besides Japan, from Asia? Like South Asian or Southeastern Asian?

152 **S2:** Yeah, of course I have a friend who shared his stories. He went to Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines.

153 **S1:** But besides that, you don't get any information from the internet about the rest parts of Asia.

154 **S2:** No, (..) it's mostly Japan. When it comes to the content that I see on social media, it's mostly Japan.

155 **S1:** Why is it? (..) Because it's your own personal interest?

156 **S2:** Yeah, I want to I want to visit Japan next year.

157 **S1:** So you want to focus on Japan. That's why you only get the content about Japan.

158 **S2:** Pretty much, yeah.

159 **S1:** Mm-hmm. (..) Okay, it's hard to ask because you have never seen any content about the other part of Asia.

160 **S2:** I've seen content about Thailand of (..) sadly about soi six in Pattaya.

161 **S1:** What's soi six?

162 **S2:** It's like (..) the main beer, not beer, bar, walking street of Pattaya, and you have like (..) girls who (..) literally grab your groins and try to pull you in to have what they call boom, boom time.

163 **S1:** It's also the like the red (..) red light area.

164 **S2:** Exactly. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's the one.

165 **S1:** Uh-huh. And do you think like (..) the algorithm treats (..) different Asian group, differently? Or does it tend to present them as a one group?

166 **S2:** Can you repeat the question? What was that?

167 **S1:** Do you feel that's algorithm treats (..) different Asian group differently, or that they tend to present them as one group?

168 **S2:** Ooh. (..) I think, (...) again, it depends on the content that's being shown. I think the content. Let's say if content of Thailand is being shown to me, it's generally (...) you know, again, just like sexualization of women, whereas Japan is more like recommendations and trips to where to eat and which places to visit. (..) I don't know. I wouldn't say they generalize Asians as a whole. No.

169 **S1:** But for the Japan content, it was because you're interesting in travelling to Japan.

- 170 **S2:** Right, because I have I have interacted with a couple of videos, maybe saved or liked a couple of videos from maybe, I don't know, (..) restaurants that you need to visit or places that you need to see in activities to do in, I don't know, now, Kyoto or somewhere like that, right? Whereas if I see the content of the, let's say, (..) of Soy six and Thailand, I never like the videos. I never I never comment. I never do anything.
- 171 **S1:** Does they still push it to you?
- 172 **S2:** Sometimes. There's (..) sometimes where, let's say, like, (..) I open a video about someplace in Japan and then I scroll, scroll, scroll, scroll, and maybe there's like three or four more videos of Japan. And then maybe the fifth or the sixth video would be about Thailand.
- 173 **S1:** Have you got any other content, like about maybe China or Korea?
- 174 **S2:** I've seen content about (..) China. Korea, not so much. And is it a (..) similar (..) content with the Japanese content? The Chinese content. (...) I think it's (..) similar to (..) the Japanese one where it shows like (..) underrated cities to visit that are not like Beijing or Shanghai. Right?
- 175 **S1:** Mm-hmm.
- 176 **S2:** (...) Yeah, and some of the places really do look cool. Sometimes I'm (...) sometimes I really wish I could go there, but Japan is still maybe (..) number one on my list to go. But then again, I have a female friend from China that I've met in Vienna and she had to go back because of the (..) working situation. (...) And then I totally forgot that you need to use VPNs and everything to access Instagram and Facebook and all of these social media in China.
- 177 **S1:** Yeah.
- 178 **S2:** Because they (..) because they have their own locals like Bilibili and Webo or whatever it's called.
- 179 **S1:** Yep.
- 180 **S2:** Is it there's (..) a red note is it called, right?
- 181 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, it's red note.
- 182 **S2:** Yeah. There was news that when TikTok was banned in the US.
- 183 **S1:** Yeah, yeah.
- 184 **S2:** Yeah, that's the time around where I actually met her.
- 185 **S1:** Oh, so it wasn't a long time ago. It was just this year, no?

- 186 **S2:** (...) Yeah, I guess it's this year. It was either late last year or the beginning of this year.
- 187 **S1:** Yeah. And now she's back to China already?
- 188 **S2:** She's back in China because (...) she came here for university. And when she finished, she started like the (...) In German, it's called probmonat for work as an architect. And he actually cut off her contract and didn't, (...) didn't want to keep her after the first month and she couldn't find a job, so she went back to China.
- 189 **S1:** Okay, that's very sad.
- 190 **S2:** (...) I mean, I can't find a job and I have every legal possibility to have a job, so I don't know. I don't blame her.
- 191 **S1:** But for the content that you saw on the TikTok, but did you feel like a poetry that Asian as one group?
- 192 **S2:** (...) I mean, I could tell that they're Chinese. That's for sure. I think some are (...) not. Maybe the majority. I don't know. But I wouldn't put them together as like one group.
- 193 **S1:** So you can actually distinguish them.
- 194 **S2:** I kind of (...) can, yeah. (...) To some extent.
- 195 **S1:** Mm.
- 196 **S2:** Like (...) I think (...) Koreans are very easy to spot. And Thai and Filipinos. They're very easy to distinguish.
- 197 **S1:** Why?
- 198 **S2:** Because of their facial features. I can also distinguish with the way that they talk, especially between Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Because because I watch a lot of anime, so it's easy to distinguish Chinese and Japanese. And (...) if it's not Chinese, then it's Korean. Because Korean to me sounds like a (...) like a broken Japanese record, something like that is the best way to describe it. (...) Let's just say that Japanese sounds the most pleasant to the ears.
- 199 **S1:** Yeah. Okay.
- 200 **S2:** Phonetically, when you hear it because it's syllable after syllable and you don't have to break your tongue where Chinese is (...) a totally different story.
- 201 **S1:** (...) And do you think like these kind of TikTok content can influence how people perceive Asian groups?

- 202 **S2:** Of course.
- 203 **S1:** (..) Like how?
- 204 **S2:** Let's say (..) I show this content that I've seen on that (..) I've seen on this TikTok account (..) to (..) let's say a friend of mine in Serbia that has (..) no idea about Asia in general. Probably he would ask me like, what the hell are these people doing in Asia? (...) Or China.
- 205 **S1:** Yeah, or China.
- 206 **S2:** Or China, because most of the people, when you say Asia, they think China. They are, I don't know, because it's the biggest, right? I have a friend when I say, (..) oh, that person's Asian. And he goes like, yeah, he's from China.
- 207 **S1:** Yeah, but why do they think like that? I also encounter multiple times of this, but I don't understand why.
- 208 **S2:** Oh, because (...) Well, coming back to your question, he thinks he thinks that (..) that Asians as a race are all the same. He does not recognize the facial (..) differences from different countries in Asia. So it's in the same, let's say, like kind of melting apart for him, and it's China, and that's it.
- 209 **S1:** Do you think it's because of the (..) education that you receive since you were young?
- 210 **S2:** No, no. (..) He kind of says he kind of says that to joke a little bit, right? But he (..) definitely cannot distinguish between Chinese, Asia, Korean, Filipino, and that, right? He just says, oh, they're all from China.
- 211 **S1:** Yeah, this is, (..) I just don't understand because also, I think two weeks ago I went to Morocco and me and my friend, both are Asian, and when we are walking on the streets, everyone is just saying like, nihao. It's like everyone like in on the streets. I I think (..) they were trying to be nice, but I felt very uncomfortable.
- 212 **S2:** Okay, a question for you. Why did you get offended?
- 213 **S1:** Because first of all, I don't like (..) stranger to talk to me all the time on the street because they were not only just saying nihao, they are also saying like, (..) pretty Chinese girls, I like you, baby, like this kind of things. (..) This is very irritating for me. And then seconds, if, yeah, I am Chinese, but what if I'm from, (..) I don't know, from (..) Japan or from Thailand?
- 214 **S2:** Yeah.
- 215 **S1:** It gets it's a kind of offensive, I would say, like you are just...
- 216 **S2:** Stereotyping.

- 217 **S1:** Yeah, stereotyping me, (..) I'm definitely a Chinese just because I look like an Asian. That's (..) that's like why I don't like it. But also I get the point. They don't really know what's the difference between (..) China and Asia as a whole because I was also talking with someone and she even asked me like, what is the difference between Japanese and Chinese? Is it not the same language? No. It's totally different languages and these are two different countries. But I get that they probably never get any information of Asia, so they couldn't really distinguish us. It makes sense, but (..) I was just trying to understand why they think like this. Because I think nowadays with the internet, with all the social media, it's not so hard to get this kind of information. It's either you don't want to get that or (..) I don't know.
- 218 **S2:** (...) I know, I understand. I know a couple I know a couple of Chinese words. So, yeah.
- 219 **S1:** What did you say?
- 220 **S1:** Ganbei.
- 221 **S1:** That's cheers.
- 222 **S2:** Yeah.
- 223 **S1:** Yeah. So you actually don't think it's because of the (..) education
- 224 **S2:** (...) Depends on what kind of education that you get. I think in Europe, (...) I don't know. I was kind of interested in geography, but there are other people who just don't care. Right? The thing is, (..) a lot of people from the region when I'm where I'm born, high chances that they're never going to go and visit Asia. And when I say Asia, I think of Southeast Asia, you know, like, (..) Japan, China, (..) Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, etc, et cetera. They don't get the chance to see the differences physically from a Chinese person, from a Thai person, from a Korean person, et cetera. So that's why they just know China, China is the biggest country. Chances are (..) it's probably going to be a Chinese person, right? That (..) that's my thought process.
- 225 **S1:** It might be. And also when I was talking with the Indian friend and he said, mostly when people are talking about Asia, they would automatically like erase India (..) from Asia (..) category.
- 226 **S2:** That's what I do.
- 227 **S1:** Yeah, okay. That's also (..) what you do. Why do you do that?
- 228 **S2:** (..) Because I'm biased against Indians.
- 229 **S1:** But he was he said, I asked him, do you consider yourself as an Asian? Like, he said, yeah, why not?
- 230 **S2:** Oh, no, I understand geographically.

231 S1: Yeah.

232 S2: He's Asian.

233 S1: Yeah, but why do you think he's not? (..) They are not?

234 S2: Because they don't look like the majority of other ethnicities (..) that also live in Asia, right? But like I said, I'm biased against Indians. I personally don't like India.

235 S1: Because of their culture?

236 S2: (..) Because of everything. I mean, have you seen (..) immigration videos?

237 S1: What kind of immigration videos you mean?

238 S2: Do you, like, literally, Canada is ruined because of Indians?

239 S1: Yeah, but but you cannot just (..) but those are just videos.

240 S2: Yeah, videos of random people that post it online.

241 S1: Yeah, but you cannot (..) say, you saw this video, so you (..) 100% sure all the Indians are like this.

242 S2: Oh, not everyone, but if you are civilized enough (..) and you have some type of culture that you bring from your home country, you can't say that it came to Canada (..) for university, and then just take a shit on the street in the middle of daylight. (...) Like, (..) how? No, that doesn't work. There's no way. And I'm going to believe the random videos of people who recorded that and put it online, than the news in Canada, that reports about Indians.

243 S1: Have you ever seen any videos that it's portraying Indian as a good (..) as a positive side?

244 S2: No. All of the videos, I think the algorithm knows that I'm very biased against India and they show me the worst content about India. (...) Absolutely. It's either scam calls or just like people with god awful personal hygiene, like, God forbid.

245 S1: Yeah, yeah.

246 S2: (...) Or like the dirty street food where, I don't know, (..) a person is kneading flour under his armpits or something like, come on.

247 S1: Yeah, but you know those are just exaggerated. (..) Some are, some are probably not, but some are exaggerators.

248 S2: Okay, so here's here's one example of (...) talking bad about India. From time to time, I get a

video from (..) an Australian (..) content creator influencer. I don't know how do you want to call it. Her name is I think it's (..) Dina. She's either Chinese. She's, I think she's born in Australia, but she's from (..) either Chinese, Japanese, some southern East Asian descent, right? So she has those roots. And she announced that she's going to go to India alone.

249 S1: Yes.

250 S2: And the first top three comments are from Indians themselves saying, don't come to India alone.

251 S1: Mm.

252 S2: So when an Indian himself is saying, this is not safe for you, at least come with some (..) male friend.

253 S1: Yeah.

254 S2: I think that says enough.

255 S1: Mm. Yeah. Okay. Makes sense. So I conclude that these kind kind of contents influence you a lot about how you see India.

256 S2: Yeah, but...

257 S1: Yeah, but I mean, I know it's like very normal. Just..

258 S2: I've never seen a positive thing about India. I'm sorry. I just have to say it.

259 S1: Okay. Also for those videos, like back to the Indian videos, a lot of like (..) creators are Indian themselves. Why do you think they are making this kind of videos?

260 S2: (...) What type of videos?

261 S1: Like the street foods memes. That's like a viral on the internet.

262 S2: Well, it's not memes. I don't know why (..) they actually share dirty street food and people eating (..) with their hands. Actually, eating with their hands, that I think that's a cultural thing. (..) It's more about the personal hygiene. I don't know why they're sharing. If , hey, if they didn't have mobile phones and internet connections, nobody would know about this.

263 S1: Yeah, but.

264 S2: Yeah.

265 S1: This is So, why this is like also what I want to know, like how they started this and why they started this. But did you find this memes or (..) videos funny?

266 **S2:** I've never seen memes about India. I really just get the bad stuff about India on my feed when I see it.

267 **S1:** But there was one in TikTok.

268 **S2:** I skipped as immediately.

269 **S1:** Yeah, exactly.

270 **S2:** It's the street food one. I don't know what she's making. That didn't look hygienic, so I skipped it.

271 **S1:** Yeah, yeah. But those are should be should be some like humor or funny videos.

272 **S2:** No. That's There's no way that's a funny video.

273 **S1:** Yeah, but even like my Indian friend said that's a funny video, he find it's funny.

274 **S2:** Okay, I'm going to scroll back and look at it.

275 **S1:** Okay.

276 **S2:** Okay, she's making. (...) So there's a lot of lemon, so I think it gets lemonade she's putting. (...) Ice in the glasses, it's probably salt. (...) She's putting some powder inside? I don't know what that is. (...) Uh (...) Okay, now she's squeezing the lemon, I don't know if she's making some kind of tequila or something, if she's putting salt inside, but I don't think so.

277 **S1:** She's making a drink, right?

278 **S2:** She's making a drink. (..) Oh, that's (..) that's baking soda. Okay. So she's making like a drink or something, but none of this is funny. There's no way this is funny.

279 **S2:** Yeah, but..

280 **S2:** That's not a meme.

281 **S1:** As I heard, it's supposed to be funny.

282 **S2:** But yeah, just like you said, oh my God, that looks so horrid. It's supposed to be funny, but it's not.

283 **S1:** Yeah, but the who is like uploading this kind of video, what's the purpose? Yeah, okay, it's very strange for me, but yeah.

284 **S2:** (..) What's the purpose of the uploader? I don't know.

285 **S1:** Yeah, I guess it's also to gain the views. I mean, nowadays is like (..) viral on the internet. So (..)

it can be.

286 S2: Yeah, I think (..) TikTok pays more for views than Instagram, I think. Not sure.

287 S1: I don't know as well.

288 S2: Yeah.

289 S1: Then do you feel like this kind of content could contribute to real world bias or discrimination?

290 S2: Yeah, I'm the perfect example of it.

291 S1: Okay.

292 S2: I think that answers your question.

293 S1: Mm-hmm.

294 S2: (..) I don't (..) I don't want none of this in my life. No, there's no way.

295 S1: But how do you think, like, in your imagination, how do you think an Asian or an Indian user watch this kind of of video, how would they react?

296 S2: (..) If an Indian person saw this video, right, about this drink making from (..) a random food stall an idiot, he'd probably think it's normal. (...) He would probably think it's normal. I've seen comments on the very dirty street food videos where Indians would comment that (...) I do get it. Those are slums and the living standards are very horrible there, right? But (..) I remember of a comment saying like, (...) foreigners watching this video and get disgusted but don't even know like the true food in India in normal cities, right? I do I do realize that good food exists in India, right? I do think Indian food is generally great, right? Even if it's made here (..) in like super clean hygienic situations. But I just don't eat it.

297 S1: For example, if you have an Indian friend, would you (..) accept his invitation to (..) he cooking a dinner for you?

298 S2: (..) Here in Vienna?

299 S1: Yes.

300 S2: Probably. Probably. Depending on, there's (..) I don't know how spicy they may make their food. I mean, I love spicy food, but probably the tolerance of his spicy and my spicy is very different.

301 S1: So think more about the spiciness, not the hygiene.

302 S2: No, I do think about the hygiene more. No, no, no, of course, of course.

303 S1: But you still would probably accept.

304 S2: Right. If I know that he looks clean and he (..) uses deodorant and washes normally, right? But now coming back to the cleanliness, I've seen videos and like maybe screenshots of (..) maybe Twitter posts and whatever and (..) there were definitely some comments of people saying that they don't even know what deodorant is and they don't use it.

305 S1: Really? Okay.

306 S2: Yeah. I don't I don't know if I've liked that video. I'm going to check right away. But even if I did like it, there's probably, (..) I don't think I could find it. (...) You can keep asking me questions while I search for this?

307 S1: (..) You can search it I will think about the questions.

308 S2: (...) Are you surprised about some of my answers?

309 S1: I think no, but (...) no.

310 S2: Okay. (...) Ooh, here's the video. (...) Okay, so this is the video.

311 S1: But also, like, (..) from his background, (...) you can see he's from a (..) he is not coming from a very wealthy region or family. I mean, it's also like the case that when you cannot even (..) afford for the food, how can you even care about if you smells bad?

312 S2: I'm going to contradict that if (..) you can afford internet, I think you can afford a stick of deodorant. (...) Because he's chatting to someone on the internet.

313 S1: But would you say this kind of video is real?

314 S2: Could be.

315 S1: But it can also be fake.

316 S2: It can be fake, but I choose it to be real because I'm biased.

317 S1: Okay. Okay, let's (..) skip the Indian topic.

318 S2: Yes, please.

319 S1: Let's go back to the (..) sexualized the female.

320 S2: Okay.

321 S1: Because I have asked a couple of males and they would think (..) this kind of content, like a

female are doing this kind of content is (..) I think they are supporting this female are doing this kind of content because they think like female, they are using their own benefit to gain money and they think it's a (..) reasonable (..) market. (..) Do you also think the same?

322 S2: Unless you're very, very, very popular on TikTok, I don't think you get a lot of money. Then again, (..) I can ask you the same thing if they support women getting money and why not, (..) do they support women doing OnlyFans?

323 S1: I guess they also support women doing OnlyFans. Why do you think they don't?

324 S2: (..) To what kind of guys did you talk to?

325 S1: Just some random people.

326 S2: I think.

327 S1: Why?

328 S2: This is probably my thinking because (..) were (..) they Austrian?

329 S1: No.

330 S2: Because I don't think any of my friends (..) would support anyone on OnlyFans.

331 S1: It doesn't matter the gender.

332 S2: Doesn't matter the gender. To be fair, there's 99.999 creators of (..) OnlyFans are female, and we know what they do.

333 S1: Yeah, but what's the difference then? Like between doing the OnlyFans and uploading this kind of sexualized soft support on TikTok?

334 S2: They can make more money of OnlyFans.

335 S1: Yeah, then (...) . So, you don't really support this.

336 S2: Uh, no.

337 S1: And why is that?

338 S2: Because I think they're sexualizing themselves for external validation. (...) Which is not going to change your way of life. That's what I think. God forbid you have an OnlyFans and OnlyFans today (..) gets leaked on so many obscure forums where there's like the worst of the worst people, probably, that are just waiting to see new quote unquote content from, I don't know, (..) a female that they follow. And that female is probably going to retire from OnlyFans because beauty fades at some

point then she's going to have a child and then the child's probably going to get bullied in school and the kids will say like, oh, I saw your mom's buttohole for five euros.

339 S1: But if it's with male and they do the same thing, would you have the similar (..) same comment.

340 S2: Oh, definitely. I think (..) I think the male creators on OnlyFans that promote sexual content, there's, (..) I don't know what's the number of them, but (..) I mean, people go for OnlyFans to see to see the woman, not the guy. It's rarely the other way around. (..) But also, the guy doesn't have to have an OnlyFans (..) to, you know, be in the the video with the woman.

341 S1: Uh-huh.

342 S2: Right. So he doesn't have to have an OnlyFan account. He doesn't have to have a subscription button or whatever. I don't know. There are guys who do it. I'm not saying that they don't. (...) All I'm trying to say is there's more moral ways to earn a living, right? You definitely, you definitely won't be rich as much. But (..) I don't know. It just signals to me that there's no self-respect and they seek external validation. Because people are deprived of a sense of intimacy.

343 S1: (..) And do you think social medias are promoting (..) some kind of Asian beauty standards?

344 S2: Mm. (...) I think so, yeah. Isn't it like. (..) There's like an unwritten rule in China that you're like, you're supposed to be very thin and white.

345 S1: Yeah.

346 S2: Yeah. I mean, I think that's just years and years (..) of tradition and maybe culture and standards. I don't know. It's hard to (..) describe it properly. I personally think like being very (..) pale as, I don't know, cheese and being thin. (..) You probably look malnourished and weak. I don't know. I don't think that's healthy. (..) But then again, the diet in these countries plays a big role. Like, let's say in Japan, people eat a lot of rice and fish and generally (..) a lot of vegetables, right. Probably in China as well.

347 S1: Japan don't really eat much vegetables.

348 S2: Yea they eat. They eat a lot of vegetables. Why wouldn't they?

349 S1: The vegetables there are very expensive expensive. It's very hard to get vegetables there.

350 S2: Is it?

351 S1: Yeah.

352 S2: Okay.

353 **S1:** Like the most vegetable they eat maybe is the spring onion. Well, that's true case because it's very expensive there. So (..) they are in the like grocery stores, you can get a lot of vegetable juice instead of eating real vegetables.

354 **S2:** Okay.

355 **S1:** So you think (...) their cuisine, it's like one of the reasons (..) made them very thin.

356 **S2:** One of the main reasons what?

357 **S1:** To make them like very thin, very skinny.

358 **S2:** I mean, (..) the majority of women in China and Japan are (..) shorter and skinnier than compared to..

359 **S1:** Also look younger, you think?

360 **S2:** Oh, yeah, definitely. But that's like the (..) facial structure, right?

361 **S1:** Mm-hmm.

362 **S2:** Especially with the eyes, I think they give like a very younger look than (..) than what their actual age is.

363 **S1:** But also one of the interview (..) I had with my friend. She said she think the anime is also promoting a kind of minor looking of Asian female, (..) like cute, and very small, tiny, this kind of image. (...) Well, I don't know what kind of anime you're watching, but as I recall, (..) like at the anime that I watched when I was younger, it was actually like that. Like for a older females are very skinny, very tiny, but still with big boobs and very cute face.

364 **S2:** Of course. (..) Standard (..) anime portrayal of women. What was one of the animes that you've seen before? Where (..) that's the case?

365 **S1:** It was very old. I cannot tell you the name.

366 **S2:** Okay. There definitely (..) is some kind of (...) I mean, yes, I think anime kind of portray that. (..) But then again, (..) I don't think. (...) Then again, I think that the majority of anime viewers are men.

367 **S1:** Yes.

368 **S2:** And (...) well, it also comes down to which genre of anime they watch, to be honest. Like, I don't (..) I don't watch, like the romance, love, and slice of life stuff, right? I need action and comedy. I need really something to be happening, not just follow the (..) daily life of Ben and Alice, you know, and how they're going to fall in love in school right? I don't I don't care about that.

369 S1: Obviously, those are not targeted to you, I guess.

370 S2: Yeah, of course. I'm not saying that there's that there aren't people who watch that, right? But...

371 S1: But there are also like some, I remember like one very famous and it's like like a fighting (..) anime.

372 S2: That came out recently or it's old?

373 S1: It's very old. Fighting anime, that's old.

374 S2: Dragon Ball Z? I don't know.

375 S1: No. Like, there's a blonde girl. (...) Okay, I really don't. Cannot remember the name. That's in this kind of anime, the female portrait is always like (..) big boobs. That's the only thing I can think about.

376 S2: Yeah, probably.

377 S1: Yeah. And they usually wear like very exposed clothes when they even when they are fighting with someone.

378 S2: I don't know what kind of anime have you've seen, but it's been a while since I saw something like that in the animes that I watch.

379 S1: Mm. Okay, I guess probably that was been very old back then, It was still like that. But now, I guess it changed since, (..) also, everything is changing.

380 S2: Probably.

381 S1: Have you also heard of the sex tourists in Thailand?

382 S2: Sex tourists as in. Yeah, well, I mean, I said about soi six and pattaya.

383 S1: Yeah, but those are mostly like Western (..) tourists they are doing that.

384 S2: Okay.

385 S1: Have you heard of it?

386 S2: I've only heard about Soy six. Like the red Light District in the main walking street. Other than that, I don't I have no idea.

387 S1: Okay, then never mind. Have you heard of like the stop Asian hate campaign during the COVID time?

388 **S2:** Yes, I did. (..) Yeah, of course, in America, (..) people also label everyone Chinese and telling them to get out of the country because they made corona.

389 **S1:** Yeah.

390 **S2:** Yeah, I've heard about it.

391 **S1:** Was it very effective?

392 **S2:** Sorry, what?

393 **S2:** You think it's very effective?

394 **S2:** (..) To just make up a hashtag on Instagram and make it trending so that everybody sees it. (..) I don't. It's it's kind of dumb because a lot of people are just born into the States with, in this case, Chinese roots, right? They have nothing to do (..) with China directly, right? So (..) but even if they're not born in the U.S., like (..) , they're living there, right? They moved from China and moved to U.S. And they've been living here for, I don't know, many (..) years already and just to assault someone over their roots (..) or rather their physical appearance just because a world pandemic is going on, I think it's very dumb.

395 **S1:** It wasn't a big deal in Europe, right? It was only mainly in the US.

396 **S2:** I don't think it was a big deal in Europe, no. Not sure, but (..)9 the videos I've seen were almost all definitely (..) cases that happened in the U. US.

397 **S1:** I guess the campaign was mainly, (..) I think it started from TikTok and that was mainly TikTok want to address harmful stereotypical contents about Asians. So you think it didn't really cause, like made any effect on people to change their minds.

398 **S2:** To change their minds (..) about (..) Asians being (..) at fault for corona or nothing to do with corona at all? Because you can look at it at two ways.

399 **S1:** To change their mind on (..) I don't think it's like changing on that. I think it's more of stop the hating or hate speech on Asians.

400 **S2:** Yeah, but the hate speech came from (..) because corona happened, right? I do not think this hashtag can actually change their minds on who caused corona or who spread it. It probably didn't because people believe what they want to believe. (..) I don't think you're going to influence someone like to change (..) their way of thinking. But (..) as far as I remember, it didn't last that long. It was some big deal for maybe a couple months or maybe even half a year. But I think I think it's (...) It kind of quieted down very quickly. I'm not sure, right? Because I've seen, I haven't seen a lot of videos about that.

401 S1: Okay. I think that (..) was most of the questions for the interviews. Is there anything you want to add?

402 S2: (..) Not really, no. I mean, you're the one asking questions.

403 S1: No, maybe you still have like something that you want to talk about. Of course, you can talk about it.

404 S2: No. Not really.

405 S1: Okay, then I will collect some of your personal information.

406 S2: Okay.

407 S1: Where are you from?

408 S2: I'm from Serbia.

409 S1: And how old are you?

410 S2: I'm going to be 32 in November, so technically still 31.

411 S1: And your highest education?

412 S2: Bachelor's degree.

413 S1: Gender identity?

414 S2: Male. There's only two genders.

415 S1: Have you lived in different culture environment?

416 S2: Different culture environment?

417 S1: Yeah.

418 S2: Yeah, here in Vienna.

419 S1: You would consider that's different culture environment?

420 S2: (..) Yeah, Austrians are very different to Serbians.

421 S1: For how long?

422 S2: I've been in Vienna since 2012.

423 S1: So 13 years?

424 S2: Yep.

425 S1: That's a long time.

426 S2: Yeah.

427 S1: How often do you use TikTok?

428 S2: Basically everyday.

429 S1: I ask this already. (..) Did it participating in the study affect the way you view TikTok's algorithm or racial content on the platform?

430 S2: I don't think so, no. It was somewhat to be. (..) I think it was somewhat to be expected. I may be was surprised by the content that was given to me at the start.

431 S1: Yeah.

432 S2: But I think if I used TikT, ok, I think it would just be a matter of time that I would see content similar to this.

433 S1: But you do use TikTok right?

434 S2: Yea I mean for like specific this type of thing.

435 S1: Why were your surprised at the beginning?

436 S2: (..) I don't know. I'm maybe I came with different expectations. I mean, you said, like Asian representation and whatever, right? I was maybe expecting more cultural videos, you know, about cities and diversity and whatever.

437 S1: If you search for Asian, you get this kind of video. Very unfortunate.

438 S2: Okay, but that's not the videos that they the algorithm showed me, so. I think this was more extreme.

439 S1: More extreme.

440 S2: Because some of the videos that were shown to me (..) explicitly tried to show you porn. (...) Like not even hiding it, right?

441 S1: Yes, of course.

442 S2: Where I've never seen (..) at least that content on Instagram. There's no way. (...) But I know that a lot of stuff gets reposted from TikTok to Instagram and vice versa.

443 S1: Mm. And were there any moments during the study when you felt uncomfortable?

444 **S2:** (..) Maybe not uncomfortable, but shocked. Like I said, the porn scenes.

445 **S1:** When you were scrolling (..) through the TikTok feed.

446 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. (..) Because (..) I mean, theoretically, if I can see it, (..) kids can also see it as well. It's it's not hard (..) or difficult to change your age when making a TikTok account. I don't know. Do you have to mention your age when you make a TikTok account?

447 **S1:** Yes, because there's a regulation for TikTok that (..) only over 14 years old is allowed on the platform.

448 **S2:** But then again, even if you're older than 14 and seeing this kind of content, I don't think that's good.

449 **S1:** Yeah, obviously.

450 **S2:** Yeah, obviously.

451 **S1:** But also, like for the regulation, it's not, (..) like they are not checking your ID or anything. It's just like you type into your birthday.

452 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know.

453 **S1:** Any birthday you want.

454 **S2:** Yeah, that's what I'm saying. You can probably put that you're 31 just like me.

455 **S1:** Yeah, exactly. So it doesn't actually it doesn't matter how old you are actually.

456 **S2:** Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

457 **S1:** Yeah.

458 **S2:** And yeah, that's all for the study.

459 **S1:** Thank you.

460 **S2:** Okay.

Interview I

1

2

S1 (Researcher): Okay. So before we start, I will briefly explain the study. So in the study, I'm interested in understanding your thought process as you complete the tasks I will give to you. To achieve this, I will ask you to think aloud while engaging with the task. By thinking aloud, I mean verbalizing everything that comes to mind from the moment you begin the task until you complete it. I encourage you to continuously express your thoughts without planning or structuring your response. Simply speak as though you were alone in the room, narrating your thoughts. If you remain silent for an extended period, I will prompt you to continue speaking. Do you understand what I mean?

3

S2 (Interviewee): Yeah, yeah.

4

S1: Okay. So before the primary think-aloud task, I will give you two training tasks. (..) First one: how many windows are in your parents' house? You don't need to count them by yourself — I will do that for you. Just tell me which room has how many windows.

5

S2: (..) So I tell you like each room or...

6

S1: Yeah, yeah. You can describe like: bedroom, two windows; living room, two windows — like that.

7

S2: (..) Bedroom, one window. My bedroom, one window. And (..) in the living room, there's two windows, if I'm not wrong. (...) And in the kitchen, there's a window. (..) Yeah, that's it, I think.

8

S1: Okay. So for the second task — imagine you're opening your favorite social media app. Without touching your phone, describe your usual actions upon opening the app. What type of content do you usually encounter, and how do you decide what to engage with or scroll past? Verbalize everything that comes to mind as though you were actively navigating the app.

9

S2: Usually on my (..) I open Instagram and (..) usually I see like a lot of watches because I like watches, and (..) some music stuff because I'm a musician.

10

S1: Yeah.

11

S2: And (..) just click what's interesting for me.

12

S1: Do you also look at your friend's (..) story?

13

S2: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, of course.

14

S1: Yeah. And (..) have you — so do you — have you gotten into the Instagram (..) "For You" page, or I don't know, how is it called?

15

S2: Oh, yeah, the feeds, yeah. Usually, I just open (...) if there is some — usually they put reels in

the (..) feeds. I just open something interesting and just slide it down, and if it's interesting, (..) just keep sliding. Just looking.

16 **S1:** Okay. And how long do you usually spend time on social media?

17 **S2:** Do you mean in a day or like, by open once?

18 **S1:** Yeah, daily.

19 **S2:** Daily might be a lot. (..) Because I — you're on your way, just open social media. Or maybe (..) three hours, four hours.

20 **S1:** Okay. So now I will give you a pre-set TikTok account. You can open it with your own device. (..) So I'll give you this. (...) It's my phone number. I think they will send me a code.

21 **S2:** Okay, wait, your phone number is...

22 **S1:** Yeah. I think they will send me a code — verify code — and then you can log in with the code.

23 **S2:** Wait one moment?

24 **S1:** Mm-hmm.

25 **S2:** (...) Oh, sorry. Can I do it again? So I didn't save that information.

26 **S1:** No, no, no worries.

27 **S2:** (...) Yeah, I started. Should you get an SMS?

28 **S1:** Yes. (..) It's 639 and triple zero.

29 **S2:** Oh, I put the wrong one. It's triple zero?

30 **S1:** Oh, yes, I also sent it in the chat.

31 **S2:** Ah, it's in now.

32 **S1:** Mm-hmm. Okay, so you will scroll through the feed in this account. Please verbalize your thoughts about what you see. This may include your immediate reactions to the account and your interpretation of why TikTok is recommending certain videos and how these recommendations make you feel. And you are free to interact with the content on the page — you can either like it, follow the account, comment, or (..) tap "Not Interested." It's completely up to you. And please, during the time, also turn on the screen recording so I can get back to the video that you went through.

33 **S2:** Oh, so I need to screen record this, right?

34 **S1:** Yes, just saving like in the TikTok will be fine.

35 **S2:** Okay.

36 **S1:** Yeah, you can start.

37 **S2:** I'm recording now? Yeah. (...) I think it's quite a lot of (..) it's very different with my TikTok.

38 **S1:** Mm-hmm. Okay, can you maybe describe a bit what it's about?

39 **S2:** I mean, first of all, it's more (...) because in my TikTok, it's mostly the content creator is from my (..) home country. Mostly it's more like (..) it's (..) foreigners for me. And mostly it's just like video that (..) people make this typical — I mean, you can see it's almost the same thing (..) from the whole feeds.

40 **S1:** Is it like Asian dancing?

41 **S2:** Yeah, yeah.

42 **S1:** Uh-huh. Mostly like female and male both?

43 **S2:** Yeah, some. Yeah, with some caption in the middle. Usually it's something like this. Usually I watch for funny videos or (..) some songs.

44 **S1:** So you don't really go through this kind of video most of the time?

45 **S2:** I mean, it appears once or twice, but I didn't really watch this kind of stuff.

46 **S1:** Okay. (..) If you don't really have many thoughts, you can also stop it right now.

47 **S2:** Sorry?

48 **S1:** If you don't really have much thought in your mind, we can also just stop this session at the moment, because — I mean, if it's the same content, I guess (..) there is not too much point, yeah?

49 **S2:** The same content. (..) I've been scrolling since I started — it's almost the same thing.

50 **S1:** Uh-huh. Okay.

51 **S2:** So I need to stop now, or?

52 **S1:** You can stop. And you can stop the recording. (..) So I would like to explain how this account was set. This is (..) because I want this account to just focus on Asian content, so I just typed in "Asian." And then it starts mostly with the female sexualized content — mostly the dancing and showing their body. And then after I go through some more, it will push more of this kind of content,

and then they will also give me some tabs that I can choose to go to. Like, for example, I think I got like “Tiny Asian,” “Filipino Asian,” and also some like “Filipino female looking for husband” — this kind of things. So I tapped on those, and then this is mostly how I set this account. (...) It’s quite a surprise for me because when you (...) search for “Asian,” there’s only this kind of female dancing videos. There was even barely any male content, I would say. Even if there is, it’s mostly about Koreans, and they are showing their face — or also, I would say it’s like sexualized Asian male.

53 **S2:** Yeah. In the page now, it’s — I would say — a lot of guys as well.

54 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. They’re showing muscles and stuff.

55 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, actually true. I don’t know why, because — yeah, at the beginning they will show male, and then later on they will start to show female, and then more and more female, and then it’s like more and more sexualized. For my previous accounts, the interview I had, I think (...) a day before, it was almost like soft porn already. And I think, okay, this is too much. So I did it with a new account now.

56 **S1:** Okay.

57 **S1:** And so, to post-reflect on the feedback for the session — did you feel the instructions made sense to you?

58 **S2:** Yeah.

59 **S1:** Yeah? And did you feel comfortable verbalizing your thoughts through the process?

60 **S2:** Yeah.

61 **S1:** Were there any moments that you struggled to articulate your thoughts?

62 **S2:** (...) Just to find the words to explain it.

63 **S1:** Uh-huh, uh-huh.

64 **S2:** I mean (...) it’s sometimes hard to find a word because you have it in your head, but it’s in your mother language, and it’s kind of hard to explain in English or (...) in another language. So I did just that, but to speak my thoughts, it’s not so complicated.

65 **S1:** Okay. So now move to the main interview part. Do you think there are any common stereotypes about Asians that come to your mind — for you, like in general in the Western world?

66 **S2:** In Western world, usually they would be — Asians would be smart. (...) That’s very typical.

67 **S1:** Yeah.

68 **S2:** (...) Yeah, I mean, I think that's the only thing that's usually very common. And I would think in Europe — I mean, as an Asian — depends on like which Asian (..) from what I heard from my friends, if it's like a Chinese — Chinese student that's studying in Europe, for example — they're either coming from a very rich family or a family of the government officials, because it's...So I assume they're going to have (..) quite more money than other students. Because, yeah, that's the fact — I've met my friends (..) from China and stuff — they are in the upper middle class, more like upper class.

69 **S1:** Uh-huh.

70 **S2:** Yeah, or they are the son or daughter of the government officials.

71 **S1:** So mostly about the (..) rich...

72 **S2:** The rich, yeah, sometimes...

73 **S1:** Backgrounds.

74 **S2:** Yeah.

75 **S1:** And they are very smart.

76 **S2:** Yeah, because I think also in Asia, it's quite — the currency difference is quite high with euros.

77 **S1:** Yeah, yeah.

78 **S2:** It's quite difficult to (..) send your children abroad without burning more (..) than average.

79 **S1:** Does this kind of stereotype bother you?

80 **S2:** Me?

81 **S1:** Yeah.

82 **S2:** You mean bother me?

83 **S1:** Yeah.

84 **S2:** No.

85 **S1:** Then did you feel stressed by, for example, the “being smart” stereotype? Like because they have some sort of expectation on Asians, so maybe they would also have some expectation on you to be smart as well?

86 **S2:** Sometimes, yeah. But (..) I mean, I didn't really get this (..) stereotype every time because most

of the people that I met here, they're just super friendly to me. (..) Either it's Austrians or it's from other countries, but they're always super nice to me. So for me, I didn't really feel there's a (..) stereotype discrimination kind of stuff.

87 **S1:** Okay. I'm back to the TikTok account. While you were scrolling through the TikTok content, did you notice there were any recurring patterns or themes in what was recommended to you?

88 **S2:** Yeah, it's — sometimes there is the same (..) girl that keeps coming, I think, the video. Or it's almost (..) after several girls, and then comes like one or two boys, then girls again, then (..) after more girls, then boys like once or twice. There's like girls, a lot of girls, then boys, then girls again.

89 **S1:** So mostly just dancing, (..) showing their body?

90 **S2:** Yeah, yeah.

91 **S1:** And why do you think that TikTok's algorithm decides what kind of content to show you?

92 **S2:** I think depends on your (..) first of all your likes, your saved video, and your following, maybe. Yeah, because sometimes in my TikTok, I like some videos, or if I watch like one video longer — for example, (..) one topic — I watch it quite long, then they're going to suggest me more videos like this.

93 **S1:** Do you think they also recommend the video based on your identity, or your behavior

94 **S2:** (..) Behavior in?

95 **S1:** I think behavior not only inside of TikTok, maybe also outside — like when you (..) were interacting with some other apps, they would collect maybe data from your phone and they would recommend some sort of videos. For example, I had some experience with Instagram, I guess, (..) when I was like shopping on some website, and I don't know — somehow they get this kind of information and then they (..) would add, like, about this website or about some like product that I bought on my Instagram page.

96 **S2:** Actually, I heard about this a lot. But I mean, for me, I never really experienced this. (..) Yeah, I don't think so for me. But I think in iPhone, they have this now — a feature (..) like to allow you to track like your activities.

97 **S1:** Yeah, you can reject to let the app track your (..) I don't know — history or something.

98 **S2:** Yeah, yeah.

99 **S1:** Yeah, I always choose reject, but I don't feel it works that well.

100 **S2:** Oh, okay.

- 101 **S1:** And then do you think they recommend the content based on your identity or like your ethnicity, your nationality or something?
- 102 **S2:** I mean, (..) I think it could be. I think, yeah, could be.
- 103 **S1:** Because mostly you get content — it's from your home country? Or it's based on Vienna, Austria? Or how does it work? What kind of content do you get, mostly?
- 104 **S2:** I get mostly the content (..) that I like — like I like in the platform. And then, but sometimes I still receive like local content from Austria. I think they detect that I'm in Vienna. Then I get some (..) something — some events maybe about Vienna, or (..) just from nothing famous — it's just a random account that pops up. It's not even like (..) high-likes accounts — just like normal account people make, like with three followers and stuff. The video just came up (..) just randomly sometimes.
- 105 **S1:** Yeah, makes sense. I also get that sometimes too.
- 106 **S2:** Yeah. It's very — I think it's actually quite strange, because it's not the content that I'm interested in and also it's nothing related to me, but it just pops up somehow.
- 107 **S1:** Yeah.
- 108 **S2:** Once or twice.
- 109 **S1:** Yeah, yeah. But how do you usually react to this kind of content? Just scroll past? Or would you react with "Not Interested"?
- 110 **S2:** I (..) just scroll past because I don't want TikTok to recommend more of this kind of content to me.
- 111 **S1:** Yeah. Have you also like ever seen this kind of sexualized Asian content on your (..) social media platform?
- 112 **S2:** There is a lot.
- 113 **S1:** Okay.
- 114 **S2:** There is a lot. Because I usually see (..) a lot of K-pop stuff. They make AI edits and stuff. (..) I mean, sexualized editing and stuff.
- 115 **S1:** Mm. And you also just scroll past them?
- 116 **S2:** Yeah. (..)
- 117 **S1:** But they just keep coming up?

118 **S2:** Sometimes, yeah.

119 **S1:** Mm.

120 **S2:** (...) Because the — I mean, these past few days, there's a lot of this AI edit, so they change the clothes and stuff. And (...) it keeps appearing several times.

121 **S1:** So you mean AI-generated content?

122 **S2:** So there's a picture of an actress — I mean, a singer — and then, because I know the original picture, they're wearing these clothes, but then they change it to something else. Something like this. Sometimes it's a bit sexual, sometimes yes, they change the clothes, but it's very AI.

123 **S1:** What do you think is the point of this kind of video? Like why do they post this?

124 **S2:** Maybe they just want to find people who (...) like to sexualize them. Because sometimes I see in the comments, people are really interested in this. (...) And they're like, "How do you do it? How did you make this?" and stuff.

125 **S1:** So mostly, I would say fans are interested in recreating, yeah?

126 **S2:** Yeah.

127 **S1:** And so based on what you have seen, do you think TikTok is promoting or reinforcing some kind of stereotypes about Asians?

128 **S2:** (...) I mean, in my experience, I don't think so.

129 **S1:** Yeah.

130 **S2:** I mean, I haven't seen anything (...) offensive, like from TikTok to (...) Asians. I don't know with other people, but from my experience, I don't think so.

131 **S1:** Uh-huh. But do you think this kind of like sexualized content can maybe make people think (...) or interpret that Asian people are maybe more sexually open or something? Because I think also in some (...) Southeastern Asian areas, there are quite a lot of like rumors or quite a lot of content about sex tourism. I'm not sure if you heard of it?

132 **S2:** Really?

133 **S1:** Yeah, yeah. Previously I had a couple of interviews and they all mentioned this.

134 **S2:** I'm from Southeast Asia, but I didn't get any of this.

135 **S1:** Uh-huh. And also you never heard of it?

136 S2: No. This is my first time hearing this.

137 S1: Okay.

138 S2: But then from which countries are they?

139 S1: (..) Mostly Thailand.

140 S2: Ah, okay. I think Thailand is quite (..) different because — Thailand is quite known for the prostitution.

141 S1: Yeah.

142 S2: Yeah.

143 S1: I think also this kind of content is quite big (..) at the moment on TikTok.

144 S2: Yeah.

145 S1: I didn't really search for it, but it still pops up most of the time, so...

146 S2: Sometimes in my social media, people make like "my holiday in Thailand," like they make (..) this kind of video — like half is about the food or the view, and then they put some clips like they hired a prostitute from Thailand. You understand — this kind of stuff (..) in the video. So I think it's maybe the spirit of Thailand, but (..) I don't know.

147 S1: (..) And do you think like TikTok algorithm is treating different Asian groups — like East Asian, South Asian, or Southeast Asian — differently? Or does it tend to present them as one group?

148 S2: I think it could be different (..) because the content is quite different — like the Southeast Asian and, for example, the (..) Korean or Japanese content is quite different from what we have.

149 S1: Also, like the (..) content that you've seen from (..) the account that I gave to you — actually, yeah, I also went through quite a few contents. I actually couldn't really tell like, where are these creators from. Would you actually recognize like where they are from or you (..) also have no idea?

150 S2: I would — in my mind, I would think this is (..) immigrated Asian. (..) Yeah, either to the USA or to Europe somewhere.

151 S1: So they don't really look like locals to you?

152 S2: You can see in the way they put makeup and (..) the way they dress up. I mean, growing up, this type of Asian that I see — it's very different from this. The makeup, the dress. (..) But the boys, I think (..) it's Korean, I think. Korean or Chinese. But the girls — it's like, yeah, they're students abroad. Like, none of them — they didn't live in Asia, I think, most of them.

- 153 **S1:** But do you think like in the internet world or in Western society, when people think about “Asia,” it’s mostly just East Asia? Do you have this kind of impression somehow?
- 154 **S2:** Yeah. Sometimes it’s mostly East Asia — Japanese, Chinese, Korean.
- 155 **S1:** (..) Then why do you think this caused this kind of phenomenon? Because like, social media is promoting more of Eastern Asia? Or like in traditional news media, it’s also mostly focused on Eastern Asia. Yeah, actually now I think about it and feel like all the news media (..) are mostly just focused on East Asia, no?
- 156 **S2:** I mean, yeah — I mean the big issues are mostly with East Asia. (..) Like the Chinese government with their innovation and stuff. And then (..) Koreans with the K-pop, K-drama and stuff — it’s mostly looked at, and Japanese as well. So I think because (..) they do something more impactful globally, then they get more attention. That’s why people who didn’t really (..) dig deep — just look at the surface — they only see what the media shows.
- 157 **S1:** Yeah, that’s what I think. Yeah.
- 158 **S1:** It’s like Japanese — they are very famous for anime.
- 159 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 160 **S1:** I think it’s causing a big influence in Europe. It makes a lot of like — (..) especially people around me, the Europeans — they really would like to visit Japan.
- 161 **S2:** Oh, you’re from Japan?
- 162 **S1:** No, I’m not from Japan.
- 163 **S2:** Okay.
- 164 **S1:** Yeah, yeah.
- 165 **S1:** And also, yeah — I think it’s something like this.
- 166 **S1:** And do you think TikTok content can influence how people perceive Asian groups?
- 167 **S2:** Could be, yeah.
- 168 **S1:** How do you think it can shape public opinion about Asians?
- 169 **S2:** I mean, it depends on like what kind of video is shown on social media, but (..) it can create some skepticism — that depends. (..) Like maybe, for example, in Thailand — maybe people will think more that there’s a lot of prostitution and stuff because social media keeps making these videos (..) about girls in Thailand. Well, on the other hand, Thailand has amazing food and views.

I've been there — maybe something like this.

170 **S1:** Have you also seen the (..) Indian street food memes? I think that's also quite viral at the moment.

171 **S2:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

172 **S1:** Would you think that's the reality in India?

173 **S2:** I have a friend from India and he (..) confirms it's almost like this.

174 **S1:** So that's the truth?

175 **S2:** From what he said, yeah. But not in every city. Like, he said that if you go to Mumbai, it's going to be very different. But in the other places, it's more like this.

176 **S1:** Uh-huh. But I think nowadays this meme is becoming very exaggerated because (..) they are already — like, for example — using the mud to take a shower or putting the food (..) under their armpits and then still take it out to eat.

177 **S2:** Yeah, yeah.

178 **S1:** I think this is already too much. Like, people — I don't believe people would actually do this in India, but maybe I'm wrong. So I don't know why this kind of thing is getting like this right now. And with my previous interviewees, they all said they try to avoid this kind of thinking, but they cannot help it. And they start to think like India is actually like this — and then they start to feel like not really well to travel to India. (..) Yeah. So do you think this also has some similar influence on you?

179 **S2:** No. For me, I'm the type of person — if I heard something from the news, I'm going to at least do my own research about it.

180 **S1:** Yeah.

181 **S2:** Or I ask — if I have a friend who's from this country, I'm going to ask them directly. "Is it like this or is it like that?" For example, the situation now between Iran and Israel. One of my professors is from Iran — I asked her directly: "What do you think?" And it's very different from what the media has said. And she has contacted people — she has family in Iran — and it's a very different (..) view. So I always do this. I do my own research or I (..) ask someone from the (..) from the country.

182 **S1:** Yeah. And just for like the TikTok — in my account — do you think like people from different cultural backgrounds would interpret this kind of content differently? Yeah, like just imagine — for example, an Austrian opens his (..) TikTok account and he searches for "Asian," and then directly a lot of like dancing, this kind of sexualized content pops up. How do you think they would think about it?

- 183 **S2:** I mean, I think maybe they will like it (..) because nowadays there's a lot of Europeans that take an Asian wife. (..) So maybe they are interested. Because you've seen — they're everywhere. It's a European guy and they (..) have a European–Asian wife or girlfriend, which is very common. Maybe they like it.
- 184 **S1:** And what do you think about this kind of phenomenon — like a white guy with an Asian wife?
- 185 **S2:** (..) I don't really mind. But in my mind, something that crosses my mind is — it will be the cultural difference that they will face. (..) Because it's going to be very difficult. The lifestyle, (..) the cultural background, the family background — difficult. I would say even with me and my friends, it's very hard to (..) sometimes hang out with them because it's very different — like what they do for fun (..) compared to what I grew up doing, what I grew up with to have fun. So it's, yeah.
- 186 **S1:** So you mean like with your Austrian friends?
- 187 **S2:** Yeah — Austrian. I mean, European in general.
- 188 **S1:** Yeah, okay, yeah. Of course. And do you think this kind of content could contribute to real-world bias or discrimination?
- 189 **S2:** (..) Again, depends. I think the one who sees this (..) depends on how the viewers see it. It could make more discrimination, or it could help people to appreciate. So yeah, it depends, I would say.
- 190 **S1:** Have you ever personally experienced any bias or discrimination?
- 191 **S2:** I did — but it's not from the Europeans. (..) It's from the Chinese people.
- 192 **S1:** Oh, okay. Would you like to share about it?
- 193 **S2:** Because I'm a musician, I'm a violinist, I'm studying music in Vienna. And last year I had several projects — I was supposed to go to China.
- 194 **S1:** Yes.
- 195 **S2:** I think three projects. Because now the Austrian (..) relationship with China is quite strong now — they're exchanging musical concerts. So (..) some organizers from China are trying to find (..) an orchestra to bring to China to have a concert, and they sell the concert with quite high price.
- 196 **S1:** Yes. And sorry to interrupt — what kind of instrument do you play?
- 197 **S2:** Violin.
- 198 **S1:** Violin. Okay, continue.
- 199 **S2:** Yeah. And because this organizer couldn't really pay (..) a big institution — like, for example, the

Vienna Symphony Orchestra or Vienna Philharmonic — so they just contact with some local organizer, and then they organize — they make like an orchestra especially for this project. I've been invited (..) three times to this project. But the moment when they gave my name to the organizer, (..) the organizer from China said, "Sorry, we don't want any Asians in the project." So it's like an "Asian-free" project. So it's only for Europeans so they can sell the tickets. But even so — three times my project got cancelled. I was supposed to go to China in December, so I will see how it goes. Also, I heard about Japan — because Japan has so many (..) connections with some well-established orchestras in Vienna. But I heard from the musicians themselves, (..) they have an agreement: if they have a tour to Japan, they couldn't take any Japanese musician. And sometimes it's no Asians — which is kind of ironic. One of the conductors — the artistic, the (..) principal conductor from the orchestra that's had a 200-year relationship with Japan — is a Japanese.

200 **S1:** But why don't they really — like for China, yeah, I get that they want to sell the tickets, so for Europeans there's more like (..) to see. But for Japan, why do they also not take (..) Japanese or Asian musicians?

201 **S2:** You mean outside Chinese, you mean?

202 **S1:** Yeah, in Japan, yeah.

203 **S2:** For Japan, I don't really know why. I think it's maybe the same reason.

204 **S1:** Also just to sell the ticket?

205 **S2:** I think, yeah — mostly to sell the tickets. I think because — I mean, they want to have a connection with a European orchestra.

206 **S1:** Yes.

207 **S2:** So they're expecting a full European orchestra — if you know (..) what I mean — like, full European, quote unquote.

208 **S1:** I get that. But that's very — it's very (..) offensive. I think no matter for you or for the European musicians, this is both offensive.

209 **S2:** I mean, (..) on the other hand, I understand this. But like — sorry, where are you from?

210 **S1:** Yeah, I'm from China. But yeah, I also think this is a very rude behavior.

211 **S2:** I mean, I understand. For example, if it's like the (..) Chinese — I don't know — would have Chinese orchestra, you have local instruments. And if it's filled with like Europeans, it doesn't make sense. So I understand — like, at some point it's not right — but I still understand the reason behind it. So yeah.

- 212 **S1:** Yeah. But I think like — I would say — China is (..) a very racist country. They are (..) influenced by social media a lot. Like for the Indian content — they would immediately start to hate India. Like they would immediately think India is definitely actually like this, and they would avoid traveling to India. And also, like (..) because I also think social media power in China nowadays (..) portrays Southeast Asia as very poor and very underdeveloped. So then we start saying, “Okay, it’s very dangerous there,” “You should never go there alone,” and blah blah blah. And also, for white people — they’re, I think — they’re just like worshipped. They think white people are rich, very educated. They think everything is better in Western countries. But at the same time, they look down on other Asian people, look down on Black people. (..) This is a very huge — like, from my opinion, it’s a very huge thing in China, but they never realize it. And yeah.
- 213 **S2:** Yeah. But I heard like (..) even in the Chinese community — I guess I watch a lot of (..) K-pop stuff.
- 214 **S1:** Yes.
- 215 **S2:** I heard the Chinese people are very toxic as well — about the actresses or idols.
- 216 **S1:** Yeah.
- 217 **S2:** You mean on the beauty standards?
- 218 **S1:** On the beauty standards and stuff. And it becomes — it doesn’t make sense anymore. It’s not human — what they expect from the actresses or singers.
- 219 **S2:** Yes, yes.
- 220 **S1:** I think in general, East Asia — that’s like a very (..) general thing. Is it the same, like, also in Malaysia?
- 221 **S2:** I don’t know.
- 222 **S1:** I’m from Indonesia, but...
- 223 **S2:** Sorry, Indonesia.
- 224 **S1:** It’s okay.
- 225 **S2:** It’s (..) not that extreme, I would say.
- 226 **S1:** So even like — sorry, I didn’t really pay much attention to Indonesia, like...
- 227 **S2:** No, no, no. It’s almost like Malaysia, I would say. It’s kind of similar. I think they appreciate it more. Like they don’t have much complaint, for example, “Oh, she’s too fat” or “She needs to lose

more weight.” We just — we don’t really do this kind of stuff. But it’s always in the news — like, the Korean people do this a lot. But Chinese is more extreme than this.

228 **S1:** Yes.

229 **S2:** Yeah. It’s like almost inhuman — like (..) their expectations. So yeah.

230 **S1:** Do you think the beauty standard now is also somehow influenced by Korean — like the makeup and the Korean beauty products?

231 **S2:** I think yeah.

232 **S1:** So (..) they’re also trying to do this Korean makeup more?

233 **S2:** Yeah. I mean for me — because when I grew up, (..) because I’m a Chinese-Indonesian. So (..) when I grew up in high school — in school — (..) if you watch, there were either three options. It’s something regarding Japanese, Chinese or Korean. If you do something related with Japanese, then you are a wimp. No one will hang out with you. You’re like the nerd — the wimp. You understand?

234 **S1:** What?

235 **S2:** Yeah, yeah. I mean, it’s the kind of stereotype. I mean, because the people who are into anime and stuff — it’s quite extreme. So it’s quite (..) weird in Indonesia. And (..) because my communities are mostly Chinese-Indonesians...

236 **S1:** Yeah.

237 **S2:** (..) If they watch Chinese movies and stuff, it’s like — like old generation. So like in this — in my generation — Korean everything is like (..) top. Like higher level compared to the other two. So they look up to Koreans. The standard is going to be Korean. I mean, in my (..) what do you call it, like in my (..) circle — like the people around me — they are influenced by this Korean standard, mostly.

238 **S1:** Also for males as well, like the Korean style?

239 **S2:** Yeah, yeah.

240 **S1:** Uh-huh, okay. But do you also feel like — I’m not sure if you’ve encountered this kind of content — but like on TikTok, they are always very idealizing Korean men. And if you’re from another country — for example, Laos, or (..) I don’t know, like Malaysia or Indonesia — it’s always like, it’s not (..) as good as Korean. I don’t know why they so idealize Korean men, but this is like right now the thing. I think it’s also because K-pop is super popular in Europe. And also, they tend to think, “Oh, Koreans — they all look very pretty.” Yeah. And also, yeah — we have this kind of stereotype about Korean men: they use skin products, they care about their hygiene, they do very fashionable styles, and they are just gentle and they take care of you. They do the housework. They also take care of kids.

So...

241 **S2:** I think it's because of the social media — like, not even just social media — it's like (..) K-dramas maybe. Because Korean drama is quite well known.

242 **S1:** Yes.

243 **S2:** That's how they depict the Korean men.

244 **S1:** Yes.

245 **S2:** Maybe that affects them.

246 **S1:** And even some of my Austrian friends — they just put like their dating app, changed their location to Korea, and then just chat with the guys there.

247 **S2:** Really?

248 **S1:** That's extreme.

249 **S2:** Yeah.

250 **S1:** And maybe travel to Korea. They try to travel as much as possible — like twice, three times a year — just to go there to meet them and to have some dates with them. And also even one of my friends — she's planning to do a working holiday in Korea. But yeah, it's actually quite hard because she needs to learn Korean first and then maybe get a job there. It's not so easy, as I know.

251 **S2:** Interesting.

252 **S1:** Also, like, we have this kind of stereotype — it's not a stereotype, but I heard some rumors — that Japanese people, they are very... they don't really like foreigners. Is this the same (..) in Indonesia?

253 **S2:** I mean, in Indonesia, you mean?

254 **S1:** Yeah.

255 **S2:** Actually, people really adore Japanese in Indonesia because we have several (..) artists, people, social media influencers, singers and stuff — they came from Japan. Comedians. And they have a career in Indonesia and they are super nice. So (..) I mean, Japanese people are considered very nice for Indonesians.

256 **S1:** And what about like Western white people?

257 **S2:** (..) White people, we don't really have much. So it's not really that much. So I don't think we

have anything against them. Yeah, (..) we have nothing against them.

258 S1: Uh-huh. (..) Okay. Have you heard of that *Stop Asian Hate* campaign that was during COVID?

259 S2: Oh, yeah, yeah.

260 S1: And (..) that was something that TikTok launched to try to address harmful and stereotypical content about Asians. Do you think this kind of (..) initiative (..) actually worked, or do you think more is needed?

261 S2: I mean, it could work because nowadays (..) people use social media. I think that's one of the good platforms to voice this out.

262 S1: You mean the...

263 S2: The *Stop Asian Hate*, yeah.

264 S1: Yeah. But as I asked some other interviewees, they said like — this movement was very short and it didn't really change much. Yeah, I mean like during COVID, it was very extreme because (..) the virus came from China. And so everyone was thinking like, "Oh, the Asians are Chinese," and we're just going to hate them. But did you really think that campaign worked during the time?

265 S2: I don't really know, because during COVID time, I was not in (..) Europe yet.

266 S1: Yeah.

267 S2: And I didn't see it. I didn't know like if it was working or not. So I don't really know, sorry.

268 S1: Okay, okay, no worries. Have you also gotten any online discrimination — like hate speech?

269 S2: Oh, not really. Never been.

270 S1: Never met?

271 S2: No.

272 S1: Okay. Have you seen any TikTok content that made you feel uncomfortable because of how it portrayed Asians?

273 S2: (...) I don't think so. I mean, I just take it as a joke — if it's something about Asians. I never take it as a serious kind of thing. Because, I mean — maybe I know some content — like some are going to try to make a joke, but some people take it (..) aggressively as something offensive.

274 S1: Yeah.

275 **S2:** I mean, I know this kind of — for example, influencer — they make (..) just funny videos. And I just take it as a funny video. I take it as a joke. It never really offended me.

276 **S1:** And also when you were watching those (..) sexualized male contents — you didn't really feel uncomfortable?

277 **S2:** Sorry, what do you mean?

278 **S1:** The sexualized male contents — like for those who take off their shirts and are dancing in the video. You didn't really feel uncomfortable or angry?

279 **S2:** This kind of video — I mean, it's not my cup of tea, so I just skip it.

280 **S1:** Yeah. But it's just because you are not interested — but it didn't really cause any discomfort?

281 **S2:** Yeah. I just — I'm not interested in this kind of stuff, I just skip it.

282 **S1:** Uh-huh. And did you feel like the TikTok content actually reflects your experiences or identity accurately?

283 **S2:** I think, yeah — with my account. (...) It flows. Depends. Sometimes — sometimes it suits well. Sometimes I just accidentally — for example — like a video that I didn't intend to like. And it keeps showing again. It's kind of annoying. But sometimes, if it reflects — like, I like this type of video — and then they keep sending me, so it really is for me. (..) It's annoying. Yeah, it depends. (..) Algorithm set.

284 **S1:** Yeah. And do you think TikTok influences the way that you view your own (..) cultural background?

285 **S2:** (...) Maybe.

286 **S1:** Like how?

287 **S2:** Like my cultural background. (..) Like — I mean, some people make — because we are minorities in Indonesia, as Chinese-Indonesians. And some creators use it to make (..) that content — for example, “how life as a Chinese-Indonesian is.” Like, it's kind of related most of the time. And so now people also know like, “Ah, so this is what it's like to be (..) a Chinese-Indonesian,” like, “How do they feel?” Sometimes we get discriminated.

288 **S1:** Is it different to be a Chinese-Indonesian and like a (..) local Indonesian?

289 **S2:** It's very different.

290 **S1:** Can you maybe share some examples?

291 **S2:** Very clear example. (..) First of all, back during colonial times — when the Netherlands colonized our country — they divided Indonesia into three classes.

292 **S1:** Yeah.

293 **S2:** The highest class is the Dutch — like the noblemen. And then the second class is the merchants — which is Chinese and Indian. And (..) the lower class is like (..) kind of like — almost like a slave kind of level — is the Indonesian. So since then, the hatred towards Chinese people is quite strong.

294 **S1:** why people don't have hatred emotions towards Dutch people?

295 **S2:** They do, but after the colonialisation time, the Dutch left but the chinese stays in Indonesia, I think that is why.

296 **S1:** But why do they hate (..) Chinese people?

297 **S2:** (..) Because they're more successful than the local Indonesians, and most of them are jealous.

298 **S1:** Uh-huh, okay, okay.

299 **S2:** So (..).

300 **S1:** Yeah. I see.

301 **S2:** It's — most of the time, from what I experienced — mostly like this. And this affects — for example, in my (..) birth certificate — when they know that I'm Chinese, for example, they try to make everything difficult for us.

302 **S1:** Yes.

303 **S2:** In my passport now, I have one name. (..) I don't have a last name.

304 **S1:** It's possible to do that?

305 **S2:** Yeah, it shouldn't be possible, but (..) so when my dad was about to register me when I was born, they told my dad, "Sorry, your son's name is too long if he has two names."

306 **S1:** What?

307 **S2:** So they tried to make this difficult so that — like — my dad needs to (..) bribe the officer to put in both names, so they can (..) earn money from Chinese-Indonesians — like, to pay. (..) And so my dad didn't do it. Now I have kind of a problem in Austria — when I try for a visa. They keep asking. I'm going to fix this soon. But I mean, this is a clear example.

308 **S1:** Yeah. Uh-huh.

309 **S2:** Like even my dad — my grandfather, my dad — they didn't have a last name as well, because of this kind of problem. Some people have different problems in different areas. This is from my personal experience.

310 **S1:** Is your last name a Chinese last name?

311 **S2:** Ah, also this. So (..) my last name should be Chen — or Tang in some other dialects in Chinese.

312 **S1:** Yeah.

313 **S2:** Back then, it was not allowed to have a Chinese name. So in Indonesia, they changed it — they still keep the Chinese name, but they extend it into something not Chinese. For example, my unofficial last name is *Hertangdo*, because the "Tang" is there.

314 **S1:** Yeah.

315 **S2:** It's something like this.

316 **S1:** I see.

317 **S2:** So yeah, this kind of stuff. So none of them — I mean, most of the people now don't have like really Chinese names, but they have unofficial Chinese names. Like even my full — even unofficial Chinese name as well. It's not written anywhere, but I have it. I mean, I don't speak Chinese, but we have this.

318 **S1:** So you don't speak any Chinese anymore?

319 **S2:** I understand a bit. I learned in school for 12 years, but (..) it's too difficult.

320 **S1:** Yeah, okay. That makes sense.

321 **S2:** Yeah. Yeah, it's something like this. In my experience, it's quite difficult — especially also when (..) the majority of Indonesians are Muslim and (..) Christians — I am Christian — it's also a minority. Then I'm Chinese-Indonesian — it's even more of a minority. It's (..) yeah.

322 **S1:** I see. Something like this. Is it like — (..) do you feel like online they portray (..) Muslim — like Asian Muslim in general — very (..) differently from how you see Muslims as a group in your own country?

323 **S2:** In my own country, the Muslim people are so (..) radical. Like, the way they are portrayed on the internet is nothing compared to what they've done in Indonesia.

324 **S1:** Really?

325 **S2:** Yeah.

- 326 S1: Can you share an example if you have any?
- 327 S2: The discrimination. They — for example — (..) every time in some other area, the Christians want to build a church...
- 328 S1: Yeah.
- 329 S2: They shut it down. They make a demonstration — like 50, 60 people come and tear the building apart. (..) This kind of stuff. It's very radical. And once in Jakarta — the capital — several years ago, they had a very good governor. But he was Chinese-Indonesian and Christian. He got many awards — even international awards — as the best governor because of what he's done in Indonesia. But just because he was Chinese and Christian, they made a huge (..) demonstration. Thousands of people came to impeach him and to imprison him. Very messed up. Like the political agendas — they use even for the presidential election. Last time, thankfully, they didn't win — but they used religion as a (..) weapon.
- 330 S1: So would you say Indonesia is a very religious country?
- 331 S2: It's not religious — the Muslims are very radical. I would say, because the (..) education level in Indonesia — most of them is not very high.
- 332 S1: Yeah.
- 333 S2: It's easy to brainwash them — which is very common. I've heard a lot of stories — a lot of these radical Muslims come to (..) remote areas and start teaching the children to be like this. Yeah, so (..) yeah.
- 334 S1: But how did you — how could you become (..) Christian? Like, is it because of your family?
- 335 S2: My family.
- 336 S1: You chose it?
- 337 S2: My (..) grandfather was Buddhist, but I don't know how my dad became Christian. My mom is Catholic, so yeah.
- 338 S1: Uh-huh, I see. So your family is not a Muslim family anyway.
- 339 S2: Yeah. But Indonesia is the biggest Muslim country in the world, I think.
- 340 S1: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I know that.
- 341 S2: So, yeah. Like this.
- 342 S1: And do you feel like pressured to conform to certain stereotypes or avoid certain behaviors

because of how Asians are portrayed on TikTok?

343 S2: For me, I'm the type of person who doesn't mind. (..) Like, I just do whatever I want. If they accept me, they accept me — if they don't, then (..) I don't want to be someone I'm not. (..) That's what I've done since a very young age. So I didn't try to change anything.

344 S1: So you also (..) like never present yourself in a certain way?

345 S2: No.

346 S1: Because — to fit the standard, you mean? In Europe?

347 S2: Yeah.

348 S1: No?

349 S2: Yeah, no. I'm not.

350 S1: Yeah. Then do you feel like being in Europe, you feel like (..) an outsider here?

351 S2: (..) I never think of myself becoming an Austrian. So yeah.

352 S1: So you also never felt pressured. Because — like — I had another interview with another (..) girl from Indonesia. And she also told me that, for example, when she goes to some party or pub, she sees it's full of Austrian — like European, Caucasian, white people. And then she feels a bit stressed because she's going inside and maybe is the only Asian face in there. She starts to feel panic or something like that. Would you have this kind of similar feeling, maybe?

353 S2: Oh. (..) Actually, I mean — first of all, I didn't go to bars a lot, or pubs.

354 S1: Yeah.

355 S2: But I don't (..) think so. I never paid attention, actually. Because I always go with my friends, and — I mean — just hanging out with them is like my focus. So I didn't pay attention. But I don't think so.

356 S1: And also with your language — like, there are quite a lot of (..) videos on TikTok or elsewhere that mock Asian accents. Have you ever encountered any inconvenience or uncomfortable moments with your (..) English or German accent? You do speak German, right?

357 S2: Sorry?

358 S1: You do speak German, right?

359 S2: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

360 S1: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

361 S2: No. Actually, I've never had any encounters. And it's the opposite — they actually (..) praised my German and English. So I don't feel any discrimination.

362 S1: That's great. Have you ever seen any content on TikTok that made you feel proud or ashamed of being Asian?

363 S2: Proud, yeah. But ashamed — I don't think so.

364 S1: Proud of what kind of video?

365 S2: Like when they show (..) the culture of Indonesia, for example. People are amazed by this — like how the people act. As Indonesians, we are known for being very friendly (..) to each other. And people really appreciate it. In Europe, you're not as friendly as in Indonesia. So people say, "Oh, Indonesians are very friendly," and stuff. So I'm quite proud of that. Yeah, mostly this.

366 S1: (..) That's great. I mean, you are really a positive person, so...

367 S2: Yeah, yeah.

368 S1: For example, on social media — have you ever felt the need to post some type of content to get more views or to fit into this online trend world?

369 S2: For me, what I do differently with my posting on social media is I started posting a lot in English now — compared to (..) just to...

370 S1: I mean for your Instagram followers?

371 S2: So they could understand the content I'm posting. But I think that's the only change that I do.

372 S1: So it's more because you...

373 S2: So people can read or understand what I'm posting.

374 S1: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

375 S2: Yeah, that's it. And I do everything normally.

376 S1: Mm. It's very positive from you. It's very positive.

377 S2: Because I didn't do anything different. Like, that's just how I do — how I deal with my life since high school.

378 S1: Uh-huh. So, yeah.

379 S1: Yep. I think that was all for the interview. And now I would like to gather some personal information about you. So (..) you're from Indonesia. And how old are you?

380 S2: (..) 23 this year. This year I'm going to be 24, but I'm still 23.

381 S1: Okay. And what is your highest education.

382 S2: I'm doing my (..) bachelor's.

383 S1: And what is your gender identity?

384 S2: Male.

385 S1: (..) Is this your first time living in a different cultural environment — in Vienna?

386 S2: Yeah.

387 S1: Yeah. And for how long already?

388 S2: I came in 2022.

389 S1: So three years?

390 S2: Yeah.

391 S1: And how often do you use TikTok?

392 S2: Every day.

393 S1: Okay. And you mostly just engage with like music video content or memes?

394 S2: Funny — funny videos to send to my friends, this kind of stuff.

395 S1: Mm. And mostly it's from your home country, from Indonesia?

396 S2: Yeah.

397 S1: Yeah. And (..) have you — yeah, you've seen that. Have you also heard of the *fox eye* trend?

398 S2: What is that?

399 S1: It's like — there was some time that Asians were discriminated because they have this like small eyes. So because of that, there was a (..) “fox eye” trend. It's a makeup trend — they do the fox eye makeup.

400 S2: Okay, I know this. Well, I didn't know the name of the trend, but I think I know this.

401 **S1:** Yeah, you've seen it. And also, we talked about the *Stop Asian Hate*. Do you still come across
like similar content on your everyday TikTok views — like racialized or (..) anti-racism content?

402 **S2:** I don't think so in my account — barely see it. Because I didn't engage with that kind of content
when it came up. I just skipped it, so I think that's why it never came up again.

403 **S1:** Okay. Did participating in this study affect the way you view TikTok's algorithm or racial content
on the platform?

404 **S2:** Nope. (..) I think I'm going to be more aware, but yeah — it doesn't really change anything. Just
more aware.

405 **S1:** Were you surprised by the content that you saw today?

406 **S2:** (..) It's just quite different. Not really surprised. It's kind of a surprise, but I don't know how to say
it. But yeah — something like this.

407 **S1:** And yeah, you just said you will scroll past this kind of like (..) activism — like racial activism —
content. Why do you scroll past them? You didn't like it or you're just simply not interested?

408 **S2:** What kind of racial thing? What do you mean?

409 **S1:** Like the fox eye, *Stop Asian Hate* — like this kind of content.

410 **S2:** (..) I'm just not interested. So I just scroll away.

411 **S1:** Okay. Were there any moments during the study when you felt uncomfortable?

412 **S2:** No.

413 **S1:** Okay. And do you still have any additional thoughts on the topic that we haven't covered?

414 **S2:** I don't think so. I think that's all.

415 **S1:** Yeah, I think that's all for the study. Thank you again.

416 **S2:** You're welcome.

Interview J

1

2

S1 (Researcher): So (..) before we start the interview, I will give you a brief explanation about the study. So in this study, I'm interested in understanding your thought process as you complete the task I will give to you. To achieve this, I will ask you to think aloud while engaging with the task. By thinking aloud, I mean verbalizing everything that comes to mind from the moment you begin the task until you complete it. I encourage you to continuously express your thoughts without planning or structuring your response. Simply speak as though you were alone in the room, narrating your thoughts. If you remain silent for an extended period, I will prompt you to continue speaking. Do you understand?

3

S2 (Interviewee): Yes.

4

S1: Yeah. So I will give you two training tasks to help you familiarize yourself with this task. First one, how many windows are in your parents' house? You don't need to count them yourself. I will do that for you. Just tell me which room has how many windows.

5

S2: Okay, so (..) we have (..) like (..) I'm going to start from the upper floor, I think. So we have one big window in the (..) like where the staircase is and that's never been cleaned since we've been there. Then we have like the bathroom window, then we have (..) a big double window in my parents' room and my brother's room. (..) Then my brother's room has another window actually, which is a little smaller. And then my room also has one window. And then in the living room, there's one front that is basically completely made up of windows, so I don't really know how many it is, but I think it's like (..) maybe eight or something. Then we have one in the kitchen, one in the kind of weird room where you store cleaning supplies, and one in the toilet. And then the cellar also has windows in some rooms, which are made so it's not getting too wet. So they are not really used, but they are kind of emergency things. So there's one which goes back and then one next to the (..) sauna kind of thing. And one in the (..) utility room. Yeah, and that's it.

6

S1: That's a huge house.

7

S2: It's actually not, but it just has a lot of windows.

8

S1: Sounds like a very huge, a lot of rooms.

9

S2: Okay.

10

S1: The second task, imagine you are opening your favorite social media app without touching your phone. Describe your usual actions upon opening the app. What type of content do you typically encounter and how do you decide what to engage with or scroll past? Verbalize everything that comes to mind as though we are actively navigating the app.

11

S2: Okay. So I think my favorite social media app is Instagram (..) because (..) I think that's where I

have most connections on.

12 **S1:** Yeah.

13 **S2:** I try not to use it too much. So there's usually like before I open it, there's a locker that I like (..) a notification popping up if I really want to use it. (...) And when I'm unlocking it, I think the first thing that I'm (..) doing is going to my DMs and seeing who's sent me some stuff. (..) Then I usually watch stories from people I follow.

14 **S1:** Yeah.

15 **S2:** And if I still have time, like time, because I usually like use social media on the bus or somewhere where there's like a time limit by nature or by the task that I'm doing. So if I still have time, I switch the (...) like there's a new function in Instagram. I switch from like recommendations to the people I'm following.

16 **S1:** Yeah.

17 **S2:** And then I just scroll down. (..) I think I'm not like I'm not really interacting with content by comments. The two parts of interaction are likes when I just, I feel like it's a nice post. There's not really (..) science behind it. (...) When I want something to have more outreach, I like it. And some stuff I send to my friends or my boyfriend.

18 **S1:** Yes.

19 **S2:** (...) And for recipes and stuff that is about Vienna, like, I don't know, museums or stuff that you can do in Vienna, I have a folder where my friends also have access to. So it's like a shared folder where we save stuff like recipes that we want to use or like we want to try out or places where we want to try out. So that's usually how I interact with content.

20 **S1:** So you also go through with the reels?

21 **S2:** Actually, not really. (..) Sometimes, like exceptionally, yes. But usually I would just stay on this like page where I see what people are posting that I follow.

22 **S1:** Why do you avoid to go on reels or you just don't feel like?

23 **S2:** I think for this kind of content, I would use TikTok. And also I feel like the reels on Instagram are not really (..) fitting to my preferences. So the algorithm on Instagram is so different, so there's a lot of irrelevant stuff (..) on Instagram. So I rarely, like, (..) sometimes I have content that is really interesting to me. Mostly it's about dog, let's say, education or like behavior because I recently got a dog. So this is one thing that I would interact with and maybe send to my boyfriend for recommendations or something. (..) But other than that, I have much stuff that I usually would not

consume in the reels. So (...) I don't know. It's even if I go there, it's not keeping me there because it's too much irrelevant stuff going on.

24 **S1:** Okay, so you think the algorithm is not really fitting your taste?

25 **S2:** Yeah.

26 **S1:** Okay, so I will write in the chat, the account. It's my phone number. (...) So you can log into the TikTok with this. I think they will send me a (..) verify code. They will give you the code that you can see to the account.

27 **S2:** Okay.

28 **S1:** Yeah, so you will go through the (..) feeds and at the time, please verbalize your thoughts about what you see. You can describe the content and you can have an immediate reaction to the content. Your interpretation of why TikTok is recommending the certain videos and how this recommendation makes you feel. During the time, you are also free to interact with the content on the page, you can either like it, follow the accounts or comment or also press not interested. It's totally up to you. You will go through about 10 to 15 contents, I think. You can stop anytime if you feel uncomfortable and is it possible you can turn on the screen recording so I can go back to the content you have been through later.

29 **S2:** Okay, let's see if I can do the screen recording.

30 **S1:** Yeah.

31 **S2:** (...) Then you can start when you're ready.

32 **S1:** Okay. So, do you want me to be on For You or Following or like (..) Discover page?

33 **S1:** I think just the (..) For You, yes. For You page.

34 **S2:** Okay. So the first content is two very young Asian girls dancing in the (..) tram. I think it's not in Vienna because like based on how the tram looks it's captioned "a moment before disaster." (...) And I'm a little bit confused because I don't get the disaster about it.

35 **S1:** Uh-huh.

36 **S2:** It's a really short video. So I've been through it like while we have been talking. And like at some point they just take the phone and (..) laugh about it, but I don't really get what the disaster is that is happening. (...) And. (...) Ah, okay. So now apparently their phone was close to falling down because TikTok automatically translated their captions, so now it makes a little bit more sense because the caption is "Kayla saved my phone."

37 **S1:** Oh, so it's the same content?

38 **S2:** (...) Yeah.

39 **S1:** Okay.

40 **S2:** But there was like automatic translation in the caption. (...) Okay. Yeah, I think I'm going to go on. Yeah, a little bit random. So now I have a guy, I think it's a guy, who is fed by a syringe with like some purple liquid.

41 **S1:** Okay.

42 **S2:** There's a girl basically kneeling on his lap and I think they are also making out, but it's not really clear from the video because all you can see is their bodies at some point. It's captioned in (...) I think, Chinese, so I can't really (...) understand the caption. (...) It's (...) it's a little. Like, personally, I've not come across this content when I've watched TikTok. So it's not something that would be recommended to me normally.

43 **S1:** Yeah.

44 **S2:** Which is also kind of interesting. (...) But yeah, I'm going to go on to the next TikTok. So it's captioned "I need a haircut" and it's a guy without his shirt on, flexing muscles (...) in some kind of locker room, I would say. (...) And that's basically what the whole video is about. I've seen this content, like with non-Asian people, but I think it's the first time I've seen it with like an Asian guy.

45 **S1:** Yeah.

46 **S2:** And I think it's really outstanding how many saves this thing has. So it's like more than 3,000 saves.

47 **S1:** Oh, uh huh.

48 **S2:** So I'm a little bit (...) like, I get by looking at guys that are flexed is generally like a thing that you can enjoy. But why would you save it? Like, when would you go back to such a video and be like, "Aya, I need to watch this video again of this guy." So I don't really get the charm of saving it. But okay, let's go on.

49 **S1:** Yeah.

50 **S2:** So it's POV trying to relax, but you live with your man and it's a girl that's kissed by a guy and looking annoyed by it. (...) And it's also captioned, "I want a refund." (...) So, (...) I'm a little bit confused about why it's captioned, (...) like, why it's related to Korea, because all of the hashtags are like Korean, living in Korea, life in Korea. (...) But she seems more like Caucasian. So, I don't know, maybe there's something I'm not getting here. Or she just lives there and it's no relation to the

content at all.

51 **S1:** Okay, but let's go on.

52 **S2:** Okay, so now I get a warning that the stuff that I'm going to see in this video is done by pros and supervised and I should not do it myself.

53 **S1:** Okay.

54 **S2:** What I'm seeing, it's really funny, actually, because what I'm seeing is like a lot of guys with no shirts in a dragon boat. As you could also see in other places, I don't think dragon boats are so dangerous, but maybe it's the part of being in a river that seems dangerous. So there's like one drummer. But they are flexing their muscles. So it's not really like, it's not helping that he's drumming. Ah, okay, now they are going, driving, I don't know. And there's people filming them. So actually it might be some kind of film set, I guess. (...) Yeah. Interesting what film it's going to be. Also, there are two guys wearing a shirt among like, I don't know, 15 not wearing a shirt. So it's still (...) it's still kind of, I would not say it's sexualized as itself, but it's counting on the sexual (...) sexualization of these people later. So it's basically those thirst trapping, just because these people have muscles and show them on social media, you already know that people are going to sexualize them.

55 **S1:** Yeah.

56 **S2:** And I think that's kind of what they are counting on because also this has a lot of likes, like 700K. (..) Can I look at the comments?

57 **S1:** Yes. Yeah, yeah.

58 **S2:** Because that's what I would usually do. Like when I consume TikTok content, I would read the comments a lot. So, yeah, (..) it's as expected, a lot of quite funny memes about like thirst trapping.

59 **S1:** Yeah.

60 **S2:** So, like a dog that is sticking its tongue out, a person licking their phone.

61 **S1:** Okay.

62 **S2:** A cat licking their phone, Joker licking at something, his nose, I think. Basically the whole content is about Chinese men. And some people are joking about being open-minded, which is a joke that I'm not really getting. Like, I don't get it. I've not come across it. But also there are people complaining about this kind of joke and that people are ignorant and like mocking the Korean race.

63 **S1:** Uh-huh.

S2: (...) Which I think is, in general, a discussion that is very real about social media, that mocking nationalities is a big thing and should not be a big thing. But I'm not sure if this video of naked guys is the right place to have this discussion. But yeah, okay, let's go on with the next post. (..) So now we have a girl. I think it's one of the first girls actually in the content and she's dancing. (..) There's not really anything about this content, so it's just a girl dancing, basically. (...) The comments say, like, she knows she's hot, no man deserves this, you are perfect. So (...) I don't know. I'm just, like, saying out loud what I think. I think that's a lot of reactions that girls get on social media when they post dancing videos. Of course, she's a confident person, so it's not surprising. I also think that she knows that she's attractive, but like most of the comments are like from the guys, everybody was liking them so much and like kind of, I don't know, trying to marry them. And now here it's more like either bringing her down by telling her she's too confident or just like, I don't know, "send me the link to the top," like demanding stuff of her. And it's some men commenting, but I think it's a lot of girls also. So (..) let's go on with the next one. Oh, okay, we are back to men without shirts. So now we have an Asian guy who is cutting his own hair and he's calling it a pony, but I think it's just a man's haircut, actually. I don't know if you call it pony with guys, but however, (..) he's also including his address in the post. I know that that's something that you can do on TikTok, but I think it's kind of surprising given that he's there, like in a pyjama. So I would do it when I'm like at a monument or something. I don't know. Video of the Eiffel Tower? Okay, I would say, okay, this is the Eiffel Tower. But I would not give my address in a pyjama on a video. So that's interesting. (...) According to the comments, he's the type of the people that are here, so it's like TikTok knows my type. That's my type, blah blah. And also, a lot of people are confusing him with another person that is (..) famous, I guess. So they are basically arguing about whether it's him or not. Okay. We are going on with (..) let's say it's a video of two people talking and it's like one is saying, "can I post this picture?" and the other one is saying, "no, I hate it." And then they are posting it anyway, so that's kind of the plot of the video. The two girls are really pretty, although the makeup is kind of like a puppet. So it's really like, you know, these under-eye (..) sparkles and like offered in this style of like glassy skin is making them really like above human. Maybe it's also edited. I don't know. But they're really like appearing perfect. And also it's really hard for me to distinguish if it's the same person or not. Like, I don't know if they are sisters or if they just style themselves so similar. But I'm really like it took me three or four times distinguishing that they're not like making a video with themselves. (...) But yeah. And here, I'm really, I think it's quite interesting that it's recommended here because it seems to have very little outreach. So like 1,000 likes. So TikTok must really think that that's a video I'm going to like. Or this account is going to like. But I think in general it's a nice video. It's just a funny thing, not really respectful to do, but it's a funny video. And in the comments, people are also confused about if they are twins or not. So it's not on me for not being able to distinguish them. (...) Yeah, but let's go on, maybe. So here again, we have like two girls that look the same, basically, a little different because they have an age difference, but I think they are somehow related. Also, it's captioned "me with twins," so I don't know. I don't think they are really twins, but still looking very similar. And they have pants where "senior" is written like all over their butt in very, very big letters. (..) And they are not

really dancing. They are just flexing. (...) I mean, turning around and stuff, but it's not, it's not a dance video.

65 **S1:** Yeah.

66 **S2:** (...) Okay. So now we have a video titled "Boring life?" with two Chinese men right here. So it's also kind of, I'm not really sure what kind of thirst trap it is. So there's one sitting in the tram and just like minding his own business on his phone and one kind of leaning on him and then jumping up and using his feet to kick the phone that he's filming (..) away. So I'm not really sure (..) if it's like a call for me to make my life less boring with these two men or if they are making each other's lives less boring together. I'm not sure if I'm invited in this (..) unboring my life. But yeah. So (..) then in the comments, (..) people are also confused about that, but again, it's very sexualizing. So someone's commenting, and I'm like, I'm saying this on record, but someone's commenting, "I mean that's why I have two," and then there's like a hole emoji. (...) "Then I can have both, right?"

67 **S1:** Oh my god.

68 **S2:** And then there's again this "you open-minded" thing, which I still don't get. Maybe it's a thing that's just, I don't know, (..) out there and I missed it. Or maybe it's really a thing if you're in the community of Asian sexualized people more, maybe you get it then. But yeah, and then people are volunteering and saying that their life is boring, which is kind of the point of the video. Okay, so let's go on. We have another Asian dude. He's looking confused. So he's like, (...) the way he's looking is just confused. And then he's flexing his biceps and then he's smiling. And he's captioning it "another one because the last one went viral." (..) Congrats, bro. This one also went viral. It's like close to one million likes, so it's like 900K right now.

69 **S1:** Yeah.

70 **S2:** And it has nearly 7,000 comments, and more than 170K people sent it around. So apparently people like looking at these guys' biceps, which is very impressive. (..) What I'm also a little bit confused about is the background. So there's like an open dishwasher, dishes in a thing, so it's kind of like, I would not date men that are messy. Like a rice cooker and a very nice toaster, like very expensive toaster. And then there's, like, I don't think it's a TV show, but there's something going on on the TV, which nearly looks like CCTV that you have like in a, (..) I don't know, in a shop to stop you from shoplifting. So I don't know what is going on in this apartment. But opening the comments, people are also a lot talking about the biceps, of course.

71 **S1:** Yeah.

72 **S2:** (...) But I think it still is this very sexualized men (...) I can't say it's concerning, it's not the right word for how I'm feeling about it, but I still think it's kind of problematic, especially when he's like, yeah, because the last one went viral. So either you have fun posting TikToks or you want to go viral.

I mean, it's not either or, you can have both, but still, I don't think you should post stuff, especially exhibiting your body just because it went viral, because you can go viral with a lot of stuff. And like for many of these videos that I've seen until now, it's kind of, it's a lot about (..) doing very random stuff just for the algorithm. So it's like doing stuff that everybody knows will get you (..) views or likes or, I don't know, clicks. So I'm not sure if these accounts are, I'm going to click on this guy. (...) So I'm not really sure if what he's doing is really like, he's not getting anything out of it.

73 **S1:** Do you think it's a real account or is actually (..) run by some sort of media company?

74 **S2:** I think it's a real guy. He's called Enzel, apparently.

75 **S1:** Mm-mm.

76 **S2:** And you can write him an email and he's waiting for 90K. So for him, it's a big thing that like some of his videos have like 18K views. (...) And actually, I'm going to look at this one. So it's like, since they added photos to comments, let me see y'all.

77 **S1:** Yeah.

78 **S2:** So he was asking his followers to comment photos. (..) And now we can look at them. (...) And for many of these people, I'm not really sure if that's really them. So (..) most, like, until now, all that I've seen are women, and there's like two that I would bet money on that it's really them and it's edited in a reasonable amount. Because (..) a lot of these, you can see the filters, but a lot of these, I can't believe that they are real. And some of them are also very young. So (...) it's very, I mean, some are clearly like a joke, and then it's not them, but for me, (..) it's kind of (..) maybe even concerning the people, even like in the comments, it's not a public post. You only can look at comments if you view this one video and then click at comments. You can't see, okay, this person, I don't know, Renee here, I can't look up everything she's commented, like on Blue Sky on other apps, I can do that, but here I can't. So why would I do, like also pass my time to edit a comment, like to edit a picture to comment here. (..) Given like how stupid some of the comments are, people are not really passing so much time thinking about what they comment, but then it comes to pictures and then they are really like editing a lot. So (..) that's really making me think right now. But, yeah, let's go back to my For You page, maybe. I want to get out of this. Okay.

79 **S1:** Yeah.

80 **S2:** Now we have kids, which are very young. (...) Shoulder training for different dance students. And they show kids in their dance class with a teacher that I would identify as male. And so, okay, let's start this again. So they are bowing down in the beginning and then there is one girl who's been cupped apparently. So like her back is all, like (...) red, let's say. And there's some captions, but in a language I can't read. So let's not talk about that. And they are just showing how to train your shoulders. And the teacher is touching them a lot.

81 **S1:** Okay.

82 **S2:** So I think, so he's giving one of them a belly (..) belly wrap. I'm not sure if a teacher is supposed to do that, actually. But I think that's a part apart from sexualization and showing very young kids online, I think that's also feeding into the stereotypes of like Asian people (..) being very flexible and like having that hard dance school and then like being so passionate about dancing and getting so good at dancing. Okay, now that he is stretching them and they don't look too happy about it. And also, I'm also not too happy about (..) young people being stretched on camera. Now he's pulling one of the girls by her ear to get her stretching. (..) So I know this video's supposed to be funny, but given the children and their very young age, I'm a little concerned here. But also it has two million likes.

83 **S1:** And can you also go to the comments, I'm a bit curious.

84 **S2:** So (...) first comment is "police." "What did he do to the girl in the white shirt?" "Reason why I stopped doing ballet." "Why is the guy kind of cute?" "Why can't ballet teachers be girls?" Yeah, and then basically people arguing about like, if he's sexualizing them and if this is normal behavior from like teachers to kids. And I'm going to go to the account.

85 **S1:** Yeah.

86 **S2:** So actually I think his whole content is doing ballet (..) teaching, which is nice. Like we all like guys that like kids and are good with kids.

87 **S1:** Yeah.

88 **S2:** But I'm also training kids. I mean not ballet, but skiing. And we're, like, (..) our kids are really small and sometimes they also need to be touched because they can't put their coats on their own because they are kind of incompetent sometimes. But still we are very aware of how we are touching them and we would like, a male teacher would probably not dress up a female student, like in skiing clothes. And that's like ballet stuff, which is a lot less fabric. Yeah. And so I'm just on his account right now and scrolling through what he's posted. Firstly, he has a lot of views for some of his videos. So this we just watched is 45 million views, that's basically (...) five times the Austrian population, so half of Germany, very weird. But also, like some of the videos, like one, I can't like, there's one of these girls is apparently four years old. So I'm not really sure how she got her consent to be watched by 400K people here. (...) And, I mean, we all know how ballet clothing is looking, even if they are not sexualized in this video, but it still seems to be that he's making fun of them. So by including memes, for example, and I'm, (..) I just think that's not really something that you should do to little kids. So.

89 **S1:** I think we can stop here by the TikTok.

90 **S2:** Yes. Let's stop here.

91 **S1:** Yeah.

92 **S2:** Good place to stop.

93 **S1:** You can log out if you want to and you can also stop the screen recording.

94 **S2:** Okay.

95 **S1:** So let's get to some feedback to the session. Did the instructions make sense for you?

96 **S2:** (..) Yeah. I think, overall, yes, it was very clear. I think throughout watching the content, I saw how I forgot sometimes, what is relevant or not relevant. So I ended up like talking about really everything, everything with the screen recording that might have not been necessary, but since you can't really see what I'm doing right now, I thought it might still be helpful. But overall, yes, I think it was clear.

97 **S1:** Yeah, because you could really talk a lot, but most of the time with some other people, it was really hard for them to really talk about their thoughts. And also a lot of people said when they were using TikTok, especially this kind of like short video platform, it's really hard to have any specific thoughts during the time. They only think it's like entertainment. So...

98 **S2:** Yeah.

99 **S1:** And did you feel comfortable verbalizing your thoughts?

100 **S2:** Yes, I think it was fun, actually.

101 **S1:** (..) And were you struggling to articulate your thoughts? Not really?

102 **S2:** Sometimes, yes. Because especially with like sexualization, I think it's a very subjective thing. So sometimes I'm like, am I suspecting it? Or is it really happening? But that's more on me, I think.

103 **S1:** And how often do you use TikTok, like in your daily life?

104 **S2:** Actually, I'm not using it anymore. I deleted it for the time of writing my thesis.

105 **S1:** Yeah.

106 **S2:** But before that, I used it 15 minutes a day (..) with a timer. So really 15 minutes a day.

107 **S1:** That's very strict. And what kind of content do you usually encounter?

108 **S2:** I think a lot of cooking content and a lot of dog content, so puppy stuff.

- 109 **S1:** Yeah.
- 110 **S2:** And Formula One content is also one of them.
- 111 **S1:** Yeah.
- 112 **S2:** And then (...) quite some feminist content. So (...) like, I don't know, this micro-feminism trend or other (...) like more fact-based explanation videos on some stuff that happened somewhere. So educational content in the range of feminism, let's say.
- 113 **S1:** And to this account, when you were scrolling through the TikTok content, did you notice any recurring patterns or themes in what was recommended to you?
- 114 **S2:** I mean, apart from this one person, all of the people I saw were (...) looking Asian.
- 115 **S1:** Yes.
- 116 **S2:** I think not all of them were really in some Asian country, but like from their appearance, all of them were Asian. And all of them were on the younger side so nobody was older than me, I think. Especially (...) except for the ballet teacher. He was maybe older than me. But other than that, I think it was very young people, Asian looking people. (...) And no, like I didn't watch it like for the study. I didn't watch it with sound on. And still everything made sense. So the talking was not a part of any of the content.
- 117 **S1:** Mm.
- 118 **S2:** So, yeah. Or it was languages that I don't understand, so it didn't make sense for me to (...) listen to it.
- 119 **S1:** And how do you think TikTok's algorithm decides what kind of content to show you?
- 120 **S2:** I think (...) maybe I messed it up even more now. I think it's mostly about what I interact with and what I like, where I stay longer. So usually without being in a study, I would skip content that I don't like.
- 121 **S1:** Yeah.
- 122 **S2:** (...) And so here I was still like watching it longer because I was trying to talk about it and why I don't like it. So I was also lingering on content that I didn't really like. But in general, I think like staying on a video is a big factor, maybe also liking, going to somebody's account, commenting, that kind of interaction stuff.
- 123 **S1:** Do you think the algorithm recommends content based on your identity or ethnicity?

- 124 **S2:** (...) It might be so, but at the same time, I think it depends if TikTok really knows about it. I'm not this kind of person to think that everything is controlled and like TikTok knows, like based on how I'm opening my phone. TikTok already knows that I'm like Caucasian, I'm a girl, all of that kind of stuff. I think TikTok does kind of circumstantial evidence and from that is making some assumptions. (...) But if I'm not really uploading content myself, TikTok doesn't know who I am, (...) TikTok just knows what I'm doing on TikTok, which is enough information for the algorithm.
- 125 **S1:** You mean like if you don't upload anything on TikTok?
- 126 **S2:** Yeah. I don't think that like (...) TikTok has no way of knowing (...) for example, how somebody looks or something, unless they disclose the location. So that might be some kind of info and the preferences. So I think if they have the information, they will use it, but I don't think they have it for everybody.
- 127 **S1:** But did you feel like the content that you went through was most (...) maybe not mostly, but some, more than half of them are like the sexualized Asian male content?
- 128 **S2:** A big part, yes.
- 129 **S1:** Yes, a big part, yes. But then that's very strange because when I do the same interview with some other like male interviewees and they would get more of sexualized female contents, but for you, it's more of sexualized male content.
- 130 **S2:** That's interesting. That's very interesting.
- 131 **S1:** That's very strange, I think.
- 132 **S2:** That's very interesting because on my phone, (...) like I have several TikTok accounts. One, which was, which is work and one, which is my personal account.
- 133 **S1:** Yes.
- 134 **S2:** And so (...) so (...) and also, it's very interesting. It's really, very interesting.
- 135 **S1:** Do you think like TikTok is actually connecting all these accounts, like to get information from all these accounts and decide what to recommend to you, what to push to you?
- 136 **S2:** (...) I'm not really sure about that. I think (...) like, of course, algorithms are very sophisticated nowadays, but I think most stuff still is based on circumstantial evidence. I don't think that (...) that TikTok is really like invading the phone and then knows everything about you. I don't think that that's a thing.
- 137 **S1:** Mm.

- 138 **S2:** So, (..) I mean, maybe I'm also naive, but (..) I'm also not sure if it is allowed even to connect everything. So maybe it was just because I was still logged on with my other account. Because I only did like account change and not like log myself out and like do all of this. Then they knew that I was female, but other than that, I don't think they know (..) just because they know, they just have the data to know it. Because I gave them the data to know it when I was using TikTok.
- 139 **S1:** So you also don't think that TikTok would get information from your other applications, or your behavior on, for example, Instagram?
- 140 **S2:** Actually, no, I don't think so. I think we are all using TikTok so much that it doesn't have to. We are giving it so much information about us already. There's no necessity for TikTok to get information from Instagram, where I already like (..) told you that the algorithm there is much less fitting to my interests. So why, like this information would even also not be helpful to TikTok. So I think (..) the information TikTok already has is more than enough. And (..) I also think that behind the analysis of like views and likes and comments and all of that stuff, there's already so much they know that they don't really have to invade your phone.
- 141 **S1:** Have you had a similar experience? Like, for example, you are shopping on like some shopping application and then after you bought something, for example, a bag or clothing, and then after a few days, you will see the advertisements of the same brand on Instagram page. Have you had this kind of experience?
- 142 **S2:** For Instagram, no. (..) I have had it in like Google advertisements where I bought a backpack and then saw the backpack on Google advertisements. But also I bought it after Googling the brand, so Google already had the data.
- 143 **S1:** Yeah.
- 144 **S2:** So, yeah, I'm aware that this kind of data collection is happening.
- 145 **S1:** Yeah.
- 146 **S2:** But I've not had it like (..) via different providers.
- 147 **S1:** That's strange. I have had this kind of thing going on on my Instagram all the time.
- 148 **S2:** Really?
- 149 **S1:** Yeah, yeah. So I don't know how do they connect with each other, but it's only literally like that. For example, I have Zalando, I always buy my clothes on Zalando. And also the Zalando advertisement is on my Instagram all the time. And yeah (...) so I'm not sure if they are connected or Zalando really paid a lot for the Instagram advertisement.

- 150 **S2:** I mean, coming from social media as an industry, the opportunities to refine advertisements are so huge, so they don't really have to know about your Zalando shopping, just based on who you are as a person, the likelihood of you liking Zalando is already enough for them.
- 151 **S1:** Yeah, it probably can also be the case.
- 152 **S2:** Because, like, it's very, it's so interesting. Like, what you can do on Facebook, you can say, okay, I only want people this age from this region, (...) like interested in that and that and that. So you can really tailor your advertisements to stuff that they just know.
- 153 **S1:** Yeah, yeah.
- 154 **S2:** And just also, like, for example, my employer is not paying for advertisements because my boss is very stubborn about it. But still, I can see like from my page, for example, who is the favorite politician of my followers? (...) Who is the favorite news outlet of my followers? Like, I know all of that and I didn't pay a penny. I just have a page. And that's very creepy.
- 155 **S1:** Okay. Then we back to focus on the Asian group. (...) In your opinion, do you think there are any common stereotypes about Asians that come to your mind?
- 156 **S2:** In general or what I saw?
- 157 **S1:** No, just like in general, in Western society.
- 158 **S2:** Ah, I think there's a lot of them and it got worse after COVID. So I think in general, it's also this (...) kind of positive stereotype, but it's still very harmful that Asian people are working so hard and they are so driven and, I don't know, career oriented, which is still very harmful, but it's like a positive, it's supposed to be a positive thing in (...) capitalist societies. (...) I also think that food preferences is also a stereotype. (...) Like that Asian people only eat Asian food. They are really like (...) not willing to explore other options, basically. And, (...) especially in German, like the stereotype that they will never learn to pronounce certain words. Because I don't know, the tongue is from different or I don't know what the reasoning behind it is, but it seems to be kind of a biological issue. (...) According to the stereotype. So I think that's also very (...) harmful to basically say that they are not going to be any time as competent in pronouncing words.
- 159 **S1:** It's more of an accent or just like not correctly pronouncing?
- 160 **S2:** It's about correctness, I think. It's not about accent.
- 161 **S1:** Okay, okay.
- 162 **S2:** And ah, and then I think that's the stereotype (...) that as a Western person, you can't really differentiate Asian people. So, like, yeah, they look all the same, this kind of thing. (...) Yeah, I think

these are like the most common ones.

163 **S1:** Why do you think the working hard thing is harmful, since it's supposed to be a positive stereotype?

164 **S2:** I think because it sets an expectation that is not really like, not everybody wants to be working hard. And also the stereotype is really (..) like, in an unhealthy kind of way. So like, I don't know, working 20 hours a day, sleeping in the office, that kind of thing, which is also (..) kind of a way of saying that they are not able to enjoy life. (...) But yeah, I think it's harmful because it sets expectation for a very personal choice. So how career driven I am is my thing. And I don't think just based on how I look, I should be expected to be very, I don't know, so engaged in my work and like working 24/7. I can also just chill. It's just a personal choice that is (...) not really, it's not helping anybody to have this expectation.

165 **S1:** Yeah, true. Do you also feel like Asian people are more sexualized nowadays on the internet?

166 **S2:** (...) The thing is, I think sexualization is very bad on the internet for a lot of people.

167 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, definitely.

168 **S2:** And I don't think it's only about Asian people. (..) I think it's in general minorities. So Asian people are a minority in Europe, for example, and this is also one reason why they are sexualized because it's like exotic and so interesting. So I don't think it's an Asian issue. I think it's like (..) being a minority issue.

169 **S1:** Yeah, uh-huh. Continue.

170 **S2:** (..) But I also think, like, a lot of this sexualization is due to all of the stereotypes surrounding mangas, K-pop, all of these parts of pop culture, just kind of fuelling this problematic fantasy.

171 **S1:** Yes. I think K-pop and anime, they are one side, they're promoting some Asian cultures. On the other side, they're also promoting the sexualized content to the West. Have you also ever heard of the sex tourists in, I think, in Thailand or (..) Indonesia?

172 **S2:** Normally not, but I'm just now reading a book about (..) AI sexism. So it's basically about how technology is changing misogyny. There it was (..) it was a topic. But in general, I think that's also a Western stereotype to go buy a wife. So rich middle-aged single Western men expect to travel to (..) countries in the Asian world that are mostly less rich and then they expect to come back with a wife that loves them forever because they have money and the wives need money. And they want to be married to a middle-aged Western man. So, yeah, that's also a stereotype and part of sexualization, I would say.

173 **S1:** So you have actually never seen the video of the Soi six?

174 **S2:** No.

175 **S1:** Okay. That's also actually promoted quite a lot on TikTok. You will get it like sometimes, not all the time, but it's like a mix with the other contents. There's like the Thai girls on the street in Soi 6. It's a red-light street in Pattaya. And they're trying to get some customers. That's mainly what the video is about.

176 **S2:** Ah, okay. I've not seen it.

177 **S1:** Do you think that TikTok promotes or reinforces certain stereotypes?

178 **S2:** Yes.

179 **S1:** Then which one do you think?

180 **S2:** I think everyone on the planet. So TikTok is feeding people content that is agreeing to their worldview.

181 **S1:** Yes.

182 **S2:** And unfortunately, stereotypes are very much embedded in the worldview of a lot of people. So (...) TikTok is just showing them that they are right. That's basically the whole thing on TikTok. It's even like in other cases, like I talked about dog content, but even there, I only like, (...) at first, I got different opinions on stuff, but now I still only get dog content. Like, really, it's about nothing. I mean, a lot of dog content is very useless. It's just like how to teach a dog a trick or I don't know, that kind of stuff. But still I only get like, (...) like approaches that are in my opinion. So some kind of groundwork that I have with my dog. So I don't want to hit my dog, for example, and there's other kinds of microaggressions that some people still do to their dogs, which is a way of like teaching them stuff, but it's a way that I'm choosing not to do. But still there, like it's an opinion. It's not, it's a preference. It's not really a belief, like political belief or stereotype. It's just something that I randomly decided, okay, I don't want to spray my dog with water if he does something bad. Like this kind of belief is already filtered by TikTok and I only get content about like being a team with your dog and like being best friends with your dog. And yeah, of course, that's what I'm doing. But TikTok is not showing me that there's other people who don't believe the same thing. And that's also the same with stereotypes in every other belief. And it's not as harmless as like doggy tricks.

183 **S1:** Yeah.

184 **S2:** Every time.

185 **S1:** So yeah. I think TikTok is just creating some kind of information bubble and if you walk in, then you will never get out. Like from (...) another interviewee, he has a very strong bias towards Indian people. So he only gets negative news about Indian people. So and then it would strengthen again

the bias. So he would hate Indian people more. And this is like a loop. It's like a non-stop loop. In the end, he just thinks, okay, oh, the Indian people are just like (..) terrible, terrible people. And I would never make friends with them. This is (..).

186 **S1:** Do you think like the TikTok algorithm treats different Asian groups, like East Asian, South Asian, or Southeast Asian differently, or tends to show them as one group?

187 **S2:** No, I also think that TikTok is even mixing them up sometimes, (..) especially on a Western For You page, so targeted towards Western people. It's even mixing different kinds of Asian people. So like what I got in this study now is mostly Chinese content, like content about Chinese people. But I think if not the whole For You page was about (..) Asian stuff, then at some point they would mix it up.

188 **S1:** But also, they are somehow erasing the (..) other Asian groups, no? They're mostly just promoting the East Asian, I would say, like Japanese, Korean, or Chinese. The other nationalities, like, especially, you didn't really see anything about India or anything about Laos, anything about Thailand. Those are just gone.

189 **S2:** Yeah, fair, fair, fair.

190 **S1:** How do you think about those comments? You opened a few comments. Do you think those are kind of disgusting or you feel also comfortable with those comments? Do you think it's a normal (..) phenomenon?

191 **S2:** I mean, to a certain degree, I think it was to be expected based on the content that (..) I saw.

192 **S1:** Yeah.

193 **S2:** (...) I think, like, I'm usually a person that is like flagging a lot of stuff and also, I don't know, fighting with Instagram about really disgusting comments. So I think it was all in the (..) gray area of what you can say online. There was nothing, I don't know, "I want to rape you" kind of stuff, which could also happen. So we didn't see anything bad. (..) Most of the time we saw stuff that was kind of (...) unkind or maybe sexualizing. But in a way, it's unfortunately part of discourse online. So it was nothing really concerning.

194 **S1:** Yeah.

195 **S2:** But it was also nothing to say, okay, they reacted in a good way. I think that's a good thing that they wrote this. When like the criticism was not, like, even when I agreed to the criticism, (..) it was not the right wording or the right place to discuss it.

196 **S1:** But for this kind of comments, I wouldn't think the creator or the TikToker, they are enjoying looking at this kind of comment. But even though they know this kind of comment is going to pop up,

they still keep creating similar content. Why do you think they are doing this?

197 **S2:** I think because they want to have the clicks. I think that quantification of social media, it's only counting that you have that many clicks, that and that many likes, that and that many comments, saves, I don't know, so I think that's a big part. I don't think they were like, okay, that's fun, let's do it. Or they were like, okay, (..) I want to make a video of this just for my own joy. I think most of these people knew what they were doing. And they played with this sexualization and also stereotypes in order to have clicks. (..) Even this ballet teacher, by including the memes, he knew that some people were not going to like it and were going to discuss it in the comments and he knew that he was, he's not a serious teacher. He was making fun, clearly making fun of the footage that he recorded himself.

198 **S1:** Have you also seen the, I would say it's memes or funny videos of Indian street food? (..) Have you ever come across this kind of content?

199 **S2:** I think I have come across similar content.

200 **S1:** Yeah.

201 **S2:** I mean, there is just like (..) watching people make Indian food or make street food, like these kinds of videos. (...) Which is, in my opinion, very satisfying. But it's not funny. It's just interesting, I think.

202 **S1:** Okay, so then that would be different type of content.

203 **S2:** Yeah, yeah.

204 **S1:** The one I'm talking about...

205 **S2:** I think there's also this kind of Western people making fun of other people's food in general. Like saying that it tastes bad. I think that's also kind of thing that I saw.

206 **S1:** I think for the Indian one, it's more about the hygiene issue in India. Like they put the food under their armpits or they put their feet in the water that they make food with.

207 **S2:** That one I have not seen.

208 **S1:** Okay, those are very disgusting.

209 **S2:** Yeah.

210 **S1:** Just would like to know. And do you think that TikTok content can influence how people perceive Asian groups?

- 211 **S2:** Yeah, I think so because (...) the internet opens the world for you, so you see people that you would not normally see. I mean, some people are rich enough to go and travel the world, but a lot of people, and especially those on the internet, are not. So you see glimpses of lives of other people that you would never be able to meet and (...) glimpses of places that you would never be able to visit. And of course, then that's what you think, okay, you think of Korea, okay, then you see, okay, they seem to have a nice tram system because we saw some videos about like the underground.
- 212 **S2:** Yeah. And, you know, that's also a little bit how you learn what a country looks like. And that's also like based back to, I don't know, (...) colonialism. There was also this popularity in reports being written about what a country looks like and like how the people look like there, and also back then it was problematic. And I think that's just a modern way of doing it.
- 213 **S1:** And also, for my personal experience, I have encountered multiple times that when I'm walking on the street and people just randomly say like, hello in Chinese to me. (...) Well, I feel it's a bit weird and also a bit offensive, but I just want to know the reason behind why they're always thinking like the Asian people on the streets, they must be Chinese. Like they don't, they're never thinking about like, (...) it might be a Japanese or might be a Korean, but they always assume, oh, Chinese, Asian is just Chinese.
- 214 **S2:** That's really funny, though.
- 215 **S1:** Yeah, but why do you think these things would happen? I was like, quite surprised because nowadays, with the internet, you can get different content then you would know that there are other countries in Asia. It's not (...) so you cannot just assume, okay, that's Asia, okay, of course, Chinese.
- 216 **S2:** Yeah, I think, (...) I think it's like Malifest said it. I think one of the reasons is that there are, like, objectively speaking, there are a lot of Chinese people.
- 217 **S1:** Yeah.
- 218 **S2:** So it's one of the biggest groups of Asian people.
- 219 **S1:** Yeah.
- 220 **S2:** And I think that's also one of the most talked about. So (...) for example, when you get food, oftentimes you say, okay, let's get Chinese or let's get Asian food. But then the nuance of, okay, let's get Korean or let's get Japanese. I think that's (...) not a thing, really. Also when you look at like food delivery services, you can choose Italian or Chinese or (...) Indian, but you can't choose like Korean as a category. So I think that's a thing that it's just (...) a cultural category. And also, I think it's one of the most talked about. (...) So I think maybe they don't even think that you're Chinese, but they don't know hello in Chinese or other languages. So they just take the one they know, you know?
- 221 **S1:** Uh-huh.

- 222 **S2:** So I think that's also one of the reasons that they are just like people are just (...) idiots. And they just want to get your attention and they are like, okay, she's going to understand it anyway. So the joke of, (...) so basically the joke is them telling you that they identify you as being Asian and not being from here. So it's some, I think it's some kind of othering process and then they are like, okay, I know you're not from here, but I still want to get your attention. I still want to show you, (...) I like you, which is a thing that happens to women. So they tell you (...) they tell you you're not belonging to here, but they are still nice. So they are the nice people here because they even know hello, you know?
- 223 **S1:** Yeah.
- 224 **S2:** It's very problematic, but I think the joke is just (...) them talking Asian to an Asian person.
- 225 **S1:** I guess so. I think they are trying to be nice. Sometimes I get like a bit annoyed and they see my face, they would even ask, like, what's the problem? I'm like, nothing. But they would (...) have never realized this is a problem for them, I guess. Yeah. But do you also think that Indian people are considered as Asian people?
- 226 **S2:** (...) In Austria, I don't think so.
- 227 **S1:** Mm-hmm. And why is that?
- 228 **S2:** (...) Good question. (...) I really don't know. I think, (...) I think in general, there's still a very problematic view of the rest of the world.
- 229 **S1:** Yes.
- 230 **S2:** That is taught in Austrian schools and that is put into practice. (...) So the (...) whole depicting the continents wrong on maps thing is just one of these things. And I think a lot of people don't know where they're (...) what is what. So also, I saw like a TV quiz show last week where the question was like, is it an African country or not? And the people failed like every question. They really failed. They just messed up. So I think it's generally a thing that people don't really look beyond Europe.
- 231 **S1:** I see. So it can be caused by the education.
- 232 **S2:** Yeah, (...) and education (...) and popular culture, everyday, everyday education.
- 233 **S1:** And what do you think if an Asian user would go through the content that you went through might feel when they are watching this?
- 234 **S2:** I mean, on the one side, I think they would be more used to it.
- 235 **S1:** Yeah.

236 S2: Because I expect that's the kind of content that they get more often than I do.

237 S1: Why do you think that?

238 S2: Because I think TikTok shows them more of it.

239 S1: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

240 S2: And (...) on the other hand, I think they would maybe be more personally offended by offensive content. Because (...) I mean, for me personally, it's kind of hard to identify as an Asian man. But Asian men identify with Asian men, you know?

241 S1: Yeah, yeah, obviously, yeah.

242 S2: I think there's more personal emotion to it.

243 S1: And do you believe this kind of content could contribute to real-world bias or discrimination?

244 S2: Yes. I do. I don't see why not, so I really do.

245 S1: Have you ever, like, experienced or noticed any similar bias or discrimination that you think can be caused by social media?

246 S2: (..) I think a lot of how people treated Asian-looking people during the pandemic.

247 S1: Yeah, yeah.

248 S2: Was caused by social media and caused by the (..) discourse we had about Asian people.

249 S1: Yeah.

250 S2: And I have also seen people fired about it. So we had one incident at my previous workplace where somebody got fired because of it.

251 S1: Because of the COVID?

252 S2: No, because of acting racist towards Asian people.

253 S1: Uh-huh. Okay. Have you heard of the Stop Asian Hate campaign? I think it was during the COVID time.

254 S2: Yes. Yes, yes.

255 S1: And do you think it was effective?

256 S2: Partly, yes, but I think you're still, (..) I mean, (..) to be honest, stereotypes should not exist at all

anymore. So, (...) maybe it improved the situation, but it's still bad because stereotypes exist, so.

257 **S1:** Do you think that TikTok does enough to address harmful stereotypical content on the platform?

258 **S2:** No, because (...) as long as the moderation system is not (...) okay and working and as long as you can post children and children can also consume content on the app.

259 **S1:** Yes.

260 **S2:** There's still much to do.

261 **S1:** And I'm not sure if you have seen that, but TikTok contents are mostly promoting Korean men as a sexual ideal boyfriend. Would you, like after you go through multiple times similar content, would you think that would influence you?

262 **S2:** I mean, I don't have a Korean boyfriend, so I think I've not been influenced enough, apparently. No, but I think (...) in general, (...) it's very problematic to (...) have expectations about relationship life and gender roles, especially towards, like in an intersectional perspective, towards nationalities or I don't know, other lifestyles, that's very problematic if a big corporation is deciding people's opinions about it. (...) So I think it's very problematic. I don't think it would influence me personally, just because of how my life is going. (...) But I also know that being younger, I had some struggles about what I expected from boyfriends based on very untrue expectations from the internet. So I could have spared some dating experiences if I had known what I wanted. And if I had known that what others like or need is not every time what I like or need.

263 **S1:** So you feel like for maybe younger users, they would get more influenced by this kind of content.

264 **S2:** Yes.

265 **S1:** Okay. And also you mentioned before about the mocking nationality.

266 **S2:** What is that?

267 **S1:** I have never heard of it.

268 **S2:** What?

269 **S1:** The mocking nationality that you said in the comments.

270 **S2:** Mocking nationality?

271 **S1:** Yeah, yeah.

272 **S2:** It's just like mocking about their nationality?

273 S1: Yeah.

274 S2: I have never seen that. That's very strange.

275 S1: I (..) I think there's like guessing where somebody is from, based on how they look, is kind of a problem because it (..) it states the assumption that some nationalities look a certain way and is also very big basis to othering people.

276 S1: But would you also think that Asian people might have the similar stereotype about white Caucasian people?

277 S2: (...) I think there are still stereotypes about white people.

278 S1: Yeah.

279 S2: (...) For example, not seasoning food.

280 S1: Yeah.

281 S2: But, (...) I'm not sure if they end up being as harmful.

282 S1: Because like, especially in China, Chinese people, they only distinguish Chinese people or foreigners. So if you talk about, (..) I don't know, Austrians, they would think, ah, it's a foreigner. They will never call you Austrian. They only call you foreigners. Do you think it's kind of an offensive way of saying that when you hear it?

283 S2: I mean, I would be a foreigner, so.

284 S1: So it's fine for you.

285 S2: Fair enough.

286 S1: Okay. All right. I think that was all for the interview. And now I'm going to collect some personal information about you.

287 S2: Perfect.

288 S1: Where are you from?

289 S2: Austria.

290 S1: And how old are you?

291 S2: 24.

292 S1: The highest education?

293 S2: Bachelor's degree.

294 S1: Your gender identity.

295 S2: Female.

296 S1: Have you lived in different cultural backgrounds?

297 S2: (...) Let's say no.

298 S1: And have you noticed related to racial representation (..) trends on TikTok, like the Fox Eye trend or Stop Asian Hate movement?

299 S2: Yes.

300 S1: And did you also take part in it?

301 S2: No.

302 S1: You never get to any similar contents like today in your everyday TikTok use, right?

303 S2: (..) Similar sometimes, but very seldom.

304 S1: How would you react to this kind of content? You just go through it?

305 S2: Ignore, yeah.

306 S1: Do you personally enjoy this kind of content?

307 S2: No.

308 S1: Okay. And did participating in the study affect the way that you view TikTok's algorithm or racial content on the platform?

309 S2: Yes.

310 S1: In which kind of way?

311 S2: I think reflecting it a little bit more.

312 S1: Mm-hmm.

313 S2: And also seeing (..) the difference to my own For You page.

314 S1: Have you ever changed your own algorithm? Tried to train it, or?

315 S2: Yes.

316 S1: Would you like to share some experience?

317 S2: So I did like a like (..) you can delete what they know about.

318 S1: Yeah.

319 S2: So I did that and then tried to be more mindful about the content I was interacting with, because before that I had a lot of these like videos where you see somebody running on a subway surface or Minecraft and then there's a random story told via audio. So I wanted to get rid of that and reset everything and it took quite a long time to get back to normal. But it worked, so, yeah, fair.

320 S1: Were there any moments during the study when you felt uncomfortable?

321 S2: No.

322 S1: Do you have any additional thoughts on the topic that we haven't covered?

323 S2: No, I don't think so.

324 S1: And also, there's a rumor about using TikTok in general. They think it's very childish because the TikTok content is usually very (..) like useless, usually just time consuming. Do you also think the same?

325 S2: I mean, (..) it's not productive. That's also why I'm trying not to use it too much.

326 S1: Yes.

327 S2: (...) But I think it's a (...) it's kind of also a little, let's say, capitalist, patriarchal thing, that everybody has to do productive stuff all the time. I think it's a way to learn about stuff and it's a way to get information. And I don't think like (..) belittling it is really helping anybody. And by doing so, we are also making these problems that (..) are there smaller because we're like, okay, it's just a kids app, but what we saw today is not content that I would want to watch. Like I would want my kids to watch. So it's really like we are making the problem smaller than it is by not taking TikTok seriously. And we should have worked towards making it safe and (..) rule-based some years ago already. So we are very late to the party now. So I think this (..) this perception of it being childish is actually part of the problem.

328 S1: And there, I think now Austria, they're also trying to raise the age limit for TikTok. It used to be 14. I think they want to change it to 16.

329 S2: I think they want to change it to 15, yeah.

330 S1: Yeah.

- 331 **S2:** I mean, the thing is, this 14 thing is already a lie because TikTok itself is not 14. I think it's 13. So this one year is already nobody like is (..) like already nobody cares about this kind of age limit. And (..) then raising it again is just kind of washing your hands clean from a problem. And the problem being lack of moderation on TikTok and lack of control over the content.
- 332 **S1:** Yeah.
- 333 **S2:** So I think it's a little bit (..) making your life too easy by raising this and not doing anything about it. So there's other stuff in Austria that is like you're not allowed to do when you're younger. And then like your parents are responsible or somebody is responsible but just saying, okay, you shouldn't use TikTok (..) best regards, your government is not going to fix the issue.
- 334 **S1:** Yeah. And the app itself. Like TikTok it's not checking or any like (..) identity or anything. So you can actually type in whatever you want.
- 335 **S2:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah.
- 336 **S1:** Okay. I think that was all. And thank you for participating.
- 337 **S2:** You're welcome.

Interview K

1

2

S1 (Researcher): Before we start the interview, let me briefly (..) explain this study. In this research, I hope to understand your thought process while completing the upcoming task. So I will ask you to think aloud during the task, which means that from the moment you start, you should say out loud everything that comes to mind. You don't need to organize your words or worry about how you express yourself—just speak as if you're talking to yourself alone in a room. Whatever comes to mind, say it. If you stay silent for a long time during the process, I will gently remind you to continue expressing your thoughts. Do you understand what I mean?

3

S2 (Interviewee): Yes.

4

S1: Great. First, I'll give you two training tasks to help you get familiar with this think-aloud method. Can you try to recall how many windows there are in your parents' house? You don't need to count them exactly, I'll help with the tally. Just tell me approximately how many windows there are in each room.

5

S2: Each room probably has about two.

6

S1: Okay. Now please imagine when you open your most frequently used or favorite social media app, what do you usually do? Without touching your phone, describe your usual behavior after opening the app. What kinds of content do you usually see? How do you decide which content to interact with and which to skip? Please speak all your thoughts aloud, just like when you're actually using the app.

7

S2: When I open (..) Facebook or YouTube, I usually immediately see music that I (..) listened to a few days ago or yesterday. I might just click on that (..) music to listen to again, unless I really want to hear something else. (..) Generally, I listen to music when I'm working out. If I'm not exercising, I might watch (..) movie trailers, news, or speeches.

8

S1: Okay. (..) Earlier I gave you a TikTok account, this account is pre-set. I've put some content and videos related to Asia in there. You need to browse the page and speak out loud your thoughts as you view the content. This includes your initial reaction to the videos, your understanding of why TikTok might recommend these videos, and how the content makes you feel. You are also free to interact with the videos, like, comment, or follow accounts. You'll need to scroll through about 10 to 15 posts. While you're browsing, can you turn on screen recording?

- 9 **S2:** (..) You said 15 posts, is that like I have to keep scrolling through the phone?
- 10 **S1:** Just 10 to 15 is fine. It should go quickly. And during the process, just say out loud whatever comes to your mind. (..) Can you turn on screen recording?
- 11 **S2:** Do you need to see my phone screen?
- 12 **S1:** Yes, because I want to understand what content you've seen for follow-up questions.
- 13 **S2:** So I should open the camera now?
- 14 **S1:** Okay, you can start. I won't interrupt you, just talk to yourself.
- 15 **S2:** (...) Is this what you showed me?
- 16 **S1:** No, this isn't from me, it's what TikTok is recommending to you. (...) Can you describe roughly what the content is?
- 17 **S2:** This (...) is by young girls (..) filming themselves. (...) I think (..) it's mainly showing off their (..) appearance, (..) physical looks, it's mostly about showing their looks and dancing. They're all Asian, (..) and very similar. The content is more or less the same, just girls dancing.
- 18 **S1:** So they're mostly similar types of videos? All girls?
- 19 **S2:** Similar content, and mostly younger girls. (..) This is the kind of TikTok that's meant to be attractive, (..) but I don't really like watching this, it's too young for me, (..) and there's not much substance. There's no speaking, just (..) body language. (..) And there's a heavy (...) sexual implication, yes.
- 20 **S1:** Basically all the videos are like this? About how many have you viewed now?
- 21 **S2:** Yeah. (..) Just in this browsing session, I'm not interested in this type of content because (..) there's no speech. I prefer text or descriptions, or someone talking, something with some content, not just (..) performing, I don't even know what they're trying to say. (...) And this one has a guy, that's better. (...) Like this one has text, (..) some explanation.
- 22 **S1:** (...) Okay, so still similar content. You've probably gone through around 10 videos now. Make sure your mic is on.
- 23 **S2:** Is it on?

- 24 **S1:** Yes, it's on. (...) Alright, we'll wrap this up then. You can log out of the account or do whatever. Let's move on to the interview.
- 25 **S1:** (...) You can turn off the video too, it'll help with the connection.
- 26 **S2:** Okay.
- 27 **S1:** So, did you feel comfortable speaking your thoughts aloud during that whole process?
- 28 **S2:** Comfortable? (..) Not really.
- 29 **S1:** Why not?
- 30 **S2:** (..) I don't know. (..) It's not the way I normally feel comfortable. I wouldn't watch that kind of stuff anyway, so I'd just scroll past it.
- 31 **S1:** So you think it's because of the content that it was harder to express your thoughts?
- 32 **S2:** Yes, because of the content.
- 33 **S1:** Maybe there just wasn't much to say, right?
- 34 **S2:** Exactly. I wasn't interested in that (..) at all.
- 35 **S1:** Alright.
- 36 **S2:** So when I see that kind of content, my thought is just to ignore it.
- 37 **S1:** Let me briefly explain how this TikTok account was set up. It's a default account, (..) and to make it focus on Asian-related content, I searched keywords like "Asian." Once you search for that, you keep getting this kind of content and see nothing else. I'd click into a few, and then the system just keeps recommending similar videos. Eventually, it even suggests strange search terms like "Tiny Asian" or "Filipino girlfriend," and I'd click those too, then the recommendations became what you just saw. At first there were also some male-related videos, but after a while it was basically just videos of young Asian women. I found it weird and didn't understand why TikTok would do that. (..) My guess is this type of content attracts more attention, and maybe it's easier to monetize for the creators.
- 38 **S2:** I agree. When I used TikTok before, and it's not just TikTok, (..) Facebook or YouTube too, if you search for something like a song, using lyrics or description, you'll definitely find it. Maybe not right away, but within ten minutes. I've done that a lot, looked for speeches or interviews with a certain speaker, and then other videos featuring them would appear.

Then, based on the host's name, you get a chain of related content. YouTube and Facebook both do this. I have a friend who works in big data analytics, he said once you give account permissions, it can track your behavior and recommend accordingly. I even did a test. I created a new YouTube account, and it was clean, no junk content at all, just blank.

39 **S1:** Yes, I've also noticed that TikTok's algorithm has this issue. The same account will show different content on different devices. I have an Indian classmate, what shows up on his TikTok looks completely different from mine. I think TikTok (..) might read more background data from your phone, like how you interact with other apps, then recommends content based on that.

40 **S2:** Right, I know that. (..) I have three phones, and all three have TikTok installed. I noticed that the content recommended on the first phone couldn't be found on the second one. Even though both have TikTok, I rarely use the second one, and its feed is completely different. For example, the first phone often recommends dancing children, but you don't see that on the second one—unless I actively search. Once I search, that kind of content keeps popping up. So eventually I stopped using TikTok as much.

41 **S1:** So what kind of content do you usually see on TikTok?

42 **S2:** Mostly entertainment, like singing, dancing, and creative videos. (..) Of course, there are also "motivational" ones, like "5 things you must know in life," or "what not to do when looking for a partner." (..) If you watch a video for just a second or two, it might not recommend more, but if you watch it longer, even just a few seconds more, it'll keep pushing similar content for days. It seems like it detects that I watched it. A friend of mine works in data analytics—his company analyzes view data, phone origins, and so on.

43 **S1:** (...) So is most of your content from Taiwan? Or do you see European content too?

44 **S2:** It should be global. But because I registered with a European number, and it's the international version of the app—not the Chinese one, I rarely see Asian regional content. Most of it is from Europe, Africa, or West Asia. (...) I can't even see what my Chinese friends post.

45 **S1:** Yes, Douyin in China and TikTok overseas are separated.

46 **S2:** Exactly. I tried, but I couldn't connect to my friends' Douyin accounts.

47 **S1:** Then why do you think you haven't seen much content from Taiwan? Taiwan is part of

the overseas TikTok system.

48 **S2:** (..) Because I don't have many Taiwanese friends around me, and those I do know don't really use it either. I also rarely use it myself, only tried it for a month or two when I first installed it, then stopped. It felt like flipping through TV channels in the old days, just endlessly switching. Now with a phone, you can scroll anytime, but the content is still all entertainment, nothing meaningful.

49 **S1:** No substance.

50 **S2:** Right, nothing "nutritious." (...) If you're stressed and want to relax, watching jokes is okay. I used to like short skits and funny videos. Sometimes I'd come across those edited argument clips, showing both sides with alternating commentary. At first they're entertaining, but after a while, they get exhausting, not really important issues. Sometimes it's hard to say who's right, depends on context.

51 **S1:** Let's return to the topic of Asians. Do you think there are certain stereotypes about Asians in Europe or Western societies?

52 **S2:** Yes. I also have some stereotypes about Asians, for example (...) those videos we just saw, young girls dancing. Western girls used to do that too, so I don't see these girls as traditional (...) Asians. If they're Asian people living in Europe or America, usually their families wouldn't allow them to do this.

53 **S1:** So you think most Asians wouldn't upload that kind of video?

54 **S2:** Right. If they do, maybe it's because they're young and don't know better (...) they think it's fun, see others doing it, and follow along, just trying to get attention. (...) I don't really support this behavior.

55 **S1:** So do you think this creates a stereotype that overseas Asians like to make this type of content?

56 **S2:** I don't think it's an "Asian" issue. I think (...) non-Asians are more likely to do this kind of thing. Traditional Asian values (...) and family education are very different from Europeans. Usually, Asian kids grow up in traditional families, with strict parents. It's not "do whatever you want" but more disciplined. But if the kids grow up in Europe, their parents are more open, if it makes the kid happy and they don't see it as inappropriate, then it's fine. But what you do when you're young, you might stop doing once you're older. No matter where you're from, kids doing silly or funny things is normal. Like yesterday, I was

working out on an island and saw five or six kids posing naked against a wall for a photo. No one minded because people know they're only 17 or 18, it's normal behavior. (...) Once they grow up, they'll stop. They'll live normal lives, work, have families.

57 **S1:** So in your view, how do Westerners perceive Asians?

58 **S2:** (...) Some don't care at all, they're completely indifferent to Asians. Others who do care will distinguish between Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Thai, Indians, etc. They realize that "Asian" isn't one single group, there are many differences. Just like we shouldn't lump all Europeans together. Germans, Italians, Greeks, and French are very different. Only people unfamiliar with Europe would generalize them. It's the same in reverse. People who know Asia understand the differences in culture and style between Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Filipinos, etc. In open countries like Germany, where many Asians live, people tend to have a more nuanced understanding. They'll distinguish Chinese from Japanese and Korean.

59 **S1:** Do you think on TikTok, Asians are categorized in a nuanced way, or are they presented as a monolithic group?

60 **S2:** I think on social media, they're more often lumped together. Unless you specifically search, like if you're into K-pop, then you'll know who's Korean or Chinese. (...) But most people aren't that engaged—they just treat TikTok as a tool for entertainment and view things on a surface level, just seeing "Asians." Of course, TikTok isn't all bad. It has both good and bad sides. The downside is that things spread too fast, once something negative goes out, it's hard to stop. But there's quality content too, like educational videos or commentary. You just have to find it yourself. And social media does allow us to learn about Europe without flying there, or see Asian culture without traveling, that's the upside. The problem is people tend to amplify negative things and ignore the positive. That's human nature, and it's also why people often overlook TikTok's benefits.

61 **S1:** Do you think TikTok's algorithm reinforces real-life bias or discrimination?

62 **S2:** I don't think it's bias or discrimination, it just shows what it thinks you want to see. The bias doesn't come from the content itself, it's in how viewers interpret it. Like a painting or video, the content may be neutral, but some people think it's biased or discriminatory, while others see it as just a documentary. It's hard to say.

63 **S1:** Do you think TikTok as a platform influences people's perception of Asians?

64 **S2:** Definitely. From what I know, it doesn't really (...) moderate content. It only blurs things

that are bloody, violent, or overly explicit and gives users a warning. But a lot of content isn't suitable for minors or certain groups. (...) But due to politics and profit motives, the question of whether TikTok should moderate content becomes controversial. Without strict moderation, inappropriate content spreads easily. Some videos can mislead inexperienced viewers. TikTok (..) is a social media platform with huge reach. Once something is posted, it can't be taken back, and that affects many people. Of course, there are benefits too, but I'd say the downsides outweigh them.

65 **S1:** In earlier interviews, someone mentioned that most of the online content they saw about India was negative. That led them to form strong biases against India. I think (...) these kinds of biases might be personal, but they could also be amplified by platforms, causing people to only see negative portrayals of certain countries.

66 **S2:** (..) I've had that experience too. For example, with India, I've seen a lot of negative news, videos, or clips about daily life. But if we treat those as documentaries that reflect real situations, (...) then there's nothing to criticize. It's like watching footage of some country 50 years ago, we might find it unbelievable now. But if India's hygiene situation today is still poor, then of course people will pay attention to that. Of course, they also have positive sides, like preserving tradition, and that's fine too. But if the quality of life is low, the negative impact can't be ignored. When I was in India, the hygiene really was bad. The issue isn't that others are showing negative things, because positive portrayals of India's hygiene don't get shown, but whether we're willing to acknowledge and improve the problems. If everyone just wants to hide the issues, that's the real problem. Discrimination doesn't exist if this is simply your culture, you don't have to care what others think. Some people feel they're being discriminated against, but they should also reflect on whether they themselves might be unknowingly discriminating against others. Sometimes a victim mentality is a way of resisting, but it's not always effective.

67 **S1:** But if we, as individuals, can't change the behavior of the group yet still get labeled and discriminated against, that's unfair, isn't it?

68 **S2:** What we call "discrimination" (..) really depends on context. (...) For example, regarding India, if everyone says the hygiene is bad, and statistically that's true, then it's not necessarily discrimination. A lot of things come down to data. If the statistics show a certain country has an issue, that's fact, not bias.

69 **S1:** But for example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, because the virus originated in China, the entire Asian community in Europe faced a lot of discrimination. Do you think that

was the fault of the Asian community, or of individuals?

70 S2: I think first we need to be clear, if the virus did come from China, then at the beginning, calling it the “Wuhan virus” was just a memory label, not intentional discrimination. Many new viruses are named after their place of origin when first discovered. If hearing that term offends us, then maybe we’re too sensitive about the label. The real issue isn’t the words “Wuhan virus,” but how we view them. (...) For example, during the early days of the pandemic, people were afraid to interact with Asians, not necessarily because of racism, but because they feared infection. It’s like seeing a Muslim person, you can’t say they’re a terrorist, but statistically most terrorists are Muslim. That’s based on data. (...) You can’t accuse people of prejudice because of that. During the pandemic, I believe most people weren’t discriminating against Asians, they were worried about their health. Since the virus came from Asia, it’s natural for people to be more cautious toward Asians. (...) That’s a normal response. A lot of social media platforms don’t moderate content strictly, so negative information spreads quickly while positive content rarely gains traction. These platforms aren’t nonprofits—they’re businesses. Strict moderation is necessary, but barely exists. Social platforms aren’t public services—they’re profit-driven. Education levels are important too. Well-educated people can judge content more fairly, but most people are still affected. So we have to rely on individuals’ judgment, and that’s hard to control.

71 S1: Regarding the content you just saw, do you think it had any impact on your self-identity as an Asian?

72 S2: Yes, it had an impact. I don’t want to see that kind of content. TikTok (...) always pushes what it thinks I like to watch, but I actually don’t want to watch it. That kind of content makes others mistakenly assume (...) that I’m the one choosing to watch it, like I enjoy this type of video. But I don’t. I’d rather see meaningful, informative, or educational content, not mindless entertainment. That’s why I said I only used TikTok for a month or two before stopping. Too many repetitive, hollow videos keep popping up, and I’m just not interested. (...) It’s always the same girls doing the same things, nonstop.

73 S1: Yes, the video content is very similar. But from another perspective, it shows that these kinds of videos are really popular on the platform.

74 S2: Probably very popular, because they keep making the same type of video. If no one watched, they wouldn’t keep doing it. I didn’t specifically check how many likes or comments there were, but there must be a lot of subscribers to that kind of content. (...) Actually, I’ve seen some sports-related content too, like football, basketball, or fitness

videos. I'm someone who likes sports, so I'll keep watching that. Some of them share workout routines or daily training suggestions (...) how to exercise. That kind of content is more educational. I've also seen recovery tips for after sports, like stretches for back injuries. I think that kind of thing is really practical and positive.

75 **S1:** Have you noticed that a lot of this type of content on the platform is made by women? Though there are also many male creators.

76 **S2:** Yes, I've noticed.

77 **S1:** But don't you think, regardless of gender, (...) there's a lot of objectification in these videos?

78 **S2:** Very serious objectification. But I don't know if you'll agree, actually, the ones objectifying women are women themselves, not men. Because (...) they choose to dress like that and make those videos. (...) Sure, men want to watch, but it's not men telling them to do it. (...) It's their choice. So I think it's not men objectifying women, it's women objectifying themselves.

79 **S1:** What about places like Thailand or Southeast Asia's red-light districts, do you think it's the same situation?

80 **S1:** Same. In Thailand, many of the men who dress like women don't really want to, they do it to survive. It's a developing country, and I don't know exactly how that industry came to be, but I don't believe anyone really wants to do it. They do it because they have to survive. As for those TikTok videos you just showed me, they're all made by young girls. I don't know their backgrounds, but they're young, and maybe they don't fully understand what they're doing. If they can earn easy money, they'll keep doing it. (...) But then again, maybe it's not all about survival, maybe some just find it fun or are imitating others. But they probably don't realize they're objectifying women. I think the term "objectification" is something older women are more likely to bring up.

81 **S1:** TikTok and other social media platforms often push content related to Southeast Asian red-light districts, and based on earlier interviews, it's hard to avoid. Do you think that might lead viewers to form stereotypes about Southeast Asian women?

82 **S2:** Yes, it creates stereotypes, especially among people who don't interact with Southeast Asian women often. They're more likely to assume they're all like that. But if you have friends or relatives from that group, you won't necessarily associate them that way. You

might make those associations unconsciously, but it depends on the situation.

83 **S1:** In previous interviews, some female participants said watching those videos made them anxious. They felt like they should lose weight or avoid presenting themselves in certain ways. But they were conflicted, they felt pressured to conform to Asian beauty standards. Do you ever feel that way?

84 **S2:** I don't feel the need to conform to those standards. (...) In today's society, men and women are equal in terms of status, but the way they grow up is different. Girls and boys go through different experiences. In (...) middle school, high school, and college, you'll notice girls have their own circles and expectations, it's what we often call "traditional paths." If a girl has the ability, she doesn't need to rely on clicks or pleasing others, and she won't make those videos. A truly capable woman will live like anyone else, work, have a family. In the family, women might be the ones caring for children, and men work. Education is often handled by the mother, while the father provides financially.

85 **S1:** So you think it's the education environment that causes this?

86 **S2:** Yes, it has a big influence. But now there are also some "toxic positivity" messages, (...) like emphasizing that women must be independent, self-reliant, and not depend on men. (...) Of course it's fine for women to have careers, but once you have a family, someone has to take care of the kids. No matter who stays home, the other person will have to make sacrifices in their career. That's just reality. You can choose whether it's the woman who works or the man who stays home, if both sides are okay with it, that's fine. (...) The problem is that boys are raised from a young age to be independent and take responsibility, while girls often aren't. Girls are taught (..) to study hard, find a good job, and live a more comfortable life. Once they get married and have kids, many prefer to take care of their children themselves. That mindset is almost instinctual.

87 **S1:** Have you ever felt the need to post something on social media to better fit in with your group or get more attention?

88 **S2:** Posting articles or pictures on social media does get more attention from friends. But I don't need to do that now.

89 **S1:** Okay, that's about all for our main discussion. I just need to collect some personal information.

90 **S2:** Sure. What do you need to know?

91 **S1:** Where are you from?

92 **S2:** Taiwan.

93 **S1:** Age?

94 **S2:** 47.

95 **S1:** Highest level of education.

96 **S2:** University.

97 **S1:** Gender identity?

98 **S2:** Male.

99 **S1:** Have you lived in different cultural environments? For how long?

100 **S2:** Yes. I've lived in Australia, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, South Korea, and Canada.

101 **S1:** For how many years?

102 **S2:** 16 years.

103 **S1:** Do you think living in different cultures has had an impact on you?

104 **S2:** It definitely has. It's changed a lot of my original perceptions.

105 **S1:** How often do you use TikTok?

106 **S2:** I just open it when I want to, maybe like a few times a week.

107 **S1:** After participating in today's interview, do you have any new insights about TikTok's algorithm or how it handles racial content?

108 **S2:** Not really. TikTok is still the same, it just gives you what it thinks you want to see.

109 **S1:** Do you think the influence it has is more positive or more negative?

110 **S2:** More negative.

111 **S1:** Have you heard of the "Stop Asian Hate" movement?

112 **S2:** No, I haven't noticed that.

113 **S1:** During the interview or task, was there anything that made you feel uncomfortable?

114 **S2:** No.

115 **S1:** Do you have any other thoughts or experiences related to today's topic that you'd like to share?

116 **S2:** No, that's about it.

117 **S1:** Okay, thank you for participating.

Interview L

1

2

S1 (Researcher): So I will briefly explain about the study. In this study, I'm interested in understanding your thought process as you complete the tasks I will give you. To achieve this, I will ask you to think aloud while engaging with the task. So by thinking aloud, I mean verbalizing everything that comes to mind from the moment you begin the task until you complete it. I encourage you to continuously express your thoughts without planning or structuring your responses, simply as though you were alone in the room, narrating your thoughts. If you remain silent for an extended period, I will prompt you to continue speaking. Do you understand what I mean?

3

S2 (Interviewee): Yes.

4

S1: So to help you familiarize with this technique, I will give you two think aloud training tasks. How many windows are in your parents' house? You don't need to count them yourself. I will do that for you. Just tell me which room has how many windows.

5

S2: Okay, so each room or like bedroom has (..) one big window and the living room has maybe four windows and (..) the room where we eat also has four windows. And, (...) yeah, I think that's it.

6

S1: Okay. And the second task. Imagine you are opening your favorite social media app without touching your phone, describe your usual actions upon opening the app. What type of content do you typically encounter and how do you decide what to engage with or scroll past. So verbalize everything that comes to your mind as though you were actively navigating the app.

7

S2: Okay, so when I open my phone, then my thumb already knows where I have to click on the app and my favorite app is Instagram. So firstly, I will (..) watch maybe like the pictures my friends posted and then after that I will go through the stories of my friends and just watch what happened (..) during the days or the past days and yeah, just engage with that. And after that, (..) maybe I will go on the for my on my for you page and then just watch content on that and my favorite content is mostly like (..) funny and comedy content.

8

S1: Yeah, that's all. Okay. So I sent the account in the chat in the meeting. So you can log in. I think they will send me a verification code and you will use the code to log in the account.

9

S2: Okay. One moment.

10

S1: So you will scroll through the feed (..) at the for you page and verbalize your thoughts about what you see. And this may include your immediate reaction to the contents or your interpretation of why TikTok is recommending certain videos and how does it make you feel? (...) You can also freely interact with the contents. So like you like it or follow the accounts, it's completely up to you. You will go through 10 to 15 contents, and is it possible you can share your screen so I can see what you

have?

11 **S2:** One moment I will go back to the Zoom and then. (...) Yes.

12 **S1:** Okay, yeah, I see it. So now do you see (...) TikTok?

13 **S2:** Yeah.

14 **S1:** Okay, so go on the home screen.

15 **S2:** I think it's like a guy? I don't know. I think he's maybe arrogant, because (...) he thinks he is the best? I don't know. I don't know the music, but I think it's a nice beat, and then I just go on. (...) Oh now it's like a lot of girls, (...) they look all beautiful and confident. It's nice, but I think it's because of the music, yeah, but it's beautiful. (...) Ooh, okay, she has long hair, that's crazy. I just thought like (...) how she's gonna wash it, or how often she washes the hair. It also looks very nice, I don't really look at the makeup videos, so I just skip it. Ok (...) he also looks like a guy showing off like his body and being confident. (...) Ok, this looks like the nightlife in Seoul and I guess it's like (...) a girl's trip video. Because it shows like the guys there, and handsome guys. And I think this video is long, if it's too long, I will just skip it. (...) Ahh, sounds cute. Because he speaks German, and (...) oh, he plays the guitar, it's beautiful. And let's see if he will sing or not or just play the guitar. (...) Oh, okay, that's it. (...) Oh, ok, that looks really it. Like a really nice shot, aesthetic video. Ok, it's also not a video I like. Oh they all look beautiful I guess. (...) She's also, I mean all the girls are beautiful, I'm not really enjoying those content, or videos, that they just show themselves off. Ahh, cute. Ok, that was kind of funny, he was showing his muscles. (...) Oh, that is really nicely produced, like (...) really good content, and (...) really nice, and also the topic is deep and (...) those videos where you feel inspired, because you also want to maybe also go outside and meet up with your friends. So I really like those kind of videos, and it's really nice video too. (...) I don't understand, like it's about Asian people so I can't relate with that, to think about being Asian and don't feel like (...) weird in a country, I guess so. Ok, that is also (...) nice outfit. (...) And it's also like a German song. (...) Ok, I'm confused but it's kind of funny, and (...) it's about outfits. Ok, that is a nice video, but also a little bit long, so I think after a few minutes because I don't know him, I will skip the video. (...) Also, this thirst trap video.

16 **S1:** Should we stop here?

17 **S2:** Yeah, can I come back? Okay.

18 **S1:** Okay. And (...) so for the feedback session, (...) how did you feel like the content? Did you like them?

19 **S2:** The content wasn't my usual content. (...) So, because like a lot of Asian influencers, I guess, so it's not what's typical on my for you page. And also like the thirst trap videos, (...) not the videos I watch usually. There was one video, the one with the really nice (...) it was really nicely filmed and it's

like an inspirational video, I guess. (..) I mean, the topic was also a little bit deep, but I really liked the colors in the video and that it was so clean and inspirational.

20 **S1:** Did you feel uncomfortable during the time when you were watching the contents?

21 **S2:** Yes, sometimes when the camera was like moving too fast and upside down the body. So it's like, like my boundaries were like over the top and I don't want to see that so fast, maybe.

22 **S1:** Okay. And for the instruction, did it make sense for you?

23 **S2:** Yes. Like the instructions of the video or like the resource?

24 **S1:** The one for the session.

25 **S2:** For the session. No, it was really clear. Yeah.

26 **S1:** Okay. And did you feel comfortable verbalizing your thoughts throughout the process?

27 **S2:** Yes, I think I felt comfortable. Yeah.

28 **S1:** Were there any moments where you struggled to articulate your thoughts?

29 **S2:** (..) Maybe when there's like text in the videos, so then I will read it first and then I can't just read or maybe just speak it out because I have to understand the video fully and then I can speak about it so that's maybe a pause moment and (..) yes.

30 **S1:** Okay. So now we move on to the main interview session. What do you usually like look at? Do you also go through the Instagram reels?

31 **S2:** Yes.

32 **S1:** And those are mostly just funny videos you mentioned.

33 **S2:** Yes, sometimes. (..) So sometimes it's funny videos. And then maybe because I will search a lot about love or relationships, then it will be a lot of (..) like videos about relationships and tips and it's crazy how the algorithm works.

34 **S1:** Have you ever thought about how does it work?

35 **S2:** I thought about it, yes. (..) But I think maybe it will (..) collect the data, how long I've been on the video or maybe I will watch it like more times and then they are like the algorithm knows, okay, I like that content. So they show me in the next video a similar content to keep me longer in the apps.

36 **S1:** Do you feel like they also recommend content based on your identity or your ethnicity?

- 37 **S2:** Yes, I think so, yeah. Because they know, (..) like I'm I think maybe I'm a German girl or like a European girl, so they will show me mostly content of, (..) I would say white people.
- 38 **S1:** Yes.
- 39 **S2:** Yeah.
- 40 **S1:** And mostly from Germany?
- 41 **S2:** Yes, Germany, but also maybe like the funny videos or when I'm searching for influencers, then also like from the US.
- 42 **S1:** Uh, okay. Do you think they also get the data from your interaction with other apps on your phone, maybe?
- 43 **S2:** Mm. I think so because or sometimes I have the feeling when I Google something, maybe like a cream for my body or something and then I will get the identical cream on Instagram as an ad. So I think that's that's really connected on my phone. (..) And it's scary sometimes.
- 44 **S1:** Yeah, I have also had similar experience. They are always on my Instagram ads. I don't know why.
- 45 **S2:** Yeah.
- 46 **S1:** And during the time when you were scrolling through the TikTok contents, did you notice there were any recurring patterns or themes in what was recommended to you?
- 47 **S2:** (...) Maybe I think the videos of the (..) like guys or showing beautiful girls were a lot. Like it's a lot about beauty. So because there was only one video, (..) which was a little bit funny or like two or three videos and the rest they were like really about outfits and makeup and like the body.
- 48 **S1:** Would you consider those contents can be like sexualized?
- 49 **S2:** Yes. Yeah.
- 50 **S1:** Based on what you have seen, do you think that TikTok promotes or reinforces certain stereotypes about Asians?
- 51 **S2:** (..) Yes, I think there was one video like they were filmed from above. Like it looked like they have like big cheeks and big eyes and like, I don't know, seem smaller and the body seems like bigger a little bit. I don't know how to describe it so it's more like filming from above the face especially the girls and the boys of course maybe more from down so they (..) seem like taller.
- 52 **S1:** Could you recognize like the ethnicity of different Asians?

- 53 **S2:** No, not really.
- 54 **S1:** Do you think like TikTok are actually promoting them as like one group? They tend to present them as one group or they treat different Asian groups like differently.
- 55 **S2:** (...) I think, and on TikTok or Instagram, when you see something or in the comments, what you read, then it's always like the Asian people and not like Korean or China or like the different countries. So it's, I think it's it's it's one pool and they are all one group. So yes, I think they will (...) collect them as a whole group and not like the individual countries.
- 56 **S1:** And based on your experience, like no matter on social media or traditional news media, do you think they tend to present more of the Eastern Asian countries instead of other parts of Asia?
- 57 **S2:** (...) Yeah, maybe more like, (...) I think Vietnam, Korea, Japan, like maybe those countries more, I guess.
- 58 **S1:** When you think about Asia, like, what parts would you think? Because like, I had interviews before with some Austrians, they would consider like East Asia as Asia. So they wouldn't consider like Indian people as Asian people. Yeah.
- 59 **S2:** Yeah, that's right. For me, it's also like, (...) I had a trip to Southeast Asia. So for me, it's like Vietnam, Thailand, of course, but also like, I know Eileen. So and I have other friends like from (...) Taiwan or China. So of course, that's like the big part, but that's true. Like in India is not considered for also for me, like that it's like Asia. I mean, it's really big the Asian countries and, you know.
- 60 **S1:** But why do you think you think like that? (...) Is it because like the education from the school?
- 61 **S2:** Yes, (...) I think it's the education a little bit, but also I don't know that (...) maybe (...) it's also like how (...) the people are like the culture, maybe. So I think the Indian culture for me, especially I have a friend from kindergarten, was Indian. So it was, I grew up a little bit with the Indian culture because I was a lot at her house and we ate Indian food. So for me, it was like, I didn't see her as an Asian, but Indian people from India. So it's, I didn't think as a whole group. And I think that's why I think that because I knew it as a little child or learned it like that as a little child.
- 62 **S1:** Uh-huh. So it's more because of your personal experience.
- 63 **S2:** Yeah, yes.
- 64 **S1:** And do you think there are any common stereotypes about Asians that come to your mind?
- 65 **S2:** Can you repeat that sorry?
- 66 **S1:** Do you think there are any common stereotypes about Asians that come to your mind?

- 67 **S2:** Yeah, I think, of course, there's stereotypes, I mean, because of Eileen, I know she faced a lot of stereotypes as well, like (...) eating rice all the time or like has yellow skin and stuff like dumb stuff like that. So, yes, I think there's a lot of stereotypes, negative and also like positive (...) in (...) each direction, it's, yeah, it's more like a, I don't know, (...) when you only think uh they come from Asia, so they are like that or they come from Germany, so they are like that. And yeah, this thinking yeah.
- 68 **S1:** Have you seen the similar contents like today before?
- 69 **S2:** (...) Like, not all the videos. I mean, I have a few videos about like maybe (...) when I was (...) did a research about my trip to Southeast Asia. I had a lot of videos from Bangkok or (...) other content creators from Southeast Asia. So yes, I had content like that, but more (...) from Thailand.
- 70 **S1:** Have you come across the contents about the soi six in Pattaya (...) in Thailand?
- 71 **S2:** (...) No.
- 72 **S1:** It's the red light streets.
- 73 **S2:** Oh. Ah, yes. Yes, yes, yes. I have those videos. I saw and those videos. (...) It's like when the (...) girls or ladyboys, they try to get the men into the clubs. Is that right?
- 74 **S1:** Yeah.
- 75 **S2:** Yeah. So, yes, I saw those videos.
- 76 **S1:** Yeah. Are those videos appearing very often, like frequently?
- 77 **S2:** Yes. When I had one video and maybe like I stopped for a little bit, then I (...) had it again, like a few minutes after.
- 78 **S1:** Uh-huh. Do you think those kinds of content change your perception of Asia or Thailand specifically?
- 79 **S2:** (...) No, because I think, I mean, that's that part, they can do what they want. I mean, it's like a street of (...) like party and sex and and some kind of stuff. So I don't have like bad thoughts about it. (...) I mean, it's not what I like or I would like to walk through, but I, yeah, I think they were like not bad people or kind of stuff.
- 80 **S1:** Yeah. But you, (...) after you went to Thailand, you didn't go to those areas personally, right? I would assume.
- 81 **S2:** No, I mean, we walked through some party streets, but only to see all the lights and the music. Yeah.

- 82 **S1:** So you didn't really go into this like a prostitute area.
- 83 **S2:** No, no, no, no, no.
- 84 **S1:** (..) Do you think like this, (..) do you think this kind of TikTok contents can influence, like how people perceive Asian groups? Like, you didn't get the influence, but would you think it has a more general influence on other people?
- 85 **S2:** Yeah, I guess, yeah, yeah. Because of like the videos and what you see it then you think like all Asian people are like that or look like that. But I mean, that's that's not true or like behave the same, but I mean, it's like in every country, everyone has (..) an own own mind and character. So, yes, I think they influence a lot. Yeah.
- 86 **S1:** And there was a girl like in the content we went through, she was speaking German, right?
- 87 **S2:** Mm. Yes.
- 88 **S1:** It was quite strange for me because I came across with this girl's content multiple times, but she never talked. So I thought she would speak, maybe English. And then today, I found this out she speaks German. I was surprised.
- 89 **S2:** Yeah. Yes.
- 90 **S1:** Do you think like maybe because TikTok detects that your IP address is in Germany, so it gave this kind of German speaking content?
- 91 **S2:** Yeah, maybe. And also there was like one TikTok with German music and they were like lip-syncing to it. And maybe that's also, yeah. And I mean, I paused on those videos because I recognized the language and like wanted to hear what they have to say.
- 92 **S1:** Okay. But do you think people from different cultural backgrounds, for example, Asian users would interpret this kind of content differently?
- 93 **S2:** Yeah, yes, I think so. Maybe. (...) I don't know. It depends what you want to see on TikTok. I mean, you go on, I think you go on the apps like for a purpose, maybe you want to just have a laugh or want to be inspired. And (..) I think you can really control what the for you page shows you because how long you watch the videos or how many videos you skip. So (..) I think it knows really fast what videos you want to see.
- 94 **S1:** Have you ever trained your own algorithm on Instagram or something?
- 95 **S2:** Like trained to have like nice videos on it?
- 96 **S1:** Yeah.

- 97 **S2:** Ah, okay. Not really, but there was one time where or like a few times where I have a lot of videos which are like dark or have like a negative mind because it's about fighting or like about violence. And then I was like, okay, I have to stop watching those videos because then I get more and more and more. I have to get on the other side of Instagram again with positive videos. So that was kind of like a moment where I thought, okay, no, I have to get out of this side of Instagram.
- 98 **S1:** Uh-huh, okay. And did it succeed?
- 99 **S2:** Yes.
- 100 **S1:** Great. Do you believe this kind of content might contribute to real world bias or discrimination?
- 101 **S2:** (..) Okay, that's, I don't know if I understand the question right? Like, do you mean that (..) there's a lot of discrimination on the app or like that (..).
- 102 **S1:** I mean, like this kind of content might trigger like anti-Asian sentiment (..) to more discrimination or bias in the real world.
- 103 **S2:** Yeah. I think it depends on the people in front of the phone because for me, it's like (..) I think really positive about other people and other cultures. So for me, it's like not triggering that I think, oh, I don't want to see them anymore, but maybe for other people, it will be really triggering and they seem like, oh, they always look like that and look at their faces or I don't know, so yes, I think it's, yeah.
- 104 **S1:** Do you think it's possible like (..) it might influence more on like younger generations?
- 105 **S2:** Yeah, I think so because the younger people or like younger generations, they grow up with those apps and they believe everything they see. And I mean, the videos, they are like shot (..) like sometimes it's really nice cameras and sometimes from different angles and that people don't look like that in real life. So I think the younger people, they learn that you have to look like this or have to look like that, but that's not true. So I think it really like has a bad influence on young people.
- 106 **S1:** Have you ever come across like the Indian street food videos? Like, I think it's memes or something.
- 107 **S2:** Yes. Like the one guy who's sitting in the door and like gives out food really fast. And yeah, so yeah, I saw that.
- 108 **S1:** Like, did they come across like very often?
- 109 **S2:** There was also a time, I think, where I was looking a lot about like food content and then also like cultural food. And then I came across those videos with yeah Indian food and then street food and then it got to this video. Yeah.

- 110 **S1:** Yeah, wouldn't you think that's actually a very accurate portrait of Indian foods or India in general?
- 111 **S2:** Yes, I think so because, I mean, Indian food is so good. It's so delicious. (..) And yeah, I think when you, or like random people see those videos, they think, oh, it's and everywhere you go in India, it's like that that you eat from (..) the ground or like with hands and it's like not clean or looks like it wasn't clean enough. So yeah, I think the people get influenced and think, oh no don't eat Indian food because you get food poisoning, maybe.
- 112 **S1:** And mostly like the creators of this kind of videos are like some are Indian, I think. Not all of them, of course, but why do you think they are making this kind of content because it's obviously negative.
- 113 **S2:** Yeah, I think they just want clicks and they want something like shocking and people comment on it or maybe I saw some videos where German people or like (..) from other countries, they traveled there and try it and then they will see if they get food poisoning or not. So they just want the clicks of the people and yeah.
- 114 **S1:** Did you feel like this kind of content makes you uncomfortable?
- 115 **S2:** I mean, yes, because I didn't know if the guy wanted to be filmed because sometimes (..) he looks like really like not that happy or like strong eyes. And then I didn't know if he gave consent to be filmed. And (..) yeah, so it was a little bit, yeah, discomfoting. I didn't like it that much. I mean, it was interesting to see how he packed the food, like because it's his culture. But then I was thinking about his family or maybe there were like kids in the background and I was like, oh, so many people watching that. (..) it's not that good.
- 116 **S1:** Uh-huh, uh-huh. And also like there are quite a lot of videos on TikTok that's showing like Korean guys as like ideal boyfriends. I guess those are mainly influenced by the K-pop culture. Are you a big fan of K-pop culture?
- 117 **S2:** I mean, (..) the music, I think it sounds nice, but I like I don't listen to it that much, but I saw like on Netflix, there was a documentation about, (..) I don't know, a girl group. And I thought it was really interesting. So I really liked that. But like boys' K-pop groups, I think maybe it's more for the like teenage girls, like (..) to scream about it and I don't know, it's not the music I listen to.
- 118 **S1:** Do you think like that kind of video can actually influence people to think like maybe Korean men are more ideal for as a boyfriend?
- 119 **S2:** Yes, I think so, because in those videos, there are like a lot of clips behind each other, like with ideal guys and men. So you think that everyone is like that. And when you walk down the street, you see like 10 guys who (..) look like the ideal boyfriend. So, yes, I think you get really influenced by

that.

120 **S1:** Do you think those videos are real?

121 **S2:** (..) Sometimes, but not that much. Like the one where they are working like in the street, I think, yes, because it was a party street and the people, they look like sometimes confused because they got filmed. But sometimes those videos, I think they are scripted to just show like the perfect image of a person.

122 **S1:** Yeah. (..) Have you ever heard of the Stop Asian Hate campaign?

123 **S2:** Yes. But I think I heard about it on (..) also on Instagram.

124 **S1:** Yes.

125 **S2:** I think, yeah.

126 **S1:** It was during the COVID time.

127 **S2:** Ah, yes.

128 **S1:** Yeah. It was launched to address harmful or stereotypical content about Asians, especially during COVID, it was quite bad, I would say. Do you feel like it was very effective?

129 **S2:** I think it got to the point where, like, (..) I mean, some people, they don't recognize that there's a lot of Asian hate because they (..) don't have friends or don't know people who get this hate. And so I think it's important that you know that this is happening and you have to stand up against it. So I think that is positive. But also, (..) some people use this kind of cloud to spread more hate because then when people post about it and say stop Asian hate and it's it's not good and some kind of stuff, then there are a lot of people who get into the comments and just hate, hate, hate. So (..) I think it's difficult, but it's with a lot of topics on Instagram.

130 **S1:** Also during the COVID time, have you noticed any discrimination (..) was going on like around you?

131 **S2:** Discrimination. (..) Not about culture, but about not getting vaccinated, like, or not wearing a mask.

132 **S1:** Yeah.

133 **S2:** You get like discriminated and just pushed out, I think.

134 **S1:** Okay, so not really against the Asian people?

135 **S2:** I mean, yes, I've heard about it, but I like, (...) I didn't feel it on myself because I mean, I don't

have Asian culture, so. (...) But of course, when I heard on Instagram and stuff and I was like, what why why people think about it? I mean, it's just just dumb.

136 **S1:** And do you think TikTok is doing enough to stop this harmful stereotypical content on the platform?

137 **S2:** No, I don't think they do enough because they're like, on Instagram or on TikTok, in the comments or some kind of stuff, it feels like there is no law, so people can talk about everything and they can say everything. So I think there should be, (...) or like maybe an AI who like deletes some really harmful messages. I mean, it's (...) important that we have like the freedom of speech that it's true. I mean, that's really important, but you can't say anything in those comments and (...) also can't or shouldn't spread hate a lot. So I think there should be more regulations and or maybe you can like (...) that the police or like some, I don't know, they will track some people down and then delete those comments or like, yeah, warn those people that it's not good what they are doing.

138 **S1:** Would you agree that nowadays on social media, like (...) the sexualization of females is like (...) the top way of getting views, like not only on Asian females, but it's like a very big phenomenon nowadays for all the females on the Internet.

139 **S2:** Yes, I think a lot of women or girls like get a lot of clicks when they show their body or like dancing and like just tease the people and yeah, make them believe that they are like, I don't know, special or that they get to see more if they follow them or they text them and some kind of stuff. So yes, I think there's a lot of things going on on those platforms.

140 **S1:** Would you think it has like an even bigger like influence on the social or the society side? Like a negative influence?

141 **S2:** Yes, I think it's a negative influence (...) because you see some women on videos and then some guys believe maybe that every woman is like that or that you can touch every woman like (...) she shows them in those videos or yeah, I don't know it's I think it's not a good development that everything is so open or like everything is so open or sexualized about the female body.

142 **S1:** And also for females, like ourselves, it can be, like, if we don't really think through about this we might think, okay, this is an easy way for me to get money, why don't I also start to try it. It's like, it's easy, I just shoot a few videos and then I get rich.

143 **S2:** Yeah, it's so crazy, they make millions. That's (...) yeah, I don't know. I always, always think about like the money can go to so many nice projects and not only on those views and videos.

144 **S1:** And also very sad that all the platforms are just promoting this kind of stuff. And even nowadays, there are companies who are actually making like this kind of account just for females to show their body and use them to get money.

145 S2: Yeah.

146 S1: Okay. I think that was all for the interview and I would like to collect some of your personal information. Where are you from?

147 S2: I from like where I was born? Or like?

148 S1: You can say both.

149 S2: Okay. Like now I live in Tübingen in Germany.

150 S1: Yeah.

151 S2: And yeah, so I think that's fine.

152 S1: And how old are you?

153 S2: I'm 25.

154 S1: What's your highest education level?

155 S2: Bachelor of Arts.

156 S1: Okay. And your gender identity?

157 S2: Female.

158 S1: Have you lived in a different cultural environment?

159 S2: Different cultural (..) no, I think I was like in a typical German city. Like, I mean, I knew a lot of people with cultural background, but...

160 S1: But you personally never.

161 S2: No, I, no.

162 S1: How often do you use TikTok?

163 S2: Three to four times a week.

164 S1: Did participating in the study affect the way you view TikTok's algorithm or racial content on the platform?

165 S2: Yes.

166 S1: Were you surprised about the contents?

167 **S2:** (...) Maybe a little bit, because there were like a lot of videos, like with people I usually don't watch, but I mean, it was it was really nice. I mean, it was not bad to see those videos, yeah.

168 **S1:** Okay. And then how does it change your view on TikTok?

169 **S2:** I think (..) it shows, again, that TikTok is like a really fast app that you can scroll a lot, a lot, a lot and leave a really long time on this app. And (...) yeah, but it's like so many videos you can't really process it in your head because it's so fast.

170 **S1:** Have you heard of a rumor that's saying about TikTok is very like childish and time consuming app? Like there's no point of using it?

171 **S2:** Yes, I've heard of it. (..) Or maybe the word doom scrolling, like to just be on those apps, to scroll and don't think a lot about it. And I mean, sometimes I like it too because when I watch funny content and then I laugh or when I watch inspirational content and after that I will write something on my to-do list. So sometimes it really has a nice effect, but on the other hand, it's (..) like when you look on the clock and it's like an hour ago and you were just like, oh, okay, what did I watch already? I mean, it's it's nothing in my head. It was just doom scrolling. It was just dumb.

172 **S1:** So you would agree TikTok is that kind of application.

173 **S2:** Ah, yes, yeah.

174 **S1:** Do you have any additional thoughts on the topic, that we haven't covered?

175 **S2:** Maybe that it's really important to get away from those apps or like to live more in the present. And, I mean, we shouldn't ban those apps. It's nice to have them and to explore a little bit or to express yourself. But I think it's a little bit overhand and (..) it's not good how much time we spend on those apps.

176 **S1:** Okay. Thank you again.

177 **S2:** Yeah, you're welcome.

Interview M

1

2

S1 (Researcher): Hello. So, before the study, did you already look through the consent form and totally agree on the content? Yes. Okay. So first I will introduce the study. So in the study, I'm interested in understanding your thought process as you complete the task. I will give give it to you. To achieve this, I will ask you to think aloud while engaging with the task. By thinking aloud, I mean verbalizing everything that comes to mind from the moment you begin the task until you complete it. I encourage you to continuously express your thoughts without planning or structuring your responses. Simply speak as though you were alone in the room narrating your thoughts. If you remain silent for an extended period, I will promote you to continue speaking. Do you understand what I mean?

3

S2 (Interviewee): Yes. (..)

4

S1: So first I will give you two think aloud training task. So to familiarize familiarize you with the think aloud technique. So first one how many windows are you in your parents house? You do. You do not need to count them yourself. I will do that for you. Just tell me which rooms has how many windows?

5

S2: I've never been to my dad's house, but my mom's house has, like. (..) Four in the living room. Living area, kitchen, two in the hallway. Two in the guest bedroom. And I'm assuming two in the bedroom.

6

S1: And the second task. Imagine you are opening your favorite social media app without touching your phone. Describe your usual actions upon opening the app. What type of content do you typically encounter? How do you decide what to engage with or scroll past? Verbalize everything that comes to your mind. Although you weren't actively navigating the app.

7

S2: Usually when I open it, it depends. It always depends. Usually I check the messages, or sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. And then I just scroll through it. And there's a lot of, like, sports related, posts usually, some posts of like, I guess celebrities and, friends and also music related posts. Yeah. And I usually just have it open for a couple of seconds, a minute maybe, and then I close it because I get bored and then. Yeah, but it's different every time.

8

S1: Would you usually like, comment or like on those posts?

9

S2: No, I never like, never comment.

10

S1: Okay. Okay. Now we move on to our think Aloud session. So I will give you a pre-set TikTok account. And, during the phase, you need to instruct to verbalize your thoughts while engaging with the content on TikTok page. So as you scroll through the feed, please verbalize your thoughts about

what you see. This may include your immediate reactions to the content, your interpretation of why TikTok is recommending certain videos, and how these recommendations make you feel.

11 **S2:** Understood.

12 **S1:** And also during the scrolling, you will need to, turn on the screen recording.

13 **S1:** Let's see here.

14 **S1:** I think the screen recording is on.

15 **S2:** Yeah. Recording? Yep.

16 **S2:** I mean, this is already your first video.

17 **S1:** Yes.

18 **S2:** Well, this is a typical video of, like, Indian food culture. I guess that is portrayed on TikTok, where everything seems to be very dirty. Like, there's people sitting in the food with their feet and they're adding mud to the food. So it's like, yeah, typical video you could see now he's spitting in the food. Typical video. You, I guess you could see about like Indian food culture on social media.

19 **S1:** And I forgot to say that during the session, you're free to interact with the content. You can, like, comment whatever you want. You can also follow the, the.

20 **S2:** The the account.

21 **S1:** Yeah, exactly.

22 **S2:** Well, as I said, I don't like and I don't comment, so I'm not going to do that, but I'm going to read the comments. And yeah, it's like typical comments about like Indian, hygiene, I guess, where it says like, cleaning is a crime in India. (..) Even bacteria is not safe in India. So it's like a lot of negative comments about Indian street food, I guess, or Indian hygiene in general.

23 **S2:** Next one is, Asian woman dancing. (...) To the song. (..) And I Must Be Dreaming is the title. (5) The comments are very. They all seem to be very much in love with this exceptionally beautiful young lady. Another comment of Goddess of natural beauty. I must be dreaming. (...) So yeah, it's like an a female dancing. I don't know where she's from, but yeah. Next one is a female on the streets taking pictures and, like, a goth costume. (..) If I vanished in a night, this is what I want to wear. I guess it's like a fashion statements fashion TikToker. And there's again commons of like, you're cute, you're so cute, you're so pretty and so on. A bunch of fire emojis. (4) And another video

of like food with the title. If you see me getting manipulated by a tall Chinese guy, academically smart, that plays basketball, likes to draw soft spoken, beautiful eyes, cute smile. Leave me the fuck alone. I worked hard for that spot. (..) Oh okay, so someone is interested in a tall Chinese guy that is smart, plays basketball and so on. Yeah. I don't quite understand the background also because it's like a desert in the background, but it's I think it's a song that is pretty popular on TikTok. (..) Yeah. Another one is a guy. (..) That is showing both of the sides of his face. (..) Why does one side look so friendly at the comment? I don't know, they look the same to me. (..) And then comments are sometimes you have to say damn and scroll. (..) Dinner is ready. My type 100%. (..) Also, it's like, (...) Yeah. I don't know what it is. This guy is showing his left side of the face and then showing the right side of his face, and apparently one side looks friendly. (5) I feel like this is like fishing for compliments, I guess I don't know. Okay, baddie alert, my love for you. Hey, do you live alone? (..) Yeah. Also like lots of comments of how pretty cute 100% their type is. Next one is pictures of someone eating an egg. (..) Looking at the egg. Having the egg in her mouth. Showing the egg.

- 24 **S2:** Yeah, it's five pictures of a female with an egg, either in her mouth or her hand. And again. You ever seen someone so beautiful you want to walk in? Like the comments again are very. There's also like Spanish or whatever comments. (5) And comments that love boiled eggs. (..) Yeah, I don't get that. (4) Next one is of a guy that turns red apparently after he drinks alcohol and he's like smiling and singing along to the music. (...) His face is turning into a tomato after one sip of alcohol. That's the. (..) Header. And apparently this is Asian flush. (..)
- 25 **S2:** There's comments that can relate. Also comments that say they're not Asian, but it also happens to them. (..) And also comments that think it's cute. (...) Yeah, many people in the comments can relate to this. (..) And he's also showing his tattoo on his neck and like putting his shirt to the side. So I guess also trying to look cute or whatever. Yeah. And also playing with his tongue so I guess. Yeah. (..) Next one wearing a hijab. (..) Of like a Korean girl holding, I guess, the Quran and just posing in front of the camera. (..) Not moving a lot. I love showing the peace sign. (..) And then comments. (..) About Islam is the best. And then (..) one person is annoyed that people think there are no Korean Muslims and Chinese Muslim girls. Also comments of like them converting from. (..) Islam to Christianity. But yeah, lots of comments, lots of Arabic comments of favoring Islam and saying Islam is the best. (..)
- 26 **S2:** Next one is a Chinese video of a Chinese guy. I'm assuming I'm not homophobic. I don't understand what it says. It says shiba All of you. I don't know what shiba is.
- 27 **S2:** The comments are all shiba to you, Shiba all to you too. I don't know what shiba is. So. Another video is of two girls singing. (..) Or lip synching to a famous TikTok song. (...) I cannot see a lot except for their faces and comments about. (..) Time to learn Chinese sushi don't lie. (...) Sushi don't lie because lyrics sound like that. And I know what batty when I see one. Same. Same but different. Yeah. A lot of comments of sushi don't lie. Korean make it video. Yeah, I guess they're Korean. And I

don't know. (..) Hannah and Mina. (...) Next one is on the basketball court. Here are some steps to pull an Asian. And the second picture is also you like Asian to someone standing in front of a mirror. (...) And then the top comment just give me the damn steps. Is anyone falling in love, married and love with boys on TikTok that I don't have a chance? Okay, so apparently they're also very interested in him or he seems to be cute. Again, according to the comments. But you cannot really see his face. So I'm assuming the comments already know him or the way he or whatever he looks like, because from this picture you cannot see. Next one. (...) Is a girl standing in front of the mirror filming herself. (...) Smiling. (..) Also lip syncing at some point, but yeah, not really moving a lot. So I'm assuming the comments are also going to be like yeah, first one God, I love Asian girls. Riot ID Konichiwa, I love women. What's your favorite dinosaur? (...)

28 **S2:** Oh, and apparently he's been asking her what her favorite dinosaur is for a couple of videos or TikToks. (..) Because there's also comments there. (..) She likes Pokemon, oh, apparently on her phone case. She has like Pokemon card or whatever. I don't know anything about Pokemon, so I don't know what this is, but yeah. (...) (...) Oh, yeah. All right. This is a picture again. It says no X. Oh, it's three pictures. Wait. No X no next. For me, Asian girls are the best. (..) No X no next. For me, Asian girls are the best. (..) (..) I don't know if this is supposed to be a poem. I don't understand it, but the first picture is him with wearing a hoodie. You cannot see his face or anything. He's standing in front of a crosswalk. Second picture is him walking on the sidewalk and says no. Next. The third picture is him standing in front of the mirror and it says, for me, Asian girls are the best. Plus 12 commons. And one of the commons is, I guess I'm Asian too. Yeah, but he responded, not the type of Asian I'm talking about. (..) (...) Well. (..) Okay, I don't know. (4)

29 **S2:** And then there's comments that I'm from Turkey and it's in Asia, I'm from the Philippines and I'm Christian. One comment. I'm not one of being racist, just want to ask Asian because of these beautiful eyes and language I don't understand. Yeah. (..) Next one. It's a guy looking into the camera. And with the with, like, the header or subtitles, it says, can't stop looking at myself. I'm in love. So apparently this person is in love with themselves, and they're literally just looking into the mirror or camera. (..) And then comments are the caption is so real. He looks like Ricky. I don't know who Ricky is. What's up? Beijing? He's handsome and he knows it. Ricky and Jake born to ride. Forced to scroll. (5) And then comments. Neither can I. I can't stop looking at you either. Did I just say that out loud? Something's off. I'm in love too. Okay, so the people are in love with him. I don't know who he is, so I'm not in love with him. (6) Again, a famous TikTok song. And then when they want an Asian but want Korean, Chinese or Vietnamese. (..) And it says, I don't have a flag because he's Hmong. Then comments of asking or got me over here researching Hmong now. Just give me an Asian. Any Hmong isn't even a country girl. Just give me an Asian. This is not a girl, is it? No. (..)

30 **S2:** No, it's a Christian guy. Vietnam is not Asia. And then a comment. You're right. Vietnam is in Europe, and they just won Eurovision. All right. (...) What they said is, oh, he didn't put the Japanese flag but put a Vietnamese. And also comments I like every Asian. Honestly, I don't care where from

in Asia. Why do some people care? I just want a man of God. Christian man. Okay.

31 **S1:** Okay.

32 **S1:** That's enough, I think. Okay, so I will ask you some questions about the feedback of this session. Do you think the instruction makes sense? (..)

33 **S2:** The instruction you gave me?

34 **S1:** Yeah.

35 **S2:** Yeah.

36 **S1:** Do you think it actually, like, guides you through the whole process and, like, help you to, get to know about the task and so you did the task correctly?

37 **S2:** I hope so, I was.

38 **S1:** But did you think, like, the structure helpful?

39 **S2:** Yeah.

40 **S1:** Okay, Did you feel comfortable, like verbalizing your thoughts through the process?

41 **S2:** Yeah. (..) I was.

42 **S1:** Were there moments where you struggle to articulate your thoughts?

43 **S2:** Yeah. I mean, articulate my thoughts. Partially because, like, some of the videos, like, I don't know, I don't have the background information because, like, usually, I guess those are not the kind of videos that I get on my feed. So, like, I don't know, like certain words or I don't know. There was one TikTok that had a word in the header, basically, but I didn't know what it means and everyone in the comment knew what it meant. But other than that, no, I didn't have any issues. (...)

44 **S1:** Okay. So now we move to the next session about the retrospective interview. (..) So first, do you think there are any like, common stereotypes about Asians that come to your mind?

45 **S2:** Well, like the very first thing. It depends on what kind of Asian because like first video, for example, was of an Indian group who was like a stereotype of like, dirty dirtiness, dirty food. Like they had their, their feet in the food, in the food bowl and like spitting in the food, adding mud to it and whatever. And like all the comments were like negative about like how dirty India is and like

bacteria, even bacteria is like scared of India or whatever. So yeah, in that case, yeah, there's stereotypes. And also like the, the other video where it's like I want an Asian from like Korea, China or Vietnam is like also like I guess stereotype of people preferring that nationalities rather than other Asian countries. So I guess like stereotypes as in like Asia from a westerner's perspective is more like those bigger known countries and not like India or Russia or whatever.

46 **S1:** But before you saw that the video of the Indian food, have you ever thought about how it would Be like of Indian people? Or do you have any Indian friends around you?

47 **S2:** How they would perceive it?

48 **S1:** Like how you would perceive them before you see the content?

49 **S2:** I mean, I've seen content like that before.

50 **S1:** But have you thought about if it's real or it's just like a it's just a sensational, like content on the internet to get views.

51 **S2:** The video that we just saw is obviously fake because they were like exaggerating, like spitting into the the food and whatever and having their feet and the food. I've seen other videos that seem to be real. But I've never been to India, so I'm assuming it doesn't. It's not like that everywhere, but I know that India, like I've never been to India, but I know that they are kind of struggling with like, like trash everywhere, like on the roadside and whatever from like, Google Maps or whatever. So I don't know. I'm assuming it is actually the case where like food, like hygiene is not not number one priority there. But it's also in other countries. But like India is the only country that I've seen on videos that it's really bad. Like I also like for example, in Thailand, it's also hygiene is not like number one priority like in the West. I mean, we're also struggling with like the shops, the small kebab shops or sausage places, whatever. They're also not the most hygienic. But like, I think like in the West, we really prioritize hygiene or at least try to. And in India, it's not that big of a deal, I'm assuming, but I don't know. I'm not. Yeah, I've never been to India, so I wouldn't know.

52 **S1:** Okay. For those like stereotype that you talked about, like where do you think these ideas come from?

53 **S2:** I mean, it probably like for some degree it stems from like actually being that way in some places, I'm guessing, because I feel like certain stereotypes, like even though they're like extremely exaggerated, but they like, they come from, from somewhere. Like it's not like a person just invented a new stereotype. So it has to, like, exist to some degree somewhere. So I'm assuming that, yeah, those things actually take place. Like, I've seen videos that didn't seem to be fake of like Indian street food for example. So yeah I think it act like of course they're overly exaggerated as like the

video was like obviously fake but it comes from somewhere.

54 **S1:** But like the The video was exaggerated because it's obviously fake, but also like the content was made, I would assume those are Indian, but why do you think they are like, I don't think this is a very positive image of Indian representation. Then why do you think they are still doing this kind of like content?

55 **S2:** I mean, I don't know if they were Indian or not, but maybe yeah, they would probably make it to like because it's so big on like social media, like I've seen a plethora of videos that like depict the Indian food hygiene or whatever. So I'm guessing they're also like because there are so many videos of it. It's also like quite popular. So if you're I don't know if they were from India or maybe, maybe Pakistan that aren't very friendly with India right now. So maybe they are making a joke about it, or they're like Indians living in like in a different country and are not that close to India, the country itself. Maybe their parents are from there, but they grew up somewhere else. And yeah, and I'm guessing that's like, you can get a lot of clicks on that video if you like, overly exaggerated like that. Because people are going to be like, yeah, blah, blah, blah. This is like, I've seen this happen. Whatever. Yeah. So it's just a way of like, I guess, like getting emotions out of people whether they're positive or negative doesn't matter, but like just to get the views.

56 **S1:** So while scrolling through TikTok content, did you notice any recurring patterns or themes in what was recommended to you?

57 **S2:** Yeah, there were a lot of like, beauty or like people just showing their faces for an extended amount of time into the camera, not really doing anything. And like, I don't know if it's fishing for compliments, but like, they didn't really do anything. There was not like there wasn't any value to the video. It was basically only their face. And they were like looking into the face, maybe like smiling for a second or whatever. And all the comments were so cute, so pretty, blah blah blah. I'm in love with them. So yeah, I think that was like four videos. Two times it was of girls, two times it was boys. So yeah, like very much like beauty related or. (..) Yeah.

58 **S1:** But like based on your experience, it's only like happened on the other Asian creator or it's also like apply on those like Western or like from other countries, from other regions, the content creators, they're doing this similar type of videos.

59 **S3:** I don't know, like in my feed, I don't get these kind of videos, so I wouldn't know if there's also Westerners that do that. I'm assuming there are, because yeah, why not? Like, people always want to get compliments. It doesn't matter if you're Asian or European or whatever. So I'm assuming they also exist for Caucasian people, but I don't know. I don't get those on my feed. But yeah, the ones that I saw were only Asian, so.

- 60 **S1:** Yeah. How do you think TikTok's algorithm decides what kind of content to show you?
- 61 **S2:** I mean, I'm guessing it's like through liking certain videos or commenting on videos. Maybe like. (...) Maybe because while watching the videos, like, for example, the one of just a guy looking into the camera and like fishing for compliments or whatever, because I was looking through the comments and the video played in the background for like maybe 5 or 10 times. Maybe TikTok thought, oh, I like this kind of content. And so it kept giving me this kind of content. Maybe that's why I had four, because I think it was like the most videos that I got were like that. But yeah, in general I think like through liking and through (...) commenting TikTok would or searching also searching, for certain videos or like hashtags or whatever. TikTok would assume that I enjoy those kind of videos and it would like constantly, play those kind of videos in my feed.
- 62 **S1:** Okay. And do you feel like that algorithm recommended content based on your identity or behavior? Like just in general? Like not the account that I provide to you, just like in general.
- 63 **S2:** I mean, yeah, like, I mean, it's, in general. Yeah. Because the videos that I watch. (...) I'm gonna get similar videos afterwards, but like, I wouldn't know because there are so many videos out there. Like, I wouldn't know if there's like a different video that I would much rather watch or a different category because I just get like the same or similar categories right now, because that's the videos that I watch. And that's also like the videos, like I get a lot of videos that I send to my friends or my friends send to me. So I'm assuming we have like similar feeds just because it's like the videos that we watch and the videos we, we send each other.
- 64 **S1:** Do you think like the TikTok algorithm, promotes or reinforce certain stereotypes about Asians. (...)
- 65 **S2:** I mean promotes I don't know, I mean videos exist for example, coming back to the Indian, it's a stereotype of India. I don't know if TikTok promotes it. I don't know if it's like on like the starting page or whatever for most people that watch those kind of videos.
- 66 **S1:** But also it was strange. No. Like out of I think I showed you about 15 videos. There were only like one Indian videos.
- 67 **S2:** Yeah, there was one. Indian video.
- 68 **S1:** Mostly others were about, I would say like Eastern Asian.
- 69 **S2:** Yeah, most were Eastern Asian, like Korean or Chinese. There was one of like a muslim or Muslim Korean. Yeah, yeah.

- 70 **S1:** So there are like other regions or just disappeared.
- 71 **S2:** Yeah. Other. But that's like what I think of like a Westerners look on Asian is mostly like Korean China, Japan probably. And like other countries like Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, whatever they're not, or in a more extreme way, like India or Russia or whatever, or Turkey, they're not seen as like typical Asian like for Westerners. I think typical Asians would be like Korean, Chinese and Japanese. So I don't I'm assuming they also create TikToks, but also like the sheer amount of people living in Korea, China, especially China and Japan, I would assume just there's like way more videos of Chinese creators, for example, than there is for creators from Myanmar, for example, but also India. India has a lot of people. So there should be more videos of India or Indian people, but I guess they have a different, different social media app. So. (..) Maybe that's the reason why there's not as many Indian or not as many positive Indian videosd. (6)
- 72 **S1:** Then do you think those like TikTok contents can influence how people perceive Asian groups?
- 73 **S2:** Yeah. Yeah. For example, the Indian again, so many people would then think that India is really dirty and wouldn't want to visit, for example, or with the I think it was Korean guys that were so pretty looking at the camera, not doing anything. So people would think, okay, like all Korean guys look like that, like flawless without like, any, any, any bad spots on their face or whatever. And they're just like cute, pretty and whatever. So yeah, I think it influences people because you only see, like probably mostly only, like really beautiful people or whatever. Or it's probably edited afterwards, but like TikTok will promote, or more people would watch pretty people on TikTok looking into the camera as like, not so pretty or whatever. So yeah, people would think that many or most Koreans are like, pretty like that. (..)
- 74 **S1:** Yeah. But I guess also those like not pretty Korean people, they wouldn't be on the internet. No?
- 75 **S2:** They wouldn't be on the internet?
- 76 **S1:** Yeah. Like or.
- 77 **S2:** On TikTok? They wouldn't be content creators?
- 78 **S1:** Yeah.
- 79 **S2:** Well, I think there's content creators that don't look like ten out of ten. Probably. But but to get like recognized and for have having thousands of people watch your content.
- 80 **S2:** Like all the comments were like you're so cute I want to be with you. I'm so in love with him blah blah blah. Like, if you're not like you don't look ten out of ten, then you probably won't get that. That

kind of comments. And if comments also increase the likelihood of you being on someone's, like for you page or whatever, you're not going to get the, the views that the, the, the ten out of ten the pretty people get. I think there's still there's still content creators. Like not every content creator looks like superly attractive, but they get used and they probably also edit like afterwards, I don't know, or use makeup or I don't know how it works.

81 **S1:** Do you think people from different cultural backgrounds would interpret this kind of content differently? (4)

82 **S2:** From a different cultural background?

83 **S1:** Yeah. For example, like a European Caucasian or like the Asian watch into this content.

84 **S2:** Well. Yeah. Like people from Korea that actually know what it is like in Korea and what people look like. I'm guessing they're going to interpret it differently than someone who like for me, I've never been to Korea. So if I just go by the videos that I see on TikTok of Korean people, like, I would also think that, oh my God, they're like also beautiful there. I have to get there right away or whatever. So yeah, it's going to change the perception.

85 **S1:** Then do you think this kind of like recommendation content can influence people's attitudes towards Asians, like in real life or online interaction?

86 **S2:** Can you repeat the question.

87 **S1:** Like, do you think this kind of like algorithmically recommended content can influence people's attitudes towards Asian.

88 **S2:** Well, yeah. Like, I mean it's probably not the TikTok is not the sole reason. But like for example, Koreans or Korean pop culture in general being so popular. I mean, TikTok has its part in it. And also like someone who, let's say is more close minded and believes everything they see on the internet, like they would maybe like start having hatred against Indian people or India in general, and they would like just start hating on India because of those kind of videos. So yeah, there's definitely a chance that people like are going to take it negatively, but probably also positively if like you see.

89 **S1:** K-pop is a Positive example.

90 **S2:** Yeah. For example. Yeah.

91 **S1:** So you would say that can contribute to a real world bias or.

92 **S2:** Well yeah of course.

- 93 **S1:** Have you have you personally experienced any bias or discrimination that you believe may have been influenced by the content from social media? Not exactly from TikTok. Like, I mean you cannot be discriminated or biased, but you could also but just like maybe you have had certain experience about that.
- 94 **S2:** Not me personally. You know, I just know like of friends of Asian friends during Covid or like lots of misinformation has been spread on, on the internet in general. I just know that they got hate from Covid. Like for example a friend from Malaysia, she got bullied by like younger children because I'm assuming they saw something on TikTok or Facebook or Instagram, whatever. And so she got bullied for like they called her like a Covid spreader or whatever. Just because she's a Chinese Malaysian. And yeah, those kind of things obviously happen, I think.
- 95 **S1:** And at that time was also like, I think it's very interesting because like the rumor is saying like this Chinese people started yeah, the the virus was spreaded from China. But in the end, like all the Asian like, people are get discriminated.
- 96 **S2:** Yeah. It doesn't matter.
- 97 **S1:** Yeah. It doesn't matter.
- 98 **S2:** But also, like it doesn't really matter who got discriminated against. But yeah, it's like basically all of the Asians maybe except for like or all of the East Asians. But like, it also doesn't matter because like also like one single Chinese person gets discriminated against, like it's not their fault. So like discriminating whether they're Chinese or like Malaysian or Japanese or whatever. Like it's bad in general just because of like, news you get on the internet or probably even fake news maybe, like, I don't know. Back then, Donald Trump also was the president of the US. So he also spread some fake news. Yeah that happens.
- 99 **S1:** Okay. Go back to the TikTok content that you saw. Like did you see any content that made you uncomfortable because of how it portrayed Asian? (..)
- 100 **S2:** No, not uncomfortable because like most of them were positive videos about like. (...) Asians. I guess the only one negative that I remember was the Indian one, but that was like obviously satire. So I didn't feel uncomfortable watching that.
- 101 **S1:** But did you feel like, for example, there was a video that about a guy that he had said he had a sip of alcohol and he got like blush or something.
- 102 **S2:** Yeah.

- 103 **S1:** And then he also like, doing something, like with his clothes. Did you feel like it was a sexualized content?
- 104 **S2:** Well, yeah, I think he was probably fishing for compliments or comments to say, like, he's so cute or, being relatable to other people. And yeah, obviously he was like sexualized because he was like pulling down his shirt to show his tattoo that he had on his neck and shoulder.
- 105 **S1:** Yeah.
- 106 **S2:** But yeah, it didn't make me feel uncomfortable because why would I like I wouldn't get uncomfortable of those kind of things that I see on the internet.
- 107 **S1:** Okay.
- 108 **S2:** Like it doesn't affect me negatively. If even if I would feel uncomfortable, I would just skip it.
- 109 **S1:** So you wouldn't actually, like, report it or like, I don't know, block it. This kind of content.
- 110 **S2:** No, I don't see a reason why I should report it and also block it. I don't know, I'm just not going to watch it. And if I keep like, I think that's like part of the algorithm, I suppose, like if I skip a video then it's not going to like come up again or a similar video, it might come up again. But if I continuously skip it, then that kind of video is going to be like gone from my feed.
- 111 **S1:** Yeah, I guess you need to press like not interested or something like that.
- 112 **S2:** Maybe. But I never do that either. And at some point I think the videos that I'm not interested in, I mean, TikTok can never like 100% know which videos I'm interested and which I'm not. But like, generally speaking, I think that just skipping like, yeah, I'm fine with seeing like 1 or 2 seconds of a video I'm not interested in. (..)
- 113 **S1:** But like back to the, about the male content. contents like why do you think there are? I would say there were quite a few like content that it's like portraying Asian males as like a very ideal boyfriend. Why do you think it's like that? (...) Or do you agree with, like, what I'm saying? (..)
- 114 **S2:** Well, I'm I'm guessing that the content is probably directed at European or Western people in general because it was like also like everything was in English. And I think like in general, like Asian culture or especially like through K-pop, many Westerners like started paying attention way more, at, like Asian people or Korean people. (...) Yeah. What was the question again?
- 115 **S1:** Oh, do you think, like why there are so many contents about Asian males are portrayed as an ideal boyfriend?

- 116 **S2:** Well, yeah, I think it's like part of it is because of K-pop. Because, like, there's the idols that just people, like, keep following and, like, love and, like, whatever. So I'm assuming, like, even if they don't know about, like, their personal life or how they are as a person because they might only know them from like stage or from like music videos or whatever. They just think that because it's so popular that they're, like, interested in them. And so I think like Korean men, for example, just got like a big boost in Western or in attractiveness Effectiveness perceived by Westerners.
- 117 **S1:** Do you think the portrayal of the Asian male is same with the portrayal of Western males?
- 118 **S2:** No, I don't think so. I think I mean, the like the videos of Asian males that we saw was like all like being cutesy and like very beautiful and whatever. And I think usually in the West, it's not like men don't aim to be like cute or whatever, because here it's more like still to this day, like back, back. A couple of years ago, it was like worse, but like, still, it's like men here have to be, like, strong and like, take care of the family, take care of their wife, their children, whatever. And the videos that we saw of Asians was like, not it was not a portraying strength, but more like good facial features and being pretty. And I don't think being pretty is that much of a deal in like, European or Western culture. Like, of course everyone wants to be pretty, but it's not like I've never seen videos of Westerners that like, do that, like show their face and like or show their face like for five seconds and don't do anything basically. And then just having comments like oh my god so pretty, whatever. Like I've never seen that of Westerners.
- 119 **S1:** And also you mentioned that it might be like makeup effects, like there is like barely like for Western male to put on some makeup.
- 120 **S2:** Yeah. I don't think it's very common. I mean, I don't know, like since I'm not a content creator, I don't know what they do like in in post, but like, I'm assuming there's like filters like I know from friends where if I post something on social media, which I never do, but I used to do, I would just post a picture. But I know from friends that they also like alter the picture to make. I don't know their butt look bigger or whatever, or just like adjust the coloring and whatever. So they edit the picture they're going to post. So I'm assuming like big content creators, they're going to like edit their, they're going to edit the video in post. And if that's like lighting up their face or making it smaller and whatever, like maybe it's makeup, but nowadays it could probably also be like, I just like, I don't know, editing the video. So they look like flawless.
- 121 **S1:** Do you think TikTok does enough to address harmful stereotypical content about Asian. Like for example TikTok has previously launched initiatives like the Stop Asian Hate campaign, and updated its community guidelines to include stricter policies on hate speech and harassment. Do you feel this like efforts are effective or is more needed?
- 122 **S2:** I mean. More is always good, I guess. Like, but since I never like comments, report block or

anything, I don't really know what the options are. Or if it's like actually effective. But yeah, I think more is always good. Like getting rid of hateful, content, is always good. But like, for example, going back to the Indian, I don't think that the Indian content should be blocked if it's like satire or if it's like just a video, like if, if there's like a video of that and then people talking over it. How disgusting it is. How or like purposely attacking Indian culture or Indian people then I think it should. TikTok should do something of like getting rid of it, but just the content itself. I don't think it should be blocked, banned, whatever, because it's not directly like Asian hate or whatever because it's a video or it's like comedy or whatever that should be allowed. But yeah, in general always like if there's hateful content on there, it's always good for TikTok to start acting against it and doing something against it.

123 **S1:** But do you think the video back to the Indian, it's funny?

124 **S2:** Well, I personally don't think it's funny, but it's like it's obviously a joke. So why should it get banned? Like, for me personally, I don't find everything funny, but just because I don't think it's funny doesn't mean that no one else can think it's funny. And if other people find it funny, then that's fine. And if their opinion is that yeah, India is actually like that. I mean, that's their their choice I guess. But it's not. TikTok is not to enforce other people's views based on things they see. Because people can or should at least think for themselves. (..) And TikTok is not there to like direct you in a, in a, in a way that you should think of something I feel like. And if people watch it think it's funny and then actually think that India is like that, then well that's their personal choice.

125 **S1:** Okay. I think that was all for the interview. And then it's the last session that I will collect some personal demographic information about you, and also the feedback for the entire study. Okay. Where are you from?

126 **S2:** Born in the US, but been living in Austria for most of my life.

127 **S1:** How old are you? (6)

128 **S2:** 27. Yeah. 27.

129 **S1:** Okay. What is your highest level of education?

130 **S2:** Bachelor's.

131 **S1:** What is your current income level like? You don't have to say a number.

132 **S2:** I'm jobless right now.

133 **S1:** Okay. What's your gender identity?

134 S2: Male.

135 S1: Okay, so you have lived in a different cultural environment, right? And for how long there?

136 S2: Well, I've lived in the US for in some for two years. I've lived in Japan for three years, and I've lived in Thailand for half a year, and in Austria for the rest of the time of my 27 or 28 years.

137 S1: Okay. How often do you use TikTok?

138 S2: Every day.

139 S1: And what type of content do you engage with most frequently on TikTok?

140 S2: Well, it's usually the things that my friends sent me. Or just like, random sports or music.

141 S1: Have you noticed any trends like related to the racial representation on TikTok, for example, the fox eye trend or the Stop Asian Hate movement? Have you heard of them?

142 S2: I've heard of them, but I, I like I don't encounter too much, I guess. Asian content. Like most of my content is US based. So yeah, I I've heard of them, but not encountered them.

143 S1: How often do you come across similar content like in your everyday TikTok use? Okay.

144 S2: That we watch today?

145 S1: Yeah. You don't have any, right?

146 S2: No, no.

147 S1: Okay. Did you did participate in this study affect you the way you view TikTok's algorithm or racial content on the platform? (5)

148 S2: No.

149 S1: Were there any moments during the study when you felt uncomfortable?

150 S2: No.

151 S1: Okay. Do you have any additional thoughts on the topic that we haven't covered?

152 S2: No, I don't think so.

153 **S1:** Okay. That's all. Thank you.

154 **S2:** You're very welcome.

Interview N

1

2

S1 (Researcher): And (..) so I will briefly explain about the study. So in the study, I'm interested in understanding your thought process as you complete the task I will give to you. To achieve this, I will ask you to think aloud while engaging with the task. By thinking aloud, I mean verbalizing everything that comes to mind from the moment you begin the task until you complete it. I encourage you to continuously express your thoughts without planning or structuring your responses. Simply speak as though you were alone in the room, narrating your thoughts. If you remain silent for an extended period, I will prompt you to continue speaking. Do you understand what I mean?

3

S2 (Interviewee): Okay. Yes, I should verbalize everything I see and (...) like that.

4

S1: And I will give you two training tasks to help you familiarize with this think-aloud technique. First one, how many windows are in your parents' house? You don't need to count them yourself. I will do that for you. Just tell me which room has how many windows.

5

S2: Ah, okay. So (..) my room has (..) I can only guess it's like 10 windows because it's a gallery. Then (..) it's on the first floor, it's (...) one in my parents' bedroom, one in my brother's bedroom, one in the bathroom, one in the toilet. In the main hall, it's two.

6

S1: Yeah.

7

S2: And on the ground floor, it's (...) four in the living room. Kind of like a door, but I think it counts as a window. (..) Another one in the kitchen, another one in the living room, another one in the toilet, and that's it.

8

S1: Yeah, perfect. And the second task. So imagine you are opening your favorite social media app without touching your phone. Describe your usual actions upon opening the app, what type of content you typically encounter, and how you decide what to engage with or scroll past. Verbalize everything that comes to mind as though you were actively navigating the app.

9

S2: So for me, it's YouTube. So first I unlock my phone, then I (..) click on the main page and usually I get recommendations about videos from the (..) channels I subscribed. (...) Like dashboard. (...) And sometimes I go to the subscribe section and look which channels that I subscribed published a new video.

10

S1: That's all?

11

S2: That's all. (...) I mean when there is a video, then I will click on that and watch it like 10 minutes. (...) And sometimes comment section kind of when there's a good topic.

12

S1: And what kind of contents do you usually go for?

- 13 **S2:** (...) Either it's music or like, (..) historical or current history, like (..) media channels. (..) Kind of deeper than normal news because normal news coverage is not so analytic and not so long, usually it's just small (...) reports.
- 14 **S1:** Yeah, okay, I get that. So I'm sending the TikTok accounts in the chat. You can log in. I think they will send me a verification code. I'll give the code, so you can log in with that.
- 15 **S1:** Can you share screen? So (..) I also have a screen recording of what you have been through?
- 16 **S2:** Yes. (...) So you should see my screen now.
- 17 **S1:** Yep.
- 18 **S2:** Okay. (..) So I just start. This one is (...) singing.
- 19 **S1:** Yeah, you can go through the content. You can also interact with the page.
- 20 **S2:** Like war, but it looks like CGI. (...) I don't know, it's random. (...) Okay, she's just showing her dress, outfit. I don't know why it's open-minded with Korea, so (...) maybe it suggests Korea is open minded. (..) Two other dancers, cute girls singing or dancing with maybe her brother.
- 21 **S2:** (..) So this is American content and an argument.
- 22 **S1:** This is live, you can just scroll past.
- 23 **S2:** Oh, okay. This is (...) so this is the ice cream rolling?
- 24 **S1:** Yeah. Oh.
- 25 **S2:** (...) Okay. This is, (...) like self-motivation, maybe? I don't know. (...) Starbucks. (...) I don't like AI videos, to be honest. (..) It's a dancer. (...) Yes (...) so this is about Asian cliché, maybe? (...) This is a German argument because the waiter got hit or something, eyes and ear.
- 26 **S2:** (...) Well, this is the ads.
- 27 **S2:** (...) I don't know what's this one. (...) Okay, this is a dentist advertisement or something. I don't know what it is. (..) McDonald's advertisement. So. (...) Oh, this is some sexualized content? I don't know. (..) This looks like he's doing gym and posing or something. (...) Okay, so it's tennis and (..) like (...) he's kind of showing off, he's better than the other one, maybe.
- 28 **S1:** I don't get it.
- 29 **S2:** (..) So this one is an American, (...) eating food kind of a bit. (...) I feel like most of this content is just ads.

30 **S1:** Yeah, we can stop it here.

31 **S2:** (...) Because it's obviously super noisy, most of them. And this one is at least more calm. (...) So he's speaking about race, racial discrimination, maybe? Or kind of what's expected from him?

32 **S1:** Yeah, I guess so.

33 **S2:** (...) So he's also showing off at the same (...) the same life. This is (...) okay, I don't know why the trainer is so rude or rough with them.

34 **S1:** I think this is ad, yeah.

35 **S2:** Yeah. (...) Okay, it's memes.

36 **S1:** I think we can stop. I think it's more than 10.

37 **S2:** Okay. Good.

38 **S1:** That is so weird. Why is this content giving, why is this account giving you this content? This is the account I gave to you?

39 **S2:** Yes, it should. (...) Your profile? Yes. I mean, I got one in Chinese. One video, but most of them were just (...) a bit random.

40 **S1:** Random stuff. Yes. Do you also use Instagram?

41 **S2:** Yes, I do that just to (...) most of that is about bee work because I'm a beekeeper and I'm recently not (...) using it much, but it's new.

42 **S1:** But do you also get this kind of like random stuff on your Instagram?

43 **S2:** No. Maybe that's because I never used actual TikT on this laptop, ok, so they're, or this IP address, I'm currently. That's never linked to TikT ok, so they don't have maybe they don't have any idea like that, (...) which

44 content to show so they just show random to (...) get my interests? I don't know, to collect some
45 data?

46 **S1:** Okay. Well, that's very strange because (...) nobody has the same content like you, all the interviews I had before were not like this.

47 **S2:** It's super loud and I don't know.

48 **S1:** Yeah, but mostly, like my interviewees get either sexualized female content or like almost soft porn or like sexualized men content.

- 49 **S2:** Okay. And I just got gym bros, memes and one video about food, Asian food or something.
- 50 **S1:** Uh-huh. Okay. Then let's get to the feedback session. Did you think the instructions made sense for you?
- 51 **S2:** (...) You mean on the (...) what exactly?
- 52 **S1:** On the tasks.
- 53 **S2:** Yes.
- 54 **S1:** Was it, like, did you feel comfortable verbalizing your thoughts through the process?
- 55 **S2:** (...) Yes, it's a bit hard to actually verbalize everything. But (...) it makes sense to (...) get a rough idea what's (...) going on in the mind, but (...) for such fast changing and different content, it's a bit hard to keep up with (...) you know, too many (...) sensations or how to describe that.
- 56 **S1:** So it was hard for you to articulate your thoughts.
- 57 **S2:** Yes, it was definitely hard. Because you think the content was like (...)
- 58 **S1:** Too random.
- 59 **S2:** Not really linked to each other and too many (...) different stimulations.
- 60 **S1:** Yeah, ads.
- 61 **S1:** Have you heard like, (...) like there was some kind of saying saying like TikTok is a very (...) like childish application. Usually the contents are very nonsense, there's like no point. It's just time consuming.
- 62 **S2:** Yes. That's definitely true for my experience. I don't feel any, (...) I don't feel like I got any information or useful stuff from that. Just (...) random content to stimulate and not (...) I don't know, no, but it feels like mind-eating.
- 63 **S1:** And (...) it's very hard because the algorithm is like really fucked up, so. And also, have you ever thought like how the algorithm decides what kind of content to show you?
- 64 **S2:** I think the session is a bit too short for the algorithm to get exact (...) my preferences, because maybe (...) it's trying out at first. Throwing random stuff and learning from the (...) like how long I stay and like how I interact with it, maybe. And that's why (...) it's not fully learned yet.
- 65 **S1:** It's also different if I log in this account on my phone and you log in this account on your website, the content is different.

- 66 **S2:** Okay. So it's (..) it's maybe it's also based on the location and the device you are using. So maybe the IP address, plus my rent data from my laptop or something that's changing the content, maybe.
- 67 **S1:** Do you think it might connect your other app so they get more data about you and they decide what kind of content to give to you?
- 68 **S2:** That's possible, yes. If they collected any other (..) data, it might connect to that. But in (..) I think in my case, it didn't really connect successfully because it's (..) there's no (...). You know, the algorithms, they are learning, so there's not enough data points for them to specialize to any direction for me, maybe. Plus, plus, this laptop is my work device, so maybe that's why it has even less information.
- 69 **S1:** It's your work device?
- 70 **S2:** Yes, this laptop.
- 71 **S1:** Ah, okay. Then, yeah, might be.
- 72 **S2:** Although it's (...) I don't think they get information from Google because my profile account is linked with this one. Instagram, (..) I don't know, I didn't really use it here. So maybe it's not (..) connecting successfully. But I think they are definitely using (..) any data on whatever they get because it's money.
- 73 **S1:** Okay, then you will have to answer these questions based on your own experience, because you didn't get much content from Asian.
- 74 **S2:** Okay. Usually I get more (..) Asian content because like on, for example, on YouTube, I follow a (..) Vietnamese girl who's with a boyfriend in Germany, for example.
- 75 **S1:** Why do you follow that?
- 76 **S2:** Because (..) because that (..) you know, you got my contact from Youzhu (..) and she is my girlfriend (...) and I felt like (..) we are kind of in a similar situation, you know?
- 77 **S1:** Okay, yeah, makes sense. Do you think there's any common stereotypes about Asians in like (..) general Western world?
- 78 **S2:** Yes, definitely. Like (..) Asians are expected to be like hardworking and very (..) career-oriented people. So I definitely think that's the stereotype we have, like (..) about Asians.
- 79 **S1:** But where do you think these stereotypes come from?
- 80 **S2:** (...) I don't know where exactly it comes from, but I think it's also kind of true (..) that many

Asians, who are immigrating to Europe, are very focused on getting good school results for their Asian kids. Maybe they are more (..) I think they are more strict on education than European parents like that. (...) I think many stereotypes have a true (..) heart or, yes, a true (..) background.

81 S1: And other than that, do you know any other stereotypes?

82 S2: (...) I think it's also a stereotype that they have good food or (...) yes, like good food is definitely a stereotype, although now I know it's the food we are getting as Westerners is not (..) that's not authentic at all.

83 S1: So you think the authentic food shouldn't be good?

84 S2: That's way better.

85 S1: You think it's way better.

86 S2: Yes. The authentic food is (..) now that I tasted authentic food. I think it's also a stereotype that like the population in Asia is like super high and so many Asians everywhere. And, yeah.

87 S1: Do you mean Chinese?

88 S2: Yes, Chinese. Chinese are Asians, so (...).

89 S1: But if you see like people on the street, would you just assume that they are Chinese?

90 S2: No, because (..) now I somehow know not all of them are Chinese. A lot of them are Vietnamese. I had a school colleague who was from the Philippines. So (..) I think most people are just defaulting, oh, Chinese. Everyone is Chinese and they don't see any difference or (..) yeah.

91 S1: But why do you think that?

92 S2: Because they couldn't distinguish their looks, because they are not so in touch with different Asian (..) countries or (...) I don't know how to explain, but like, they couldn't distinguish, like someone from Japan, China, Philippines, whatever. Maybe Philippines, they could. But (..) for most Europeans, it's all the same. Or all are Chinese.

93 S1: Yeah, this all are Chinese is very weird for me. Why they don't assume they are Korean or Japanese? Yeah, because like Chinese has, yeah, more population than other countries, but (..).

94 S2: Yes, China is the biggest one and I think most tourists from Asia are actually Chinese because they are kind of saving a lot of money for a short trip to Europe to take photos of the buildings and everything.

95 S1: Why do you think that?

- 96 **S2:** Because I see that many do that. (..) Also, it's a big group, like Chinese people. That's a big country, so many people. (...) I think that makes sense.
- 97 **S1:** Okay. So imagine if you search likely in this TikTok account, if you search Asian, what do you think the contents you will get?
- 98 **S2:** (...) What I think?
- 99 **S1:** No, you don't search now. You just imagine what (..) just think, like what you will get.
- 100 **S2:** I think I would be bombarded by stereotypes.
- 101 **S1:** Like what kind of content?
- 102 **S2:** Like Asian parents or (..) because I experienced that myself, that like Asian, the content on social media is (..) a lot of that is like how Asian parents versus Western parents behave or to their kids like that. (..) Maybe that could be a result or also about food, about Japan, maybe. (..) About culture. I got content for about like immigrating to Japan, not only for (..) like true immigrating living there. (..) Yes.
- 103 **S1:** And would you like to search it now, so you can get it.
- 104 **S2:** Yeah. Ah, of course. Asian girls. Okay, it's cosplay.
- 105 **S1:** Yeah, this is usually the contents that you should get.
- 106 **S2:** Okay. Yeah.
- 107 **S1:** But this time it's a bit different. I don't know why. But if I log in with my phone, I get the same like content like this. So I don't know what happened.
- 108 **S2:** So it's usually sexualized, but in my case, not because of some different data or (...).
- 109 **S1:** I don't know what happened to it because I had the interview two hours ago with another female and she got full of that.
- 110 **S2:** She got that.
- 111 **S1:** But it's sexualized with guys, so it's a bit different.
- 112 **S2:** Like when I type Asian guys? Maybe Korean, like that, Korean guys, right?
- 113 **S1:** Yeah, they are similar like this content.
- 114 **S2:** Yeah, like K, (..) K content.

- 115 **S1:** Like half naked and showing their biceps or something.
- 116 **S2:** I mean, I got that. You know, I got the gym stuff, but maybe I interacted too little with that. Like I didn't stay enough on that. I just said, oh, gym, and scrolled. Maybe I should have stayed longer to get (..) content like that. I saw many experiments where they trained TikTok's algorithm in quite a short time to a specific (..) point of view to a bubble like that. And you could reach that very quickly in TikTok.
- 117 **S1:** What do you mean view to a bubble?
- 118 **S2:** Like (..) when I click that and I interact enough with it, look it fully, maybe look it twice. Then I could train the algorithm that I interact with that a lot. And so it will recommend me more (..) of that.
- 119 **S1:** That is like this.
- 120 **S2:** And (..) but have you seen this kind of video, like this kind of sexualized content on your daily use, on your social media?
- 121 **S2:** (..) To be honest, no. I (..) I didn't experience that. So.
- 122 **S1:** But like from what you've seen now, do you think like TikTok is promoting some kind of stereotypes?
- 123 **S2:** Definitely. I think it's super focused on (..) grabbing the viewer's attention and using stereotypes will definitely help that. Kind of the people usually want to be (..) to stay in their mindset, in their bubble. It's not so easy to get out of a stereotype when you really really think there's one.
- 124 **S1:** Yes.
- 125 **S2:** And I think like this algorithm, they are not promoting just stereotypes about Asians. It's like promoting (...).
- 126 **S1:** They are generally promoting stereotypes, I think.
- 127 **S2:** I think about everything. I guess like this kind of sensationalism can actually grab the eye and that's how they (..) like achieve their agenda, I guess.
- 128 **S1:** Yes, they want to keep the people using the app as long as they (..) as possible so that algorithm will definitely choose what people (...). They just want to hold people on their platform. They don't want me to click here and (..) cancel TikTok. Yes. Like that.
- 129 **S1:** But do you feel like this kind of TikTok, they treat like different Asian groups, like East Asian or South Asian or Southeast Asian differently? Or do they tend to like mix them up?

- 130 **S2:** I think they tend to mix them up. They tend to mix (..) like Chinese, Japanese, Korean, they mix everything. They don't really care. Like, oh, you like Japanese content, you must like Korean content too.
- 131 **S1:** (...) Do you personally like this kind of content?
- 132 **S2:** You mean cute guys and girls or?
- 133 **S1:** Yeah. you can tell the truth. I have some interviewees, they liked it.
- 134 **S2:** Yes, it's (..). I don't really like self-promotion videos, if you get me. I'm not interested in people self-promoting themselves, how good lives they are living, how beautiful they are. And I also don't like to compare myself, like (..) with this guy, he's having such good skin or (...). And personally, I don't, (..) I also don't try to look like everyone. Like the stereotypes they advertise, like ah, hit the gym, have six pack and everything. I'm not so, so much into that. That's currently the trend. And I think we saw that a lot too. Like (..) TikTok really wants you to get into that bubble with like (..) gym bros and training, have good muscles, like that (..) and people tend to compare themselves to them.
- 135 **S1:** I think like TikTok is making up some kind of anxiety and trying to change your lifestyle.
- 136 **S2:** Yes.
- 137 **S1:** Yeah.
- 138 **S2:** To (..) hit the gym every day and (..) if you don't do that, you would never be as beautiful and everything like them.
- 139 **S1:** Yeah, like also, like TikTok is really promoting, like for Asians, it's really promoting some kind of beauty standards. Like you need to be skinny and like very (..) pale and like the face is very like delicate. It's like very cute with the makeup. So I had a couple of interviews with some Asian interviewees and they felt they start to have like body anxiety about their body type or their face. They try to follow up the beauty standards on TikTok.
- 140 **S2:** Yes, I think that's definitely the case. You get influenced by TikTok like that and you compare yourself with the top percent of people and some couldn't even reach like (..) like the muscles or like (...).
- 141 **S1:** Yeah, this kind of gym, yeah, gym guys.
- 142 **S2:** Yeah.
- 143 **S2:** Many don't have even the biological (...).
- 144 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, obviously.

145 **S2:** So maybe that's the content that they should have shown.

146 **S1:** Yeah, I guess so. Yeah, and also (..).

147 **S2:** Ah, that's true. I've been to Japan. They don't like tattoos at all.

148 **S1:** They don't like to show their skin?

149 **S2:** No, skin is fine. Tattoos. They don't like to show or see tattoos.

150 **S1:** Interesting.

151 **S2:** That's not even a stereotype. That's a (..) cultural thing, I think. Yeah, I think they see tattoos as a very bad sign of the person, I guess.

152 **S1:** Yes.

153 **S2:** Yeah.

154 **S2:** Maybe it's a gang or something. Like a bit criminal like that?

155 **S1:** Yeah, exactly. It's like similar also in China. Like if you have too many tattoos or something, it's really hard for you to get jobs.

156 **S2:** Ah, yes.

157 **S1:** And also you mentioned like the Asian parents content. After you watched this, would you feel like that's actually true?

158 **S2:** That's a hard question. I think there is (..) there's a true core, but I don't think it's (..) true like they show it.

159 **S1:** So it's exaggerated, you think?

160 **S2:** It's exaggerated, yes. Exactly.

161 **S1:** Do you think this kind of TikTok content can influence how people perceive Asian groups?

162 **S2:** Of course.

163 **S1:** Like how?

164 **S2:** I think it's more (...), your opinion will get exaggerated. Like the stereotype will be exaggerated like (..) from many parents forcing their kids (..) to get good grades to like maybe you will think every parent will hit their kid when they don't get good grades like that.

165 **S1:** But also, like you mentioned the stereotype about Asians, they are hardworking and everything. Would you consider it's harmful, actually? Because if you think, always think, oh, you see an Asian, and then you will think, okay, he or she should be hardworking, then there's already a certain level of expectation on this person.

166 **S2:** Yes, that's harmful too.

167 **S1:** Yeah.

168 **S2:** Every (..) predefined opinion (..) could be somehow harmful. It's also, maybe it's also harmful because you get a wrong perception of how it would feel to work in Asian countries.

169 **S1:** Yes, exactly.

170 **S2:** You get a wrong image of the true world somehow through the internet.

171 **S1:** Yeah.

172 **S1:** Is there anything that's like, how long you been together with her? Your girlfriend?

173 **S2:** (..) It's been almost two years. Will be soon, two years.

174 **S1:** Is there anything about Asians that you thought differently?

175 **S2:** Beforehand?

176 **S1:** Yeah, beforehand. And after you met her and you see, ah, this is not like that. Is there anything like that?

177 **S2:** I think I (..) expected them to have more stringent parents, or I expected her to have more stringent parents, but that's not so much true. (..) And also, I got (..) a wrong image of like they are poor and, you know, factory workers and that's neither true. It's not as bad as advertised in the media generally speaking. (...) Like, you know, there was a time where they displayed, like, almost all Chinese are working in factories and super poor and like that. And that's not the case.

178 **S1:** Okay.

179 **S2:** I think you got me. That's also highly exaggerated.

180 **S1:** And those are not on social media, those are like on the news media?

181 **S2:** Yeah, that's not only on social media. That's the (...). I think generally speaking, it's correct to display like who suffers on like cheap consumption, like cheap plastic stuff, there are always people suffering from that. But it's not like that a whole country is (..) working in cheap plastic factories.

- 182 **S1:** I think the problem, it's always that they only report one side of the story and then it gave people the impression that, ah, this is the whole side of the story. But actually, that's not true.
- 183 **S2:** Yes, you (..) you don't get the complete image of (..) Asia or of China in this case.
- 184 **S1:** Yeah, exactly.
- 185 **S2:** You will only get a pretty extreme image of that. And that's also for TikTok with all that. (..) It's always an extreme (..) image like that.
- 186 **S1:** Then do you believe this kind of content could actually contribute to real world bias or discrimination?
- 187 **S2:** (...) I don't know how exactly but there's always some secondary influences. Like (..) but I don't really know an example, but it (..) might be a wrong image, like people in Europe weren't (..) I think it must be the same for Asian people. They don't have a real image of Europeans, right? It must be kind of exaggerated and (...).
- 188 **S1:** I feel like, like from my personal opinion, I feel like Asian or just say in China, the image of Western worlds, it's always or 90%, it's like positive. I would barely get information about negative sides of Western worlds. And we tend to have the thinking that, yeah, Western world is more developed, it's more (..), it's richer there, people are living better life there.
- 189 **S2:** But isn't that bad too? Because it gets them a wrong image, because Western countries are not as developed (..) as Asians expect it to be. Ah, yeah, I definitely got that experience. I thought I didn't expect Asians (..) to have such a wrong image of Western. (...) Like Asians usually expect it to be more modern, but Austria and Europe in general, they have many primitive (..) stuff. Like you can still go to the bank and fill out a check and give it to the counter.
- 190 **S1:** Yes, yeah. Actually, yeah.
- 191 **S2:** So Europe is way more primitive than Asians think.
- 192 **S1:** But do you think it can cause some negative consequence?
- 193 **S2:** Yes, because they are (..) expect (..) how to say that (..) by having a wrong image of Europe, they are underestimating their own standard.
- 194 **S1:** Mm-hmm.
- 195 **S2:** (...) It's like I got the content of the super beautiful guys and gym bros with muscle and everything. But in reality, I wouldn't (..) reach that and it's also not the best to reach (..) that look. Maybe for my health, it's not (..) always the best and there are many bad sides, which are not shown.

196 S1: Yeah, I get that.

197 S2: So also a good display could have negative influence.

198 S1: Yes. And do you think the TikTok algorithm is like recommending stuff or just algorithms in general are recommending stuff based on your identity or ethnicity?

199 S2: Definitely, yes. Because it's trained with (..) with that. And it's definitely also based on your location, what's trending in your location, (..) because trends are somehow localized or based on the (..) quote, bubble you're in.

200 S1: Yeah. (..) And also, those contents, have you heard of the Stop Asian Hate campaign? It was during the COVID.

201 S2: Yes. I think I heard that. It's (..) kind of like Black Lives Matter campaign.

202 S1: Yeah.

203 S2: Similar to stop like discrimination on (..) race.

204 S1: Yeah. And did you feel that was effective during the time?

205 S2: (..) No. I think only real education about how it's here and how it's here could help to get rid of wrong stereotypes.

206 S1: And do you think TikTok is doing enough to address harm from stereotypical content?

207 S2: Definitely not. They don't care at all.

208 S1: Yeah, I was talking with my previous interviewee. She said it's like, yeah, there now there's new regulations, I think in Austria.

209 S2: In Europe. (..) There's like, I think it should be there too. You could report and they really have to look into that and that's (..) I heard that not only for TikTok. I heard that for like all social media or platforms. They are forced to have a better reporting system than, (..) for example, in America.

210 S1: But would you think it would be enough?

211 S2: I don't think there's in a completely free internet, there's (..) never enough. But like (..) at least to prevent like child abuse and really harmful content, that's really important to (..) to address this issue for discrimination, cyber bullying, and everything.

212 S1: Do you think this kind of content could cause more effects or influence on younger age or on minors?

213 **S2:** Yes, that's definitely true. Because younger (..) people are more likely to believe the stuff that they consume. (..) I think elderly people, they ask more questions about the content and (..) don't take this as truth. And that might be the reason why (..) older people tend not to use TikTok because it's the whole platform design is focused on (..) stereotypes, short videos, catching your attention and (...) quick and not really content you could really interact with, like think about that in a critical, have a critical perspective, because (..) it's too short to have any real content, real education.

214 **S1:** But even though I think for the elder person, if you get really into this kind of loop, for example, I have another interview with a guy that he only gets negative news about or negative content about Indian people, so he has very strong bias or like, I wouldn't call it discrimination. So maybe bias or opinion towards Indian people and like, so he couldn't really, like he doesn't really see the good side already. He only sees the bad side. So (..) I also asked him like, have you ever thought about this might be fake? This might be not true. Like he said, well, maybe, but he chooses to believe in it. So (..) if you're really in this loop, in this bubble, it's really hard to get out.

215 **S2:** Yeah.

216 **S2:** Yes. Definitely.

217 **S1:** I think that was most of the questions for the interview and I want to collect some of your personal data.

218 **S2:** Okay.

219 **S1:** And so where are you from?

220 **S2:** I am from Austria, Mödling, born in Mödling.

221 **S1:** And how old are you?

222 **S2:** 23.

223 **S1:** What's your highest education?

224 **S2:** I'm currently studying electronics, bachelor degree.

225 **S1:** Mm-hmm. Gender identity?

226 **S2:** Gender (..) male.

227 **S1:** Have you lived in different cultural backgrounds?

228 **S2:** (..) Not really live, no, only in travel and yeah, girlfriend. That's my biased international.

229 **S1:** How often do you user TikTok?

230 S2: I open it like once in 3 to 4 days to check what my friends send to me.

231 S1: And did participating in the study affect the way you view TikTok's algorithm or racial content on the platform?

232 S2: Yes, I didn't expect it to be so random. I thought maybe there's some kind of structure behind that.

233 S1: But did you expect that the, like mostly the Asian content would be like this?

234 S2: No. Not really. I expected more food content and less (..).

235 S1: Sexualization.

236 S2: Yeah, (..) but it wasn't really much sexualization.

237 S1: Yeah, but I mean, food content, I have never seen.

238 S2: Really?

239 S1: No.

240 S2: Like Asian food content, yeah, I have (..) seen the Indian street food.

241 S1: Do you know that?

242 S2: Yes, Indian. I have seen that too. Like magic water and stuff like that.

243 S1: Yeah, that's like the only Asian food content.

244 S2: No, I thought it's more common food content because it's usually what people like, always like.

245 S1: Yeah.

246 S2: And it's also a good representation of culture, I think, the food.

247 S1: Yeah, then I don't know.

248 S1: Have you heard of the sex tourism in Southeast Asia?

249 S2: No.

250 S1: No?

251 S2: You mean they go for sex? For prostitutes there?

252 S1: Soi Six in Pattaya, something like that.

253 S2: I heard that from Japan, but I thought that's only Japanese people are allowed.

254 S1: To go there?

255 S2: To go there, yeah.

256 S1: Why only Japanese people allowed?

257 S2: I thought that's a law or something.

258 S1: A law for Japanese people? Okay.

259 S2: Like (..) prostitutes, like traditional Chinese, (..) Japanese prostitutes there, I thought they are only for Japanese themselves somehow.

260 S1: Not for tourists.

261 S2: Uh-huh, uh-huh. You mean the (..) prostitutes in Japan.

262 S1: Yes. Like but the traditional one, not like the Western. (..) I don't think they are prostitutes like in Europe where you go for sex. I think it's also to meet and sometimes just play cards and like that.

263 S2: Uh-huh.

264 S1: You mean those are the sex tourists in Southeast Asia?

265 S2: Yeah.

266 S1: But I didn't really hear there are people. I heard that more from. (..) Ah, yes, from Thailand.

267 S1: Yeah, Thailand.

268 S2: Yeah, I heard that. I saw a documentary once about pedophiles going there. And like small (..) girls being exploited by that and (..). So, yes, I heard that.

269 S1: After knowing that, when you see like (..) the Southeast Asian female and the white people couple, would you have some kind of bias on them?

270 S2: But prostitution isn't linked to relationship and couple, right?

271 S1: But there's also like rumors saying that a lot of the females are trying to get like a white husband to get the (..).

272 S2: Ah, I got you. You mean financially.

273 S1: To get the green cards or something like that.

274 S2: Yes.

275 S2: But I don't think it's the majority of couples between Asians and Westerners (...) I think that's just a small group of nasty idiots going to exploit women in poor Asian countries.

276 S1: So you think it won't cause, it won't influence you?

277 S2: Me personally, no. I don't think normal couples, like (..) me and my girlfriend are, like, influenced by that.

278 S1: Okay.

279 S1: Yeah, because I sometimes heard this kind of saying from people around me, they would assume, maybe they are like doing this and then they can know each other and then now they're here get married or something. So I just want to know if it would influence you or something.

280 S2: I heard that rumor too.

281 S1: Yes. Yeah, yeah.

282 S2: (...) That's definitely also a stereotype, a bad one.

283 S1: Yeah, yeah, of course. And also on TikTok, there are (..) sometimes videos about this, prostitution in Thailand or somewhere. Pop up and yeah, and it's like very sexualizing the female yeah.

284 S2: But it's a real issue.

285 S1: Yes.

286 S2: So TikTok is just addressing a real issue, although they are not addressing it enough.

287 S1: Yeah. But also, I think according to the law in Thailand, that is not legal.

288 S2: Definitely not. Child abuse is never legal anyway.

289 S1: Yeah, yeah. Also, the prostitution is not legal, but a lot of people have this misunderstanding where they would have this wrong concept thinking this is actually legal there, but actually it doesn't.

290 S2: I have never informed myself about that, to be honest.

291 S1: Yeah. I also just searched it because I had an interview and this popped up and we talked about this.

292 S2: But in Europe, it's legal, like there is legal prostitution.

293 S1: Not in Austria?

294 S2: In Austria, there is.

295 S1: There is?

296 S2: Yes.

297 S1: It's legal. (...) They are even paying social insurance and like that. They are just (..) not for children, of course, but there is legal prostitution.

298 S1: Ah, okay, so that's why. Because I was reading the newspaper and there will be a section about prostitution. And usually this section is only (..) Asian, about Asian females. It's very strange. I have pictures. I can share with you, but it's always the Asian females. I've seen a couple of times and it's always only Asians. It was very strange for me. I don't know why.

299 S2: Ah, okay.

300 S2: No, I don't think most of them. Maybe many of them have Asian background, but (..) I think many are also just Austrians.

301 S1: Yeah, I don't know about this business. I have never gone into it.

302 S2: No, I just know it's allowed. I just like forwarded to you yet. Ignore the text. I just sent it to some of my friends. But you can see the section is only Asian pictures.

303 S1: Is the first one not, right?

304 S2: First one is not prostitution.

305 S1: And the last one also not, right?

306 S2: That is Asian.

307 S1: So maybe that's (..) that's specialized for Asian.

308 S2: But why? Why there's no specialized for (..) Austrian?

309 S1: Because it's Korone?

310 S2: I don't know.

311 S1: Oh, but there's also Oma.

312 S2: Okay.

313 **S1:** Yes, yes, it's (..) so you got it.

314 **S2:** Okay.

315 **S1:** It's just preferences, you know?

316 **S2:** Yes. Okay, okay. I get that.

317 **S1:** Yeah. It's just Asian like preference about Asians, but there are also like mother preference, Oma preference, (..) like all kinds of weird preferences.

318 **S1:** Do you think there's any additional thoughts on the topic that we haven't covered?

319 **S2:** No, I don't think we covered it quite well.

320 **S1:** Yeah, I think we went to topics

321 **S2:** Yes, you went through many topics.

322 **S1:** And yeah, that was all for the interview.

323 **S2:** Thank you very much.

Interview O

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S1 (Researcher): So in this study, I'm interesting in understanding your thought process. As you complete the tasks I will give to you. To achieve this, I will ask you to think aloud while engaging with the task. So by thinking aloud, I mean verbalizing everything that comes from mind from the moments you begin the task, until you complete it. I encourage you to continuously express your thoughts without planning or structuring your responses. Simply speak as though you were alone in the room, narrating your thoughts, if you remain silent for an extended period, I will promote you to continue speaking. Do you understand?

3

S2 (Interviewee): Yeah.

4

S1: Yeah. So before the (..) primary task, I will give you two training tasks for you to familiarize this technique. How many windows are you in your parents' house? You don't need to count them yourself. I will do that for you. Just tell me which room has how many windows.

5

S2: Wait, so like in my parents' house, (...) let's see how many rooms are there? I don't know. I'm getting to guess, but's somewhat between eight and 20.

6

S1: In every rooms?

7

S2: Yes, so let's see. (..) There's two in the hall. There's one in the downstairs bathroom, then there's the one in the dining room, then there's the one in the lounge. Then there's, I think. Four or five in the kitchen. There's one in the utility room. There's one in my bedroom, there's one in the upstairs floor. There's one in the bathroom. There's one of my brother room. There's one in my parents' room, there's one in that bathroom. (...) Yeah.

8

S1: Yeah. Okay. The second task, imagine you are opening your favorite social media app without touching your phone. Describe your actions upon opening the app. What type of content do you typically encounter and how do you decide what to engage with or scroll past, verbalize everything that comes to mind as though you were actively navigating the app?

9

S2: Yeah, so when I (..) normally open TikTok on my phone, then I (..) get a variety of different contents. Sometimes it is, I guess, what you would call brain rot, like very dumb content, which I find (..) relatively amusing. Sometimes it's more political content, which sometimes I'll stick on, sometimes I won't, depending on my mood. (...) Then there's also (..) like quite ultimate part follow's different trends, such as at the moment, like this decorating sand show is everywhere where people destroy (..) like decorators, destroy apartment or like house rooms, basically in the interests of like trying to make them look better and they always look terrible. (..) So, yeah, like that's what I would say. (..) I make sure a present trains, some political content, (..) ads, which I just immediately scroll past. Yeah, it's fair.

- 10 **S1:** Okay. So I will send you the accounts in the chat. (...) So it will send me a verification code and we're logging with the code.
- 11 **S2:** Yeah. Oh, wait, you sent me a phone number?
- 12 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, it's logging with the phone number.
- 13 **S2:** Oh, I've never actually logged into TikTok on (...) the browser. I mean, also, I barely remember how to do it on the phone. Hence, I didn't actually want to like log in on my phone.
- 14 **S1:** (...) Do you usually use TikTok in your daily life?
- 15 **S2:** Yes, but (...) I'm basically just like, I stay logged in. So I don't know what any of my login details are, so I never want to log out basically.
- 16 **S1:** Okay, makes sense.
- 17 **S2:** Okay, so I'm in like. (...) Okay, I'm just going to click on the TikTok.com thingy, I guess. Okay. (...) Oh, that's quite loud. Let's see. I It's just someone wearing a (...) butterfly costume is something not interesting to you.
- 18 **S1:** Yeah, could you share your screen, maybe? So I can also see what you have.
- 19 **S2:** I'm sorry, what did he say? I turned the volume down in order to hear that app.
- 20 **S1:** Could you share the screen so I can also see it?
- 21 **S2:** Oh, yeah, of course. Let's see. Screen sharing. Yep. (...) Okay, is that shared with you?
- 22 **S1:** Yeah, I can see it. And, yeah, you will need to go through 10 to 15 contents. And you can also interact with the contents on the page, like, whatever you want. Yeah.
- 23 **S2:** Okay, okay. Okay. I' barely ever interact with anything except to say just share it to my boyfriend, but yeah.
- 24 **S1:** Yeah. So you can start. Yeah.
- 25 **S2:** Okay, wonderful. (...) Okay? (...) I don't really I don't know what that was about. (...) Is this just people doing their hair? (...) I'm not that interested in. (...) Ah, she sounds British. (...) Okay, yeah, no, sounds about British. This in London? (...) She's, yeah, definitely something, she said bar. (...) Where is she going? Is it like wedding? (...) It actually been sounded a little bit like stalker. (...) Okay, I don't really know what the content of that was apart from she's in the taxi. I'm not sure I had the context to get this or what does this mean. (...) That's what normal TikTok is like? (...) Okay, this is supposed to just people singing. (...) Also, I just dancing. (...) What? 15 is so young, like, (...) of

course you don't have no body count what the fuck. (...) Okay more dancing. (...) I don't know. Big shoulders. (...) Okay, getting none of you. (...) Dancing.

26 **S2:** (...) Was that enough or would you like more? Uh, yeah. I think I'll stop that. (...) Disable to share?

27 **S1:** Yeah, you can't stop it and you can also log out the accounts.

28 **S2:** Uh, yeah, I stop share there it is. (...) And log out of the account to be profile.

29 **S1:** So just like a little bit explanation about the account. I'm not sure how you felt, but it was it was just an account for the study. So I never used the account as not for myself, like personal usage. And it was, I trained (...) it the algorithm to focus on Asian. What I did is just typing Asian and then I will get this type of contents and then I have to go through it and then it will recommend me more and also it will give me some other tabs that lead me to further other different (...) videos. Usually those are like, well, it's a bit uncomfortable, I would say. It's mostly sexualized.

30 **S2:** Yeah.

31 **S1:** So I will just go through it. And then in the end, the account will be like this. So, yeah. (...) And for the feedback session, did you feel the instructions made sense?

32 **S2:** Yes, the instructions made sense.

33 **S1:** And did you feel comfortable verbalizing your thoughts through the process?

34 **S2:** I mean, broadly, like, I was confused by the content because I use TikTok and I get different kinds of content, so it was a bit of a surprise. But once I adjusted to that, it was easy enough to get into, yeah.

35 **S1:** So it was actually hard for you to articulate your thoughts?

36 **S2:** I would say that it took a bit of adjusting to, just because I'm used to the platform, but I tend to get quite a different perspective on it. Does that make sense?

37 **S1:** I guess so, yeah. (...) So we move to the interview session. During the time when you scrolled the TikTok content, did you notice there were any recurring patterns or themes in what was recommended to you?

38 **S2:** (...) Yeah, I mean, it was usually teenage girls, either lip syncing... Asian teenage girls lip syncing or dancing. Yeah, that seemed to be the overwhelming majority of the content.

39 **S1:** Did you feel uncomfortable when you were looking at that?

- 40 **S2:** I mean, it just seemed (...) I guess I never considered it to be uncomfortable because it was just like, skip past, skip past.
- 41 **S1:** Yeah, but you were not interested in the content.
- 42 **S2:** No, certainly not.
- 43 **S1:** And how do you think TikTok's algorithm decides what kind of content to show you?
- 44 **S2:** (...) Based on what you've previously (...) interacted with. As far as I'm aware, it measures how long you focus on something and whether your focus makes it seem like you're either very into something or really dislike something.
- 45 **S1:** Mm. And do you feel like the algorithm recommends content based on your identity or your behavior?
- 46 **S2:** (...) I'd say broadly, yes. Yeah, I would say that for the identity categories I fall into, because to a certain extent, that does echo into my interests. That also means that the algorithm picks that up to an extent.
- 47 **S1:** Have you had the experience that you interacted with some shopping apps and bought some product, and the other day you get advertisements for the product, no matter on Instagram or TikTok?
- 48 **S2:** (...) Yeah, I have had that experience.
- 49 **S1:** And do you think it also gets the information from your interaction with other apps?
- 50 **S2:** (...) I don't know. I have heard that they don't, but also, I don't know, it's a constant experience in data theft, so who knows?
- 51 **S1:** So you never thought about this?
- 52 **S2:** As in, like (...) I would say I have, but yeah, I don't know. What I'd heard was that they don't take the data directly from, for example, listening to what you say or whatever.
- 53 **S1:** Mm. And based on what you have seen, do you think TikTok promotes or reinforces certain stereotypes about Asians?
- 54 **S2:** Let's see. (...) I guess, I don't know. So like, the stereotypes in this sense would be like Asian girls being sexualized, right? So I guess it does seem to be replicating that. But at the same time, I basically don't have a control for how it would be representing other groups... yeah, women of other ethnicities, but also, yeah, girls specifically.

- 55 **S1:** So you think the platform cannot control what they do?
- 56 **S2:** Wait, what do you mean by that question?
- 57 **S1:** Like, is TikTok promoting certain stereotypes?
- 58 **S2:** I mean, (...) I guess yes, because it's the algorithm. It often acts in a very (...) sort of base, very general way, and promotes lots of different contradictory things to different audiences at the same time.
- 59 **S1:** Mm-hmm. Are there any common stereotypes about Asians that come to your mind?
- 60 **S2:** Do you mean like (...) all Asians or Asian women? Because the content feed seemed to be mostly about Asian women.
- 61 **S1:** Just in general about Asian groups.
- 62 **S2:** Yeah, let's see, what are the stereotypes? I mean, there's obviously like a fetishization of Asian women. Otherwise, I guess academic stuff, like the presumption of academic attainment or the expectation of tiger mothers. (...) Yeah, and I guess also the fact that the stereotypes would probably be a bit different based on whether it's East Asians or South Asians that you're talking about.
- 63 **S1:** So you could actually recognize different Asian groups?
- 64 **S2:** Yeah, I mean, like they did have a (...) Bengali on, which was, you know, different from (...) most of the other people who looked East Asian.
- 65 **S1:** Uh-huh. And do you think the stereotypes can be harmful? Like, even the high expectation about their smart genes or being good at mathematics? I think you mentioned that.
- 66 **S2:** Yeah. I mean, yeah, stereotypes put people into boxes and force people to develop in certain ways. And if they strain against them, then they have to deal with the exclusions of normal society.
- 67 **S1:** Mm. And do you feel that TikTok's algorithm treats different Asian groups differently, or does it tend to present them as one group?
- 68 **S2:** (...) Well, I would say that I don't know, because I think that would really depend on (...) yeah, I guess the output you were searching for. I mean, TikTok can be hyper-targeted. If you were, I don't know, looking for an app that's going to talk about a very micro-community experience, like Japanese Americans in Sacramento, you could probably get that on TikTok. But at the same time, it can also be very homogenizing. So yeah, I would say yes and no.
- 69 **S1:** Uh-huh. Would you share some more examples?

- 70 **S2:** (...) Yeah, so, let's see. I just feel from my own personal use of TikTok that it can be a very, very micro-targeted platform. It can target things which really don't have that much mass appeal but can be very appealing and interesting for specific groups and their interests. (...) Like, so (...) yeah, how to say this. You do get lots of big trends. You get a broader cultural zeitgeist that you interact with, like the big trends that happen on TikTok. But at the same time, you have lots of little micro communities and interactions within those. Does that help as an explanation, or would you prefer a different (...)?
- 71 **S1:** I think yeah, I get that. (...) And have you seen similar contents when you were using TikTok?
- 72 **S2:** I wouldn't say that I get a lot targeted specifically for Asian content. Honestly, the only one of those that even felt like it could have been on my For You page was the Bengali one, just because, I don't know, it seemed vaguely British, so she was the only one who was speaking.
- 73 **S1:** Yeah. So your TikTok content is mostly focused on British content?
- 74 **S2:** I wouldn't say mostly, but I just (...) it's not substantially teenage girls dancing and lip syncing.
- 75 **S1:** Mm-hmm. So the style is different, but not focusing on one region.
- 76 **S2:** Yeah, yeah.
- 77 **S1:** And usually it's like international content or from which regions then?
- 78 **S2:** I mean, it's basically a mixture of (...) Britain, America, a little bit of Austria and Germany, (...) basically kind of limited by my languages. So, you know, English and German, like it influences what I'm shown. I mean, I occasionally get Spanish or Italian content, but that is usually a reach and a miss by the algorithm.
- 79 **S1:** Uh-huh. And do you think TikTok content can influence how people perceive Asian groups?
- 80 **S2:** I mean, probably. It's a large media platform, so obviously it's going to have an effect on how people perceive groups because it's, you know, like a large aspect of the visibility of these groups, I guess.
- 81 **S1:** Uh-huh. Would you think that your interpretation of this kind of content would be different from, for example, Asian users' interpretation?
- 82 **S2:** Was that the question?
- 83 **S1:** Yeah. Do you think it would be different?
- 84 **S2:** I mean, of course. (...) I'm a white man and I have very different experiences, like the experience of race, I guess. I am not a racialized minority. So, yeah, obviously it would be a different experience

and a different way of relating to it.

85 **S1:** And how do you think an Asian viewer might feel watching this?

86 **S2:** (...) Yeah, I don't know. Yeah, (...) I don't really know, partially because I can't really separate the racialized from the gender aspect of what I was shown, because it was all just Asian teenage girls lip syncing and dancing. So (...) I find it very difficult to figure out if this is a specifically Asian or a specifically gendered mode of representation. I feel like someone in this community would have an easier time parsing that and figuring out their way around it.

87 **S1:** Mm-hmm. And what do you think was their target audience then?

88 **S2:** (...) Well, I mean, I tend to presume that people make content for people that they presume to be like themselves. At the very least, if it's not like a sort of industrial-style content operation. It seemed like teenagers making content for teenagers, basically.

89 **S1:** So you think as an adult or an older generation, they wouldn't be interested in this kind of content?

90 **S2:** I mean, (...) I wouldn't imagine so.

91 **S1:** And also, like, there are some contents on TikTok... I'm not sure if it's minor content, but it's focusing on young kids. It's also a bit sexualized, like it's focusing on their legs and lower body, but it's not obviously sexualized. It just gives you a hint, you can feel that something is there. So then this kind of content could be targeted to whom?

92 **S2:** I would imagine that would be (...) like this kind of sexualized content of minors... I'm guessing that, yeah. I mean, I guess someone could be trying to build an audience with that, but also it could just be, you know, a kid posting and trying to appeal to people that they imagine to be similar-ish to them. Like, I don't know. These are mass phenomena, and it's difficult to put too much agency into someone who's fundamentally still a child. That feels almost like blaming them if they do something wrong in that case.

93 **S1:** Would you consider all the content on TikTok or in general on social media, like the final goal is for them to gain more views?

94 **S2:** I mean, yeah, that seems to be the incentive structure of social media – to encourage people to pursue views, pursue likes. That's the incentive.

95 **S1:** And do you believe this kind of content could maybe contribute to real-world bias or discrimination?

96 **S2:** I mean, yes. People reflect what they see online. To give the British example at the moment, you

have incredible radicalizations in transphobia, which seems to have really come from incredibly online spaces that have gone wide from that. So yeah, obviously these things can have a broader relevance beyond platforms.

97 **S1:** Have you personally noticed any this kind of discrimination happening in your real life?

98 **S2:** Let's see. You mean discrimination that I personally see, not like, say, just the government announcing terrible policies, for example.

99 **S1:** Yeah.

100 **S2:** (..) Let's see. Discrimination which is from a social media narrative... I can't think of any examples off the top of my head.

101 **S1:** But you think you have noticed something like that?

102 **S2:** I more feel like I can't be definitive at this moment.

103 **S1:** What do you feel about sexualized male content? Mostly what you saw online is about females, but there is also a portion of content that sexualizes males.

104 **S2:** Yeah, I mean, so (..) let's see (...) like sexualization of male content? I mean, I don't know, the entire matrix of gender really structures sexualization of men in a different direction. It can go in quite (..) different directions. For example, (..) a man could be sexualized while still being fully clothed and wearing no revealing clothing. (..) Because it's fundamentally about an archetype, about a type of masculinity that is being conveyed. (..) Yeah, I mean, let's see (...) there's, I guess, less of a worry about predation with a man choosing to sexualize himself. There's, yeah, I guess less concern there. But at the same time, (..) I don't feel like men are encouraged to sexualize themselves so young and so bodily. Does that make sense?

105 **S1:** So you feel like on the other hand, females are encouraged to sexualize themselves?

106 **S2:** (...) I mean, well, I'd say that patriarchy structures this in a dual modus where sometimes you're encouraged to do that and sometimes not, in a quite (...) arbitrary fashion. (...) Yeah.

107 **S1:** Okay. Have you seen the Stop Asian Hate campaign? I think it was during the COVID time...

108 **S2:** Yes. It's like (..) yeah, it's the pandemic, so it's five years ago, so I don't remember it that well, but I do remember that happening.

109 **S1:** And did you feel that was effective?

110 **S2:** I (...) mean, honestly, probably not.

- 111 **S1:** From my previous couple of interviews, they all said it lasted for a really short time, and yeah, it disappeared really quickly.
- 112 **S2:** Yeah, (...) yeah. I mean, also, I guess, (...) the entire campaign of hate was literally being used by the American government to avoid dealing with the pandemic, so (...).
- 113 **S1:** And do you think that TikTok does enough to address harmful or stereotypical content about Asians? Or do you think they do enough, just in general, to address harmful or stereotypical content about everyone?
- 114 **S2:** About... yeah, I mean, I will say that my experience of TikTok is usually on the less (...) yeah, savagely unpleasant side. So I would say that my experience of TikTok usually tends to be relatively (...) not that structured by, I guess, incredible amounts of racist rhetoric or whatever. (...) At the same time though, like (...) I think the algorithm always really intensifies anything that you show even a passing interest in. And I remember, for example, when I was a language assistant, the teenage boys would mention Andrew Tate, and it was just obvious that they got into that from TikTok and YouTube algorithms recommending and radicalizing them along those lines. (...) So (...) yeah, I don't know. I guess in a theoretical sense, I would presume that platforms aren't really doing good enough to prevent these kinds of discrimination. But at the same time, I don't really see this kind of content on a day-to-day basis myself, so I always find it a bit difficult to (...).
- 115 **S1:** I get that. And do you feel like if you actually get this kind of content on a daily basis, you get yourself into the information bubble of this kind of content? Would you agree that it would make people more used to or accepting certain types of stereotypes?
- 116 **S2:** I mean, (...) I can definitely believe that a constant repetition of an image makes it a lot more (...) compelling as a way to view the world.
- 117 **S1:** Yeah. And also, there's a rumor saying TikTok is a very childish or pointless application. What do you think about that?
- 118 **S2:** I mean, like most social media is pointless. As in, it's not really there to save the world. It's just, I don't know, people trading a couple of jokes here and there. Not everything has to be important.
- 119 **S1:** Yeah, that's definitely true. Have you ever come across the Indian street food memes?
- 120 **S2:** Indian street food? I don't think so, actually.
- 121 **S1:** Okay. So you also don't know what it's about.
- 122 **S2:** No, not even slightly.
- 123 **S1:** Okay. Have you heard of sex tourism in Southeast Asia?

- 124 **S2:** Yes, but like not through TikTok. That's just a commonly known media trope, I guess.
- 125 **S1:** Yeah, exactly. And what do you usually think the stereotypes come from? From social media, traditional media, or just from people spreading them around?
- 126 **S2:** I mean, I've genuinely not noticed it on social media. I'm 29 now and I would say that even (...) when I was a teenager, this stereotype existed on television. I mean, Christ, I think Gary Glitter, a 1980s British musician and also pedophile, was caught in Thailand in like 2008 or something. So that was also in the news.
- 127 **S1:** Ah, okay. And in general, do you think the news media is also contributing to Asian stereotypes, like not only sex tourism, but in general?
- 128 **S2:** I mean, yes, definitely. (...) I don't know, like all the media neural matters firing on all cylinders for the confrontation with China. So yes.
- 129 **S1:** Yeah. Okay. That was mostly about the interview and I will collect some personal information. Where are you from?
- 130 **S2:** Do you want the country or the city?
- 131 **S1:** Yeah, you can say whatever you want.
- 132 **S2:** Okay, okay. So, like by Liverpool in England.
- 133 **S1:** Okay. When did you move to Austria?
- 134 **S2:** I moved to Austria in 2019.
- 135 **S1:** 2019, so six years ago.
- 136 **S2:** Yeah.
- 137 **S1:** Do you consider it a different cultural background, like the UK and Austria?
- 138 **S2:** Yeah, I would consider this to be a different culture here.
- 139 **S1:** Why do you think so?
- 140 **S2:** I mean, it's a different language. (..) It's a different history. (...) Yeah, I mean, lots of it feels very different. For example, it's diverse in a different way. Britain has people from all over the world, but quite often patterns of migration have been defined by previous imperial relationships, like previous parts of the empire. Versus in Austria, the diversity, like the communities with a migration background, often have been a lot more from Southeastern Europe and Turkey.

- 141 **S1:** Did you feel it was hard to fit into Austrian culture?
- 142 **S2:** I mean, I wouldn't really say that I'm that integrated into Austrian culture. I mainly associate with internationals. (...) I mean, yeah, like I live with Germans, for example.
- 143 **S1:** Okay, so not really locals.
- 144 **S2:** Not really.
- 145 **S1:** Yeah, okay. Yeah.
- 146 **S2:** I have like one close Austrian friend, I think.
- 147 **S1:** Yeah. But would you consider it's because of the language problem or more like they are not open enough to different cultural backgrounds?
- 148 **S2:** I mean, no, I do speak German and also most Austrians speak English, so I wouldn't really say that's the issue. I mean (...) to be fair, I have hung around with more Austrians in the past, but friendship groups change a bit. But there is also just an aspect that people from other countries are more likely to need friends, whereas Austrians are more likely to already have people here. And that goes double for people from Vienna who grew up here and so they're not on the friend market, as it were.
- 149 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, that's definitely true. And how old are you?
- 150 **S2:** Oh, I'm 29.
- 151 **S1:** And your highest education level?
- 152 **S2:** Master's degree.
- 153 **S1:** What's your gender identity?
- 154 **S2:** Male.
- 155 **S1:** And how often do you use TikTok on a daily basis?
- 156 **S2:** (...) I mean, at the moment, no, because I'm reading more, but otherwise, yes. (...) Honestly, put down yes for daily basis because it varies based on what I'm in the mood for or not.
- 157 **S1:** And do you think participating in this study affects the way you view TikTok's algorithm or racial content on the platform?
- 158 **S2:** I mean, I would say it (...) made me a lot more (...) reserved about what it shows other people, I guess. Because, yeah, I've been on the platform since 2020, so by this point, it is very micro-

targeted to me. So it's very weird seeing a different algorithm.

159 **S1:** Did you expect this kind of content to be shown?

160 **S2:** I (...) didn't. Like, I knew it was to do with Asians because I read the study, but I did not expect it to be lip syncing and dancing.

161 **S1:** Have you seen any other content about Asians on TikTok, like not this kind of content?

162 **S2:** (...) I mean, probably now and again. I did get political content occasionally and so, yeah, that comes up. It also depends on what we're classing as Asian. For example, the recent New York primary, that's quite big on my For You page at the moment because people are pretty happy about that kind of content I get.

163 **S1:** Okay. And were there any moments during this study when you felt uncomfortable?

164 **S2:** I mean, not terribly. I was just quite confused by the content, but yeah.

165 **S1:** So mostly the content was a bit....

166 **S2:** It was odd to me. It's just, yeah, it's not something I really see often.

167 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, I get that. And is there any additional thought from your side on the topic that we haven't covered, you think?

168 **S2:** No, I'd say that was pretty extensive.

169 **S1:** Okay, then that was over the interview. Thank you very much.

Interview P

1

2 **S1 (Researcher):** Okay, so you can start.

3 **S2 (Interviewee):** Okay, so I'll share my screen?

4 **S1:** Yep, please.

5 **S2:** Okay.

6 **S2:** There we go. Okay, that's perfect.

7 **S1:** Okay, perfect.

8 **S2:** Okay. Yeah. Okay. Let me show my screen. There we go. I'll share the sound as well. Okay, can you see it?

9 **S1:** Yep.

10 **S1:** Okay, good. You will just like to say what's your immediate reaction and why you think they recommend this to you. You can also describe the contents and you can freely interact with the contents. Yeah, that's basically it. And you should go through 10 to 15 contents.

11 **S2:** Okay, okay. How long should I talk?

12 **S1:** Oh, well, it's up to you. If you really don't have any thoughts, you can just like, (..) you can just like talk nothing. It's like completely up to you, yeah.

13 **S2:** Okay.

14 **S1:** Okay.

15 **S2:** So here I see like (..) Billie Eilish and it's supposed to be cool and sultry, kind of. (..) Yeah, she's very fashionable. And I can see like it has a lot of likes. I'll like it. Just because like clicking the button. And I see like (..) comments in different languages. I actually have no idea what this is, oh, it's for CapCut, the video editing app. Yeah, I'm going to go to the next video. (..) I see a girl and she is wearing her hijab or head covering (..) I feel like it's Arabic, but I'm not sure. I guess it's Somali (..) I don't know why it's viral, she's not really doing anything. She's barely dancing. I do like her headscarf. I like the leopard print and I see like posts in a different language. I'll like it too. Usually I like posts, even if I don't really like them, I'll just like, you know, like I kind of like posts to indicate that I saw them. (..) Yeah, the building kind of looks European behind her. I wonder if like she's actually in (..) Somalia or where she is. Yeah.

16 **S2:** Is that enough talking?

17 **S1:** Yeah, yeah.

18 **S2:** Oh my gosh. This is so funny. This is like boomer editing, you know, when your parents (..) try to look like cool. I think she's pretty and yeah, it is nothing against her. It's just this edit is so silly. I don't know why it's so dramatically silly. Again, like, I think it's Arabic. I don't know. And the comments are very sweet, like it's a bunch of emojis. So yeah, I see (..) it's some sort of, she also says no hashtags. I don't really know anything about her. Maybe she's North African, like based on her name, but yeah, I'll like it because I saw it. And yeah, there we go. (..) I see three girls and (..) there's no caption, there's no hashtags, they're just dancing. Let's hear their song. (..) I like their clothes. I like their outfits. I don't know where they're from. The comments are in English, so maybe they're like Asian American. I don't know what this crazy comment is. I love it. It's like girls supporting girls vibes. She's obviously super famous because she has a bunch of likes and she doesn't need like any hashtags or anything. And again, they're not really doing much. They're just dancing and they're not even dancing like very, you know, like, I mean, it's good dancing. Like it's, it's attractive whatever, but it's nothing like crazy. Like, I'll like it. I'll like it. (..) Okay, let's see. I think that's Korean. (..) I guess this is like a decade-long thing where people don't dance. I'm not saying they don't dance well. Like they're on beat or whatever, but it's like, it's not like stuff you go to dance school for. And then they get like thousands of likes. You can see this one girl in the front is more confident and maybe more experienced. And the girl in the back is a little more, a little more awkward, but she's still good. Let's see the comments. (..) I think this is Korean. Yes. I don't think she's super famous. I think she's like a micro-influencer. Let's see the translation. There we go. Thor light. I don't know what it means. It sounds like a medical condition. Okay, let's see. (..) What is that? Oh my God. Oh my God. I think he's like a minor. Oh my gosh. And the comments are funny. Like some of them are supporting it and some of them are like, no, no. Maybe he's Korean because they're making this joke from this Korean creator, like the "are you open-minded" thing. And he has like kind of like the poppy music in the background. And yeah, I think he's like a child. I'll like it. I think it's pretty famous. Again, no caption, no hashtags. And he's like staring very intensely. No, it's another advertisement. Okay, Erste Bank. It looks like at the Donau or something skateboarding. Yeah. And they look like young people, maybe in high school or like late teens, early 20s. And yeah, it looks very European. And it's German. It's cute. It's a cute advertisement, like the girl. (..) Oh, I get it. Like, invest in the risk. And she's taking the risk like from being asleep on the beds. Oh my my gosh! What is this? (..) I'm not going to like this one. I guess it's like an OnlyFans thing. (..) Okay, there we go. (...) It's a good video game thing. I guess she's trying to mimic the (..) characters from Skyrim, you know, when they have like the figures, and I see the comments inspired in English. (..) Yeah, again some of them are positive, some of them are negative. Like, oh, you're hot. And then, (..) yeah, some people are talking about how cool her skills are, how she looks like a Korean woman. Yeah, pretty positive comments. I don't see any negative, like decree about her. I guess she's a really big influencer. Yeah, I like her outfit. (..) And oh my gosh, is that the guy from earlier? Oh my God. Why am I getting so many thirst traps? I don't want to like this. Sorry. I mean, this has 2 million likes and I see there are a bunch of different creators tagged. And let's see the comments. I guess they're well known because people know their

names. But again, they are still children. Yeah, it's like very thirstappy, like sexualized, like the yes, no, yes, no thing. Yes, (..) what is that? (...) Okay, I think she's very pretty, but out of all the videos, she's doing the least. Like, it's tuning. I don't know. That looks like an American house. (..) Maybe she's Asian American and I see comments in Spanish and English, and she's like a micro-influencer. (..) Yeah, I like, I think this case she's pretty, like a makeup outlet. Oh my gosh, what's going on? (..) Alright, I just see two, three Asian men. This guy is very buff, no carb, no pump. I'm not sure what that means. Like if he's saying, don't eat carbs. (..) I don't know if he's saying like if you're Asian, you can get muscles more easily. Yeah, he has lots of muscles. And the comments are kind of funny and (..) like sexualized and then a thirst trap. Oh my gosh, these are so like very intense. (...) And oh my goodness. Oh my goodness. Yeah, there's also, I don't know how to word it, but it's like them comments that are like (..) sexualizing Asian men specifically. And I don't know where they are, maybe in the U.S., so it looks like, again, like American interior in the back and you don't see his face. Okay. I do love sauces and this is an advertisement for McDonald's. It's in German because I'm in Austria. (..) And then, oh, they're selling the big bottles. I like that. I wouldn't, I don't like sour cream but I'd buy food bottle. And unfortunately, I do like McDonald's. (..) Yeah, so most of these figures like throughout the videos are Asian, but I think a lot of them seem to be Asian American because it's lots of English and then the interior. This, again, is (..) another like sexual thing if I'm assuming what she's talking about. She's talking about the size of, I think, male private parts. She's saying, like, what's realistic, what's not realistic. And the comments are funny. Like people think it's funny. And like they believe her. I don't know if she's a real nurse. Yeah, she has about a few hundred likes. (...) I don't know what this means. Again, like, I think she's Asian American. (..) I guess it's, like, a dance dance thing. I don't know. She looks very young.

19 **S1:** Yeah, I think we can stop here.

20 **S1:** How did you feel about this, the contents? How did you feel about the content?

21 **S2:** (..) I think like some of them were cute. I thought, like, I don't like watching minors. Like even if they're not minors, like where these people look very young.

22 **S1:** Yeah.

23 **S2:** And stuff is a little weird because they're like, they're like maybe doing sexual stuff, like the tongue thing and stuff. Some of them were funny. And some of them were just dancing, but I didn't really find it super interesting. (..) Actually, I don't know if any of them were actually funny. It's just like not stuff I'd really, I'd really watch or interact with. But like I said, like, I would, (..) I do like looking at comments. Like I interact with the comments. I interact with the videos, like in a way, like to indicate that I saw them, you know?

24 **S1:** So a feedback for the session, did you feel like the instruction was clear for you?

25 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, it's like it was clear.

- 26 **S1:** And did you feel comfortable verbalizing your thoughts throughout the process?
- 27 **S2:** Yes, I like to talk so that was not a problem to me.
- 28 **S1:** Were there moments where you struggled to articulate your thoughts?
- 29 **S2:** I mean, like some of the videos are just so weird and like, I didn't know what to say except for like, this feels inappropriate to watch.
- 30 **S1:** And what is usually your content on your daily usage on social media?
- 31 **S2:** Actually, I'm going to (..) so usually I use Instagram, I'm going to open right now and tell you like examples on my feed page. Like I know, I'm like, I think the Labubu stuff is really funny. It's like Labubu ones. I like the zodiac things where it's like, this is Pisces this week, this is Pisces next week, kind of like predicting your future, shopping stuff. I think the stereotypes with the AI are really funny, like (..) stereotypical British people from London or from Leeds. I also see like beauty tips, like hair talk, workout stuff, I'll tell you two more. (...) Oh, lots of dog stuff. Lots of cute dog pictures. And then one more is maybe like, oh my gosh, there's so much dog stuff. (...) Political stuff, maybe like political science. Yeah.
- 32 **S1:** Yeah. And how do you think the algorithm decides what kind of content to show you?
- 33 **S2:** I don't know. (..) I guess how long you stay on a post. Which comments you like. Maybe what you type, like what you type. What you like, maybe what you search. (...) And yeah, I mean, I also in a way, I know it sounds stupid, but I kind of believe in that thing where if you're talking with somebody about something, then it like hears you. Because we'll talk about like such specific random things and then I'll suddenly see them on social media. So I kind of believe that (..) conspiracy.
- 34 **S1:** And do you think that the algorithm recommends stuff based on your identity or ethnicity?
- 35 **S2:** Oh, (..) yes. (...) But I don't know. I feel like I interact with a lot more because also it's like partly like, I like seeing like what people live like in Korea or what people live like in, I don't know, Somalia or whatever. Like I find it really interesting, especially with social media because you get those firsthand views and not just like a TV show or a cartoon or whatever. I really like seeing what people eat and do in different countries. (..) And like my friends and partner are also from different ethnicities and different countries. So I think I don't know. I think maybe it depends on the person, but like, I don't think I see a bunch of white Americans, for example. And if I do, I will say they're like very politically aligned with me or they're making fun of other white Americans, like making fun of Trump supporters, for example.
- 36 **S1:** Yeah. And then do you think it also gets your data like when you interact with other apps on your phone? So it would recommend you something like from your, like a background of your phone.

- 37 **S2:** I don't know how to say it. Oh, yeah, for sure. Like, I think my data's being taken all the time everywhere, but I honestly, I think there are different cultural perceptions because I feel like my friends from like Poland and Germany and stuff, they're way more protective of their data and try to use like special browsers or special ways to block it. But I honestly feel like my American friends, we just don't care. And I kind of see it as a price you pay to use technology. And like, there's not really anything I'm doing that I don't want people to see, but I understand that's like a personal perception. But honestly, I don't care and I do feel like it's kind of like the, it feels like the contract you sign when you, when you have (...) the privilege of using like social media and stuff. So I really don't care if they are. And I know it's like happening all the time.
- 38 **S1:** And while scrolling through the TikTok content, did you notice there were any recurring patterns or themes in what was recommended to you?
- 39 **S2:** Well, dancing and like sexual stuff and Asian people.
- 40 **S1:** But dancing, I think it's a big feature of TikTok?
- 41 **S2:** I don't, it's like, okay, so I don't use TikT ok. Like, when I'm on Instagram, though, like sometimes I'll see dancing, but it's like this specific kind of dancing, you know, it's like this kind of like, it reminds me of Musical.ly. Do you remember Musical.ly? It's like that specific sort of like facial movements and movements. Like it's a very specific type of dance.
- 42 **S1:** So like lip syncing, like this kind of thing.
- 43 **S2:** Yeah, yeah. And like very basic, they are talented. I'm not saying they are not talented, but it's like a very, like kind of like basic in a way dance.
- 44 **S1:** Would you think this is also like very special on TikTok or it's actually everywhere on social media?
- 45 **S2:** Maybe, (...) maybe TikTok, because I think TikTok's like a (...) descendant of Musical.ly. And Musical.ly is more like, I guess when I was younger, so I saw it more. And yeah, I do feel like TikTok. But I don't see it on Instagram, honestly. And like I do see dancing, but it's not like that kind of dancing, you know?
- 46 **S1:** Yeah, I get that. And (...) do you feel like TikTok algorithm treats different Asian groups, like East Asian, South Asian, or Southeast Asian differently, or does it tend to present them as one group?
- 47 **S2:** How it presents them...
- 48 **S1:** Because like based on what you have seen, like, could you actually distinguish if they're from different Asian countries or they somehow look like the same?

- 49 **S2:** I mean, I will say the style and the makeup seem quite similar, but it's more like I saw (..) the language or the name. And then I could tell, or the background. I mean that one guy was in Paris. I don't know if he's Parisian. But I do think it's a little hard. Like if they're all from the US, for example, like Korean-American or Chinese-American, then I would want to distinguish from the name because then they're speaking English, you know what I mean? So then you can't tell from that. But yeah, I guess the style, the dances, things like that visually, yes, but then like linguistically, no.
- 50 **S1:** But mostly those are like actually more, I would say more American Asians, right? They are not really local, like really from Asian countries.
- 51 **S2:** Yeah, I'm not sure. I do think most of them were Asian American, because like I said, I saw the English, but I do think one of those videos, I do think they were like Korea, like in Korea.
- 52 **S1:** Okay.
- 53 **S1:** Have you ever seen similar contents before, like when you were using your social media?
- 54 **S2:** Those dances, no (..) like a significant amount of Asian people, maybe. My boyfriend's Mongolian, so like I see a bunch of like Mongolian stuff and like Mongolian jokes and stuff, but otherwise not really, maybe Asian food, like how like for (..) non-Asian people, like here's how (..) to make like a type of Korean food or here's how to make a type of Chinese food. So yeah, but it's aimed at like white Americans.
- 55 **S1:** But how about the sexualized content? Have you also encountered any?
- 56 **S2:** I mean, yes, but the thing is that I feel like I don't see it. And if I do see it, like I scroll past it because it makes me uncomfortable seeing people who look so young, you know?
- 57 **S1:** Yeah, yeah, definitely. (..) And also, would you think like because your partner is from Mongolia, if your partner was not like an Asian person, would you feel like you would get different types of Asian content?
- 58 **S2:** (...) Yes, I guess it depends on like what I'm interested in. Like if I'm interested in making like Korean food, then I see Korean content, if I'm like learning Korean, for example, or if I have a friend who's from Korea, I guess it depends on like what cultures I'm interested in and then like that would boost the algorithm. But I don't think like I would get someone from a random province in China unless there's like, (..) unless they're showing like, like again, like I love travel videos, if they're showing this like beautiful, like mountainous region maybe, but I wouldn't see like a random girl from a random Chinese province like dancing in her living room. Like probably not.
- 59 **S1:** Yeah. Also, like I talked with my previous interviewee, like he said he's from India and he gets more like local Indian content, which can be really diverse. But when he, like, for example, on this account, he would see like Indian content mostly about street food memes or like sexualized

content.

60 **S2:** Oh, God.

61 **S1:** Yeah, that is like what's mostly shown on the TikTok platform on this account, but for his own account, it's completely different. So, (..) I sometimes, yeah, sometimes I feel like maybe when they show like the outsider of this culture, the contents might be very superficial.

62 **S2:** Yeah, that makes sense. And then that like is supporting stereotypes because then I would get this specific, like also, I think something that comes to mind is like people have this idea that Korean people, they dress super well and they like take care of their skin when yeah, of course some of them do, but it's like, I feel like I'm going to go to Korea and then everybody's like that. But then that's what you see on social media.

63 **S1:** Yes, yes. Okay, then at this point, do you think there are any common stereotypes about Asians that come to your mind?

64 **S2:** I mean, I think it really depends on the country. Like I said, like, like, I think of, (..) and again, like, if I sit down and think about it, I know they're not true, but what comes to my mind is like plastic surgery, makeup, K-beauty, (..) like K-drama, like that, like mostly love stories and China, like metropolitan, but also mountainous regions and like meditation, Buddhism, (..) Mongolia, Genghis Khan, and horses. India, like, like it's (..) the typical (..) very typical stereotypes in my mind.

65 **S1:** Have you ever, like, personally been to Asia and Asian countries?

66 **S2:** I haven't. Of course, I need to. Of course, I'm very excited. Well, I've been to Jordan, which is like barely Asia.

67 **S1:** Yeah. But did you feel like it's actually different from what you have seen on social media?

68 **S2:** Jordan?

69 **S1:** Yeah. (...) Also, I'm not quite sure, because like the content of Jordan, I barely encounter. I don't really know how they show it on social media as well.

70 **S2:** Jordan, no, it was (..) I love Jordan. It was exactly what I expected and how I pictured it. It was yeah, it was like correct in my mind and on social media, I feel like.

71 **S1:** But do you also feel like on social media, like the contents, I would say for East Asia, it's way more popular than the content from other regions.

72 **S2:** Oh, yeah. Oh my goodness. Like, I don't see, I don't ever see stuff from, (..) okay, if I do see it, it's from like an American person who has that background, like Kyrgyz, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, like all those kind of more Central Asian countries. But then I would, you would see travel videos

from Jordan. You would see food videos from Korea. Like, like it is true. Like, I do feel like actually, and the borders of Asia, that's where you're seeing the, in both sides, on the borders. Like that's where you're seeing the...

73 **S1:** And do you think TikTok content can actually influence how people perceive Asian groups?

74 **S2:** Of course, yeah, definitely. Like I said, like, you're not probably seeing people with, (..) I mean, it's the same thing for the US too. Like, you don't see people from like Nevada, for example, you see people from like New York and stuff. So I'm sure there's like giant parts of these countries like within. Oh, and also I do feel like, (..) maybe it's, I do think this is changing recently, but I do think Americans have this idea that China is like very poor and like everybody wears like the same outfits, you know, these like socialist, like stereotypes. It's not true. And I do feel like on social media, I'm seeing more lately is actually like the opposite side, which is like addressing a stereotype you said when I was young because of like the education system is like they're actually like really rich people in China, like really rich cities. And like, you can have like a very nice life in China, but I think (..) Americans were kind of raised to think China is like an awful place to live. So I do think it's also, I mean, it's still a stereotype, but it's also like addressing these bad stereotypes of like, these are like awful, like uneducated, poor places when it's not true. And social media can also also be good for teaching people that like, you know, other countries are good too and not just the US.

75 **S1:** Yeah, definitely. And do you think like this kind of contents can also trigger like more real-world bias or discrimination?

76 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, I think also like sexualization of Asian women.

77 **S1:** Yeah.

78 **S2:** (..) Like, I mean, we saw that in the videos. And then also supporting stereotypes. Like, I don't think I've seen this, but I'm just thinking of an example. Like if I see a bunch of (..) Indian women cooking and I date an Indian woman and she's not like doing that, then I might think there's something wrong with her or be like unpleasantly surprised because I'm like, oh, like, aren't you supposed to be domestic or whatever? So I think it can support maybe sexism is what comes to my mind firstly. Or like, I mean, these are still stereotypes, so they're still not great, but like this idea that like Asian people are really good at math and like everybody, I mean, my boyfriend has this issue where people think he's Chinese. Like everybody thinks like, because we see Korea so much on social media, maybe they see you and think, oh, you're Korean, you're Korean, you're Korean, or like everybody's Chinese because these are just the countries we're seeing.

79 **S1:** Really?

80 **S2:** Yeah, my boyfriend has everybody say "ni hao" to him all the time.

- 81 **S1:** Yeah, same to me, like wherever I go. It's always the same, yeah. I sometimes wonder like, how would other people from other countries, like, how would they think, for example, Koreans when they get "ni hao," would they like, do you think they would also have some bad feelings against Chinese people?
- 82 **S2:** Well, so I think (...) I can't speak for Korean people, but my boyfriend isn't against Chinese people, but there is that, like, you know, that conflict because of Inner Mongolia and like the Chinese government, I think, like, in a way, like, maybe Mongolians get offended with that because firstly, it's like racial stereotyping, but it's also like, they don't want to be associated with China because they really want to have that specifically from China, specifically from China, they want to have that independence. So I think it's like multiple types of (...) offenses in one, you know what I mean?
- 83 **S1:** Yeah, I get that. Why do you think like people would always consider an Asian person is definitely from China? Like, it's very common in Europe, not only in Europe, like in the whole world, I would feel like.
- 84 **S2:** It's, I think it's like, I mean, I think it's, I can speak from the U.S. If I saw an Asian person, if I didn't know their name or hear them speaking with their parents or whatever, like, I would assume they're either from (...) Korea, like where I live Korea or I mean, (...) maybe I can tell if they're Indian or something, but like, kind of, because that's where most of the migration is coming from. You don't really meet, I know, I know one Japanese person, like, you don't really meet people migrating from Japan. I think it's just because like of statistics, really, it's because of statistics, because more people are immigrating from China to where I live or they did like decades ago. So it is like a statistical guess. (...) But yeah, it's, I think maybe that's why. And maybe, yeah, you know, China's huge and yeah.
- 85 **S1:** Yeah, more people, more population there.
- 86 **S2:** Yeah, yeah.
- 87 **S1:** Then would you also consider Indians as Asian?
- 88 **S2:** Yeah, yeah. I mean, like, we had this issue too. Like, we were going to Jordan, my friends and I, and I was like, oh, like, this is my first time in Asia. And my friend's like, it's not Asia. I'm like, it is Asia. It's just like, but when I think of Asia, I think of like China and Japan, India. I'm like, but it's still Asia. It's in the continent of Asia, like in the textbook, it's Asia. But yeah, like I, I would, there are like different types of Asian, like East Asian, South Asian. So.
- 89 **S1:** And do you also think like the TikTok content is promoting some kind of like beauty standards of Asians on the internet?
- 90 **S2:** (...) I mean, yeah, I mean, just looking at the videos we saw too, it's like skinny, long hair, very

feminine, like that certain stereotype.

91 **S1:** Do you think like also Western people are influenced or might get influenced by this kind of beauty standard?

92 **S2:** Yes. I mean, for example, I am envious of like Asian women's hair because the only women I know, they can like, I feel like they can easily grow their hair long and it's thicker and very shiny. And so I think, (...) I mean, because I'm exposed to Asian women, because of globalization and social media, I do wish I had (...) some of these traits, for example, like the longer hair and stuff like that. So I do think, yeah, like I'm influenced by Asian beauty standards.

93 **S1:** Have you heard of the Stop Asian Hate campaign? I think it was during COVID.

94 **S2:** Oh, yeah, yeah. And I was, yeah, I know there were cases in the U.S. of like violence against Asian people and stuff.

95 **S1:** Yeah.

96 **S1:** Yeah, exactly. And did you feel the campaign was effective?

97 **S2:** By the Stop Asian Hate campaign?

98 **S1:** Yeah.

99 **S2:** I mean, (...) I know there have been like campaigns on social media, (...) like bringing attention to stop Asian hate and like stereotypes. (...) Yeah, I'm not really sure about this.

100 **S1:** Were you in the U.S. during COVID?

101 **S2:** Yes.

102 **S1:** Did you feel like there was a huge discrimination against Asians back then?

103 **S2:** Girl, I was inside all the time. I don't know what was going on. Like, I also have like a very, like multi-ethnic friend group. So within my friend group, like they wouldn't say stupid shit like that. And (...) my like family is also very open-minded so they also wouldn't say stuff like that. And maybe, maybe, I don't remember, but maybe on social media, it's like comments like that. I think it's more like my friend group and my family knew that that was really stupid for people to associate like Asian people with, with COVID. And like, you know, everybody has their vices and stereotypes. So I'm not saying that we didn't have those, but I just like personally, we didn't support those. But I'm sure like I saw that in the, in the comments, in the comment section.

104 **S1:** Like also during COVID, there were a lot of like hate speech on the internet. Do you feel like this kind of content could maybe influence you personally?

105 **S2:** Yeah, yeah, of course. Like I, something that's really important to me, and we talked about this a lot in my undergraduate degree, because I studied psychology, is like, everybody's prone to biases and stereotypes. And I really, there's a lot of research on, you know how people say "I'm colorblind," like saying they don't see race? Like people who actually say that are like, actually more racist and doing more racist stuff. So I think it's really important to acknowledge that as a white person, like, I'm sure I do things that are like, I'm not aware of that are problematic and like racist and stuff, but it's I think it's about accountability and being open to being wrong. And I know I am susceptible to stereotypes. I'm trying to think of, like, I do have stereotypes against Austrian people because I think they are kind of, I have a backwards mentality and I think they're mean. And yeah, (..) so I do have stereotypes. I have stereotypes against people from certain countries and I constantly have to tell myself like this is inappropriate and I can't think like that. It is hard. It's so hard when you have stereotypes and people are constantly proving those stereotypes.

106 **S1:** Yes, yes.

107 **S2:** It is very difficult.

108 **S1:** Yeah. Yeah. And also I had an interview with an European guy. Like he has strong bias against Indian people because he only gets negative news about Indian people. So it makes him feel like, oh, Indians are just bad people. Like he never wants to make friends with them and never wants to travel to the country or eat the food from there.

109 **S2:** I was going to say my boyfriend is, I think he, he went, (..) he went to China and he had like a bad trip and he like, he doesn't want to go to Chinese restaurants. Like he, it's like, it's our brains are made that way though. Our brains are made to like, it's awful.

110 **S1:** Yeah. That's very hard to get rid of bias, I think.

111 **S1:** Yeah.

112 **S2:** Yeah, my, I just think of like, I have friends who have these like certain biases against certain people and it's just like, it's really difficult because I don't think they're trying to be mean. It's just, and I've tried it and you, and you can't, you also can't tell them they're wrong or they're bad because then they like go more into it. You know what I mean?

113 **S1:** Yes, yes.

114 **S2:** It is really hard. It's so, because if it was easy, then nobody would be racist. Nobody would say this. It is so hard.

115 **S1:** I guess nobody is perfect. That's like the problem there. Like nobody could be like kind to everyone. Like these kind of people just don't exist.

- 116 **S2:** Yeah. It is sad, though. It's really sad.
- 117 **S1:** Like, I guess that's like humanity, like the negative side of humanity.
- 118 **S2:** Yeah.
- 119 **S2:** I know. It's, it is, it's so complicated and sad and like, I don't. I also have like stereotypes against men. Like I don't like most men and I don't trust them. (..) But it's based on experience, right?
- 120 **S1:** Yeah.
- 121 **S1:** Yes, for me, the same because like my past experience just made me like cannot really think good side of men. That's like, at the other point, I think not all of them are like this. It's like I'm brainwashing myself.
- 122 **S2:** Yeah, I know. I know.
- 123 **S2:** It's really difficult.
- 124 **S1:** Then do you think like TikTok or similar social media, they do enough to address harmful stereotypical content about, like, no matter Asians or like any human being?
- 125 **S2:** (...) I don't know. Like, I know there have been some times where I see and it's, like flagged as hate speech. Like they, they take it down or they cover it. I'm sure they're not doing enough, right? And it's also like, this is what I studied in undergrad is like, how when there are rules and regulations, people just like, they make these like codes or songs or like people always find a way to like get around it and like dog whistling and stuff. Like so I think it's like you, you kind of have to, they're always like two steps ahead of (..) the people. So I don't know. I don't think so. Like it's, it's very complicated and hate is complicated.
- 126 **S1:** Like would you think like this kind of content can cause more influence on minors, like on underage users?
- 127 **S2:** Oh my gosh. Yes, yes, it's so concerning. It's so concerning. I also worked with young people for a really long time and it's very concerning. Like I, (..) like, I met so many good ones that I don't want to say, like I'm worried about the next generation, but in regards to social media, I'm so worried because like their brains aren't fully developed and they don't understand critical thinking and they don't understand like things are jokes and they don't understand like the idea of, what is that (..) like representative bias. Like you see one thing and you think it represents everything. So, yeah, I am very concerned because of the way their brains work and like how surface portray.
- 128 **S1:** And also like for, like at the moment, TikTok's age limit, I think it's 14 years old. But to be honest, they are not checking any of your documents. So even though you're like 12, 11, you can still get on

the platform. Like nobody actually cares.

129 **S2:** Yeah, exactly. It's very concerning.

130 **S1:** Yeah, and those are like, they tend to learn or replicate the content or the stereotypes from the content, and they might like grow up with this kind of thinking.

131 **S2:** Exactly. Like I, like when I was teaching, we were supposed to teach about like US culture because I was doing Fulbright, which is like an exchange program. And they had, like, there's so many stupid stereotypes in the US and the US is not perfect. I'll be the first one to say that. But we are a very diverse country and like Trump sucks, but you do have people going to protest and like dying at protest, trying to fight for like the rights of people. So I don't think it's fair to them to say this shit, like Americans, blah, blah, blah, Americans, blah, blah, blah, Americans, blah, blah, blah. And then they'll like, they'll say these things about Americans. And I'm like, it's because you saw this video on TikTok or those things where they like interview people on the street and they're like, what's the capital of Canada? I don't know. And I'm like, you know, I'm well educated and so many of my friends are and this is not, this is not (...) our country. And like, we're not, we're so diverse. And I think it's really unfair that like, these videos are funny, but you don't understand critical thinking and you don't understand like biases. So yeah, it's really unfortunate.

132 **S1:** Yeah. And also I feel like the same, like for Chinese content, like no matter the news media or social media it's always focused on like the Chinese government. Yeah, I'm not making it pretty, but like the Chinese government, it is shitty and also all the censorship and the surveillance. But still, like there's also still a good part of China, like the people that are kind and also the food is good, like the culture is interesting. But no one is paying attention to that part.

133 **S2:** Exactly. Exactly. That's what my, that's what my family, like, so my friends felt about me going to Jordan too. Like, because, you know, (...) the, I don't know if you saw my videos, but like, Iran and Israel started conflict when we were there. And some people were like, oh, like, I can't believe you're there. Like, Jordan, Jordan is safe. It is a safe, it's safer than the U.S., for sure. And do you know the food's amazing. The people are amazing. Like, you're addressing the news about these missiles that aren't even like touching the country.

134 **S1:** Yes, yes. It's like so (...) similar, like people around me as well, because I also went to Morocco, I think, a few weeks ago and a lot of people were, yeah, a lot of people were telling me like it's a Muslim country, like it could be very dangerous there. But actually when I was there the food was good, like the people, yeah, of course there are some like terrible people, but some people are still kind. Like they try to help.

135 **S2:** Yeah, but I, I do, I really want to go to Morocco. I think it's amazing. I do think some things though like, um I will say an exception to this and I don't tell everybody I said this because like I don't know, I want to get like an international job in the future. But like, I don't agree with like, I mean, you

see it on social media. Like I really don't agree with Israel's policies and like, so I don't want to travel there because I don't want to give them money to support things they're doing. And like, even though a lot of governments suck, like I would still go there, but there are some exceptions to that and like Israel would be one of them.

136 S1: Yeah, exactly yeah. Okay. I think that was all for the interview questions. It was very interesting.

137 S2: Yeah, it was so interesting. It's so interesting.

138 S1: So now I would like to collect some of your personal demographics. Where are you from?

139 S2: Virginia in the U.S.

140 S1: And how old are you?

141 S2: 27.

142 S1: Yeah, your highest education level?

143 S2: Now I'm master's.

144 S1: Congratulations.

145 S2: Thanks. It feels good to say.

146 S1: And what's your gender identity?

147 S2: Female.

148 S1: Have you lived in different cultural environments? Yeah (..) would you consider like ultra-diverse cultural environments?

149 S2: Yes, and I lived in Germany and I also lived in the Virgin Islands. So those are my few...

150 S1: And what do you think, why do you think it's different cultural environments? Because I think for most perspectives, like Europe or the US could be like similar. Like it's also very westernized. The values are like similar. Why do you think these two countries can be different?

151 S2: We are way more like consumerist. We are way, (..) okay, this is based on my state, my family, whatever. Way more consumerist. We're way more capitalistic. We're more individualistic. I feel like we're more modern, like more technology. And (..) like way more friendly. So I like, I also think Germany and Austria are different too. Like in ways they're similar, but they are very different. They're very different.

152 S1: So you think even though they are super close geographically, but still like the cultural

environment can be completely different.

153 **S2:** Oh, for sure. Like, I'm living here. I've been like really shocked sometimes. Like, especially with like faux pas and like mannerisms. Like that genuinely for Americans and all my American friends say this, it is a huge culture shock. The manners here, the politeness. It is not normal for me.

154 **S1:** Okay. And for the language part, do you think it was a difficulty for you?

155 **S2:** I mean English and German are the same system. I also studied German for a long time. So it's okay.

156 **S1:** Did participating in this study affect the way you view TikTok's algorithm or racial content on the platform?

157 **S2:** No. I think this is all stuff I think about.

158 **S1:** Were you surprised by the content on TikTok or on this account?

159 **S2:** I was surprised that it was so, (..) like sexual. (..) And it was so young. And like, I mean, yeah, I do see sexual content on Instagram, but I was surprised at how young they looked. Like that was kind of shocking.

160 **S1:** Yeah, but do you think this is just because, like, Asian people (..) tend to look younger?

161 **S2:** I don't know. Like, it's always like the way they dress and like the makeup they did. Like, I do feel like they were quite young.

162 **S1:** Yeah, actually true. Also, like when I set this account because I wanted to focus on Asian content. So I just like simply typed "Asian" and then you will start to get this kind of like sexualized content. There's nothing else. Like I was expecting to get some like food content or some cultural content, but there's none, it's just this. And then they will give you like further tabs like for you to tap on and then you can go to some other stuff. And there's like some tabs about like tiny Asian or like Filipino Asian females seeking for boyfriends, like this kind of stuff. Yeah, I was shocked. I was like, what the fuck is this? And then just like curious, I tapped it on. It's like really shocking content. I personally felt very uncomfortable about those.

163 **S2:** I do feel like though, white people are calling other white people out more when they're like only going after Asian women. And, you know, my grandpa only dates Filipino women. So I have Filipino family members. He only goes after Filipino women. It's weird. It's not weird if like he's had seven wives, okay? He's had seven wives. It wouldn't be weird if it was like one or two. But the fact that we don't have many Filipino people where we live, he's going to the Philippines. And we're like, what the hell are you doing? It's weird. And like, I do think now people are calling them out and saying, you are not, you are doing this because you have these stereotypes in your head about Asian women. It

is weird.

164 **S1:** But do you know why he is doing this or he's simply just simply attracted to Filipino women?

165 **S2:** I think, I feel like, I feel like, (..) because my boyfriend and I have also talked about this. We've also talked about like, when, so when white girls do it, like they want that K-pop thing. And then when white guys, when white guys do it, it's because of this like anime, like submissive woman stereotype. And we've talked about this too. It's like a specific type of man. And like, he has this idea in his head about what an Asian woman is. And like, I don't even know how to explain my grandpa, but my mom and I figure it's because like, he has this idea that Asian women are submissive because he's also said like, (..) when he gets like a new wife, like she'll cook and clean all the time. So yeah, it's like, it's the submissive housewife domestic thing, I think.

166 **S1:** I feel like this is like, for older generations, they really get this kind of concept deep in their minds. I'm not sure about the younger, like white males, but I feel like this is pretty common for the middle-aged or older generation white males.

167 **S2:** Yes, yeah, it's my grandpa. Yeah, it's like his age. Well, my aunt's Korean, but they, I don't think my uncle (..) has those ideas because they met like normally. They met normally, but my grandpa does like go after Filipino women, but my uncle and my aunt met at a restaurant and she is like Korean-Korean.

168 **S1:** Yeah, yeah.

169 **S2:** But yeah, they met in like a normal way that doesn't make me feel uncomfortable.

170 **S1:** Okay. Your grandpa really creeps me out, I feel like.

171 **S2:** That would be my mom and I always like, "What the hell?"

172 **S1:** Yeah, and seven wives, seven of them are like Filipino, right?

173 **S2:** And they're all so young, too. They're all young. It's weird.

174 **S1:** Oh my gosh. Also, like my friend, she's like in Australia and she's telling me like on the streets you always see like these middle-aged white men with Southeast Asian females because like also they are very proud of it. They feel like they use their money because there are a lot in Australia and they just save this money every year to go to Thailand or Vietnam or like the Philippines like for three, four times, first to get a prostitute there and then they might get a wife.

175 **S2:** It is so (..) it is so uncomfortable. It's like it is so creepy and there's also a big, big issue with sex trafficking of children. Like there's...

176 **S1:** Yeah.

- 177 **S2:** It's really, I saw this joke. It's always true, but the joke said white men never go to South Asia for something good.
- 178 **S1:** Oh my God. Yeah, I think these kind of people exist so it makes this business or market even bigger.
- 179 **S2:** It's disgusting. It's disgusting. Like, especially the children part, it's really awful. (..) Yeah. Then I'm scared of myself. Well, I was going to say like, I'm scared for my relationship because I'm scared people are going to see me with my boyfriend and they're going to think that I'm with him because I have these like certain stereotypes. When the truth is, I don't give a fuck about K-pop, I don't care. I'm so scared people will see me and think that. And I'm like, firstly, my boyfriend's Mongolian. And secondly, like, I had nothing to do with Mongolia.
- 180 **S1:** Yeah, I get that. Have you had like this kind of biased experience in your life?
- 181 **S2:** No, but my mom was like a little worried about me dating a Mongolian guy because she read online that Mongolian men are known for like high rates of domestic violence. So that is like the only, yeah, I mean, there is like a big alcohol issue in Mongolia that is true. And so I guess it's like associated with domestic violence. But yeah, I guess that's the only, like, oh, my aunt is racist. And so she did make racist jokes about like him owning a nail salon, which also is like the wrong stereotype because that's a stereotype of Vietnamese people. So I do have racist family members, but I either don't talk to them or have very good boundaries with them. So yeah, that's the other, but fuck that, whatever. I don't care. Like, I don't care what she says.
- 182 **S1:** But is your family like very accepting of your boyfriend?
- 183 **S2:** My immediate family is, yes, and a lot of them are also surprisingly accepting because they come from like very conservative areas or they grew up very religious, very conservative. And my grandma, for example, she's very open-minded with like gay people and Asian people. And a lot of my family is, it's just like this part of my family is not, (..) I don't talk to them.
- 184 **S1:** I get that.
- 185 **S2:** Oh, my sister's also married to an Afghan guy and she's Muslim.
- 186 **S1:** Oh, your family is so diverse.
- 187 **S2:** Yeah, it's like, it's a good example of like 2025.
- 188 **S1:** Yeah, literally.
- 189 **S1:** Because I also heard like some rumors about like American people, like, (..) there are some sayings about like American people are very like religious, so like they get married at a very young

age in order to have sex. So I always thought like, maybe like also American people are not like as open as I thought.

190 **S2:** But it depends where you are. Like, I'm from the cities and the suburbs and like, well-educated areas. So I'm from like, places where that's not totally true, but yes, that is true to the country. It's just like China, right? Like there are places where I'm sure people are religious and places where they're not.

191 **S1:** Yeah, most of the inland parts are very conservative.

192 **S2:** Oh, no.

193 **S1:** Literally it's like that. Just like some very developed cities are better, but most of the parts are like terrible. Okay, last question. Do you have any additional thoughts on the topic that we haven't covered?

194 **S2:** No, but I think it's really interesting. Like, especially as like, I, well, when I'm talking about multiculturalism in my family, it is like all Asian people. So I do think it's really interesting to think about it and to think about like social media and how people are portrayed. And yeah, I think it is, I think it is really interesting. And yeah, I hope I didn't talk too long. I love talking and I love talking about this stuff. I hope I gave you good content.

195 **S1:** Yeah, it was also very interesting with you. Like I get much more information, like from your side, because your perspective is also very unique. Thank you very much.