

**An Observational Netnography**  
**Study of Post-Pandemic Anti-Asian Racism**

by

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### Abstract

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, anti-Asian racist sentiment has spread on social media (Martin & Yoon, 2021). The present study investigates how social media may play a role in fighting against anti-Asian racism. This qualitative research utilized AsianCrit (Kiang, 2016) as the theoretical framework. Public data were collected from major social media platforms—Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. This research applied netnography analysis (Kozinets, 2015), thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019), and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995) techniques to collect, interpret, and discuss the data. The findings reveal that the responses on social media platforms were diverse, ranging from heartfelt expressions of support to critical discussions about systemic issues, and that supportive posts outweighed the non-supportive and neutral posts. Social media played a crucial role in amplifying the voices of those advocating against Asian hate, fostering community, and raising awareness about the issue. However, posts on these platforms showcased the challenges of addressing such complex and deeply rooted societal problems. Data analysis confirmed that hatred towards Asians is not just a product of the pandemic; it is in part the result of systemic bias and the influence of White supremacy. The researcher concludes that to address the issue of hatred towards Asians, it is crucial to educate the general public about Asian history, not only at the societal level, but most importantly, early on with students during their K-12 education.

*Keywords:* Asian-Hate Racism, Netnography, Critical Discourse Analysis, Critical Race Theory, AsianCrit

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### **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to the extraordinary individuals who have been the guiding lights, pillars of support, and wellsprings of inspiration throughout my academic journey.

To my parents, whose boundless love and unwavering encouragement have been the driving force behind every achievement. Your sacrifices and belief in my abilities have shaped the person I am today.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

We call for hope. Through the pain, anger, fear, and grief we are all experiencing, we call for love in the shape of cut fruit, for healing through seeking refuge in each other, and for hope that a better world is possible.

-Chinese Canadian National Council, Toronto Chapter, 2022

### **Significance of the Study**

The Covid-19 pandemic, which was first reported in China, has led to a perceived increase in racism against Asians in North America. In March 2020, former President Donald Trump referred the virus as the “Chinese Virus,” “Wuhan Virus,” and “Kung Flu,” saying, “[i]t’s not racist at all. No, not at all. It comes from China, that’s why. It comes from China. I want to be accurate” (Forgey, 2020, p. 2). Such racist terms contributed to an 800% increase of similar racist terms on social media and in news outlets and fueled anti-Asian racism, putting Asian immigrants in danger. In some other cases, government leaders and senior officials also have directly or indirectly encouraged hate crimes, racism, or xenophobia using anti-Chinese rhetoric. Some political parties and groups, including those in the US, UK, Italy, Spain, Greece, France, and Germany, have also used the Covid-19 crisis to advance anti-immigrant, White supremacist, anti-Semitic, and xenophobic conspiracy theories to demonize refugees, foreigners, prominent figures, and political leaders (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Since the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, individuals of Asian descent and Asians have been subjected to racist and offensive language in news coverage, political statements, and on social media. Additionally, hate speech related to the virus seems to be spreading rapidly.

According to the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, and Stop AAPI Hate, there has been a sharp increase in crimes against Asians since 2019. For example, on March 16, 2021, a mass shooting occurred at three spas in the Atlanta metropolitan area; of the eight people killed, six were women of Asian descent (Martin & Yoon, 2021). According to the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, anti-Asian hate crimes increased by 339% in 2021 compared to the previous year. Meanwhile, law enforcement in San Francisco reported a spike of 567% in anti-Asian hate crimes in 2021 (Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, 2021).

Racism towards Asian immigrants has existed for a long time including through immigration policies that restricted immigration from Asia until 1965 (Chen et al., 2020). However, the current tensions between the US and China and the use of inflammatory language referring to the virus as the “China virus” has only further escalated this racism against Asian immigrants (Chen et al., 2020).

Reports show that three years after the outbreak, hatred of Asians is still rising in Canada. A survey, released by the Toronto Chapter of the National Council for Chinese Canadians (CNCTO) and a grassroots organization called Project 1907, revealed that 943 racist incidents occurred across Canada in 2021, a 47% increase from 2020. Women continued to report the most incidents, but reports from children and teenagers increased by 286%. The data were collected from January 1 to December 31, 2021, and included self-reported and eyewitness-reported incidents (Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter, 2022). Stop AAPI Hate (AAPI stands for Asian American and Pacific Islander)

indicates that news stories fail to show the full picture of what Asian immigrants are experiencing. Nearly 11,500 hate incidents were reported to the Stop AAPI Hate reporting center between March 19, 2020, and March 31, 2022, and hate happens everywhere (Stop AAPI Hate, 2022).

Anti-AAPI hate has had significant impacts on Asian people, such as physical and mental trauma. Repeated incidences of hate can lead to fear, stress, depression, and anxiety, all indications of racial trauma (Stop AAPI Hate, 2022). One in five Asian Americans who have experienced racism display racial trauma, the psychological and emotional harm caused by racism (Saw et al., 2021).

Actions should be taken to end anti-Asian incidents. In early April 2020, former Democratic presidential candidate Andrew Yang called on Asian Americans to embrace and show Americanism “in ways they’ve never done before” to counter racist attacks, as if Asian Americans were responsible for hate crimes against their communities (Reny & Barreto, 2022). This call is obviously the wrong way of solving the problem by merely requiring Asian Americans and Asian Canadians to hide their identities to fit in. It is our collective responsibility to step up, be allies, and stand together against xenophobia and hate caused by all forms of racism, not only anti-Asian racism. But the big question here is: how?

### **My Story and Positionality**

As an Asian woman navigating the digital landscape, my positionality within the discourse on combatting anti-Asian racism on social media is deeply influenced by personal experiences, cultural heritage, and social identities. Living in a multicultural environment, I

have witnessed firsthand the subtle yet pervasive manifestations of racism and discrimination targeting individuals of Asian descent. These experiences have shaped my perspective and motivated me to engage critically with issues of race, power, and representation in digital spaces.

At the outset of the Covid-19 outbreak, I was residing in Shanghai. It was through social media channels that I became acutely aware of the rising tide of anti-Asian sentiments in North America, marked by frequent attacks and harassment targeting Asian immigrants. This awareness prompted introspection on how I could ensure my safety upon relocating to Winnipeg, a concern that had not arisen during my previous experiences, including my studies in Europe from 2010 to 2011.

Upon commencing my graduate studies in Winnipeg in October 2021, accompanied by my son, we encountered significant challenges during our initial winter. For example, in February 2022, when my son developed red eyes, necessitating a visit to a walk-in clinic, we experienced an unsettling incident at the pharmacy. There, the receptionist's demeanor shifted from a cheerful interaction with her colleague to a cold and impatient attitude upon our approach. Witnessing this abrupt change deeply unsettled my son, prompting him to question why we were treated with such indifference. Struggling to find an explanation, I grappled with feelings of pain not only as an Asian individual but also as a mother. It was challenging to reconcile with the fact that I could not adequately explain to my child why we encountered unwarranted hostility. Despite offering the explanation that perhaps the receptionist was having a bad day, I recognized that this did not address the underlying issue.

Subsequent instances of receiving hateful glares while queuing at the supermarket checkout and interactions with unsmiling clerks further fueled my contemplation on the matter.

Experiences such as microaggressions, stereotypes, and fetishization reflect broader systemic inequalities and power dynamics within society, underscoring the importance of interrogating ways in which social media platforms perpetuate and amplify anti-Asian racism, often with devastating consequences for Asian communities. This personal journey has motivated me to take action in combating such discrimination.

Through reflexivity and empathy, I strive to amplify marginalized voices, challenge hegemonic structures, and foster dialogue and understanding in the fight against anti-Asian racism on social media. As an Asian woman, and particularly as a mother, I felt compelled to address this issue head-on. During the winter term of 2022, while enrolled in the course EDUB 7840 Qualitative Research Methods in Education, I initiated an investigation into how individuals combat anti-Asian racism on social media. This preliminary exploration laid the groundwork for this study, aiming to illuminate the personal and collective experiences of those who face such discrimination and to contribute to broader efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable society.

### **Statement of Purpose**

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, Asians and people of Asian descent have been the targets of hate crimes and harassment. Anti-Asian racism happens almost everywhere in North America, not only in big cities but also in small towns (Stop AAPI Hate, 2022). Frequent occurrences of hate can result in fear, stress, depression, and anxiety, all of which

signal racial trauma among Asian immigrants and their descendants (Stop AAPI Hate, 2022).

However, news stories fail to show the full picture of what Asian immigrants are experiencing, and surprisingly little research looks at how social media plays a role in battling anti-Asian racism. The purpose of this study is to identify which solutions and interventions may address the root causes so that we can be in step with those who oppose racism. It is believed that while the experiences and historical backgrounds of the people in each of our communities are unique, unity is both possible and necessary in the struggle for equality and racial justice.

### **Research Questions**

To understand the role that social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube play in resisting against “Asian Hate” in North America in the post-pandemic era and to evaluate the engagement level of posts on Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube with the “Stop-Asian-Hate” advocacy movement, and to identify the patterns or themes that emerge from these responses, this study employed qualitative thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis based on public data collected from social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube), to investigate the following questions:

1. What appears to be the role of Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube in resisting against “Asian Hate” in the post-pandemic era in North America?
2. To what extent do posts on Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube engage with the “Stop-Asian-Hate” advocacy movement, and what patterns or themes emerge in their responses?

## Terms

To establish a shared understanding of key concepts within this thesis, I will define the following terms in alphabetical order: “AsianCrit,” “Anti-Asian racism,” “Critical Discourse Analysis,” “Hate crime,” “Netnography,” “Qualitative Thematic Analysis,” and “Racism.”

### *AsianCrit*

AsianCrit, a concept within critical race theory, encompasses the examination and critique of the racialization of Asian identities and experiences within Western societies. It involves interrogating ways in which Asian individuals and communities are represented, constructed, and marginalized within systems of power and discourse. AsianCrit seeks to deconstruct prevailing stereotypes, myths, and narratives about Asians, challenging essentialized notions of Asianness and highlighting the diversity and complexity of Asian identities (Kiang, 2016).

At its core, AsianCrit aims to uncover intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination faced by Asian individuals, including racism, xenophobia, and orientalism. It also seeks to illuminate the ways in which Asian bodies and cultures are commodified, exoticized, and fetishized within popular culture, media, and academia. By centering Asian voices and perspectives, AsianCrit contributes to the broader project of racial justice and equity, advocating for the recognition and empowerment of Asian communities in the fight against racism and inequality (Kiang, 2016).

Engaging with AsianCrit involves critically examining the historical and contemporary contexts of Asian racialization, colonization, and diasporization, as well as the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality within Asian experiences. It encourages reflexivity and self-interrogation among scholars and activists, challenging internalized biases and complicity in systems of oppression. Ultimately, AsianCrit calls for transformative social change that centers the voices and experiences of marginalized Asian communities and works towards dismantling structures of power and privilege that perpetuate racism and inequality (Kiang, 2016).

### ***Anti-Asian Racism***

Anti-Asian racism refers to the discrimination, prejudice, and hostility directed towards individuals of Asian descent based solely on their race or ethnicity. This form of racism encompasses a wide range of negative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that target Asian communities and individuals, perpetuating stereotypes and marginalization. Anti-Asian racism can manifest in various forms, including verbal harassment, physical violence, exclusionary policies, and systemic discrimination in areas such as education, employment, and housing (Huang, 2020).

### ***Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)***

CDA is a research methodology used to examine language use in social contexts, focusing on how power, ideology, and social structures are reproduced and contested through discourse. It involves analyzing written, spoken, or visual texts to uncover underlying social

and political meanings and to reveal how language shapes and reflects social reality (Fairclough, 1995).

CDA draws on theories from linguistics, sociology, and critical theory to explore the ways in which discourse constructs and maintains social hierarchies, identities, and relations of power. Researchers using CDA examine the language choices, rhetorical strategies, and discursive practices employed in texts to understand how they shape and perpetuate social inequalities and injustices (Van Dijk, 2015).

This approach involves analyzing both the linguistic features of discourse (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, rhetoric) and the broader socio-political context in which discourse occurs. CDA seeks to uncover hidden meanings, ideological biases, and discursive strategies that may reinforce or challenge dominant power structures and social norms.

CDA is applied across various disciplines, including linguistics, communication studies, sociology, political science, and cultural studies, and is used to investigate a wide range of topics, such as media representations, political discourse, institutional communication, and social movements.

### ***Hate Crime***

According to the United States Department of Justice (2023), a hate crime is a type of criminal offense that encompasses various violent acts like harassment, assault, murder, arson, vandalism, or threats against a person or their property. These criminal acts are committed due to the victim's actual or perceived race, color, religion, nationality, country of origin, disability, gender, or sexual orientation. Some instances of bias and hate that

marginalized groups experience can meet the legal criteria for harassment, but they are commonly known as “hate incidents” or acts of prejudice that do not reach the level of a criminal offense (United States Department of Justice, 2023). Acts of prejudice that are not criminal and do not involve violence, threats, or property damage are referred to as subtle occurrences. The Covid-19 pandemic has led to the perception of other minority and marginalized racial/ethnic groups as dangerous, such as the misguided belief that only Asian ethnicities are responsible for causing and spreading Covid-19. This perception has triggered hate crimes against Asians (Grove & Zwi, 2006).

### *Netnography*

Netnography, a combination of “Internet” and “ethnography,” is a qualitative research methodology that leverages online communities and social media platforms as primary sources of data collection. By analyzing text-based content such as blogs, forums, and social media posts, netnography seeks to unravel the experiences, beliefs, and behaviors of individuals or groups within specific online communities (Kozinets et al., 2014).

Netnography is a qualitative research methodology that involves the study of online communities and cultures through the analysis of people’s posted interactions, behaviors, and artifacts. It adapts ethnographic methods to the digital context, allowing researchers to explore virtual communities, social media platforms, and online forums. Netnography enables researchers to investigate topics such as online identity formation, communication patterns, consumer behavior, and cultural practices within digital spaces (Kozinets, 2015).

The outcomes of netnography can be both analytical and descriptive in nature. Analytical outputs involve the interpretation and analysis of collected data to unveil underlying patterns, trends, or deeper meanings (Kozinets et al., 2014). Conversely, descriptive outputs furnish detailed and vivid portrayals of the observed online phenomena. Rooted firmly in the collected data, netnography goes beyond surface-level observations, offering a nuanced understanding of the online communities or cultures under scrutiny (Kozinets, 2015).

### *Qualitative Thematic Analysis (QTA)*

Qualitative thematic analysis is an approach used to analyze qualitative data, such as interview transcripts, focus group discussions, or textual data from social media platforms. It involves identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns or themes within the data to gain insights into the research question or phenomenon of interest (Braun & Clarke, 2008).

Thematic analysis typically involves several iterative steps, including familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, categorizing them, and later identifying concepts and themes (Saldaña, 2021). Researchers engage in a systematic process of coding, categorizing, and organizing data according to recurring patterns, ideas, or concepts, which are then clustered into overarching themes that capture the essence of the data.

This method allows researchers to uncover both explicit and implicit meanings within the data, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of participants' perspectives, experiences, and beliefs. Thematic analysis is flexible and adaptable, making it suitable for a wide range of research contexts and settings. It offers a structured yet interpretive approach to

exploring complex qualitative data and is widely used in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, health sciences, and education (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

### ***Racism***

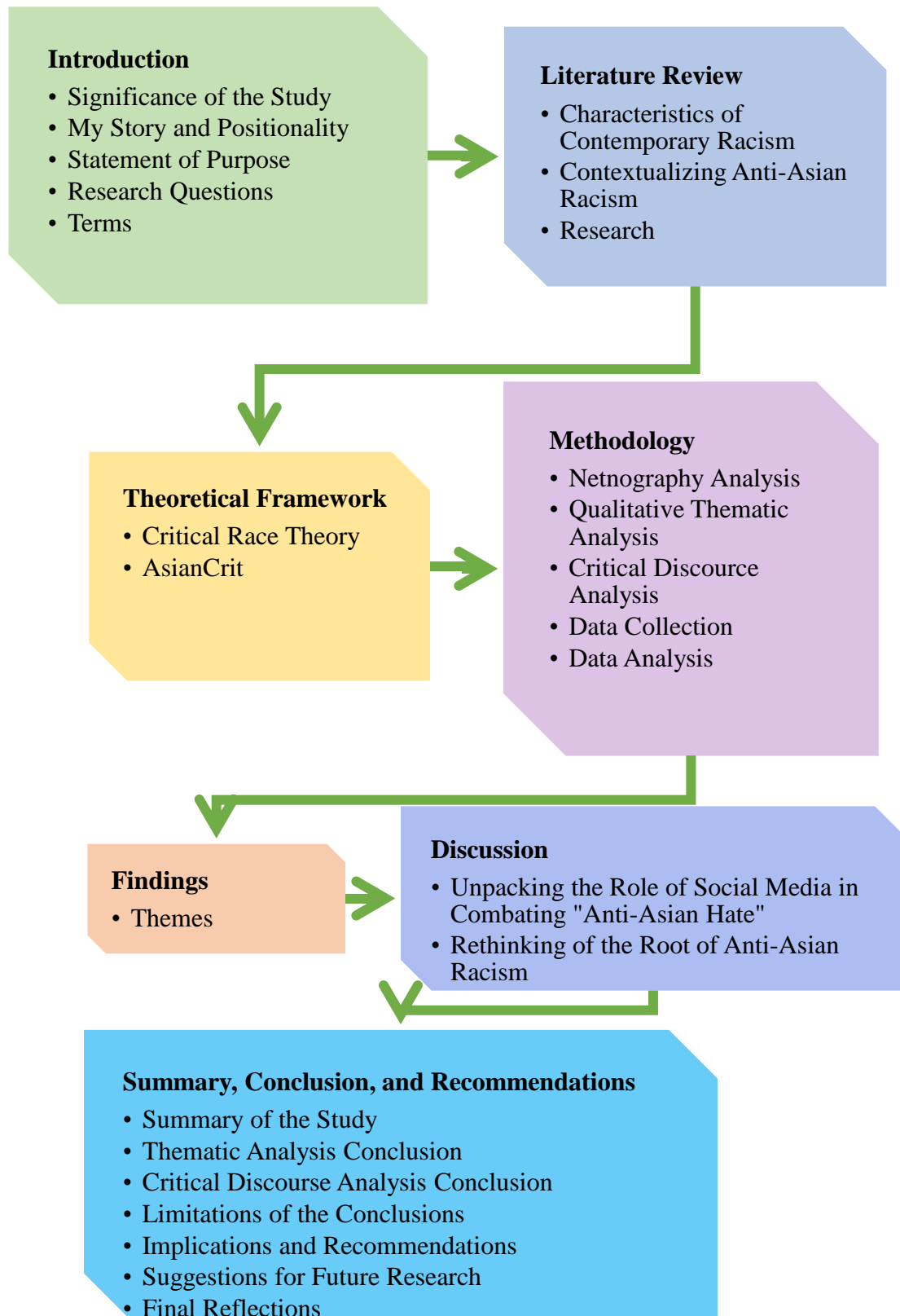
Racism, as defined in contemporary scholarship, encompasses a complex set of beliefs, attitudes, and practices that perpetuate discrimination, prejudice, and marginalization based on race or ethnicity (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967). It operates on both individual and systemic levels, influencing social structures, institutions, and interpersonal interactions. This phenomenon is characterized by the unequal distribution of power and resources along racial lines, often resulting in the oppression of racialized groups and the perpetuation of racial hierarchies within society (Bonilla-Silva, 2003a).

At its core, racism manifests in various forms, including overt acts of racial violence, explicit prejudice, and institutionalized policies and practices that disadvantage certain racial groups. However, racism can also be subtle and covert, taking the form of implicit biases, microaggressions, and everyday interactions that reinforce racial stereotypes and inequalities. These covert expressions of racism are often more difficult to recognize and address, yet they have profound implications for the lived experiences and opportunities of marginalized communities (Bonilla-Silva, 2003b).

### **Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of seven chapters, as depicted in Figure 1 below. The first chapter is the introduction, presenting the significance of the study, my story and positionality, the statement of purpose, research questions, and definitions of the terms. The second chapter is a

literature review, first looking into the historical and contemporary contexts of Asian hate and then undertaking a review of research on the topic. The third chapter introduces the theoretical framework, which includes a discussion of Critical Race Theory and AsianCrit. The fourth chapter is a description of the research methodology consisting of three parts: the analytic methods (netnography analysis, thematic analysis, and critical discourse analysis), data collection, and data analysis processes. The fifth chapter is a presentation of the findings, organized around the identified themes. The sixth chapter offers a discussion of the themes formulated from the findings. The final chapter presents a short summary of the study, conclusions, and offers directions for further research.

**Figure 1***Road Map for the Thesis*

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

In this chapter, I first examine major characteristics of contemporary racism, proceed to present ideas about the historical and contemporary contexts of Asian hate, discuss deep-seated stereotypes of Asians, and finally, I review the research on anti-Asian hate. It is important to state from the outset that studies have also shown that the impact of anti-Asian racism extends beyond individual experiences, with significant implications for the community as a whole (Her, 2017; Sue et al., 2009). This situation includes decreased economic opportunities, decreased access to healthcare and education (Demsas & Ramirez, 2021), and a lack of political representation (Alleyne, 2004; Kim, 2017).

### **Characteristics of Contemporary Racism**

Manning Marable (1992) has defined racism as a system of discrimination, manipulation, and dominance aimed at subjugating African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indigenous Peoples, and other ethnic groups, based on their race, culture, behavior, and skin color. Despite the implementation of various measures to prevent racism, North American society still faces significant issues regarding discrimination based on ethnicity, racial inequality, and exploitation. Marable's definitions of racism highlight three crucial aspects: first, the belief of one group in their superiority; second, the possession of power by this group to carry out racist actions and exploit other races; and third, the impact of racism on multiple racial and ethnic groups. These points suggest that racism is linked to institutional power, which has historically been held only by White people

in the United States. In other words, only White people had the power to exploit other races (Solórzano, 1997).

In the past, non-Western peoples were often categorized based on their bodily appearance, with skin color being a significant factor. This categorization based on racial differences has led to the belief in racial superiority, which has been used by White individuals and society to oppress those of other races (Said, 1978).

Although strides have been taken towards achieving racial justice and social equality in recent decades, a significant number of Asians living in North America still feel that they do not belong and are constantly viewed as outsiders (Chen et al., 2020). Moreover, racism has transformed to encompass more inconspicuous variants. When we observe our current society, even though racism still exists, the blatant and outrageous displays of racism are not as frequent as before, and they have been substituted with more indirect forms of discrimination and biases (Her, 2017; Sue et al., 2009). Racism may not necessarily be blatantly obvious, evident, or even intentional. Although incidents of overt racial discrimination as seen in classic cases of racial harassment unfortunately still occur, they are now less frequent. Instead, discrimination has taken on more subtle and complicated forms, as mentioned earlier. Nowadays, members of the majority group are far less likely to engage in overtly hostile actions towards minorities than in previous decades. This shift in expressions of racism is because, when racist incidents do happen, they are now widely condemned rather than being accepted as they were in the past (Jones and Neblett, 2017). This positive change is a result of society's widespread disapproval of racist behavior,

making it no longer socially acceptable to express racism openly. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has led to an increase in anti-Asian racism, with some using it as a justification for discrimination against people of Asian descent.

According to Jones and Neblett (2017) and Kambhampati et al. (2020), there are various forms in which racism is present today. The first one involves intentionally avoiding any significant interaction with individuals from minority groups. The second form consists of applying racial discrimination when there is an opportunity to do so. The third one involves attacking a policy or action instead of criticizing a minority group directly, which allows individuals with racist beliefs to express their attitudes. The fourth form involves making distinctions between groups based on their “values” (Jones & Neblett, 2017). Unfortunately, the negative images and stereotypes that we have inherited from the past continue to have an impact, making it difficult to eliminate them completely. This means that just because we do not tolerate hostile behaviors does not necessarily indicate true equality of opportunity (Kang et al., 2020). For instance, a decrease in racist incidents does not automatically imply that people from minority groups are being treated fairly in the workplace (Kim, 2017).

One of the main perspectives which researchers hold is that “a fear of the other” is a deep reason for racism. The outcome of this fear is that efforts to understand the other take the form of assigning them an isolated and uniform identity (Prieto, 2015). I will elaborate more explicitly upon this in the following paragraphs.

***Xenophobia: “A Fear of the Other”***

According to Bauman (2006), “[f]ear is the name we give to our uncertainty: to our ignorance of the threat and of what is to be done—what can or can’t be—to stop it in its tracks—or to fight it back if stopping it is beyond our power” (p. 2). Prairat (2008) further defines the concept of the “other” and suggests it can be viewed as a potential threat due to the uncertainty and danger associated with it. This threat is because the “other” is perceived as an independent entity with their own agency and ability to exert power over others. The fear of differences, which serve as a constant reminder of the existence of others with whom we share space, has historically led to exclusion, rejection, persecution, domination, racism, and even genocide (Prieto, 2015). Almost every country that has immigration has encountered instances of xenophobia, which is rooted in our natural tendency to be suspicious of people we see as different from us. This instinct helped us survive in ancient times, but nowadays, it can lead to prejudice and discrimination (Bauman, 2006).

Another expression of racism today is White fragility, which refers to the uneasiness that individuals who identify as White may feel in response to conversations about racism (DiAngelo, 2020).

***White Fragility***

According to DiAngelo (2020), White fragility refers to a defensive response that some White people exhibit when confronted with issues of racism or racial inequality. It is characterized by discomfort, defensiveness, or even anger in response to challenges to their beliefs or actions that may be perceived as racist. This fragility can be seen as a way of

maintaining White supremacy and avoiding the discomfort that comes with confronting and dismantling racist beliefs and behaviors (DiAngelo, 2020). It is important to recognize and address White fragility to create more inclusive and equitable spaces for all people. For example, when Robin DiAngelo, the author of the book *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, broached the topic of White privilege during her training sessions, White participants often responded with dismissive, angry, resentful, or defensive attitudes. They commonly expressed certain ideas such as “I cannot be racist because I have a Black friend/family member,” “racism has ended with slavery,” “I have faced hardships in my life, so I don’t possess privilege,” and “I treat everyone equally, so I am not racist” (DiAngelo, 2020).

According to DiAngelo (2020), White fragility is not an inherent trait, but rather a result of the structures and ideology of White supremacy. DiAngelo (2020) argues in her book that due to their privileged position in society, White people cannot fully understand the experience of being discriminated against based on race. Without this personal experience, it can be difficult for White people to comprehend the pervasiveness of racism. DiAngelo (2020) notes that many of her White students have strong emotional reactions when confronted with the harsh realities of racism, likely due to their lack of exposure to it.

White fragility maintains racist norms, making it impossible for White people to truly become anti-racist or allies to the minority community unless they are willing to let go of their privileged worldviews. Unless White people are ready to examine their unconscious biases and work on them, it is impossible to address systemic racism that has become deeply

entrenched in our society. Any attempt by White people to claim they are not racist or exempt from discussions on race only serves to harm and diminish the experiences of minority people with racism, whether intentionally or not (DiAngelo, 2020).

As defined by McConahay (1986), nowadays racism is more subtle and indirect than the traditional form. The key ways it manifests include the notion that (a) people of color no longer face discrimination, despite continuing to demand excessive changes to the status quo, which are perceived as unfair because people of color already possess all necessary rights; and (b) the attention given to people of color by the government and other institutions is undeserved and constitutes “special treatment.” In addition, two other ways are held: (c) the beliefs just mentioned are based on factual evidence, and (d) individuals who hold these beliefs cannot be considered racist, with racism being seen only in its traditional form (Awad et al., 2005).

Racists now do not perceive themselves as biased (Todd et al., 2011). They do not openly express or support racist views and stereotypes, and instead believe in promoting integration between different groups of people. However, they also believe that racial equality has already been achieved and that there is no need for further policies to promote it. They argue that if racism has been eliminated, it is reasonable to maintain the current situation (Todd et al., 2011). According to this perspective, racism is no longer an issue and there is no need to discuss it further. In essence, people of color are not considered a minority group from this perspective, which is also known as racial blindness. Since colorblindness is

a quite common perspective found in contemporary expressions of racism, I will elaborate upon it more explicitly in the following paragraphs.

### ***Racial Colorblindness***

Racial colorblindness refers to the idea that race should be ignored or disregarded in social interactions and decision-making processes (Bonilla-Silva, 2003a). This approach suggests that people should treat everyone equally regardless of their racial background, and that racial distinctions should not play a role in our interactions with others (Matthew, 2017).

While the intentions behind colorblindness may be well-meaning, it can often have negative consequences. By ignoring race, colorblindness fails to acknowledge the systemic and institutional racism that exists in society. This problem can lead to a lack of understanding of the challenges and experiences faced by people of color and can perpetuate the idea that everyone has equal opportunities and experiences regardless of race (Bonilla-Silva, 2003a). Christopher Doob (2019), in his book *Social Inequality and Social Stratification in US Society*, describes “color-blind racism” as the belief held by White individuals that racial privilege is no longer present in society. However, their actions and behavior reinforce the structures and practices that perpetuate racial inequality.

Additionally, colorblindness can lead to the erasure of people’s cultural and racial identities. By not recognizing the importance of race and culture, people can feel as though their identities are not valued or understood. This lack of recognition can create a sense of isolation and contribute to feelings of marginalization and discrimination (Bonilla-Silva, 2003a).

It is important to recognize and acknowledge race and the ways in which it impacts our lives and experiences. Rather than trying to ignore or erase differences, we should strive to embrace and celebrate diversity while also working to dismantle systems of oppression and inequality (Reason & Evans, 2007).

In summary, racial prejudice has not disappeared, it has changed. In the past, it was more common to see clear forms of prejudice (McConahay, 1986), but nowadays they are less visible (Clark, 2010). People of color may find comfort in thinking that racism is disappearing and that we live in a more enlightened era where judging individuals based on their appearance, particularly their skin color, is no longer acceptable (Clark, 2010). However, this is not entirely true, as racism still exists. In today's world, prejudiced beliefs are often expressed in subtle and sophisticated ways, hiding in ways that some may argue that they are not even forms of racism (Her, 2017; Jones et al., 2017).

### ***Micro-Aggression***

To keep up with the growing subtlety and slipperiness of racism, we must enhance and refine our comprehension of it. Micro-aggression refers to subtle, often unintentional acts of discrimination or prejudice that are directed at members of marginalized groups (Taffel, 2020). These acts can take many different forms, such as comments, gestures, or behaviors that convey a negative message about a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, or other aspects of their identity (Taffel, 2020).

Discrimination that is subtle and covert can be regarded as a prevalent form of inequitable treatment experienced by individuals who are racialized. There are numerous

instances of subtle racial discrimination that can be observed, particularly in the workplace (Her, 2017). For instance, a person belonging to a particular racial group might be denied opportunities such as recruitment, training, or promotions. They may also be unfairly subjected to increased performance monitoring or wrongly held responsible for minor errors. Examples of micro-aggressions include things like assuming that a person of color is a service worker rather than a professional, interrupting or talking over a woman in a meeting, making derogatory comments about someone's sexual orientation, or using language that reinforces stereotypes about people with disabilities (Taffel, 2020). Furthermore, disagreements or minor conflicts with colleagues could be magnified when a person of a particular race is involved (Her, 2017). Micro-aggression even happens in educational settings, for example, in classrooms (Piquemal et al., 2019). According to Alleyne (2004), people of color often face oppression and discrimination in the workplace. Typically, it is defined by indirect remarks and biased actions towards an individual's race and cultural background, like choosing to remain silent or disregarding the input of a person of color during a meeting (Alleyne 2004; Her, 2017).

Based on qualitative research, it has been found that negative stereotypes about Asian female workers often lead to their exclusion and marginalization (Kim, 2017). Numerous Asian female workers encounter stereotypes and covert bias because of their gender and ethnicity. According to Kim's research, participants expressed the difficulties of being an Asian woman and the subtle, unconscious prejudices they encountered. Such discrimination is more challenging to deal with because it is not always considered racism. Subtle racial

discrimination can manifest in various other settings, such as housing, where racialized individuals may be rejected as tenants or have unequal access to maintenance and repairs. Kim's research shows how quotidian racism and discrimination arises in facilities such as malls, restaurants, movie theaters, educational institutions, and healthcare services. Modern racists suggest that racial bias is undesirable and that the convictions mentioned do not qualify as racism. These individuals assert that they are against any form of racial prejudice and vehemently deny that they harbor any prejudiced attitudes themselves (Migetz, 2004).

While individual micro-aggressions may seem small or insignificant on their own, they can accumulate over time and contribute to a larger culture of discrimination and exclusion and individual trauma (Taffel, 2020). As such, it is important to be aware of our own biases and the ways in which we may inadvertently perpetuate harmful attitudes and behaviors, and to work to create more inclusive and welcoming environments for all (Taffel, 2020).

### **Contextualizing Anti-Asian Racism**

Anti-Asian racism refers to discrimination and prejudice towards individuals of Asian descent. This type of racism can take various forms, including physical violence, verbal abuse, micro-aggressions, and institutional discrimination. Given that a first crucial step in combating racism is to acknowledge its existence and understand its roots to find solutions (Peng & Dhaliwal, 2022), I will address an overview of the historical and contemporary contexts which fueled anti-Asian racism in North America. Although the historical context of anti-Asian racism has some overlaps with AsianCrit, which is a subtheme of CRT (Critical

Research Theory), I will address them separately because AsianCrit is the theoretical framework which I will present in chapter three.

### *Historical Context*

Canada exploited Chinese workers from its start. The anti-Asian racist violence during the pandemic has exposed how little has changed.

-Chandrima Chakraborty, 2021, p. 1

While the Covid-19 pandemic has stoked the flames of anti-Asian racism, such discrimination is not new; it arises from a largely undiscussed aspect of the early history of Asian immigration (Peng & Dhaliwal, 2022). Anti-Asian racism in America and Canada has a long and complex history that is rooted in colonialism and imperialism (Said, 1978). In the late 1800s and early 1900s, anti-Asian sentiment was fueled by the fear of Chinese immigrants, who were seen as a threat to American workers and culture (Holland, 2007). This led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which restricted Chinese immigration and made it difficult for Chinese Americans to assimilate into American society (Holland, 2007).

In the mid-20th century, anti-Asian sentiment was directed towards Japanese Americans during World War II, when they were forcibly interned in camps due to fears of espionage and sabotage (Chen et al., 2020). This event had long-lasting impacts on the Japanese American community, who faced significant barriers to rebuilding their lives after the war (Madokoro, 2020).

The early years of Chinese immigration to the United States and Canada were saturated with racist discourse surrounding labor (Lee, 2020). Eventually, Chinese workers

were seen as a threat to the White working class. Immigration exclusion laws such as the Page Act (1875) and Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) represent this view.

Canada has mistreated Asians from the beginning, for example, using Chinese laborers as a source of cheap and expendable labor to build the Canadian Pacific Railway (Chen et al., 2020). Their labor was exploited, their bodies consumed and used. Many people were buried under the tracks after they died during construction. Moreover, Canada never intended to allow them to continue to reside or become part of the country. They were always considered temporary (Lee, 2020). This intention resulted in the passage of the Chinese Immigration Act (later known as the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923, also known as the Chinese Exclusion Act) shortly after completion of the railway in 1885 (Lee, 2020).

A poll tax introduced under the Chinese Immigration Act and immigration restrictions under the Chinese Exclusion Act are important examples of racist structures in Canadian legislative history (Frideres, 1999). Through these means, Canada collected a \$23 million poll tax, separated Chinese families for decades, and caused irreparable harm to the development of the Chinese community in Canada (Frideres, 1999).

The oppression was not merely against Chinese people. In 1942, during World War II, the Measures of War Act was enacted, specifically targeting Japanese Canadians (Madokoro, 2020). More than 90 percent of Japanese Canadians were uprooted, displaced, and held unilaterally in internment camps. It is a reminder that Asian acceptance here is conditional, regardless of birthplace, nationality, or immigration status (Vallianatos, 2022). A Japanese Canadian activist movement seeking compensation and accountability eventually achieved

major goals and won concessions from the European Union and the Canadian government (Madokoro, 2020). Japanese Canadians received compensation from the Canadian government through the 1988 Redress Agreement. Each surviving Japanese Canadian who was directly affected by the internment received a payment of \$21,000. This was meant to acknowledge the significant personal losses and hardships experienced during the internment. An additional \$12 million was allocated to fund community and educational projects that support Japanese Canadian culture and history. A portion of the redress settlement was used to establish the Canadian Race Relations Foundation to promote racial harmony and address issues of racism in Canada (Toronto NAJC, 2020). However, the theft of homes, land, boats, and the dreams of Japanese Canadians is a legacy that is still felt, with redress being only a small fraction of the worth of what was stolen from them (Madokoro, 2020).

Canada's racism against immigrants also manifests itself in the instability of care workers from the Philippines and South Asia (Kim, 2017). In some cases, caregivers have spent years waiting for immigration status while trapped in oppressive and exploitative working conditions. Instead, Canada devolves power to employers to manage their time, movement, freedom, and control of their visas (Kim, 2017). The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation of agricultural migrant workers and home care workers. Migrant agricultural workers can die from disease, while care workers are trapped, controlled, and abused by their employers (Kim, 2017).

The history is similar in the United States, where violent deaths culminated from a long history of aggression against Chinese miners, such as during the Chinese Massacre at

Deep Creek in Oregon that took place in 1887 (Nokes, 2021). Two decades later, the 1908 Federation of Labor's pamphlet (Gompers & Gutstadt, 1908) pushed for banning Asian immigration to prevent the immigrant working class, seen as unable to integrate into American standards, from demeaning White labor (Nokes, 2021).

### *Contemporary Context*

In recent years, anti-Asian racism has become more visible due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The virus, which originated in China, led to an increase in anti-Asian sentiment and hate crimes against Asian Americans. This increase has resulted in a significant impact on the mental health and well-being of the Asian American community, who have faced increased incidents of discrimination, harassment, and violence.

In March 2020, former President Donald Trump referred to the virus as the "Chinese Virus," "Wuhan Virus," and "Kung Flu." He stated that it was not racist and was simply accurate, as the virus originated from China (Forgey, 2020, p. 2). However, this language caused a significant rise in racist terms on social media and news outlets, perpetuating fear and anger in a way that reinforces racism and xenophobia (Hswen et al., 2021).

Apart from the use of racist language, some media outlets have perpetuated the notion that Covid-19 was brought about by cultural practices (Irfan et al., 2021). Initial investigations suggested that wet markets, which are crucial for food and income in many Asian nations, may have contributed to the spread of the virus, which only reinforces the notion of Asian cultures as "different" and "primitive." This hesitancy by media platforms to

remove unreliable information and their lack of urgency hindered public health initiatives to control the virus and created a platform for harmful language (Peng & Dhaliwal, 2022).

### *Deep-Seated Stereotypes of Asians*

Asian people are subjected to specific overt and subtle racist tropes and stereotypes at the individual and systemic levels, which lead to their continued social, economic, political, and cultural marginalization, disadvantage, and unequal treatment. These stereotypes include “Yellow Peril man,” “permanent foreigner,” “model minority,” “exotic,” or “mystic” views (Lee, 2021, p. 12). These stereotypes, rooted in a long history of racism and exclusionary laws, often mask the racism faced by those of Asian heritage (Chen et al., 2020).

The “model minority” trope became popular in the 1960s to highlight the great achievements of Asians in terms of socioeconomic status and to explain their “success” in terms of Asian culture (Zhou, 2004). The model minority myth holds that Asian immigrants are a model minority group who are resilient, well-behaved, and able to rise above hardships to achieve the so-called American dream (Chen et al., 2020). The term became popular during the civil rights movement to minimize the role of racism in the ongoing struggles of other races—minorities—namely, Black Americans. By presenting the stereotype that Asian Americans are law-abiding and hardworking, this myth conflated anti-Asian racism with anti-Black racism (Li & Nicholson, 2021). As a result, this false comparison creates a racial divide between Asians and Blacks. The latter did not immigrate, but were brought to the United States against their will and continue to struggle with poverty and a history rooted in slavery (Chow, 2017).

The “Yellow Peril” (also known as “Yellow Terror” and “Yellow Ghost”) is a racially colored metaphor that portrays the people of East and Southeast Asia as an existential threat to the Western world (Odijie, 2018). In recent years, as China’s economic power on the world stage has increased and the US stronghold has weakened, the narrative of the “Yellow Peril” has also strengthened (Li & Nicholson, 2021). The mutual construction of the “Yellow Peril” and model minority discourses represents two sides of the coin that frame the divide between “good” Asian immigrants, who deserve opportunities because of their apparent success under capitalism, and “bad” people, who are perceived as threatening and disposable under the same system (Li & Nicholson, 2021). Except for the deep-rooted stereotypes of “Yellow Peril” and the “Model Minority,” Asian immigrants have been cast as permanent foreigners who do not belong in North America and threaten White values, culture, and success, regardless of their citizenship, length of residence, or generational status (Li & Nicholson, 2021).

Additionally, the concept of “Othering” is not only deeply rooted in America and Canada, it is rooted in other countries too. For instance, “other” groups like Chinese, Jews, Japanese, and Blacks were often ignored during the ascension of mestizos to national symbols in Mexico. The Covid-19 pandemic’s continuous denigration of Chinese people and the growth of anti-Chinese prejudice in Mexico show the legacy of “race” science in that country (Rachel, 2020).

In conclusion, anti-Asian racism is a persistent and pervasive issue that has a long and complex history in North America. Recent events related to the Covid-19 pandemic have

only intensified the discrimination and prejudice faced by Asian immigrants. It is crucial to acknowledge and address anti-Asian racism in order to promote equality and justice for all individuals.

### **Insights From Research**

When searching the research literature on this topic, I focused on finding answers to the following three questions.

1. Where does anti-Asian racism come from?
2. How is anti-Asian racism going?
3. What are the solutions for combating anti-Asian racism?

### ***Where Does Anti-Asian Racism Come From?***

The previous section, “Contextualizing Anti-Asian Racism,” probably answers most of the first question, in that anti-Asian racism has been rooted under the sanction of federal law from time immemorial, in historical events, and in deep-seated stereotypes imposed upon Asian people. However, the root and the cause of this issue is more complicated. Anti-Asian attitudes were linked not only to concerns about the virus, but also to xenophobic behavior and policy preferences. These relationships are unique to Asian American attitudes, are not related to attitudes toward other groups, and they do not hold for a variety of placebo outcomes (Reny & Barreto, 2022).

According to the research of Dhanani and Franz (2021), certain types of public health messages regarding infectious diseases may lead to prejudice and xenophobia, especially when the resource is linked to its country of origin or economic impact. However, campaigns

that focus on the seriousness of the Covid-19 virus are unlikely to cause similar negative attitudes. During past public health crises in the United States, Asian Americans have been unfairly blamed (Misra et al., 2020). This blame has happened during various outbreaks, such as the bubonic plague pandemic in 1990, which caused the quarantine of San Francisco's Chinatown, and the severe acute respiratory syndrome epidemic in 2003, which sparked racist attitudes towards Chinese Americans (Tao et al., 2022). The current Covid-19 pandemic has also resulted in anti-Asian rhetoric and hate crimes across the country (Tao et al., 2022).

The portrayal of Asian Americans as disease carriers is not a new phenomenon. In the 1800s, the portrayal of Chinese immigrants as unclean and disease-ridden contributed to anti-Chinese sentiment and violence, which eventually led to discrimination against the growing population of Chinese and other Asian immigrants (Lee, 2009). Although stereotypes of Asian Americans as non-Americans or indistinguishable from each other still exist today (Sue et al., 2009), the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated these racist beliefs and behaviors towards Asian Americans (Kim & Tummala-Narra, 2022).

As instances of anti-Asian sentiments rise, it is becoming more apparent that social media is also a contributing factor. Reports of such incidents spreading hate, and Asian Americans using social media to combat hate, highlight the significant role that social media plays in perpetuating prejudice against Asians amidst the Covid-19 pandemic (Croucher et al., 2020). According to Rong Ma and Zexin Ma's (2022) perspective, the US media has consistently depicted China as a source of danger and fault. This portrayal through the media

has led to a perception of Chinese people being blamed and seen as a threat in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Exposure to news featuring anti-Asian racism had a negative impact on people's attitudes towards the group based on their portrayal in the news. News stories with an anti-Asian racism theme resulted in increased resistance to immigration. Conversely, less biased news coverage about an Asian country did not affect opinions towards Asians but instead decreased resistance to immigration (Santia et al., 2022).

According to Adibrata and Khairi (2022), the international political climate has become tense in part due to the ongoing debate about who is accountable for the Covid-19 pandemic. China's initially defensive foreign policy approach has become aggressive, and it has even disseminated misleading information about the pandemic's origin. This "Blame Game" is harmful, unproductive, and is hindering efforts to address the global pandemic collaboratively. Moreover, it has resulted in increased discrimination against the Asian community. Political leaders are using various media platforms, particularly social media, to create identities based on assigning blame, which is fueling xenophobic attitudes towards Asians (Adibrata & Khairi, 2022).

In addition, traditional North American sociopolitical myopia essentially reduces racism to a White-Black conflict, making Asian American struggles and experiences almost absent from the discourse (Matias et al., 2022). Anti-Asian racism is also overlooked in discussions of education systems among youth (Lee et al., 2022). Conversations at home and at school among youth often fail to contextualize anti-Asian racism, especially in relation to

the experiences of other oppressed groups. The vast majority of American youth are engaged in ongoing conversations about Black Lives Matter and/or efforts to address anti-Black issues within their families, but are only engaged in limited conversations about anti-Asian racism (Lee et al., 2022).

The recent rise in anti-Asian racism cannot be seen as an isolated case of xenophobia, but rather as a phenomenon that has roots in historical factors that continue to flourish in present-day social and political conditions. The government, both in the United States and globally, has played a role in promoting hate crimes, racism, and xenophobia towards Asians through their use of anti-Asian rhetoric. Therefore, it is essential for political leaders to take proactive measures to combat this issue (Peng & Dhaliwal, 2022; Stop AAPI Hate, 2022).

Social networking sites (SNSs) and other forms of social media are not only online spaces for entertainment, interpersonal connections, and communication (Van Dijck, 2013), but also serve as venues for political discussions and the formation of personal identity (Papacharissi, 2013). To comprehend the rise of prejudiced attitudes towards immigrants and regarding racism, it is crucial to acknowledge social media platforms as socio-technical systems that are playing an increasingly crucial role in shaping social relationships, particularly those related to race and racism (Farkas & Schou, 2018). In addition to commonly mentioned factors like socio-economic circumstances, social upheaval, and unsuccessful integration policies, it is important to recognize the role of digital communication in evaluating the influence of politicians who espouse anti-immigrant and racist views in society (Ekman, 2019).

### *How Is Anti-Asian Racism Going?*

As the Covid-19 pandemic became a heated topic in the US media in March 2020, the then-president implemented and encouraged new anti-Asian xenophobia by using discourses such as “Chinese virus” and “Kung Flu” (Catalano & Wang, 2021). The outbreak of the epidemic has led to a rapid rise in anti-Asian hatred, which has brought on a series of negative effects, such as an increase in hate crimes, and mental health concerns became more prevalent among Asian immigrants. It can be seen from the following literature that social media plays a role as well. In the following paragraphs, I share a discussion of the literature on Anti-Asian Racism using three themes: (1) the surge of hate crime, (2) mental health concerns, and (3) the role of social media.

**The Surge of Hate Crime.** A nationwide online anti-Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Racism Incident Reporting Center, established on 19 March 2020, received 1,135 reports in its first two weeks (Stop AAPI Hate, 2022, October 6). A total of 2,583 reports were received from 19 March to 5 August across the United States, with 40 percent of the reports from Chinese Americans (Stop AAPI Hate, 2022, October 6). These reported cases, despite being staggering in number, are merely the tip of the iceberg, as many victims do not report their experiences due to emotional trauma and/or fear of retaliation. The most common form of reported racial discrimination was verbal harassment and/or name calling, followed by shunning, physical assaults, being coughed at or spat upon, online discrimination, being barred from establishments or modes of public transportation, and vandalism (Stop AAPI Hate, 2020). Study findings, statistical reports, and anecdotal evidence

suggest that women, youth, immigrants, international students, those less educated, those with limited English proficiency, healthcare workers, and Chinese business owners and employees are more likely to be targeted and victimized (Stop AAPI Hate, 2022).

Hate crimes against Asian Americans and Asian Canadians have increased and, until recently, have largely gone unreported and undiscussed in the media and not shown the same level of outrage as the Black Lives Matter movement. Non-profit organizations such as the Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter (2022) reported that a total of 943 reports of racist incidents were registered across the country, representing a 47 percent increase compared to 2020. In addition, Asia Pacific Policy and Planning Council, the Chinese for Affirmative Action, and San Francisco State University's Dr. Russell Jeung of the Asian American Studies Department and others have launched programs like "Stop AAPI Hate," a national website in the United States where victims of hate crimes can file reports with the public body, while the US federal government has remained largely silent. Nearly 11,500 hate incidents were reported to Stop AAPI Hate's reporting center between March 19, 2020, and March 31, 2022 (Stop AAPI Hate, 2022). These statistics indicate that "hate happens everywhere — in both large cities and small towns, in AAPI enclaves and in places where AAPI communities are few and far between" (Stop AAPI Hate, 2022).

**Mental Health Concerns.** A significant amount of research indicates that racial discrimination can have adverse effects on the well-being of stigmatized individuals (Haft et al., 2024). These negative impacts can occur because discrimination causes people to feel excluded or rejected from society, making it more difficult to take control of their lives (Haft

et al., 2024). These findings have been found to be applicable to Asian Americans in the United States and Canada, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic (Pan et al., 2021). Anti-Asian xenophobia had negative impacts on Asian immigrants—their physical safety, mental health, sense of belonging, and political attitudes and behaviors (Haft et al., 2024). Anti-Asian sentiments have made Chinese and East Asians in North America fearful for their own safety (Tessler et al., 2020). Some of them are even trying to hide their identities while going out (Abedel-Baki et al., 2020; Buscher, 2020). Such discrimination can have a significant adverse effect on the mental well-being of those who experience it. Asian Americans and Asian immigrants are around twice as likely as White people to say they have faced Covid-19-related discrimination. This type of discrimination linked to Covid-19 is one reason for the significant impact of the pandemic on the mental health of Asians (Wu et al., 2020).

Encountering and acknowledging discrimination based on one's race, as well as the personal interpretation of such experiences, can have severe and enduring adverse effects on both physical health and mental well-being (Bastos et al., 2010; Priest et al., 2021; Schmitt et al., 2014). In addition, being alert to racism can be a source of stress that can negatively impact a person's health. A survey conducted in June 2020 among Asian Americans revealed that 26% were concerned about being threatened or physically attacked, which could result in anxiety, depression, and other health problems (Li et al., 2020). Discrimination and stigmatization can also discourage individuals from seeking professional or medical help,

increase the risk of psychological distress and burnout among frontline workers, and prevent people from returning to work (Li et al., 2020).

**The Role of Social Media.** Social media is now being used as a platform to either discriminate against Asian Americans or to combat prejudice. The media has been identified as a key factor in promoting discrimination and xenophobia (Croucher et al., 2020). Certain media sources have used deceptive titles, such as “Pandemonium caused by the Chinese virus” or “Children in China advised to stay home” (Wen et al., 2020). Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have further engaged in virtual displays of racism against Asians and Asian Americans. Data gathered between November 1, 2019, and March 22, 2020, from two prominent online web platforms revealed significant increases in racial slurs such as “#WuhanVirus,” “#Kung-Flu,” “#Chinakidsstayhome,” and “#ChingChong.” The term “Chink” was the most popular slur, increasing from about 1,250 Twitter mentions to more than 3,500 mentions during March 2020 alone (Hahm et al., 2021). These types of posts have fueled negative feelings towards Asians, resulting in incidents of violence against them due to concerns about Covid-19 (Pasquetto et al., 2020).

According to a study conducted on 413 social media users between the ages of 16 and 30 who identified themselves as Asians or Asian Australians, the more frequently they engaged in social media related to Covid-19, the higher their chances of facing both personal and indirect racial discrimination on social media. The racial discrimination that they experience on social media leads to anxiety about actual-life racism, which in turn results in negative emotions and reduced life satisfaction (Shin et al., 2023).

Moreover, according to Matamoros-Fernández (2018), social media can change racist dynamics through their policies, algorithms, and corporate decisions. Microaggressions and blatant discrimination are present in platform governance and design. For instance, Snapchat and Instagram have been criticized for promoting “digital Blackface” and lightening the skin of non-White individuals. Facebook has been accused of enabling marketers to exclude users based on their “ethnic affinity.” TikTok has also faced criticism for suspending a viral video that raises awareness of China’s persecution of Uighurs. These examples demonstrate how digital technologies not only manifest oppression on digital platforms but also reshape structural oppression based on race, gender, and sexuality, as well as the intersectional relationship of these identities. Content moderation policies and processes of social media platforms play a crucial role in perpetuating or combating racist discourses and practices. Companies like Facebook and Twitter have been criticized for being permissive with racist content disguised as humor and providing anonymity for harassers. Studying racism and race on social media is a challenging but vital area of research, given the increasing influence of social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, WeChat, and YouTube in shaping how race and racism are experienced. It is crucial to review publications on this topic to understand the current state of the field (Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021).

Finally, it is a good sign to see that social media platforms also deliver messages to help counter prejudice/discrimination against the Asian community. Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook have all implemented measures to assist victims of abuse on their platforms. They have promoted campaigns, such as the #IAmNotAVirus hashtag, on their sites, ensuring they

appear at the top of users' feeds (McGuire, 2021). However, these are far from enough to fundamentally eradicate racial discrimination on social media, nor can they fundamentally help combat anti-Asian racism.

### ***What Are the Solutions for Combating Anti-Asian Racism?***

In the literature, there is much discussion about the discriminatory behavior targeted at Asians across Western countries, and certain solutions are suggested for addressing the problem. For example, in Wei Peng and Satvinder K. Dhaliwal's (2022) commentary, the scholars argue that since the government is at least partially responsible for fostering anti-Asian prejudice, political leaders should take top-down measures to address the problem. In addition, solidarity among Asian immigrants and other minorities should be strengthened (Lee, 2021; Peng & Dhaliwal, 2022). Some scholars and organizations advocate that the history of Asian Canadians should be included in the Canadian educational curriculum to truly eradicate the roots of racial discrimination from education (Peng & Dhaliwal, 2022; Stop AAPI Hate, 2022).

Despite the advocacy and identifying solutions suggested by scholars and some organizations, only a few papers investigate how people counter this racism on social media platforms. Theresa Catalano and Peiwen Wang (2021) investigate how one of the most popular social media platforms in China - Sina Weibo users responded to Trump's communication on the virus. The research, however, is somewhat limited. These researchers analyzed only the issue of Chinese social media users' responses to Trump's naming China in connection to the virus, and the counter-discourse to it is only based on three Weibo feeds.

Furthermore, Catalano and their colleagues did not investigate how people combat anti-Asian racism. This study is trying to look at how people deal with anti-Asian racism on social media.

Considering variables like race, gender, and attitudes towards discrimination, individuals who experienced more frequent incidents of everyday discrimination prior to the pandemic were more likely to engage in reactive bystander actions when confronted with instances of anti-Asian discrimination. Encounters with discrimination in the past may motivate people to participate in bystander actions that combat racism (Lui, 2022).

Advocacy groups can promote social media activism by connecting with Asian Americans who have a strong desire to combat racism and are willing to directly confront those who perpetuate it. Through building relationships with these individuals, these organizations can develop committed agents of social change who actively strive to address racial prejudice, particularly in the online sphere (Tao et al., 2022).

It is crucial to include Asian American history in elementary school education to address implicit bias and discriminatory attitudes towards Asians and combat anti-Asian racism (Peng & Dhaliwal, 2022). While antiracism education can start in early childhood and school environments, it is equally important to sustain these efforts at the family level, where parents and caregivers can act as crucial intermediaries to help children comprehend and respond to such experiences (Peng & Dhaliwal, 2022).

All in all, the solutions suggested in the literature are as follows. First, it is crucial for professionals to speak out against Covid-19-related anti-Asian discrimination. This solution

involves sharing personal experiences and coping strategies, raising awareness both within and beyond the Asian American community, and fostering dialogues and alliances with other racial and ethnic minority groups. Secondly, we must develop effective approaches to combat racial discrimination against Asian immigrants in relation to Covid-19 and disseminate, promote, and model these practices at local, national, and global levels. Thirdly, policies and programs aimed at preventing and eliminating all forms of racial discrimination should be advocated. Local governments, organizations, and communities have to work together towards ending racial discrimination. Lastly, it is essential to include Asian American/Canadian history in K-12 school education to address implicit bias and discriminatory attitudes towards Asians and combat anti-Asian racism.

Edward Said's (1978) seminal work *Orientalism* stands as a cornerstone in the study of Asian-hate racism, with numerous studies harkening back to its insights and critiques. Originally published in 1978, *Orientalism* offers a scathing critique of Western representations of the Middle East and Asia, positing them as rooted in stereotypes, prejudice, and a desire for Western dominance and control. In *Orientalism*, Said defines the concept of racism as the construction of an imagined East by the West, founded upon a series of assumptions and stereotypes regarding the culture, history, and people of the region. This constructed image, according to Said, has historically served to justify colonialism, imperialism, and various forms of hegemony over the East (Said, 1978). Through meticulous analysis of literature, travelogues, and scholarly works, Said illustrates the perpetuation of Orientalism over time. He reveals how these texts depict the East as exotic, mysterious, and

primitive, while simultaneously presenting the West as civilized, rational, and superior (Said, 1978).

Central to Said's (1978) argument is the contention that Orientalism has had profound ramifications for the perception and treatment of Eastern peoples by the West. He contends that it has contributed to the marginalization and oppression of these communities, fostering a sense of otherness that impedes genuine understanding and communication between East and West. Moreover, Said highlights the sexualization of the "other" within Orientalist discourse, where Western representations often exoticize and objectify Eastern cultures and peoples (Said, 1978).

*Orientalism* serves as the foundational text for AsianCrit theory which offers critical insights into the dynamics of power, representation, and discourse between the West and the East. Its enduring influence within postcolonial studies underscores its significance in shaping scholarly discourse and fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in cross-cultural interactions (Said, 1978). In the following chapter, I will elaborate on AsianCrit as the theoretical framework for this inquiry.

### **Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework**

In this section, I delve into the theoretical framework underpinning this study, AsianCrit. AsianCrit emerges as a distinct subfield within Critical Race Theory (CRT), which provides a broader theoretical lens for understanding issues of race and power. To lay the groundwork for discussing AsianCrit, I will begin by offering an overview of CRT, illuminating its key principles and foundational concepts.

#### **Critical Race Theory (CRT)**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) originated in legal studies and has since been applied across various disciplines, including education, sociology, and psychology. CRT emerged as a response to the inadequacies of traditional legal and civil rights approaches in addressing systemic racial inequality in the United States (Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020). According to Solórzano and Pérez Huber (2020), CRT evolved in the post-civil-rights era from critical legal studies in the 1970s, aiming to challenge the notion of a color-blind legal system.

CRT posits that racism is not merely a result of individual prejudice or discrimination but is deeply entrenched within the societal structures of power, politics, and economics (Hsieh & Kim, 2020). It argues that legal systems and institutions are not neutral but are often used to perpetuate and reinforce systems of racial oppression (Delgado et al., 2017). This perspective critiques the traditional view of law as impartial and colorblind, emphasizing instead the role of social and political dynamics, including race, class, and gender, in shaping legal outcomes (Delgado et al., 2017).

The framework of CRT was developed by critical legal scholars to acknowledge and address the role of racism and White supremacy within the American legal system (Hsieh & Kim, 2020). It seeks to center the experiences and perspectives of scholars of color within legal discourse, challenging dominant narratives and highlighting the ways in which race intersects with other aspects of identity and oppression. CRT serves as a tool for analyzing the complex interplay between race, power, and social structures in perpetuating racial inequality in society.

From CRT, various sub-frameworks have emerged to address the specific experiences and challenges faced by marginalized groups. Queer Critical Race Theory (QueerCrit) explores the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexual orientation, focusing on the discrimination experienced by queer individuals of color (Salzano, 1999). Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) examines the legal and social issues confronting Indigenous Peoples, emphasizing the intersection of race, law, and tribal sovereignty (Salzano, 1999). Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) explores how race intersects with disability, analyzing the unique discrimination faced by individuals with intersecting identities (Chávez-Moreno, 2023). Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) investigates the intersection of race and ethnicity within the Latinx community, addressing issues of identity, discrimination, and social justice (Chávez-Moreno, 2023).

Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) is another sub-framework within CRT that examines the intersection of race and ethnicity within the Asian American community, focusing on issues of identity, discrimination, and social justice (Chávez-Moreno, 2023).

AsianCrit provides insight into the unique experiences of Asian Americans and challenges stereotypes within the broader framework of Critical Race Theory.

### **Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit)**

AsianCrit examines how racism affects the personal and institutional lives of Asian Americans in the United States. The literature on AsianCrit in the Canadian context is limited, as it is not frequently applied by Canadian scholars. AsianCrit focuses specifically on the experiences and struggles of Asian Americans within the context of race and ethnicity. While CRT provides a comprehensive lens for understanding systemic racism and its effects on marginalized communities, AsianCrit delves deeper into the unique challenges faced by Asian Americans and examines how race intersects with other aspects of identity and oppression within this community (Lee, 2009).

AsianCrit scholars highlight the historical and contemporary injustices faced by Asian Americans, including exclusionary immigration policies, labor exploitation, and racial profiling (Lee, 2009). By centering the voices and experiences of Asian Americans within critical discourse, AsianCrit contributes to a more nuanced understanding of race and racism in America and advocates for social change and racial justice (Lee, 2009; Saito & Li, 2022).

AsianCrit posits that race and racism significantly influence the experiences of Asian Americans, emphasizing the necessity of examining the historical, cultural, and institutional contexts that shape these encounters (Roulston, 2016). This framework acknowledges the diverse nature of the Asian American population, recognizing that experiences of race and

racism can be influenced by factors such as immigration status, national origin, and socioeconomic background (Roulston, 2016).

Moreover, AsianCrit sheds light on the dual role of Asian Americans as both targets of racism and contributors to the perpetuation of racial hierarchies (Iftikar & Museus, 2018). It underscores the agency of Asian Americans in resisting and challenging dominant ideologies and structures of power while acknowledging the intersections of race with other forms of oppression (Iftikar & Museus, 2018). For instance, Frank H. Wu employs AsianCrit to analyze the intricate racial dynamics faced by Asian Americans, exploring topics such as the model minority stereotype and affirmative action in his book *Yellow* (2002). Similarly, scholars like Glenn Omatsu have enriched discussions within AsianCrit through works such as *Asian American Studies Now*, which delves into issues of identity, activism, and the multifaceted challenges confronting Asian American communities (Omatsu, 2003).

According to key scholars (Omatsu, 2003; Roulston, 2016; Solórzano et al., 2000), AsianCrit encompasses seven key principles that serve as guiding tenets in understanding the experiences of Asian Americans within the broader context of racial dynamics. These seven tenets of AsianCrit provide a comprehensive framework for examining the racialized experiences of Asian Americans, encompassing structural, intersectional, and activist perspectives while advocating for social justice and equity (Solórzano et al., 2000).

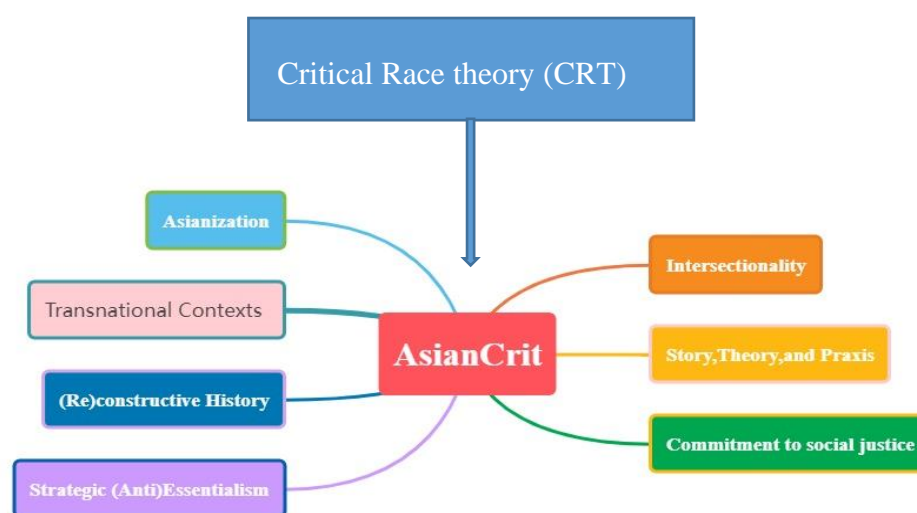
### ***Seven Tenets of AsianCrit***

Of the seven tenets, four are built upon the tenets of CRT, while three combine original CRT with Asian American issues and experiences (Solórzano et al., 2000). As a

result, AsianCrit combines the central tenets of CRT with lived examples of how the Model Minority Myth (MMM) and perpetual foreigner stereotypes are used against Asian Americans. Drawing from scholars such as Derrick Bell (1992), Alan Freeman (1995), Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2012), Betina Hsieh and Kim Jung (2020), and Daniel Solórzano (1997), the seven tenets are excerpted and paraphrased below. For simplicity, I have also represented them in diagram form in Figure 2, adapted from Roulston (2016).

## Figure 2

### *Seven Tenets of AsianCrit*



**Asianization.** Asian Americans and Asian Canadians are typically categorized as model minorities or permanent foreigners. The term “model minority” refers to the perception that Asian Americans and Asian Canadians are seen as particularly successful, law-abiding, and high achieving, especially in education and professional fields. This stereotype suggests that these groups have overcome historical discrimination and adversity to achieve socioeconomic success. However, it is crucial to recognize that the model minority stereotype oversimplifies the experiences of diverse Asian communities, ignores disparities

within these groups, and can contribute to the erasure of the challenges they face. The concept of the “permanent foreigner” reflects the tendency to view individuals from Asian backgrounds as perpetual outsiders, regardless of their actual citizenship or length of residency. Asian Americans and Asian Canadians are perceived as foreigners, regardless of whether they were born in the United States and Canada or have been citizens for generations. This perception can manifest through microaggressions, stereotyping, and the questioning of individuals’ national loyalty based on their appearance or cultural background. The notion of being a “permanent foreigner” can contribute to feelings of alienation and a sense of not fully belonging to the society in which one lives (Roulston, 2016).

**Transnational Contexts.** Transnational contexts of AsianCrit involve examining the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of Asian communities across different countries and regions. This approach highlights the interconnectedness of Asian populations globally and considers the impact of migration, globalization, and cross-cultural interactions on their identities and experiences (Roulston, 2016). By exploring these contexts, AsianCrit seeks to uncover the nuanced ways in which race, ethnicity, and cultural identity are shaped and reshaped across borders, providing a more comprehensive understanding of Asian experiences worldwide (Roulston, 2016). In North America, there is a lack of consideration for the diverse present and past encounters that shape the experiences of Asian Americans. This neglect extends to an oversight of their position in society and an inadequate recognition of how racism affects their lived experiences (Roulston, 2016).

**(Re)constructive History.** Asian American experiences have been omitted or distorted, necessitating redress or reanalysis, and the history of Asian Americans has been told from a White majority perspective. For example, Ronald Takaki (1989) provides a comprehensive historical account that explores the experiences of Asian Americans, taking into consideration the interactions with and perceptions by the White majority in his book *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Roulston, 2016).

**Strategic (Anti)Essentialism.** This is based on the idea that race is a socially constructed phenomenon that is susceptible to being altered by social, political, and economic forces. While ethnic group coalition is extremely beneficial to social justice, data disaggregation is also required. While individuals may try to understand specific ethnic groups in the United States and Canada, it's also important to work together for the benefit of people of Asian descent (referring to Asian Americans and Asian Canadians) as a whole (Roulston, 2016).

**Intersectionality.** Intersectionality is a concept that was developed within feminist theory and later expanded to address various dimensions of identity, including race, class, gender, sexuality, and more. Intersectionality recognizes that individuals hold multiple social identities and that these identities intersect and overlap, influencing their experiences of privilege and oppression. The concept highlights that individuals with intersecting identities may have unique experiences that differ from those with singular or different combinations of identities. For example, the experiences of an Asian woman may differ from those of a White woman or an Asian man. Racism and other oppressive systems (such as heterosexism,

sexism, ableism, etc.) work together to shape and condition the experience of Asian Americans and Asian Canadians (Roulston, 2016).

**Story, Theory, and Praxis.** Story, Theory and Praxis emphasizes the idea that the analysis of Asian descendants' experiences and advocacy for Asian descendants and their communities are inextricably linked to counter stories, theoretical work, and practice. It is the connection between how the marginalized community's stories are told, and how these stories ought to serve as guides and practices for bringing about change (Roulston, 2016).

**Commitment to Social Justice.** AsianCrit underscores the pursuit of social justice and transformative change, advocating for policies and practices that address systemic inequalities and promote equity for Asian Americans and other marginalized communities (Roulston, 2016; Solórzano et al., 2000). This commitment reflects a recognition of the pervasive nature of social, economic, and political challenges faced by Asian populations, stemming from historical and contemporary forms of discrimination, colonialism, imperialism, and racism (Wu, 2002).

AsianCrit scholars emphasize the importance of understanding and confronting these intersecting systems of oppression to achieve meaningful social transformation (Hsieh & Kim, 2020). This involves addressing a wide range of social justice issues, such as poverty, immigration, labor exploitation, gender-based violence, LGBTQ+ rights, environmental justice, and disability rights (Chen & Lin, 2019; Flood, 2019).

AsianCrit blends the essential principles of CRT while also incorporating the ways in which the MMM (Model Minority Myth) and the perpetual foreigner stereotypes are used to

harm Asian immigrants. While CRT has been broadly used in critical racism research for several decades, AsianCrit is only just taking root in contemporary critical research. In this specific study, AsianCrit will be used as the theoretical framework to look at how Asian Americans and Asian Canadians or any Asian immigrants experience anti-Asian racism on social media and how they fight back against the discrimination, aiming to advocate for social justice and human solidarity. In the next chapter, I turn to a discussion of the research methodology I employ in this study.

## **Chapter Four: Research Methodology**

Researchers are developing and refining mixed research methods that incorporate network analysis to deal with the advantages and difficulties of conducting social network studies (Domínguez & Hollstein, 2014). This chapter outlines the integrated approach I employed using Netnography, Qualitative Thematic Analysis (QTA), and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) when investigating anti-Asian hate posts and comments on social media platforms. I will first restate the purpose of my research and the questions guiding the study. I then elaborate on Netnography, Thematic analysis, and CDA respectively, and explain how I combine them in the data collection and data analysis sections.

### **Research Purpose and Questions**

The purpose of this study is to identify solutions and interventions that may address root causes of anti-Asian racism, aligning our efforts with those who oppose all forms of racism. It is believed that while the experiences and historical backgrounds of the people in each of our communities are unique, unity is both possible and necessary in the struggle for equality and racial justice.

To understand the role that social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube play in protesting against “Asian Hate” in North America in the post-pandemic era and to evaluate the engagement level of posts on Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube with the “Stop-Asian-Hate” advocacy movement, and to identify the patterns or themes that emerge from these responses, this study employed qualitative thematic analysis and critical discourse

analysis based on public data collected from social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube), to investigate the following questions:

1. What appears to be the role of Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube in resisting against “Asian Hate” in the post-pandemic era in North America?
2. To what extent do posts on Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube engage with the “Stop-Asian-Hate” advocacy movement, and what patterns or themes emerge in their responses?

### **Netnography Analysis**

Netnography serves as a foundational methodology for this study, enabling the exploration of anti-Asian hate discourse within online communities. Netnography involves the systematic collection and analysis of data from digital platforms to understand social interactions, behaviors, and discourse patterns (Kozinets, 2015). Through Netnography, this study aims to capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and discursive practices of individuals engaged in anti-Asian hate speech on Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

Netnography, as defined in the first chapter, is a qualitative research method that uses online communities and social media platforms as a source for data collection. It involves analyzing text-based data such as blogs, forums, and social media posts to understand the experiences, perspectives, and behaviors of individuals or groups within a particular online community (Kozinets et al., 2014). In this study, netnography serves as a research method used to gather data within a larger methodological framework guiding the whole research process.

Netnography provides a rich source of data that can be used to gain insights into the cultural and social dynamics of online communities. However, it is challenging because online communities are not always representative of the wider population and the data collected may not be entirely reliable.

Also, data overload is a problem that netnographers must deal with because the Internet makes it so easy to obtain so much information. The Internet's anonymity might result in the absence of demographic identifiers, making it difficult to identify and categorize data. A Pandora's box of ethical dilemmas regarding privacy, consent, and acceptable representation can be unlocked by this ostensibly simple, convenient, and anonymous data stream (Kozinets et al., 2014). To address these challenges, I will adopt the recommended procedures outlined by scholars as elucidated in the forthcoming section.

The netnographic process requires a deep understanding of the online community being investigated and its behavior, as well as an ability to analyze large amounts of data. It is a flexible methodology that can be adapted to the specific needs of the research project. Since netnography is a relatively new methodology, analysis methods have so far been established in connection to similar frameworks and have been informed by ethnographic procedures. According to Kozinets et al. (2014), in the netnographic process, five essential ethnographic considerations should be worked on: (a) planning for netnographic sites and entrée; (b) collecting data; (c) performing ethical research; (d) conducting an insightful analysis; and (e) representing the data analysis in a meaningful way.

At the first step of planning netnographic sites and entrée, it is imperative for researchers to be aware of how the layout of various online field sites affects the “types, forms, and structures of online communication” that can be found there (Kozinets, 2010). Bulletin boards, chat rooms, play spaces (where videogames and other games are played), virtual worlds, lists, and web-rings (a largely extinct format now replaced by blogrolls), as well as blogs, wikis, audiovisual sites, social content aggregators, and social networking sites, are on Kozinets’ (2012) list of the main types of netnographic field sites. In this specific study, data were collected from three major social media platforms: Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. This study focused on posts and comments on these three social media platforms.

The data I collected in this study are called archival data by Kozinets (2010), as they are accessible to everyone who can go online. Archival data refers to any information the researcher can find on the Internet that was not produced because of their involvement in the development or prompting of the data (Kozinets et al., 2014). These kinds of information might serve as a “cultural baseline,” giving an overview of community activity prior to the researcher’s entry into that social media environment (Kozinets et al., 2014). Depending on how specialized the issue is, this kind of so-called observational data may be hard to locate, but once located, it is quite easy to acquire and can be gathered for a very minimal cost. In addition to analyzing the text, the way people describe themselves, the images they use to portray themselves, the numerous signs they utilize, and the interplay between these aspects may all be studied (Kozinets et al., 2014). Overall, I followed the following netnographic process when performing my research:

1. Select relevant platforms. I identified three social media platforms, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, where discussions and interactions regarding anti-hate racism are prevalent.
2. Immerse myself in online communities. I observed these communities to observe their dynamics, language use, and prevailing attitudes towards anti-hate racism.
3. Collect data. I gathered data by monitoring conversations, posts, comments, and user interactions related to anti-hate racism. This process involved saving screenshots, recording quotes, and keeping detailed notes.
4. Analyze data. In data analysis, thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis were applied and integrated, which will be explained in the data analysis section.
5. Interpret findings. I interpreted the findings within the context of the research and existing literature on anti-hate racism. I sought to understand the motivations behind different viewpoints and the impact of online discourse on perceptions of racism.
6. Present insights. Finally, I presented the insights gained from the research in a clear and compelling manner. I aimed to highlight key findings and their implications for understanding and addressing anti-hate racism on social media.

In employing netnography, qualitative thematic analysis is an analytical approach that is frequently used in the data analysis process. In the next section, I outline the steps I undertook when analyzing qualitative data.

### **Qualitative Thematic Analysis (QTA)**

Thematic Analysis is integrated into the methodological framework to provide a structured approach for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Qualitative thematic analysis allows for the identification of recurring themes, concepts, and discursive elements related to anti-Asian hate posts across different social media platforms. By employing Thematic Analysis, I sought to uncover underlying discursive patterns and socio-cultural themes prevalent in anti-Asian hate discourse. According to Kozinets and Gambetti (2021), social media research should combine analytical and interpretive methods. Qualitative thematic analysis (QTA) is one of the most widely used methods in media and communication fields. QTA is used in about half of all published research studies on netnography (Saldaña, 2021). QTA allows researchers to generate themes which provide an opportunity for them to interpret and describe a social phenomenon related a specific culture and context (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019).

A common analysis process of thematic analysis is as follows: (a) familiarization; (b) coding; (c) generating themes; (d) reviewing themes; (e) defining and naming themes; and (f) reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2008). In the Thematic Analysis phase of this study, data coding involved the systematic labeling and categorization of text-based data from Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Through iterative coding cycles, categorization of codes, and the identification of themes and patterns, an analytical framework related to anti-Asian hate posts resulted. The process of theme development involves refining and consolidating themes to

capture the diversity and complexity of anti-Asian hate discourse by following the seven tenets of AsianCrit, which is the theoretical framework of this study.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

Critical discourse analysis is employed as a complementary methodology to provide a critical perspective on the underlying power structures, ideologies, and social implications (Fairclough, 1995) embedded within anti-Asian hate speech. CDA enables the examination of discursive strategies, rhetorical devices, and linguistic features used to construct and perpetuate anti-Asian racism on social media platforms.

### ***Fundamentals of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)***

CDA is considered the most authoritative field of research when it comes to studying media/social media discourse (Carvalho, 2008). CDA starts from the premise that worlds are socially constructed by words and language. Theorists involved in CDA are particularly interested in the ways in which discourse contributes to the construction of social identities and groups, the production and dissemination of knowledge, and the reinforcement of dominant ideologies (Carvalho, 2008). CDA can be applied to a wide range of texts, including news articles, political speeches, advertisements, and social media posts. CDA analyzes how language is used to construct meanings and identities, and how discourse practices contribute to the creation and maintenance of social and political power structures.

One of the key goals of CDA is to provide a critical perspective on discourse, rather than simply describing discourse objectively. CDA practitioners are concerned with uncovering ways in which discourse can reproduce existing power relations and serve the

interests of dominant groups, while marginalizing and suppressing the voices of marginalized groups (Hart, 2008). By highlighting these power dynamics, CDA aims to contribute to social change by promoting greater awareness of ways in which language use perpetuates inequality and social injustice (Hart, 2008).

As mentioned above, CDA requires a comprehensive understanding of the complex connections among language, communication, social awareness, authority, society, and culture, and requires the involvement of multiple disciplines. The standards for its sufficiency go beyond simple observation, description, or explanation, as stated by Fairclough in 1995. The ultimate measure of its achievement lies in its ability to effect change, demonstrating its practicality and significance.

CDA applies various methods, including linguistic analysis, discourse analysis, and content analysis, to critically analyze and deconstruct the ways in which language is used to maintain and reinforce power and inequality. It also considers the ways in which marginalized and oppressed groups resist these dominant ideologies and power structures through language (Hart, 2008).

In conclusion, CDA is a powerful methodology for examining the ways in which language is used to maintain and reinforce power and inequality. The methodology recognizes the importance of considering the social, political, and historical context of discourse and emphasizes the ways in which language can play a role in shaping public opinion and reinforcing dominant ideologies.

### *Three-Dimensional Model*

Norman Fairclough's (1995) Three-Dimensional Model is a framework used in critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyze relationships among language, discourse practices, and sociocultural practices. This model provides a holistic approach to studying how language functions within social contexts. The three dimensions are:

**Textual Dimension.** This dimension focuses on the analysis of language at the level of the text itself. It involves examining the linguistic features, structures, and choices within a particular discourse. Researchers analyze the words, phrases, grammar, and rhetorical devices used in the text to understand how language contributes to the construction of meaning and the representation of social actors and events.

**Discourse Practice Dimension.** The discourse practice dimension involves the examination of the processes of producing and consuming texts. It considers the ways in which texts are produced, distributed, and consumed within specific social contexts. This dimension explores the role of institutions, media organizations, and individuals in shaping and disseminating discourse. It also considers how audiences interpret and respond to texts, influencing the circulation of meaning within society.

**Sociocultural Practice Dimension.** The sociocultural practice dimension places discourse in the broader context of social structures, power relations, and cultural norms. It involves analyzing how discourse is shaped by and contributes to sociocultural practices, ideologies, and power dynamics. Researchers consider the historical, political, and cultural

factors that influence the production and reception of discourse. This dimension helps uncover the deeper social meanings embedded in language use.

By incorporating all three dimensions, Fairclough's (1995) model allows researchers to conduct a thorough analysis of the complex interplay between language and society, recognizing that discourse is both shaped by and shapes social practices in multifaceted ways. This holistic approach aligns with the overarching goals of critical discourse analysis, which seeks to uncover and critique the power relations and ideologies embedded in language use.

Fairclough (1995, p. 34) outlines a set of guidelines for critical analysis of media discourse which I use in this thesis:

1. When analyzing media discourse, it is important to give particular focus to how social, cultural, and political changes are reflected in the way the discourse is used.
2. When analyzing media texts, it is necessary to consider both the language used and the structure of the text.
3. The analysis of discourse should consider the power relationships and ideology present.
4. To analyze media texts, it is necessary to conduct both linguistic and inter-textual analyses. It means that researchers should explore inter-textual references within the media discourse and analyze how texts refer to and interact with other texts, contributing to the construction of meaning. Consider how intertextuality influences the interpretation and reception of media

messages.

5. Texts should be viewed as having multiple functions and analyzed accordingly.
6. A thorough linguistic analysis should encompass all aspects of language and its macrostructure.
7. The relationship between media texts and society and culture should be viewed as dialectical. Researchers should situate the media discourse within its broader sociocultural context, examining the historical, political, and cultural factors that influence the production and reception of media texts. The power relations, ideologies, and social structures reflected in the discourse should be considered to analyze how media language contributes to the construction of social meaning.

In the CDA phase, this Three-Dimensional Model was utilized to uncover the underlying ideologies, power dynamics, and socio-cultural contexts shaping anti-Asian hate speech.

**First Dimension: Textual Analysis.** I started by conducting a close textual analysis of the posts and comments, focusing on the language, rhetoric, and discursive features used in the content. I identified key linguistic elements such as vocabulary, syntax, tone, and style to understand how the messages are constructed and conveyed. I looked for patterns or recurring themes in the language used to discuss StopAsianHate, including expressions of solidarity, calls for action, or instances of discrimination and hate speech. I paid attention to the framing

of the issues and the portrayal of different actors involved, such as victims, perpetrators, allies, and institutions.

**Second Dimension: Socio-Cultural Analysis.** I contextualized the textual analysis within broader socio-cultural contexts, considering factors such as historical background, cultural norms, power dynamics, and social structures. I examined how societal attitudes, values, and beliefs influence the content of the posts and comments, shaping perceptions of StopAsianHate and responses to it. I investigated the role of social media platforms as digital spaces where social identities, hierarchies, and conflicts are negotiated and contested. I explored how the socio-cultural context informs the production, dissemination, and reception of messages related to StopAsianHate, including the mobilization of collective action and the formation of online communities.

**Third Dimension: Critical Interpretation.** I engaged in critical interpretation by interrogating the underlying ideologies, power relations, and discursive strategies embedded in the posts and comments. I analyzed ways in which dominant narratives and counter-narratives are constructed, perpetuated, or challenged within the discourse surrounding StopAsianHate. I questioned the assumptions, biases, and agendas that may inform the production and consumption of content on social media, including the role of media representations, political discourse, and cultural stereotypes. Also, I considered the implications of the discourse on StopAsianHate for social justice, equity, and anti-racist activism, examining the potential for transformative change or reinforcing existing inequalities. Considering the broader social, political, and cultural context in which the social

media posts are situated, I explored how they may influence the discourse and shape the meanings conveyed in the posts. This analysis helped me understand how these interactions contribute to the construction of discursive practices and power dynamics.

In conclusion, the integrated methodology of netnography, qualitative thematic analysis, and critical discourse analysis offers a robust framework for investigating anti-Asian hate speech on social media platforms. Through systematic data collection, analysis, and interpretation, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the discursive dynamics surrounding anti-Asian racism and inform efforts to combat hate speech in online environments.

### **Data Collection**

Applying netnographic procedures, public data were collected from major social media platforms—Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube—beginning with the search terms “Asian hate,” “Fight Anti-Asian Hate,” and “Anti-Asian hate.” Then “#StopAsianHate” was included because it appeared frequently. I did not collect any data that was not readily available to the public. If I had to have an account or be a follower to access the data, then it wasn’t included. According to the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*, this means that research ethics was not required (Panel on Research Ethics, 2022).

While collecting data, public engagement was the most important element for filtering the specific postings I wanted. Public engagement on social media, when viewed as a hierarchical construct, can be subdivided into two main categories: high-level engagement,

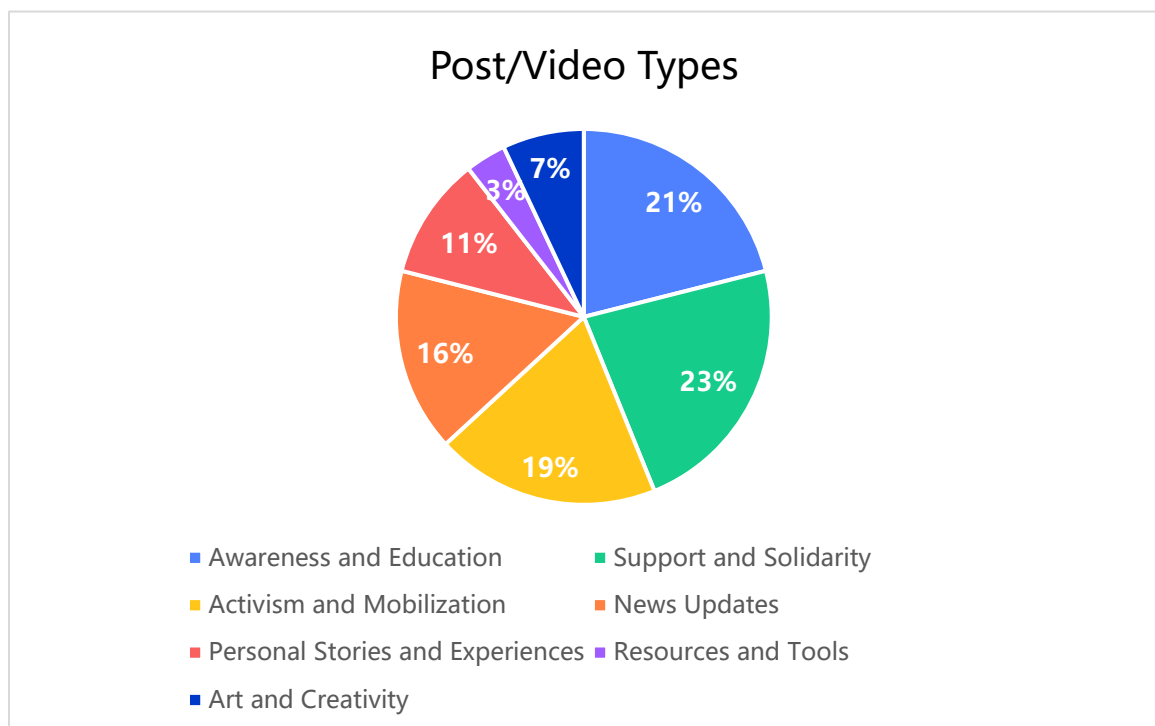
such as retweets, and low-level engagement, like likes. Retweeting serves as a prime example of high-level engagement. This action signifies the retransmission of information and demands more significant cognitive effort from individuals. When someone retweets content, it may imply their endorsement, agreement with the message, and their willingness to share the information within their social media networks. Conversely, “liking” a post usually signifies a lower level of engagement. Liking serves as a simpler means of expressing emotional reactions, involving a symbolic gesture that requires less cognitive effort.

All data were collected between March 16, 2021, and September 15, 2021. This time frame was selected because of the Atlanta shooting on March 16, 2021, which took the lives of six women of Asian descent, stirred considerable outrage and fear in the Asian community, and upsurged the debate around anti-Asian hate. The shooter, identified as 21-year-old Robert Aaron Long, was later apprehended by the police and charged with multiple counts of murder and assault. The shooting has been classified as a hate crime and sparked nationwide protests against anti-Asian violence. The families of the victims and the community have called for action to address the growing trend of hate crimes against Asian Americans (2021 Atlanta spa shootings, 2024). The Atlanta shooting is a tragedy that highlights the need for continued efforts to combat racism and hate against all communities. Therefore, data were collected over six months following the Atlanta shooting, from March 16, 2021, to September 15, 2021, to investigate what role social media plays and how people combat anti-Asian racism online.

During the first phase, when I put the keyword “Stop Asian Hate” and hashtags #StopAsianHate or #StopAAPIHate into searches, massive quantities of posts and videos popped up. I selected the top 20 posts each from Twitter and Instagram, and the top 10 videos from YouTube, to get a general idea of the categories of the posts. In general, the posts and threads can be categorized into seven broad categories, laid out in Figure 3 and explained below.

**Figure 3**

*Post/Video Types*



1. Awareness and Education: Posts aimed at raising awareness about Anti-Asian Hate, educating people about its prevalence, root causes, and impact on Asian communities, and sharing resources for learning more about the issue.

2. **Advocacy and Activism:** Posts advocating for action to address Anti-Asian Hate, including calls for policy changes, demonstrations, petitions, and other forms of activism aimed at combating discrimination and promoting equality.
3. **Support and Solidarity:** Posts expressing support for victims of Anti-Asian Hate, showing solidarity with Asian communities, and sharing messages of empathy, compassion, and encouragement.
4. **News and Updates:** Posts sharing news articles, reports, and updates related to incidents of Anti-Asian Hate, including information about hate crimes, legislation, and community responses.
5. **Personal Stories and Experiences:** Posts featuring personal accounts of experiencing or witnessing Anti-Asian Hate, sharing stories of discrimination, harassment, and violence, and highlighting the lived experiences of individuals and communities affected by racism.
6. **Resources and Tools:** Posts sharing resources, guides, and tools for addressing and responding to Anti-Asian Hate, including information about reporting incidents, seeking support, and advocating for change.
7. **Art and Creativity:** Posts showcasing artistic expressions, such as visual artwork, poetry, music, and performances, aimed at raising awareness, fostering dialogue, and promoting empathy and understanding.

For the second phase, I performed an advanced search on each platform to collect more focused data. On Twitter, I filtered with an advanced search using the hashtags #StopAsianHate or #StopAAPIHate from any accounts in the English language with an engagement of at least 500 replies, 200 likes, and 200 retweets from March 16, 2021, to September 15, 2021, and examined the top three tweets with the most engagement (Table 1a).

**Table 1a**

*Top Three Tweets from Twitter*

Twitter link	Date	Comments	Retweets	Likes
1. <a href="https://twitter.com/AOC/status/1372277970996506629">https://twitter.com/AOC/status/1372277970996506629</a>	17-Mar-21	4.5k	20k	27k
2. <a href="https://twitter.com/AndyKimNJ/status/1375815775408259084">https://twitter.com/AndyKimNJ/status/1375815775408259084</a>	27-Mar-21	2.1k	18k	121k
3. <a href="https://twitter.com/BamBam1A/status/1372794706996858885">https://twitter.com/BamBam1A/status/1372794706996858885</a>	19-Mar-21	2.6k	18k	190k

On Instagram, I looked at #StopAsianHate and #StopAAPIHate and chose the top three posts with the most replies during the same timeframe (Table 1b).

**Table 1b***Top Three Posts on Instagram*

Instagram link	Date	Replies
1. <a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CM7ULdbgqY1/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CM7ULdbgqY1/</a>	27-Mar-21	261
2. <a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CND5206AaOf/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CND5206AaOf/</a>	30-Mar-21	46
3. <a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CNckkWzghUt/?img_index=1">https://www.instagram.com/p/CNckkWzghUt/?img_index=1</a>	09-Apr-21	77

On YouTube, I filtered an advanced search based on the view count and the comment count yielding the top three videos, before looking at the comments (Table 1c). Then I transcribed the videos into texts to get the codes from the texts.

**Table 1c***Top Three Videos on YouTube*

YouTube video link	Date	YouTube views	Comments	Likes
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Ps1D-hESes">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Ps1D-hESes</a>	14-Apr-21	Over 6M	402	1.9k
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pc2pithb6CI&amp;t=13s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pc2pithb6CI&amp;t=13s</a>	18-Mar-21	Over 1.2M	8,639	73k
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qernCwuwGI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qernCwuwGI</a>	22-Mar-21	281k	1,719	24k

The two hashtags #StopAsianHate and #StopAAPIHate were chosen for the three platforms because they represented the most frequently used hashtags related to the event.

Finally, I removed the irrelevant replies and got 7,352 comments which was a massive amount of data for me to analyze. I manually annotated the top 1,150 comments and replies from the three platforms (500 from Twitter, 150 from Instagram, and 500 from YouTube comments) and then categorized the replies into three groups: Supportive, Against, and Neutral, which will be explained in the chapter of findings.

### **Data Analysis**

In my study, qualitative thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis were integrated into the data analysis process. I started by conducting the thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in the collected data. First, I used an open coding approach that included 100% of the data in the first phase. Open coding involves the initial exploration and labeling of data without preconceived categories or theoretical frameworks. The goal is to develop themes directly from the data (Saldaña, 2021). I read all comments sentence by sentence.

Second, I used an inductive approach to allow me to identify themes directly from the data, without imposing preconceived categories. At this step, I used the Descriptive Coding method to make codes as a detailed inventory of the content. Descriptive coding involves summarizing and categorizing data based on its surface-level content. Descriptive coding focuses on examining the explicit details and characteristics of the data without delving into deeper interpretations or connections. It is a foundational step in many qualitative research approaches, providing an initial organization of the data (Saldaña, 2021).

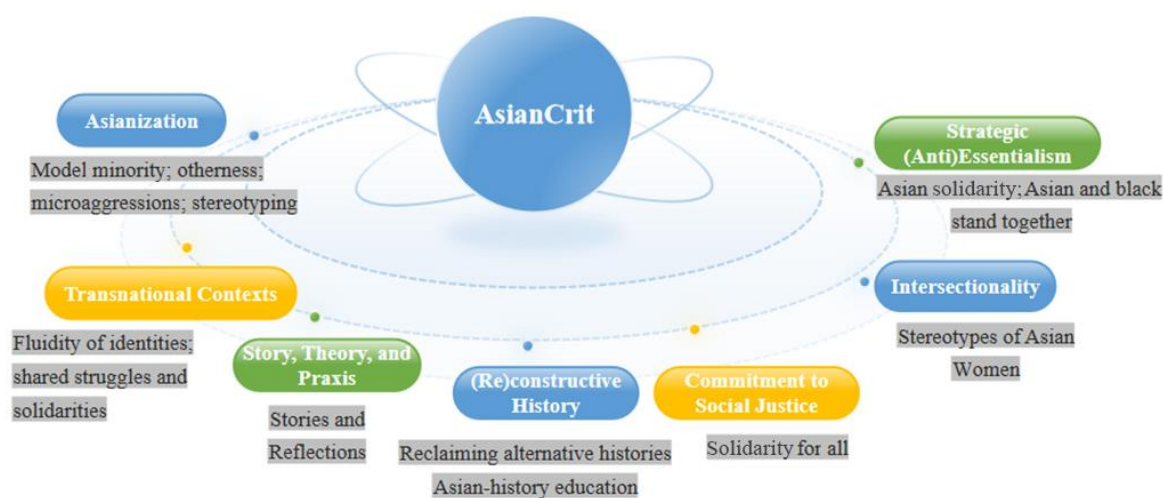
Third, I coded the data systematically, assigning codes to segments of text that represent meaningful units of analysis related to the topic of StopAsianHate. I used the Attribution Coding method for future management and reference (Saldaña, 2021). Attribution coding involves coding data based on attributions or characteristics that are explicitly mentioned or implied in the text. This could include coding for attributes such as age, gender, role, or any other identifiable characteristics (Saldaña, 2021). This method is often used because I am interested in understanding how certain attributes are associated with patterns in the data. Also integrating critical discourse analysis, in this phase, I analyzed the linguistic features of the posts, including language choices, tone, style, and use of symbols or emojis to find the patterns or recurring ideas in the language. Applying a critical lens to identify power relations and ideologies present in the discourse, I considered power relations, and how different groups were represented. In this phase, I also used the Structural Coding method (Saldaña, 2021) to make codes as a “grand tour” overview and then I categorized the codes under the seven tenets of AsianCrit.

During the first three phases, I remained open to all possible codes related to the purpose of the study. In the fourth, I used more focused coding to determine the most frequently occurring codes in the data that eventually contributed to the final themes related to the aims of the study. The codes developed during the previous phase provided an overview of how people perceive and act on the phenomenon of Asian hate. Then, I developed a hierarchy of themes and sub-themes aligned with the seven tenets of AsianCrit.

During the final phase I refined, modified, and merged the initial themes into several major themes by considering the broader social, political, and cultural context in which the social media posts are situated. I analyzed how external factors may influence the discourse and shape the meanings conveyed in the post. I analyzed interactions among users and responses to posts to consider how these interactions contribute to the construction of discursive practices and power dynamics. These overarching themes reflected the key representations of the perceptions, while sub-themes served as supportive elements of the content (Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

*The Themes Categorized Under the AsianCrit Framework*



### Criteria for Ensuring Validity

In this study, I conducted an observational, non-participatory netnography, as defined by Costello et al. (2017), allowing me to observe and interpret user reactions without actively engaging in social media interactions. I focused on data collected from Twitter,

Instagram, and YouTube. To ensure validity and maintain ethical rigor, I applied key criteria designed to guarantee the reliability, accuracy, and authenticity of my findings.

As Kozinets (2015) emphasizes, the data should be a representation of user interactions and behaviors on social media platforms. To achieve this, I implemented verification processes, such as cross-referencing data across platforms and confirming identities through associated profiles. Given the voyeuristic nature of netnography, this approach also facilitated the exploration of sensitive topics like anti-Asian racism, which might be challenging to investigate in traditional settings. Also, I compared data from Twitter with related content on Instagram and YouTube, creating a comprehensive and reliable dataset.

Understanding the digital environment is essential in netnography. This means not only familiarizing oneself with the cultural norms, language, and community dynamics but also immersing oneself in the context to minimize misinterpretation. By doing so, I gained a deeper comprehension of the underlying meanings and implications of the interactions and content, which ultimately strengthened the validity of the analysis.

Transparency and reflexivity in the research process are also crucial for maintaining objectivity. By clearly documenting the methods used for data collection, explaining the rationale behind specific choices, and reflecting on potential biases, I wanted to ensure the study's integrity. By adhering to these criteria, this observational netnography provides a robust and valid analysis of digital communities on social media, offering valuable insights into their behaviors and dynamics.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Methodology**

One significant strength of netnography is that it tends to be less obtrusive. I can observe and collect data from online communities without interfering with participants' natural behavior, leading to more authentic insights. Additionally, netnography is typically less costly than traditional research methods. There is no need for travel, physical materials, or extensive logistical planning, which reduces overall expenses. Furthermore, the process of collecting data online can be less time-consuming. Researchers can gather large amounts of data quickly by accessing digital interactions and archives, which are readily available and often systematically organized.

However, despite these strengths, netnography also presents certain limitations. One notable challenge is that the data analysis process can be more time-consuming. Analyzing vast amounts of digital content, such as forum posts, social media interactions, and online reviews, requires significant effort to sift through and interpret. This phase can involve intricate coding, thematic analysis, and ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings, which can extend the duration of the research process considerably. Therefore, while netnography offers efficiency in data collection, the subsequent analysis stage may demand substantial time and resources. Additionally, data overload is a problem that I as a netnographer must deal with because the Internet makes it so easy to obtain so much information. It posed challenges in ensuring comprehensive coverage of all relevant dimensions. And I am the only one analyzing and interpreting the data, so reliability cannot be established as it can be when data analysts work together. Furthermore, the data analysis

process could benefit from greater systematicity and organization. While efforts were made to analyze the data rigorously, a more structured approach may have facilitated clearer interpretation and synthesis of findings.

### Chapter Five: Findings

In this chapter, I will present the findings in two steps. In the first instance, I offer a general overview of the data from the three platforms (Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube). Secondly, I describe the findings resulting from an analysis of data gathered from the three platforms, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, respectively.

During the first phase of coding, I put the keyword “Stop Asian Hate” and hashtags #StopAsianHate or #StopAAPIHate into a search, and numerous posts and videos popped up. I selected the top 20 posts each from Twitter and Instagram, and the top 10 videos from YouTube, to get a general idea of the posts.

While undertaking the second phase of coding, I did an advanced search on each platform to get more focused data. On Twitter, I filtered using an advanced search using hashtags #StopAsianHate or #StopAAPIHate from any accounts in the English language with an engagement of at least 500 replies, 200 likes, and 200 retweets from March 16, 2021, to September 15, 2021, to filter the top three tweets with the most engagement, yielding the top three posts. On Instagram, I looked at #StopAsianHate and #StopAAPIHate and chose the top three posts with the most replies during the same timeframe. On YouTube, I conducted a filtered advanced search based on the view count and the comment count yielding the top three videos and the comments. Then I transcribed the videos into texts to get the codes from the texts. The two hashtags #StopAsianHate and #StopAAPIHate were chosen for the three platforms because they represented the most frequently used hashtags related to the event (Lyu et al., 2023).

Finally, I removed irrelevant replies and got 7,352 comments, which resulted in a very large data set for me to analyze. I manually annotated the top 1,150 comments and replies from the three platforms (500 from Twitter, 150 from Instagram, and 500 from YouTube comments) and categorized the replies into three groups: Supportive, Against, and Neutral. Instagram contained fewer replies than the other two platforms, mainly because this platform emphasizes photo and video sharing. Retweets and likes are obviously supportive, so I did not count them in the table (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Reply Types and Frequencies*

<b>Type of Replies</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>% of the Total</b>
Supportive	744	64.70%
Against	334	29.04%
Neutral	72	6.26%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,150</b>	<b>100%</b>

To categorize the replies, I hand-labeled the comments into the following three broad categories, as I define below.

**Supportive.** This group of replies falls into one of two categories: (a) they either explicitly or implicitly point out, denounce, critique, disapprove of, oppose, or confront racism, hatred, or violence directed at an Asian entity; or (b) they either directly or indirectly

endorse, express unity with, support or protect an Asian entity. Examples of replies in this category are as follows:

Sending love and support to your son, your family, and all Asian Americans. Let's love and support all people, all living beings (March 27, 2021).

Keep living, keep existing! Forget what other people think. Inequality is everywhere.

Not everyone thinks the same. Show your son great Asian figures. Teach him about ignorant people. I love the Asian community. YOU ROCK!!! (March 27, 2021, from Twitter replies).

**Against.** This group refers to the replies which express antagonistic speech or ignorant speech that is directed towards an Asian entity (individual person, organization, or country), and “others” the Asian outgroup through intentional opposition or hostility.

Examples I considered falling into this group are:

Need update, Chinese virus boy sound better, or covination boy (March 29, 2021, from Twitter replies).

If you want equality stop complaining about in-equality and ask whoever to stop putting a label on people. Do not place their Heritage in their nationality. If your American that's it. Stop the preface of their perceived heritage (May 2, 2021, from Twitter replies).

You guys caused covid 19 tho (March 31, 2021, from Instagram replies).

Go eat a dog (May 12, 2021, from Instagram replies).

**Neutral.** These replies are not expressing hatred or engaging in counterarguments or supports, but they are connected to the topic of the hashtags of #StopAsianHate and #StopAAPIHate. An example of this category is as below:

I don't hate y'all just get mad why one of y'all beats me in a math game (April 1, 2021).

The Perpetrator is arrested and a homeless man. I made it very clear all random attackers are mental [mentally] ill for a FACT (April 3, 2021, from Instagram replies).

Then I coded these 744 supportive replies and posts to seek patterns on how these replies and posts tended to respond to Stop Asian Hate advocacy. These comments and replies fell into four categories of codes:

**1. Solidarity and Support.** Many users on all three platforms expressed solidarity with the "Stop Asian Hate" movement by sharing supportive messages, graphics, and hashtags. Here is an example from a Black man's reply:

As a black man, with young children who face some of the challenges you so eloquently describe, I stand with you and all people who face prejudice for colour, gender, religion, or other bias. It aches my heart that Donald Trump threw the flame and got away. #StopAsianHate. (April 5, 2021, from Twitter replies)

The speaker, a Black man, expresses empathy and solidarity with the challenges faced by the Asian community. This theme emphasizes the recognition of shared experiences and the understanding of prejudice based on color, gender, religion, or other biases. He acknowledges the challenges faced by his own young children and others as eloquently described. This

theme underscores a recognition of the specific difficulties and discrimination experienced by the Asian community. The speaker explicitly states their support for anti-racism efforts, expressing a commitment to standing with all individuals facing prejudice. This theme highlights a call to action in response to the advocacy against racism. The use of the term “aches my heart” conveys a deep emotional response to the injustice and discrimination faced by the Asian community. It suggests a heartfelt reaction that transcends intellectual understanding. The statement points out Donald Trump’s role in fueling racial tensions, expressing a critical stance on his actions. It also highlights a recognition of influential figures’ responsibilities in addressing or exacerbating racial issues. The inclusion of the hashtag #StopAsianHate serves as a direct call to action. It indicates a desire to contribute to a movement aimed at ending racism against the Asian community. The statement expresses discontent that Donald Trump “got away,” suggesting a condemnation of the lack of accountability for actions that contributed to the perpetuation of racism. This theme emphasizes the need for accountability and justice.

This statement reveals a response that is characterized by empathy, solidarity, and a strong commitment to anti-racism advocacy. The speaker acknowledges shared experiences, expresses emotional distress at injustices, and actively supports the call to stop Asian hate. The critique of Donald Trump’s role and the use of inclusive language underscore a broader commitment to addressing prejudice across various dimensions.

**2. Awareness-Building.** All three platforms were used to share educational content about the history of anti-Asian racism, stereotypes, and the broader context of the issue. On

Instagram, in particular, people shared posts promoting Asian and Pacific Islander (API) culture, art, and history. These posts show people how to counter stereotypes and celebrate diversity. Also, users shared posts about influential Asian figures and cultural traditions to foster understanding and appreciation.

A typical example from YouTube videos is “The dark history of the Chinese Exclusion Act - Robert Chang.” This video is directed by Mohammad Babakoochi and Yijia Cao. It delves into the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which suspended Chinese immigration to the US and blocked Chinese immigrants from citizenship. In 1882, the United States Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first federal law that restricted immigration based explicitly on nationality. In practice, the Act banned entry to all ethnically Chinese immigrants besides diplomats and prohibited existing immigrants from obtaining citizenship. Robert Chang details the lasting impact the Act had on immigrant rights and freedoms.

Here is an excerpt from the video transcription:

After 12 years living in California, Chinese citizen Chen Ping was ready for a visit home. He procured the necessary documents for his departure and return journey and set sail for China, where he spent the next year reconnecting with friends and family. But when he returned to San Francisco on October 8th, 1888, Ping and his fellow immigrant passengers were forbidden to disembark. Just days earlier, President Grover Cleveland had signed the Scott Act, which invalidated the legal documents allowing their re-entry to the United States. (Chang, 2021)

The video states the story about Chen Ping, a Chinese citizen residing in California, who faced upheaval upon returning from a visit to China in 1888 due to the newly enacted Scott Act, signed by President Grover Cleveland. This legislation invalidated legal documents allowing Chinese immigrants, like Ping, to re-enter the United States, threatening to separate families and jeopardize their homes and livelihoods. Ping contested the ruling, sparking a legal battle that reached the Supreme Court. Despite arguing that he had followed proper procedures, the court ruled against him, resulting in his deportation, and leaving thousands of Chinese immigrants stranded. The court's decision, based on the national security justification provided by Congress for the Scott Act, set a precedent enabling subsequent discriminatory immigration policies throughout the 20th century, targeting various ethnic groups. While the Chinese Exclusion Act was eventually repealed in 1943, the impact of Ping's case lingers, influencing the government's ability to deploy sweeping immigration policies and affecting immigrant rights and liberties.

The story of Chen Ping serves as a historical narrative that raises awareness of the enduring impact of anti-Asian racism and discriminatory immigration policies in the United States. By highlighting the injustices faced by Chinese immigrants, particularly Ping, during the late 19th century, the narrative sheds light on systemic challenges and prejudices that persist in society. The Scott Act's invalidation of legal documents, leading to the deportation of Ping and leaving thousands stranded, serves as a poignant example of the discriminatory measures that targeted the Chinese community. The court's decision, grounded in national security justifications, underscores the broader issue of how such justifications have been

historically exploited to enact discriminatory policies. This historical account encourages reflection on the lasting consequences of anti-Asian racism, fostering awareness about the need to combat systemic discrimination, protect immigrant rights, and advocate for inclusive and equitable policies. The story serves as a call to action, urging individuals to understand the historical roots of anti-Asian sentiment and work towards dismantling discriminatory practices in contemporary society.

**3. Activism and Mobilization.** Social media posts were instrumental in announcing and promoting protests, rallies, and demonstrations taking place in various cities. Users shared details and encouraged participation. For example:

Some gatherings/events/vigils happening TODAY 3/20 across the USA for our AAPI community. We did our best to include as many as we could. Share these with your friends/family in your respective area if you see an event near you. Let's continue to stop Asian hate together! (March 20, 2021, from Instagram posts)

The statement serves to promote awareness of gatherings, events, and vigils happening for the AAPI community across the USA. It emphasizes the importance of informing people about these events and encouraging participation. The statement encourages sharing information about events with friends and family, emphasizing a collective effort in supporting the AAPI community. It underscores the importance of fostering a sense of community and solidarity. The use of "Let's continue to stop Asian hate together!" emphasizes the code of collaborative action. This assertion suggests a call for collective efforts in combating Asian hate, reinforcing the idea that change is achieved through unity.

The statement encourages individuals to share information with their friends and family, promoting a proactive approach to combating Asian hate. It suggests that empowerment lies in taking active steps and spreading awareness. The mention of the specific date “TODAY 3/20” adds a sense of urgency, indicating the time sensitivity of the events. It underscores the immediate nature of the advocacy, urging people to act promptly. The overarching theme revolves around advocating for the cessation of Asian hate.

In general, this statement reveals a response focused on promoting awareness, community support, and collaborative action to stop Asian hate. The themes of inclusivity, empowerment, time sensitivity, and advocacy underscore the urgency and collective effort required to address and eradicate racism against the AAPI community.

**4. Reflection.** Some individuals used social media to reflect on their own biases and experiences, sparking discussions about the need for awareness in combating hate. Here is an example from the perspective of a Black woman:

As a Black woman, whenever I saw this, I’d skip it, rolling my eyes, thinking “Please, they haven’t gone through HALF of what WE’VE gone through.” And I apologize for thinking that discrimination should never be compared by race, it needs to stop, for everyone (June 1,2021, from YouTube comments).

This statement reflects an initial code of skepticism from the perspective of a Black woman. They speak at their tendency to dismiss or skip content related to “Stop Asian Racism” with an eye-rolling reaction. Then it includes a self-aware acknowledgment of bias with the phrase “And I apologize for thinking that.” This second theme indicates a

willingness to reflect on and take responsibility for initial reactions. The thought that “they haven’t gone through HALF of what WE’VE gone through,” reflects a theme of comparative suffering. This suggests a perception that discrimination experiences are being compared or ranked. Then it concludes with a clear stance against comparing discrimination experiences by race, emphasizing that discrimination “should never be compared by race.” It advocates for an equal and inclusive approach to addressing discrimination. It ends with a call for discrimination to stop “for everyone.” This theme indicates a broader, universal perspective, emphasizing the need for collective efforts to combat discrimination without ranking or comparing experiences.

While there is an initial skepticism, the acknowledgment that discrimination should not be compared suggests a theme of recognizing a shared struggle. This theme implies an understanding that diverse communities face distinct but interconnected challenges. The apology in the statement signals a theme of personal growth and reflection which suggests an openness to reconsidering initial reactions and an acknowledgment of the need for understanding and empathy. The mention of being a “Black woman” adds an intersectional perspective to the analysis. This perspective indicates that the speaker’s response encompasses both race and gender, emphasizing the complexity of experiences. While there is initial skepticism and a recognition of comparative suffering, the statement ultimately advocates for an inclusive, equal approach to addressing discrimination. Themes of acknowledgment, growth, intersectionality, and inclusivity contribute to a nuanced understanding of the speaker’s perspective on discrimination.

Let us see another example from a White person's perspective:

I grew up in a predominantly white town where the only other ethnicity were Mexicans, and we were taught to fear them. All the history we were taught was totally whitewashed, and I was implicitly and explicitly taught to be afraid of, or at least suspicious of, anybody who didn't look like me. Then I went to college and began to understand that everything I had been taught and had learned was wrong. I'm 35 now, and I'm still trying to learn about what people who don't look like me have gone through and I'm still working on getting rid of my biases and trying to be actively anti-racist. Honestly the more I learn the angrier I get that I wasn't taught the real history of our country and the real history of people who don't look like me. I feel anger and despair for those who have suffered, and the battles still going on today. I'm not trying to make this about me, but I know a lot of people who grew up the way that I did and sometimes sharing your experiences can help make a difference for someone else. If the history of racism, and how racism is still rampant today doesn't make you angry, then you aren't paying attention. (May 19, 2021, from YouTube comments)

The speaker describes growing up in a predominantly White town where they were taught fear and suspicion about those of different ethnicities, specifically Mexicans. This theme reveals an early exposure to racial bias and discriminatory teachings. The speaker acknowledges the whitewashed history they were taught and explicitly rejects those teachings. The comments reflect a critical awareness of biased education and a commitment to unlearning misconceptions. The statement highlights the transformative impact of college,

where the speaker began to understand the inaccuracies in their education. This theme suggests that the influence of higher education which seems to have played a crucial role in challenging and reshaping the speaker's perspectives. The speaker, now 35 years old, expresses a commitment to ongoing learning about the experiences of people who don't look like them. This statement emphasizes the continuous process of unlearning biases and actively engaging in anti-racist efforts. The speaker shares feelings of anger and despair upon discovering the real history of their country and the experiences of others. This comment suggests that these emotions serve as motivators for anti-racist actions. The speaker expresses empathy and despair for those who have suffered and acknowledges the ongoing battles against racism. This theme indicates a sense of solidarity with marginalized communities and a desire to contribute to positive change. The speaker's journey from early racial bias to active anti-racism reflects a theme of personal growth and transformation. This theme underscores the speaker's commitment to evolving perspectives and dismantling biases. The statement concludes with a powerful call to attention, asserting that those who are not angry about the history of racism and its persistence today are not paying attention. This theme emphasizes the urgency of active engagement in combating racism.

Applying qualitative thematic analysis, this statement reveals a transformative journey from early racial biases to active anti-racism. The speaker's story emphasizes the importance of education, continuous learning, emotional engagement, and collective action to address racial injustices and create positive change.

The findings reveal that the responses observed on social media platforms were diverse, ranging from heartfelt expressions of support to critical discussions about systemic issues, while supportive posts outweigh the against and neutral posts. Looking at the role of the posts and interactions on these three platforms using thematic analysis, five main positive themes and three negative themes were identified during the analysis. The five positive roles that posts can play are: (a) amplification of voices, (b) real-time updates, (c) hashtag campaigns, (d) awareness-raising, and (e) community building. And the three themes representing the negative impacts of posts are: (a) misinformation and disinformation, (b) lack of accountability, and (c) polarization (see Table 3; “*f*” stands for frequency of posts and comments).

**Table 3***Roles of Social Media by Theme and Sample Quotes*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Twitter <i>f</i></b>	<b>Instagram <i>f</i></b>	<b>YouTube <i>f</i></b>	<b>Sample</b>
Amplification of Voices	42	18	123	“COORDINATED RALLIES HAPPENING NATIONWIDE! Mark your calendars! The Solidarity Against Asian Hate Boston rally will be on MONDAY, May 31 at 4 pm ET at Boston Common by the Parkman Bandstand...ALL are welcome, and we invite everyone to show up in mutual respect, love, and solidarity. Please tag, share, and repost.....” (May19, 2021, from Instagram)
Real-Time Updates	57	9	23	Police released video of the suspect wanted for spitting on the 26YO victim and making anti-Asian statements. @NYPDHateCrimes is investigating @NYPDAsianHCTF #StopAsianHate (July28, 2021, from Twitter post)
Hashtag Campaigns	13	35	3	#IAmNotAVirus, #HateIsAVirus, #WashTheHate, #RacismIsAVirus, #BeCool2Asians, #IAmNotCovid19, #StopAsianHate and #AAPI
Awareness-Raising	211	61	237	“In honor of Women’s History Month and the lives of the 6 Asian women murdered in Atlanta, Georgia on March 16th, 2021, we wanted to take a deep dive into the stereotypes targeting Asian women and the impact that they have. Beyond perpetuating inaccurate images of Asian women, these stereotypes can sometimes lead to horrendous acts, like the ones that occurred in Georgia.” (April 1, 2021, from Instagram)

*(table continues)*

Theme	Twitter <i>f</i>	Instagram <i>f</i>	YouTube <i>f</i>	Sample
Community Building	86	19	38	“Combatting anti-Asian hate & racism through information, advocacy, action” Run by Ryan, Manny, Janet jemi.app/stopasianhate”
Misinformation and Disinformation	53	13	26	“Fake news again” (April 5, 2021, from Twitter replies) “Why do I feel like this is all paid govt programming to make us turn on each other...blm, asian hate crimes, red vs blue, now this. People are too lazy to do this kinda stuff nowadays.” (April 5, 2021, from Twitter replies)
Lack of Accountability	16	21	17	“Disheartened to see the rise in anti-Asian racism on social media. Numerous hate-filled comments and posts targeting Asians go unchecked. We need platforms to take stronger measures against hate speech. #Stop Asian Hate” (March 23, 2021, from Twitter)
Polarization	22	14	28	“Do we forget that for the past four years we had an administration that trumpeted white supremacy along with anti-Blackness and anti-Asian sentiment? ... When the people of color are at each other’s throat, only white supremacy wins.” (May 12, 2021, from Instagram replies)
Total number	500	150	500	

The findings provide evidence that social media played a crucial role in amplifying the voices of those advocating against Asian hate, fostering community, and raising awareness about the issue. However, by using critical discourse analysis, results also showcased the challenges of addressing such complex and deeply rooted societal problems. Other overt sub-themes were fiercely discussed in the replies and comments on social media: deep-rooted White supremacy, micro-aggression, assimilation or erasure, manipulation of Black and Asian conflicts, and the need for Asian history education. Next, I present how themes were identified from the data after applying critical discourse analysis.

### **Theme 1: The Manipulation of Black and Asian Conflicts**

By analyzing the following two replies on Instagram, the first theme related to the manipulation of Black and Asian conflicts is presented.

Look at this black and Asian solidarity BS. This page is done by a black person always trying to get Asian Americans as allies against white people. In reality they do most of the attacking. (May12, 2021, from Instagram replies)

The phrase “black and Asian solidarity BS” suggests a dismissive attitude towards the concept of solidarity between Black and Asian communities. The term “BS” (bullshit) implies a lack of belief or value in the idea of unity between these two racial groups. The assertion “[i]n reality they do most of the attacking” implies a reversal of the narrative, suggesting that contrary to the discourse of solidarity, one group is actually the aggressor. The statement “done by a black person always trying to get Asian Americans as allies against white people” implies a suspicion of manipulation. It suggests the idea that a Black person is

intentionally trying to create an alliance between Black and Asian Americans against White people. The use of the word “always” suggests a perceived pattern or agenda.

Do we forget that for the past four years we had an administration that trumpeted white supremacy along with anti-Blackness and anti-Asian sentiment? ... When the people of color are at each other’s throat, only white supremacy wins. (May 12, 2021, from Instagram replies)

The mention of the past administration “that trumpeted white supremacy along with anti-Blackness and anti-Asian sentiment” frames the discussion within a political context. The statement attributes White supremacy and anti-Blackness/anti-Asian sentiment to the previous administration, suggesting a critique of its policies and practices. The statement “[w]hen the people of color are at each other’s throat, only white supremacy wins” highlights a concern about the consequences of intra-racial conflict. This implies that division among people of color serves the interests of White supremacy.

## **Theme 2: Deep-Rooted White Supremacy**

White supremacy was an overt theme which was frequently discussed in the replies and comment sections on the three platforms.

White supremacy has a core that needs to be broken down and understood in every aspect. Imperialism makes me want to look at its historical core and how when a few are given power over many, inequality begins. (May 15, 2021, from Twitter replies)

The statement “White supremacy has a core that needs to be broken down and understood in every aspect” reflects a critical perspective. The use of the term “core” suggests an

acknowledgment that White supremacy is not just a surface-level issue but has deep-seated roots that need exploration. The connection between White supremacy and imperialism is highlighted. The phrase “[i]mperialism makes me want to look at its historical core” indicates a desire to delve into the historical roots of imperialism to better understand its impact on the development and perpetuation of White supremacy. This idea suggests an awareness of interconnections between different forms of systemic oppression. The statement “when a few are given power over many, inequality begins” introduces a critical perspective on power dynamics. It implies that the concentration of power in the hands of a few is a catalyst for inequality. The use of “given power” suggests a deliberate allocation of power, raising questions about who holds this power and how it is distributed. The call to examine the historical core of imperialism implies an understanding that historical contexts shape contemporary power structures. This idea aligns with a critical approach that seeks to unpack the historical processes contributing to present-day inequalities.

### **Theme 3: Micro-Aggression and Otherness**

Asians experienced microaggressions, such as being asked “Where are you really from?” or being complimented for speaking English well, which can make them feel like perpetual outsiders.

No. ‘Where are you from?’ is a question I get routinely. I was born in China. First generation American, and when I reply as such, I get ‘No, where are you **ORIGINALLY** from?’” And then, I reply with ‘China.’ Now, I’m seen as argumentative.

All my life people see my name and ask, “where are you from?” I say I am from Maryland, U.S. Then they say “no, where are you \*really\* from?” And I have to explain that my parents are immigrants from China, but I am American, and I am from here. However, I am very proud of my roots. (May 12, 2021, from Twitter replies)

The initial rejection of the respondent's answer, “[n]o, where are you **ORIGINALLY** from?” reveals power dynamics in the discourse, where the authority to define the respondent's identity is questioned. The use of “originally” implies an assumption that the person cannot be authentically from the mentioned location. The insistence on a specific answer, coupled with the subsequent perception of the respondent as “argumentative” when asserting their origin, points to cultural hegemony and the othering of individuals who do not fit stereotypical expectations. The implication is that the respondent's identity must conform to certain norms. The repetitive questioning of “where are you really from?” indicates subtle forms of racism and microaggression, suggesting that the respondent's stated identity is not accepted at face value. The use of “really” implies a skepticism that challenges the authenticity of the respondent's American identity.

The question “where are you really from?” implies an exoticization of the respondent's identity, as if the initial response of being from Maryland, US, is insufficient or misleading. This question reflects stereotypical expectations about individuals with non-Western heritages. The need to explain the dual identity of being both American and having immigrant parents reflects a continuous negotiation of identity. The respondent resists

external attempts to define their identity, emphasizing their American-ness while acknowledging their roots. The emotional undertone in the statement suggests a toll on the individual, as they consistently navigate these inquiries. However, the concluding statement about being “very proud of my roots” indicates a form of resilience and pride in their heritage despite the challenges. The discourse touches on the intersectionality of identity, addressing not only national identity but also cultural roots. The respondent’s identity is multifaceted, challenging simplistic categorizations.

#### **Theme 4: Assimilation by Erasure**

I identified several codes from the replies which I synthesized as “assimilation” and “erasure,” which is a by-product of White supremacy.

That’s actually part of the problem, respectfully. As an Asian American, it’s easy to hear “Lose your Asian identity - you’re American!” But you lose sense of belonging because you don’t look American, & now you don’t know squat about your Asian culture. & now you’re lost. (May 11, 2021, from Twitter replies)

The statement challenges the notion that losing one’s Asian identity is a solution, framing it as a problem. This statement suggests a critical deconstruction of the oversimplified expectation that assimilation into an American identity should mean discarding one’s Asian identity. The dichotomy presented, “Lose your Asian identity - you're American!” highlights a perceived tension between being Asian and being American. The use of exclamation points underscores the assertiveness of this expectation, emphasizing the need to conform to a singular identity. The assertion that losing one’s Asian identity results in a loss of belonging

introduces a complex understanding of belonging. The statement challenges the assumption that adopting an American identity automatically leads to a sense of belonging, especially when physical appearance may not align with societal expectations. The phrase “because you don’t look American” suggests a critical examination of appearance norms associated with being American. This implies that the speaker may have a narrow, stereotypical image of what it means to “look American,” contributing to challenges for those whose appearances deviate from this norm. The statement “now you don’t know squat about your Asian culture” points to the consequences of this perceived loss of identity. The speaker critiques the assumption that adopting a singular American identity necessarily leads to a disconnection from one’s cultural heritage. The use of “now you’re lost” adds an emotional dimension, emphasizing the personal and psychological impact of this identity struggle. The term “lost” suggests a state of confusion, alienation, or disorientation. The mention of being Asian American highlights the intersectionality of identity. The statement advocates for a more nuanced understanding that considers both aspects of the individual’s cultural background.

### **Theme 5: Need for Asian History Education**

In the posts and replies, education about Asian history was urged frequently by the social media users.

I think education is critical, because, despite the fact that Asian Americans are the fastest growing racial group in Massachusetts and in the United States and in Massachusetts, less is known about Asian Americans compared to any other racial group, there’s no such thing as a single Asian American ethnicity in some ways. And

in some ways that they always connect and the way in which they share hopefully in the positive elements and are able to resist as well the negative elements is applied to all of these groups. (June 1, 2021, from YouTube comments)

This statement begins with the assertion “I think education is critical,” highlighting a perceived issue or challenge that necessitates attention. This sets the tone for a critical examination of the situation. The phrase “less is known about Asian Americans compared to any other racial group” acknowledges the underrepresentation of information and understanding about Asian Americans. This assertion points to a critical gap in knowledge and awareness. The statement challenges the notion of a “single Asian American ethnicity,” highlighting the complexity and diversity within the Asian American community. Critical analysis here suggests a rejection of oversimplified or monolithic representations. The repetition of the term “education is critical” underscores the importance of education in addressing the issues and gaps discussed. This idea conveys a belief that knowledge and awareness can contribute to positive change. Let us look at the following quote:

It’s crazy because a lot of minority issues are exactly the same. The funny thing is we don’t hear a lot about Asia’s struggle with civil rights in America nor do we hear about Asian slavery. That is why we need to have racial and cultural appropriation classes. (May 19, 2021, from Instagram replies)

The statement begins with an acknowledgment that “a lot of minority issues are exactly the same,” indicating an awareness of shared struggles among various minority groups. This sets the stage for a comparative analysis. The phrase “we don’t hear a lot about

Asia's struggle with civil rights in America nor do we hear about Asian slavery" draws attention to the perceived lack of visibility and discourse around the historical struggles of Asian Americans. This comment implies a critique of the limited attention given to Asian American issues in mainstream narratives. The statement concludes with the assertion that "we need to have racial and cultural appropriation classes," suggesting that education is necessary to address the gaps in knowledge and awareness. This recommendation aligns with a critical perspective that identifies the need for intentional efforts to incorporate Asian American history and experiences into educational curricula. The statement implies a critique of selective narratives that focus on certain minority issues while neglecting others. By pointing out the lack of attention to Asia's struggle with civil rights and Asian slavery, the speaker challenges the framing of historical and contemporary discussions. The statement indirectly critiques the dominant discourse that tends to prioritize certain minority narratives over others (Carvalho, 2008). This viewpoint aligns with a critical analysis that questions whose stories are highlighted and whose are marginalized in public discourse. The call for classes on racial and cultural appropriation implies that education is seen as a means of empowerment. By addressing the gaps in knowledge, the statement suggests a pathway toward greater understanding, appreciation, and equity. The mention of "Asia's struggle" and "Asian slavery" subtly calls for a more inclusive understanding of history, challenging the exclusion of certain narratives from mainstream discussions about civil rights and historical injustices.

As these five themes tend to talk about the root of Anti-Asian hate and thus seek to discuss about the interventions and solutions in the whole picture, they will be revisited and discussed on a deeper level in the next chapter. To recap this chapter: I conducted a thematic analysis and a critical discourse analysis of the themes emerging from the online data to gain a better understanding of roles that social media played in the post-pandemic era and how people respond to #StopAsianHate advocacy. The analysis uncovered multiple overarching themes concerning the research questions. Moving forward, the next chapter will delve deeper into the five themes identified, offering a more comprehensive discussion of how people combat anti-Asian racism on social media.

## Chapter Six: Discussion

In the previous chapter, applying QTA (qualitative thematic analysis) and CDA (critical discourse analysis), I presented my findings with themes that I identified from data collected from social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube). In this chapter, I will continue to address my two research questions and further the discussion with a specific focus on the themes that emerged from the replies and comments of the social media users. In doing so, I will re-state my research questions here.

1. What appears to be the role of Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube in protesting against “Asian Hate” in the post-pandemic era in North America?
2. To what extent do posts on Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube engage with the “Stop-Asian-Hate” advocacy movement, and what patterns or themes emerge in their responses?

### **Unpacking the Role of Social Media in Combating “Anti-Asian Hate”**

In response to the first research question, the findings indicate that in the post-pandemic era in North America, social media may be used as a tool for (a) amplification of voices, (b) real-time updates, (c) hashtag campaigns, (d) awareness-raising, and (e) community building.

#### ***Amplification of Voices***

Social media often serves as a platform for amplifying voices, rallying support, and spreading awareness about social justice issues. During the post-pandemic era, the three platforms played a crucial role in amplifying the voices of Asian American activists,

organizations, and allies who were speaking out against hate crimes and discrimination. For example, tweets sharing incidents of hate crimes against Asians, such as the Atlanta spa shootings, went viral, sparking conversations and calls for action. As another example:

A 52YO Asian woman was punched in the head and told to go “back to her country” in an unprovoked attack on Sunday around 1:30PM in the vicinity of 1st Avenue and E. 19th Street. She was treated on scene, and the suspect fled on 1st Avenue.

#StopAsianHate. (August 25, 2021, from Twitter post)

In this statement, the victim is not only targeted based on her race (anti-Asian racism) but also on her gender (a 52-year-old Asian woman). CRT underscores the importance of recognizing the interconnected nature of these social identities in understanding the dynamics of the attack. The fact that the victim is a 52-year-old Asian woman adds layers of vulnerability based on both age and gender. AsianCrit explores how Asians are racialized and often subjected to the “perpetual foreigner” stereotype. The directive to go “back to her country” reflects this stereotype, reinforcing the idea that Asians are not seen as true Americans. This racialization contributes to the perpetuation of anti-Asian sentiments and discrimination. The incident described in the statement serves as a lens through which to understand and address broader issues within the Asian American experience.

### ***Real-Time Updates***

Twitter’s real-time nature made it a valuable source for receiving updates on protests, events, and developments related to “Asian Hate” across North America. It allowed activists to coordinate efforts and share information rapidly. Instagram stories allowed users to share

time-sensitive updates, calls to action, and highlights from protests and events as well, and thereby encouraged real-time engagement.

All, please come join me tmrw to denounce #Asianhate here in Harlem. We will be visiting local businesses to educate them ways to support the growing Asian population and we will stop by Asian owned businesses to show them our support & teach them how to get help. #StopAsianHate. (May 2, 2021, from Twitter post)

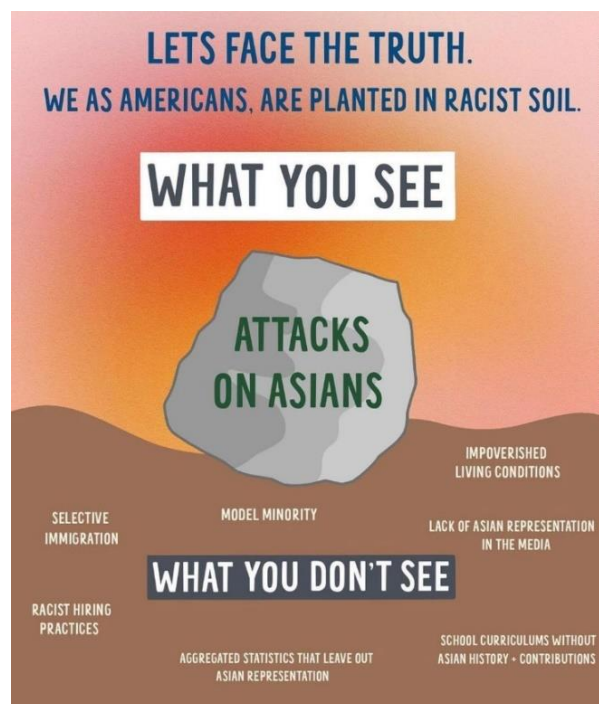
The use of the term “tmrw” (tomorrow) indicates the immediacy of the event. Social media allows for real-time communication, enabling individuals to share information about events or activities happening soon. The urgency conveyed in the statement encourages swift and immediate action. It includes a direct call to action by inviting others to join the speaker in denouncing #Asianhate in Harlem. Social media platforms facilitate the dissemination of calls to action in real-time, allowing individuals to respond promptly and participate in events or initiatives. The statement outlines a plan to visit local businesses, educate them on ways to support the growing Asian population, and show support to Asian-owned businesses. This level of detail suggests a coordinated effort and mobilization of individuals for a specific purpose. Social media platforms provide a dynamic space for organizing and coordinating such activities in real-time. The call to action involves visiting local businesses, indicating that the activity is dynamic and may involve updates throughout the event. The statement is shared on a public platform, likely accessible to a broad audience. Social media’s real-time nature ensures that the message reaches a wide audience quickly. This visibility contributes to the potential success of the event by attracting participants and supporters.

### *Awareness-Raising*

Activists and organizations created awareness-raising videos that could be shared across social media platforms. These videos often featured personal stories, expert interviews, and calls to action. Many Instagram accounts dedicated to social justice and activism provided educational content, infographics, and resources to inform and engage their followers about “Asian Hate” issues. Instagram’s focus on visual content made it a powerful platform for sharing personal stories, artwork, and images related to the movement (see Figure 5).

### **Figure 5**

#### *Visual Content Example from Instagram*



*Note.* Designed by Kiona Pattie Gonía Johnson, CJ Goulding, and Tyler Lau. Illustrated by Kimsaira (<https://www.instagram.com/p/CNC0FCVAJ0d/>).

This visual image posted on Instagram illustrates the deep-rooted stereotypes of Asian Americans, such as “selective immigration” and “model minority” under the surface of attacks on Asians. The image also suggested the aspects attributed to anti-Asian racism: “improved living conditions,” “racist hiring practices,” “lack of Asian representation in the media,” “aggregated statistics that level out Asian representations,” and “school curriculum without Asian history and contributions.”

The use of visual elements in social media posts can be powerful in conveying a message. Images can evoke emotions and provide a direct and immediate connection with the audience. In this case, the visual representation enhances the impact of the message, making it more memorable and thought-provoking. By illustrating stereotypes like “selective immigration” and the “model minority” myth, the image brings attention to harmful preconceptions about Asian Americans. It serves to challenge and seeks to dismantle these stereotypes, promoting a more accurate and nuanced understanding of the diverse experiences within the Asian American community. The inclusion of issues such as “racist hiring practices,” “lack of Asian representation in the media,” and “aggregated statistics” suggests a systemic examination of anti-Asian racism. The image prompts viewers to consider how these systemic problems contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes and discrimination. The mention of a “school curriculum without Asian history and contributions” highlights the educational aspect of anti-Asian racism. This key message suggests that the image is not only raising awareness but also advocating for a more inclusive and accurate representation of Asian history and contributions within educational curricula. The image encourages viewers

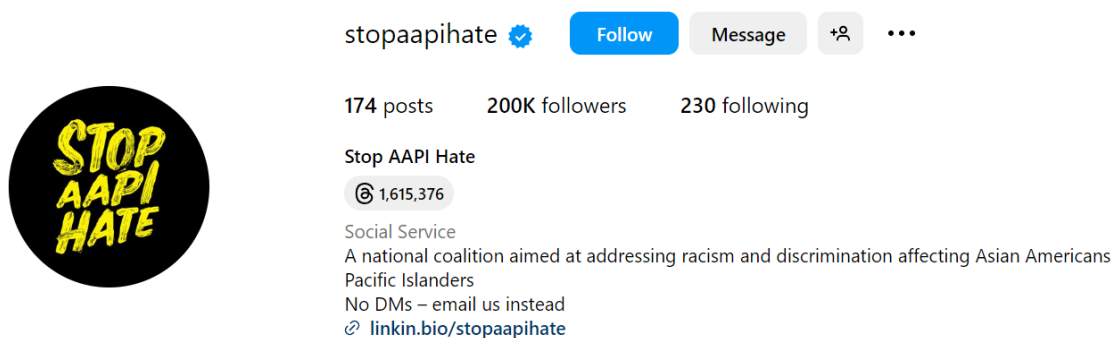
to critically analyze the various components depicted and reflect on how these stereotypes and systemic issues impact the daily lives of Asian Americans. This critical engagement can contribute to a deeper understanding of the nuances surrounding anti-Asian racism.

### ***Community Building***

Social media forums also served as platforms for building online communities centered around the “Asian Hate” movement. Replies and comment sections facilitated discussions and connections. For example, Stop AAPI Hate is a nationwide alliance dedicated to combating racism and racial inequities directed at Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. They collaborate with local communities and government representatives to record the escalation of anti-AAPI prejudice and disrupt the structures that enable its continuation. They have communities on almost all social media sites (see Figure 6).

### **Figure 6**

*A Screenshot of the Online Stop Asian Hate Community*



*Note.* Screenshot taken on May 23, 2022 (<https://www.instagram.com/stopaapihate/>)

The social media community shares educational resources and information to increase understandings about the history, culture, and contributions of AAPI communities. This

educational aspect is essential for challenging stereotypes and promoting more nuanced understandings. The Stop AAPI Hate platform provides a centralized reporting system, allowing individuals to document and report incidents. This data is crucial for understanding the scope of the problem and advocating for policy changes. The hashtag fosters a sense of community among AAPI individuals. It allows them to connect, share stories, and express solidarity. This sense of unity is crucial for individuals who may feel isolated or marginalized due to their experiences. Allies can use the platform to learn about the issues, educate others, and actively support anti-racist initiatives, contributing to a more inclusive and supportive environment.

While social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube can play a significant role in raising awareness and mobilizing support for social causes like protesting “Asian Hate” in the post-pandemic era in North America, there are also negative aspects associated with their use in this context. These negative aspects include (a) misinformation and disinformation, (b) lack of accountability, and (c) polarization. Each aspect will be discussed in turn.

### ***Misinformation and Disinformation***

Social media can be a breeding ground for misinformation and disinformation. False or misleading information about incidents of hate crimes or discrimination against Asian Americans can spread rapidly on these platforms, undermining the credibility of the movement, and creating confusion.

Why do I feel like this is all paid govt programming to make us turn on each other...blm, Asian hate crimes, red vs blue, now this. People are too lazy to do this kinda stuff nowadays. (May 19, 2021, from YouTube comments)

The media has fed us lies about anti-Asian hate. It's not a "Black on Asian" problem, it's a white imperialism problem has been for nearly two centuries. (May 13, 2021, from Twitter replies)

The two statements above express perspectives on media narratives related to racial issues, particularly the first statement questioning the authenticity of social and racial movements, and the second statement attributing anti-Asian hate to White imperialism rather than a "Black on Asian" problem. The first statement suggests a suspicion that social and racial movements, including Asian hate crimes, are part of a government program. This skepticism may be rooted in a critical examination of power structures and the possibility of manipulation through media representation. The second statement challenges a simplistic narrative by reframing anti-Asian hate because of White imperialism over nearly two centuries. This perspective aligns with CRT principles by considering the historical context and systemic structures that contribute to racial dynamics.

Both statements reflect CRT's emphasis on the intersectionality of race and power. The first statement hints at the idea that media narratives are tools of power (government programming) to influence social perceptions. The second statement frames anti-Asian hate within the broader context of White imperialism, highlighting the historical power dynamics shaping racial relations. The first statement questions the authenticity of various social and

racial movements, suggesting a critical approach to media representations. The second statement challenges the narrative that presents anti-Asian hate as solely a “Black on Asian” problem, offering an alternative perspective rooted in historical power structures. Both statements express skepticism and/or critique regarding media narratives. The first statement implies that media representations are orchestrated, while the second challenges the accuracy of the portrayal of anti-Asian hate as a “Black on Asian” issue.

### *Lack of Accountability*

Social media platforms may not always effectively address hate speech, harassment, or the spread of harmful content. This shortcoming can allow hate groups and individuals to thrive on these platforms, further exacerbating the problem of Asian hate. Activists and individuals advocating against Asian hate may face online harassment and threats on these platforms. Hateful comments, racial slurs, and personal attacks can discourage people from speaking out or participating in online discussions, leading to a chilling effect on free speech. Here is an example from Twitter:

Disheartened to see the rise in anti-Asian racism on social media. The lack of accountability is alarming! Numerous hate-filled comments and posts targeting Asians go unchecked. We need platforms to take stronger measures against hate speech.

#StopAsianHate. (March 23, 2021, Twitter)

The statement begins by acknowledging the observation of a rise in anti-Asian racism on social media. This recognition reflects an awareness of the problem and suggests that the speaker has observed an increase in discriminatory content targeting Asians on these

platforms. The post expresses disappointment and disheartenment over what they perceive as a lack of accountability on social media platforms. The term “lack of accountability” implies a failure on the part of social media platforms to effectively address and prevent the spread of hate-filled comments and posts. The statement specifically points out that hate-filled comments and posts targeting Asians “go unchecked.” This observation suggests that there is insufficient monitoring or intervention by social media platforms to prevent the dissemination of content that contributes to anti-Asian racism. The term “unchecked” emphasizes the absence of effective moderation or consequences for such content. The post calls for social media platforms to take “stronger measures against hate speech.” This call reflects a desire for more robust and proactive actions from platforms to curb the spread of hate speech. The use of the hashtag #StopAsianHate suggests that the speaker aligns with broader efforts to combat racism and discrimination. The overall tone of the statement suggests that the poster believes social media platforms bear a responsibility to combat anti-Asian racism. The call for stronger measures implies a need for these platforms to actively address and prevent the propagation of hate speech, indicating a level of accountability expected from them.

### ***Polarization***

Online discussions about Asian hate can sometimes devolve into polarized debates, making it challenging to find common ground and solutions. The anonymity provided by social media can also lead to extreme and divisive rhetoric. For instance, around #StopAsianHate, discussions around Black and Asian divisive rhetoric comprise a large portion of the comments.

Look at this black and Asian solidarity BS. This page is done by a black person always trying to get Asian Americans as allies against white people. In reality they do most of the attacking. (May 13, 2021, from Instagram replies)

It's stupid how Trump is being blamed for BLACK community's negative attitudes against Asians, and nobody is calling out BLACK people about their racist behaviours. (May 15, 2021, from Twitter replies)

The statements extracted from Twitter responses shed light on the complex dynamics of racial discourse and polarization within online communities. The discussions surrounding Black and Asian solidarity, perceived attacks, blame attribution to political figures, and accusations of racism highlight the multifaceted nature of interactions on social media platforms. This section will delve into the key themes identified from these statements, exploring the dynamics of polarization and the potential consequences for social cohesion.

The first statement points to perceptions of solidarity between Black and Asian communities. However, this standing together is perceived negatively, with the implication that the solidarity is insincere and serves ulterior motives. The concept of one racial group seeking alliances against another hints at underlying tensions and suggests a narrative of division rather than unity.

The second statement introduces accusations and counteraccusations related to blame for negative attitudes. The mention of blaming Trump for the "BLACK community's negative attitudes against Asians" reflects the politicization of racial discourse. The counteraccusation of not addressing racism within the Black community further intensifies

the blame game, contributing to an environment of finger-pointing. The use of strong language such as “BS,” “attacking,” and “racist behaviors” contributes to the amplification of divisive narratives. The tone suggests heightened emotions and entrenched positions, fostering an atmosphere where constructive dialogue may be hindered. The statements touch upon the intersectionality of race and politics, demonstrating the complexity of how racial dynamics intersect with broader societal issues. The intersectionality reveals a layering of identities and experiences that contribute to the nuanced nature of racial discourse.

These polarized perspectives have potential implications for social cohesion. Accusations and negative characterizations can contribute to an environment where genuine dialogue is stifled, hindering efforts to bridge divides and build understanding. The blame attribution to specific racial or political groups may perpetuate cycles of animosity.

Another comment on YouTube, getting 1.1k replies, substantiates the point.

I'm a black man... and I'm going to poke the bear here and point out the elephant in the room about almost, every single example of violence against an Asian person in this News report, alone just short of one or two as well as pretty much every single report I have seen about this issue of late, and that is ... ALMOST, EVERY ASSAILANT WAS BLACK!!! ... Fam, I don't know WHAT the hell is wrong and I don't know WHY the hell you would treat someone from another race in the way you wouldn't want to be treated, but this is ABSOLUTELY INEXCUSABLE. I'm worried that when I write this that I will be inviting an onslaught of racist BS comments from all over the place, and this is NOT the intent of this post!! ... AND, this is not my way

of blaming all of these acts of hatred on one particular race (that being my race in this case) but the reality of what has been constantly being seen can't be ignored! I don't know if it's just what the media is portraying, or if it's legitimately as it looks but both scenarios are painting a DREADFUL image of us!! I will say this... in the same way that I do not judge every White person for the actions and words of other White people, I refuse to do the same thing to my people as I am fully aware of the fact that a majority of Black Americans are NOT this way... but there's unfortunately, just enough bad apples out there who are doing these awful things that it's starting to paint a dishonest picture. I'm not entirely sure of what can even be done about this but I will say that, if you are a Black American, PLEASE STAND UP FOR YOUR ASIAN NEIGHBOR!!! Let them know that you stand in solidarity with them and that you are watching out for them too!! SPEAK UP and SAY THAT THIS IS WRONG!! We have to curve this hatred!! Man... I'm sooo sick of all this. (May 16, 2021, from YouTube comments)

The author of the post, identifying as a Black man, navigates the complexity of racial identities. CRT emphasizes the intersectionality of race with other social categories, and in this statement, the author grapples with the multifaceted nature of being Black in the context of violence against Asians. This highlights the intricate ways in which racial identities intersect and influence perspectives. The statement candidly acknowledges instances of violence against Asians and expresses concern about the racial identity of the assailants, recognizing the potential impact on the perception of the Black community. This

acknowledgment aligns with CRT principles, which encourage an honest examination of racial dynamics and their implications. The man challenges stereotypes and media representations by questioning whether the prevalence of Black assailants is an accurate reflection of reality, or a construct shaped by media portrayals. CRT emphasizes the importance of critically analyzing media narratives and questioning dominant discourses that perpetuate stereotypes and reinforce racial biases. The man takes individual responsibility by distancing themselves from the actions of a minority within their racial group. The call to action for Black Americans to stand up for their Asian neighbors reflects a sense of collective responsibility and solidarity. He expresses concern about potential racist comments that may arise in response to their perspective. This fear of backlash highlights the challenges individuals face when engaging in discussions about race, as it may invite hostility or misunderstandings. This statement acknowledges the power dynamics inherent in such conversations and the need for a safe space for dialogue.

In conclusion, the statements above reflect a snapshot of the polarized racial discourse on social media, highlighting the challenges in fostering meaningful conversations about race, politics, and solidarity. The intersections of identity and the amplifying nature of social media underscore the need for nuanced approaches to address polarization and promote constructive engagement in discussions about racial issues.

### **Rethinking of the Roots of Anti-Asian Racism**

To address the second research question—how do Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube posts appear to respond to “Stop-Asian-Hate” advocacy? —the findings indicate that the

responses on social media platforms were diverse and multifaceted, reflecting a broad range of voices and perspectives. In addition to the themes described in the previous chapter, overt sub-themes which are very interesting and profound emerged from the data, and were robustly discussed in the comments and replies from the three social media platforms: (a) manipulation of Black and Asian Conflicts; (b) White supremacy; (c) micro-aggression; (d) assimilation by erasure; and (e) inclusion of Asian history in K-12 curriculum. I will delve into these themes in the following paragraphs.

### *Manipulation of Black and Asian Conflicts*

In the data analysis, the codes “Black to blame” and “Black on Asian violence” popped up several times. People argued in the comments and replies about whether these hate crimes are “Black on Asian violence” or manipulated by White people to divide Asian and Black communities. Here are two posts I analyzed in the findings applying critical discourse analysis:

Look at this Black and Asian solidarity BS. This page is done by a Black person always trying to get Asian Americans as allies against White people. In reality they do most of the attacking. (May12, 2021 from Instagram replies)

Do we forget that for the past four years we had an administration that trumpeted white supremacy along with anti-Blackness and anti-Asian sentiment? ... When the people of color are at each other’s throat, only white supremacy wins. (May 12, 2021, from Instagram replies)

The two contrasting posts on Instagram reveal a complex narrative surrounding Black-Asian relations, reflecting the manipulation of racial conflicts. The posts reflect the complex dynamics when Black and Asian identities intersect, exposing tensions influenced by historical, social, and political factors. The first post expresses skepticism toward Black and Asian solidarity, framing it as a manipulation orchestrated by a Black individual to gain Asian American allies against White people. This perspective introduces the notion of strategic alliances being utilized for ulterior motives, challenging the authenticity of interracial solidarity. The viewpoint implies a racialized perception that Black individuals are orchestrating solidarity efforts to serve their own interests. This perception highlights the influence of racial stereotypes and biases in shaping how alliances are perceived within racial discourse. It further accuses Black individuals of being responsible for most attacks, contributing to an intra-racial conflict narrative. This allegation, if unfounded, can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and contribute to the manipulation of racial tensions by reinforcing negative narratives about Black individuals.

The second post addresses the broader context of systemic racism, highlighting the impact of a political administration that promoted White supremacy and anti-Black and anti-Asian sentiments. This perspective aligns with CRT's focus on systemic structures and power dynamics that perpetuate racial inequalities. It argues that when people of color are in conflict, only White supremacy wins. This aligns with CRT's critique of how divisive strategies can be used to maintain the status quo. Dividing marginalized groups undermines collective efforts against systemic racism and reinforces the existing power structures.

In the post-pandemic era, numerous high-profile incidents of violence have involved Black individuals and have raised concerns about potential conflicts between Asian Americans and Black Americans. Despite lacking evidence to suggest that Black Americans are primarily responsible for the increase in these attacks or that they hold a unique hostility toward Asian Americans compared to the general population, the perception of tension between these two communities has its origins in immigration and economic policies that have historically set them in competition with each other.

We must recognize that there exists a persistent framework where one group consistently holds a position of power while another remains marginalized. While it is true that there has always been an enduring structure of White supremacy in this country's ruling class, the methods of governance, the underlying beliefs, and the individuals involved have evolved over time (Byman, 2021).

In the end, there is a failure to recollect the origins of racial hierarchies and the ongoing tensions between Black and Asian communities in America/Canada. The root cause of these issues can be traced back to White supremacy. White supremacy played a significant role in creating segregation, enforcing strict policing, and fostering resource scarcity in low-income neighborhoods, which will be discussed in more depth in the next section.

Additionally, White supremacy contributed to the establishment of the "model minority" stereotype, which has driven a wedge between Black and Asian communities. Interestingly, a recent study suggests that more than any other ideology, White Christian nationalism has influenced xenophobic and racist perspectives related to Covid-19 (Perry et al., 2020).

The concept of White fragility also applies to this discussion. Some White people exhibit discomfort or even anger when confronted with issues of racism or racial inequality, which is called White fragility. This fragility can be seen as a way of maintaining White supremacy and avoiding the discomfort that comes with confronting and dismantling racist beliefs and behaviors (DiAngelo, 2020). In response to challenges to their beliefs or actions that may be perceived as racist, they tend to shift the blame to other minorities, putting themselves out of the issue.

A significant history of unity between the Black and Asian communities in the fight against oppression and structural racism exists, but recent divisions have overshadowed it. For example, in the late 1960s, Black and Asian activists played key roles in the Third World Liberation Front movement, which aimed to introduce race and ethnic studies into college and university programs in California. Presently, individuals from both communities continue to support one another in protests advocating for Black rights and against anti-Asian violence (Demsas & Ramirez, 2021).

Demsas and Ramirez (2021) explained that the prevailing models used to comprehend and decipher racism tend to be overly simplistic, resulting in frustration and resentment. A rudimentary representation of racism that categorizes individuals solely as either perpetrators or victims of racism fails to acknowledge the complexity of human identities, which extend beyond race. The reality is that Black Americans/Canadians, like all native-born citizens, possess a multitude of identities beyond their racial background. It is worth noting that Black Americans/Canadians, as native-born citizens, can also exhibit xenophobic and nationalistic

tendencies that target an “other” group—in this context, Asian Americans/Canadians who may be perceived as “eternal outsiders,” even though they too were born in the same country. While Black Americans/Canadians often hold progressive views on immigration reform, research also suggests that there may be instances where they perceive economic competition with new immigrant communities, leading to a more generalized anti-immigrant sentiment and racism.

Researchers also emphasize that much of this rivalry stems from a racial hierarchy that has positioned Black in the lowest tier (Nguyen & Quinn, 2018). As newcomers arrive in the country, they confront a system that prioritizes affluent, White Americans/Canadians, leading to feelings of resentment and a belief that there is only a limited share of resources left for others.

The idea of the model minority myth for Asians can be likened to the “Black criminality” stereotype imposed on Black communities. Just as portraying Black individuals as inherently prone to violence towards Asian Americans or other minority groups perpetuates long-standing stereotypes about Black people as criminals, this harmful narrative has been reinforced by both American media and popular Asian media platforms in China, such as WeChat and Weibo.

In early 2021, social media circulated videos depicting attacks on elderly Asians, with some of these attacks carried out by Black individuals. News and social media platforms quickly highlighted the historically complex tensions between Black and Asian communities. However, it is crucial to recognize that these tensions have existed for decades due to policies

influenced by White supremacy. The emerging narrative too easily attributes the violence solely to these tensions, overlooking other contributing factors. For instance, there is a global increase in anti-Asian (and anti-China) sentiment, from countries like Australia, Europe, and Canada, where hostility toward China and those perceived as Chinese is on the rise (Kim & Tummala-Narra, 2022). Moreover, in the United States, some White Christian nationalists have been reluctant to acknowledge the racism in labeling Covid-19 as “the Chinese virus” (Ma & Ma, 2022).

Ultimately, the recent surge in anti-Asian attacks not only reflects the enduring anti-Asian sentiment in America but also highlights how the perceived model minority status of Asian Americans has suppressed public awareness of this racism for a long time. When searching for an explanation for this violence, like how Asians were unfairly blamed for the pandemic, there is a tendency to either scapegoat Black individuals or assert that these incidents lack racial motivation (Kiang, 2016).

As one of comments said, “[w]e need to make sure that we’re not falling into the wedges and the traps that get set for us. There is a long history of solidarity in Black communities and Asian communities—and those relationships are needed more than ever” (May 13, 2021, from YouTube comments). To move forward, it is crucial for Black and Asian American/Canadian communities to recognize this fundamental issue and unite in their efforts to combat it. Black Americans/Canadians and Asian Americans/Canadians should stand in solidarity between both communities.

### *Deep-Rooted White Supremacy*

White supremacy was an overt theme which was frequently discussed in the replies and comment sections on the three platforms. For instance, one reply states, “White supremacy has a core that needs to be broken down and understood in every aspect. Imperialism makes me want to look at its historical core and how when a few are given power over many, inequality begins” (May 15, 2021, from Twitter replies).

The statement “White supremacy has a core that needs to be broken down and understood in every aspect” reflects a critical perspective. The use of the term “core” suggests an acknowledgment that White supremacy is not just a surface-level issue but has deep-seated roots that need exploration. The connection between White supremacy and imperialism is highlighted. The phrase “Imperialism makes me want to look at its historical core” indicates a desire to delve into the historical roots of imperialism to better understand its impact on the development and perpetuation of White supremacy. This idea suggests an awareness of the interconnections between different forms of systemic oppression. The call to examine the historical core of imperialism implies an understanding that historical contexts shape contemporary power structures. This notion aligns with a critical approach that seeks to unpack the historical processes contributing to present-day inequalities.

Echoed by other scholars, White supremacy has historically manifested through Orientalism (Said, 1978), a set of stereotypes and misconceptions about Asian cultures and peoples. This lens has portrayed Asians as exotic, foreign, and inferior, reinforcing a hierarchical worldview where Whiteness is considered superior (Li & Nicholson, 2021).

White supremacy is embedded in systemic inequities and institutional racism. Policies and practices that disadvantage Asian communities, such as discriminatory immigration laws or unequal access to resources, are shaped by a White supremacist system (Frideres, 1999; Holland, 2007).

White supremacy intersects with other systems of oppression, contributing to the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. Anti-Asian stereotypes, such as the perpetual foreigner or the submissive exotic (Lee, 2021), reinforce the broader racial hierarchy established by White supremacy. The perception of Asians as perpetual foreigners can lead to instances of racial profiling, surveillance, and discrimination, all of which are manifestations of systemic racism rooted in White supremacist ideologies. The model minority myth portrays Asians as a successful and docile minority group (Chen et al., 2020). While seemingly positive, this stereotype oversimplifies diverse Asian experiences and serves to reinforce racial hierarchies by positioning Asians as the “good minority” in comparison to other groups.

We can see from an analysis of data that White supremacy fuels racial violence and hate crimes against Asians. Acts of violence, harassment, and discrimination are often rooted in xenophobia and racism, with White supremacist ideologies contributing to the dehumanization and victimization of Asian individuals. White supremacy influences media portrayals, perpetuating stereotypes and contributes to the erasure or misrepresentation of Asian cultures. Additionally, cultural appropriation, rooted in power imbalances reinforced by White supremacy, further marginalizes and commodifies Asian cultures.

As discussed in the section investigating Asian-Black conflicts, White supremacy has at times sought to use Asian Americans as a wedge in racial conflicts, employing tactics that pit minority groups against each other. This divisive strategy aims to maintain the racial status quo and divert attention from broader challenges to White supremacy. The following two comments will be examined. The first comment states, “Why do I feel like this is all paid govt programming to make us turn on each other...blm, asian hate crimes, red vs blue, now this. People are too lazy to do this kinda stuff nowadays” (May 19, 2021, from YouTube comments). The second post expresses, “The media has fed us lies about anti-Asian hate. It’s not a ‘Black on Asian’ problem, it’s a White imperialism problem has been for nearly two centuries” (May 13, 2021, from Twitter replies).

These statements reflect a level of cynicism and skepticism towards social issues such as Black Lives Matter (BLM), Asian hate crimes, and political polarization (red vs. blue). The suggestion that people are too “lazy” to engage with these issues implies a distrust in the authenticity of these movements, potentially serving the narrative that these issues are exaggerated or manipulated for ulterior motives. The notion of government programming to make people turn on each other aligns with the concept of using divisive tactics to distract from larger systemic issues. By framing social issues, including Asian hate crimes, as manipulated, or exaggerated, the comment suggests a strategy to divert attention from addressing root problems, potentially maintaining the status quo.

The first comment on YouTube expresses suspicion about various issues, including Asian hate crimes, being part of a larger government-sponsored effort to create division. This

sentiment suggests a belief that external forces, possibly aligned with White supremacy, are intentionally manipulating public opinion to foster discord among racial and social groups.

The second comment, from Twitter, challenges the media narrative about anti-Asian hate crimes, asserting that it is not a “Black on Asian” problem but rather a result of White imperialism over the centuries. This perspective reframes the issue, deflecting blame away from specific racial groups (such as Black individuals) and placing it on a historical system associated with White supremacy. Both comments, in their own ways, contribute to a narrative that undermines solidarity movements by casting doubt on their legitimacy.

Whether through suspicion of government programming or challenging media narratives, these perspectives may seek to weaken collective efforts aimed at addressing systemic racism and discrimination.

### ***Microaggression***

Data analysis confirmed that Asians experience microaggressions such as being asked “Where are you really from?” or being complimented for speaking English well, which can make them feel like perpetual outsiders. According to Taffel (2020), microaggression refers to subtle, often unintentional acts of discrimination or prejudice that are directed at members of marginalized groups. These acts can take many different forms, such as comments, gestures, or behaviors that convey a negative message about a person’s race, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, or other aspects of their identity. To illustrate such comments, one speaker posted this reply: “As a Canadian born Chinese, I’ve heard this kinda of compliment for many times like, wow, you’re speaking English so well from your

background! I never expected someone like you to be so well-spoken. It's impressive!" (May 15, 2021, from Twitter replies).

In this example, the microaggression lies in the implied stereotype that individuals from the person's background are generally not expected to be well-spoken in English. The remark, while seemingly complimentary, reinforces stereotypes and subtly suggests that the person is an exception to a perceived norm based on their background. Microaggressions can be unintentional, but they contribute to a harmful environment by perpetuating stereotypes and marginalizing individuals based on their identities. Such discrimination is more challenging to deal with because it is not always considered racism. Subtle racial discrimination can manifest in various other settings, such as housing, where racialized individuals may be rejected as tenants or have unequal access to maintenance and repairs. It can also manifest in other facilities such as malls, restaurants, movie theaters, educational institutions, and healthcare services, just like the ignorant attitude my son and I encountered in the pharmacy in the winter of 2022. While individual micro-aggressions may seem small or insignificant on their own, they can accumulate over time and contribute to a larger culture of discrimination and exclusion (Taffel, 2020).

### ***Assimilation by Erasure: Unpacking the Intersection of Identity***

The expectation to assimilate into North American culture by erasing the identity of Asians is a by-product of White supremacy, as the following post shows.

That's actually part of the problem, respectfully. As an Asian American, it's easy to hear "Lose your Asian identity - you're American!" But you lose sense of belonging

because you don't look American, & now you don't know squat about your Asian culture. & now you're lost. (May 13, 2021, from Twitter replies)

As analyzed in the findings, the statement challenges the notion that losing one's Asian identity is a solution, and rather re-framing it as a problem. This viewpoint suggests a critical deconstruction of the oversimplified expectation that assimilation into an American identity should mean discarding one's Asian identity. The dichotomy presented, "Lose your Asian identity - you're American!" highlights a perceived tension between being Asian and being American.

These social media statements encapsulate a profound dilemma experienced by many Asian Americans and serves as a poignant entry point for a discussion within the framework of AsianCrit (Asian Critical Theory). The narrative articulates a complex struggle tied to the intersection of identity, belonging, and cultural heritage. From an AsianCrit perspective, this predicament aligns with the broader critique of societal structures that perpetuate the marginalization and exclusion of Asian Americans (Roulston, 2016). The expectation to assimilate into a monolithic American identity is challenged here, highlighting the inherent tension between being recognized as American and the preservation of one's Asian cultural identity. The phrase "you don't look American" underscores the racialized lens through which belonging is often determined, reinforcing the perpetual foreigner stereotype associated with Asian Americans. This sentiment resonates with AsianCrit's examination of how racialized expectations shape the experiences of Asian individuals.

Furthermore, the notion of feeling lost echoes the psychological and emotional toll of navigating a dual identity within a society that often fails to acknowledge the complexities of being Asian American. This statement invites a critical examination of the power dynamics that contribute to the marginalization of Asian Americans and calls for a reevaluation of societal expectations to foster a more inclusive and culturally affirming environment.

The experiences of Asian Americans and Asian Canadians are deeply rooted in historical immigration patterns. For Asian Americans, the narrative often traces back to the 19th-century labor migrations, such as the Chinese railroad workers and Japanese agricultural laborers. Asian Canadians similarly have a history shaped by early Chinese migrants, South Asian railroad workers, and later waves of immigration from various Asian countries. The historical contexts contribute to the construction of their identities within the North American landscape. Both groups frequently grapple with the perpetual foreigner stereotype, where their national belonging is questioned despite being born or raised in the US or Canada. This racialized lens influences how they are perceived, treated, and, in turn, how they perceive themselves. The expectation to assimilate into the dominant culture while maintaining ties to their cultural heritage creates a complex dynamic.

Intergenerational dynamics also play a crucial role in shaping the experiences of Asian Americans and Asian Canadians. The conflicts and negotiations between generations regarding cultural preservation, assimilation, and identity formation contribute to the evolving narrative of Asian identities in North America.

Media representation significantly influences perceptions of Asian identities in both the US and Canada. Positive and nuanced portrayals contribute to a sense of belonging, while stereotypes perpetuate a sense of otherness. Analyzing media representation is essential for understanding the broader societal context in which Asian identities are constructed.

In summary, the intersection of identity, belonging, and cultural heritage for Asian Americans and Asian Canadians involves navigating a complex interplay of historical legacies, societal expectations, and individual experiences. Understanding and addressing these dynamics is crucial for fostering inclusive societies that recognize and celebrate the diverse identities within the Asian diaspora.

### ***Inclusion of Asian History in K-12 Curriculum***

The inclusion of Asian history in the K-12 curriculum was advocated on several social media posts and replies, and I want to argue that this may be the key to reducing anti-Asian discrimination and violence. The following post conveys this sentiment: “It’s crazy because a lot of minority issues are exactly the same. the funny thing is we don’t hear a lot about Asia’s struggle with civil rights in America nor do we hear about Asian slavery that is why we need to have racial and cultural appropriation classes” (May 19, 2021, from Instagram replies). The speaker acknowledges that many minority issues share commonalities. By highlighting this connection, it underscores the need for a comprehensive and intersectional understanding of the challenges faced by different marginalized communities. Education on Asian history becomes crucial in fostering a broader perspective that recognizes the interconnectedness of various struggles.

The statement points out the lack of visibility and discussion around Asia's struggle with civil rights in America. This observation aligns with AsianCrit's critique of the marginalization and exclusion of Asian American experiences from mainstream narratives and discourse. It highlights the need to amplify and recognize the specific challenges faced by Asian Americans in the context of civil rights. This observation underscores a gap in education and awareness. Including Asian American civil rights history in educational curricula is essential to rectify this omission, providing students with a more complete understanding of the diverse contributions and challenges within American history.

American and Canadian historians have traditionally given minimal attention to Asian immigrants and their descendants who were born in the US and Canada. When they did receive mention in academic books or textbooks, their significance was downplayed and often regarded as peripheral to the nation-building process. However, the landscape has evolved significantly in recent years. We now have acclaimed books, documentary films, and heritage sites dedicated to preserving various facets of Asian American history. Nevertheless, the inclusion of Asian American and Canadian history in K-12 school curricula and many college-level U.S. history and Canadian history courses remain notably lacking (Lee et al., 2022).

Advocates also argue that the underrepresentation of Asian Americans (Canadians as well) in various aspects, ranging from educational curriculum and government representation to media portrayals in movies and TV, results in many AAPI individuals going unnoticed by the broader public. A 2023 survey conducted by The Asian American Foundation (TAAF),

which included 5,235 participants, revealed that three out of every ten Americans are unable to identify a significant historical event or policy related to Asian Americans.

Inquiries about knowledge of AAPI history commonly yield responses centered on the Japanese incarceration during World War II, with only around 14% of the US population being familiar with this historical episode, as highlighted by Norman Chen, CEO of TAAF. Given that Japanese incarceration holds great historical significance and represents a painful chapter in the history of America and Canada, there is a pressing need to incorporate more AAPI history into school curricula. This educational effort is crucial to learn from the past and ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past.

History is not solely about understanding the past; it is also about fostering a sense of belonging. American/Canadian history serves as our collective memory, uniting us through a shared past encapsulated in the phrase “we the people.” When entire communities and groups are overlooked, marginalized, or deemed insignificant within this shared narrative, we are essentially marginalizing and dismissing their significance in present-day America/Canada. Stereotypes depicting Asian Americans/Canadian as spies, terrorists, unassimilable foreigners, or model minorities tend to shape perceptions and understanding of these communities more wholly. Similarly, without a comprehensive and truthful examination of extensive history of anti-Asian racism, contemporary hate crimes are often perceived as isolated incidents rather than manifestations of systemic racism directed at Asian Americans/Canadians and Pacific Islanders (Lee, 2022).

This racism occurred in the past and is recurring amid the Covid-19 pandemic. It all started when some of the West's highest-ranking legislators repeatedly employed racially biased descriptions of Covid-19 as the "Chinese virus" or "kung flu" and encouraged Americans to attribute blame to China for the virus. Studies revealed a direct connection between the anti-Chinese rhetoric propagated by leaders and an increase in discriminatory incidents targeting Asian Americans. Former President Donald J. Trump, whose "Chinese virus" tweets gained millions of retweets, was identified as "the primary promoter...of anti-Asian American discourse linked to the pandemic," and he served as an inspiration for prejudiced actions. While he was posting on Twitter, Asian Americans were experiencing assaults (Stop AAPI Hate, 2021).

Echoing other advocates, I argue that teaching Asian American/Canadian history is key to reducing anti-Asian discrimination and violence. The earlier, the better. History is incomplete without including content about Asian Americans/Canadians. History is not just about learning the past. It is also about belonging. It is great news to see some states in America mandate the teaching of Asian American history in public schools. Illinois Governor J. B. Pritzker took a significant step on July 9, 2021, by enacting the Teaching Equitable Asian American History Act (TEAACH), making Illinois the pioneer state in mandating the inclusion of Asian American history in public school curricula. This groundbreaking legislation aims to combat contemporary prejudice and violence directed towards Asian Americans. Subsequently, in January 2022, New Jersey followed suit, becoming the second state to require K-12 schools to incorporate Asian American and Pacific Islander history into

their educational programs, beginning in 2022 (Shivaram, 2021). At least 12 states currently have local branches of Make Us Visible, a group made up of community members aiming to pass laws mandating the teaching of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) history. This initiative is a proactive response to the growing incidents of anti-Asian violence throughout the nation (Najarro, 2023). And many provinces in Canada have integrated Asian history into their curriculums, emphasizing diversity and multiculturalism. In British Columbia, for example, the “Social Studies 10” curriculum includes the exploration of significant events and developments in Asian history, such as the Chinese immigration to Canada during the 19th century, the impact of the Komagata Maru incident, and the broader contributions of Asian communities to Canadian society. The “Social Studies 10” provides a detailed overview of how Asian history is woven into the learning objectives and outcomes for students (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018). The rise in anti-Asian hate led to an increased focus on anti-racism education in schools. Programs aimed at addressing racism now include more content on Asian history and culture, as well as discussions on the contributions of Asian Canadians to the country’s development. Schools often participate in Asian Heritage Month (May), focusing on education about Asian cultures, histories, and the contributions of Asian Canadians. For example, Manitoba Education has published documents on creating racism-free schools for all students, and educators’ resources about Asian heritage as well (Manitoba Education, n.d.; Manitoba Education and Training, 2017).

Education is one of the most effective tools against racism, and implicit bias is learned early. I want to add that racial empathy and solidarity should be promoted as early as

possible to help Asian students thrive. First, teaching Asian history early ensures that students from Asian backgrounds see themselves represented in the curriculum. This inclusion can boost self-esteem and promote a sense of belonging among these students when they are young. Second, children form their attitudes and beliefs about people and cultures at a young age. Introducing concepts of racial empathy and diversity early can help prevent the formation of stereotypes and biases (Peng & Dhaliwal, 2022). Teaching kids about various cultures, including those of Asian descent, fosters understanding and acceptance from the beginning. Early education that includes positive representations of different racial and ethnic groups can reduce prejudice and stereotypes. If children grow up learning about the rich histories, achievements, and struggles of various groups, they are less likely to adopt harmful stereotypes that contribute to racism. Third, early exposure to diverse cultures and histories can encourage cross-cultural solidarity. When children understand that people from different backgrounds share common struggles and aspirations, they are more likely to work together to combat racism and discrimination. Fourth, starting early in promoting racial empathy helps to create a new generation of allies in the fight against racism. These young allies can actively challenge racism and discrimination, creating a ripple effect that promotes positive change in their families and communities. By teaching children to respect and value diversity, educators contribute to a more tolerant society, reducing the likelihood of racist incidents in the future. Overall, the earlier children are taught to embrace diversity and reject racism, the more likely they are to grow into adults who promote racial empathy and solidarity. This early education creates a strong foundation for a more inclusive and equitable society.

## **Chapter Seven: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

- Martin Luther King Jr.

This chapter will begin with a summary of the study, after which I will present the conclusions based on the QTA, then conclusions based on the CDA, followed by a discussion of the limitations of the conclusions. I will end the chapter with implications and recommendations, suggestions for future research, and my final reflections.

### **Summary of the Study**

This study sought to identify elements and interventions that hold potential to address the root causes of Asian-specific racism, so that stakeholders can be consistent with all those who oppose racism. I employed QTA and CDA as I worked with public data collected from three social media platforms, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. This critical observational netnography helped to formulate answers to the two research questions that guided the process which are presented below.

The first research question is: What appears to be the role of Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube in protesting against “Asian Hate” in the post-pandemic era in North America? The study findings reveal that Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube played distinct but complementary roles in protesting against “Asian Hate” in the post-pandemic era in North America. Twitter provided real-time updates and amplification, Instagram focused on visual storytelling and solidarity, and YouTube offered opportunities to post longer-form content

and foster community building. These platforms provide a means for Asian American/Canadian and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities and their allies to connect, mobilize, and push for change. While social media played a crucial role in amplifying the voices of those advocating against Asian hate, fostering community, and raising awareness about the issue, findings revealed three negative aspects associated with their use in this context: (a) misinformation and disinformation, (b) lack of accountability, and (c) polarization.

The second research question is: To what extent do posts on Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube engage with the “Stop-Asian-Hate” advocacy movement, and what patterns or themes emerge in their responses? The responses on social media platforms were diverse, ranging from heartfelt expressions of support to critical discussions about systemic issues. It was gratifying to find that supportive posts outweighed the against and neutral posts. However, social media content also showcased the challenges of addressing such complex and deeply rooted societal problems. Overt themes that resulted encompassed the following: deep-rooted White supremacy, micro-aggression, assimilation or erasure, Black and Asian conflicts, and the need for teaching Asian history.

I argue that hatred towards Asians Americans/Canadians is not just a product of the pandemic, it is the result of systemic racism and deep-rooted White supremacy. The experiences of Asians are like those of many other minority groups, and deliberately fostering divisions among minority communities not only fails to solve the problem but also exacerbates racial discrimination. It can be further emphasized that to address the issue of

hatred towards Asian Americans/Canadians, it is crucial to educate the public about Asian American/Canadian history, not only at the societal level, but most importantly, within K-12 education as early as possible.

### **Conclusions Based on Thematic Analysis**

The thematic analysis of social media platforms and the roles they play in protesting against “Asian Hate” in the post-pandemic era in North America reveals that these platforms serve as key catalysts for activism and awareness. Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube offer unique methods of engagement, each facilitating a different aspect of the advocacy movement. Twitter’s role centers on real-time updates and rapid information dissemination, creating a dynamic environment for activism and advocacy. Instagram’s emphasis on visual storytelling allows users to create emotional connections and build solidarity, while YouTube’s longer-form content enables deeper exploration of issues and fosters community engagement.

Together, these platforms contribute to a comprehensive online approach to combat anti-Asian racism, allowing the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community and their allies to connect, mobilize, and push for systemic change. Despite their positive impact, the use of these platforms also presents challenges such as the spread of misinformation and disinformation, a lack of accountability, and increased polarization, which can complicate the discourse surrounding “Asian Hate.”

### **Conclusions Based on Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical discourse analysis of social media responses to the “Stop-Asian-Hate” advocacy movement demonstrates a range of engagement that reflects the complexity of addressing systemic racism and White supremacy. Posts on Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube often feature themes of solidarity, resistance, and support for the AAPI community. However, these platforms also serve as a battleground for ideological conflicts, highlighting the inherent challenges in confronting deep-rooted societal issues.

The discourse analysis identifies recurring themes, such as deep-rooted White supremacy, micro-aggression, assimilation or erasure, Black and Asian conflicts, and the need for teaching Asian history. These patterns indicate that hatred towards Asian Americans and Canadians is not merely a product of the pandemic but results from long-standing systemic racism. Additionally, the analysis suggests that fostering divisions among minority communities further exacerbates racial discrimination.

Addressing “Asian Hate” requires an understanding that the experiences of Asian Americans and Canadians mirror those of other minority groups. A crucial step in overcoming these issues is to educate the public about Asian American/Canadian history, with a particular focus on K-12 education as early as possible, as this is where foundational attitudes and beliefs are formed. By embedding this history in educational curriculums, society can challenge the structures that perpetuate racism and promote a more inclusive and equitable environment.

### **Limitations of the Conclusions**

A notable limitation is the reliance on publicly available data sources, which may not capture the full spectrum of experiences or perspectives. Due to the extensive nature of the data set, certain aspects may have been overlooked or omitted during the research process. Data overload is a problem for one student researcher working alone. The Internet makes it easy to obtain so much information. It posed challenges in ensuring comprehensive coverage of all relevant dimensions. Also, I am the only one analyzing and interpreting the data, so reliability can't be established as it can be when data analysts work together.

The choice of which social media platforms to analyze, as well as the specific accounts, hashtags, or content, can lead to selection bias. This limitation might cause the analysis to overlook certain voices or emerging trends in other parts of the online community. And each platform serves a distinct purpose, but users might not use them uniformly. For example, Twitter's real-time updates might reflect immediate responses, while Instagram's visual storytelling could portray a curated narrative. These inconsistencies can influence the data sources and the subsequent interpretation of the data.

Furthermore, critical discourse analysis relies on interpreting the meaning behind social media content. This subjective process might lead to varying interpretations, influenced by the analyst's own perspectives and biases. While critical discourse analysis highlights systemic racism and White supremacy, addressing these deep-rooted issues requires broader societal change. The analysis might identify the problems but not necessarily offer actionable solutions, leading to a sense of powerlessness or stagnation.

## **Implications and Recommendations**

The study's findings indicate that social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are critical tools for protesting "Asian Hate" in North America. Their unique but complementary roles in disseminating information, fostering community, and mobilizing action have significant implications for advocacy and social justice movements. However, these platforms' potential to spread misinformation, lack accountability, and cause polarization presents ongoing challenges. Moreover, the diversity in social media responses reflects a broader public engagement with systemic issues like White supremacy and racism. The prominence of these discussions underlines the complexity of combating anti-Asian racism and the need for long-term strategies that address both the symptoms and root causes of racial discrimination. Themes like micro-aggressions, assimilation or erasure, Black and Asian conflicts, and the importance of teaching Asian history emerge as key areas for focus and intervention. The systemic nature of anti-Asian racism underscores that hatred toward Asian Americans/Canadians is not merely a pandemic-related phenomenon but a reflection of deeper societal issues. The implication is that addressing "Asian Hate" requires a multifaceted approach that combines social media advocacy with broader societal and educational changes. Based on the findings and their implications, the following recommendations are proposed to social media platform companies, the government, organizations, and educators.

Social media platform companies should improve their content moderation practices with an aim to reduce misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech, and implement

advanced algorithms and human moderation to ensure harmful content is swiftly identified and addressed. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube should encourage users to create content that fosters solidarity and combats racism through promotional campaigns, partnership with anti-racist organizations, and community guidelines that reward positive content. Social media companies should be transparent about their policies regarding hate speech and disinformation and provide clear guidelines for users on reporting abusive content and ensure accountability through regular audits and public reports on content moderation.

Social media companies can support educational initiatives that promote awareness of Asian American/Canadian history and culture. This could involve partnering with educational institutions, providing grants for educational content, or creating dedicated spaces on their platforms for learning. Teachers who are implementing curriculum should ensure that Asian American/Canadian history is part of the K-12 curriculum. This includes teaching about the contributions and struggles of the AAPI community and addressing the broader context of racial discrimination. Also, educators should focus on developing students' critical thinking skills and media literacy. This can help them identify misinformation and challenge stereotypes and racist narratives.

The Parliament of Canada should enact laws that explicitly address hate speech, particularly against the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. These laws can include clear definitions and penalties for violators. Government departments of education should consider the inclusion of Asian American/Canadian history in K-12 curricula to help address systemic racism and foster inclusion, and should allocate funds for

programs and organizations that combat racism and discrimination. This includes support for community-based initiatives and educational campaigns that promote tolerance and unity. Finally, governments should establish regulatory bodies to oversee social media platforms, ensuring they adhere to standards that prevent the spread of hate speech and misinformation.

Organizations, particularly those focused on civil rights and social justice and/or peace and conflict should create campaigns that challenge anti-Asian racism. These campaigns can leverage social media to reach wider audiences and promote solidarity. In addition, public institutions and private corporations should provide training on diversity and inclusion for their staff, emphasizing the importance of understanding and addressing systemic racism. This training can help reduce micro-aggressions and unconscious bias within the workplace. Organizations and institutions, public and private, should work with local communities to develop solutions to combat anti-Asian racism, for example, funding grassroots initiatives, supporting cross-cultural events, and fostering dialogue among diverse groups.

All Canadian and American citizens using social media should promote positive messages and challenge racism. This includes sharing content that fosters unity, reporting hate speech, and avoiding the spread of misinformation. Also, citizens should commit to continuous learning about different cultures and histories, especially those of the Asian American/Canadian community. This learning can help reduce biases and foster a more inclusive mindset.

These stakeholder groups collectively have the power to contribute to successful decision-making and implementation of these recommendations, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. Each group has a unique role in promoting anti-racist advocacy, ensuring accountability, and fostering cross-cultural understanding and solidarity.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

While this thesis focused on the dynamics of post-pandemic anti-Asian racism through observational netnography, there are other areas for further exploration to deepen our understanding and address the complexities of racial discrimination. Future research endeavors could gather and analyze social media content from platforms that are different from the ones used in this study, such as TikTok and Facebook. Also, it would be interesting to conduct a similar study as an active participant on one or more online communities related to the topic. A longer-term study examining trends in anti-Asian racism as expressed on online platforms over time would provide insights into how anti-Asian racism evolves on social media and how Asian communities are impacted. Researchers can also conduct a study on the representation of Asian characters and stories in popular media and its correlation with public attitudes toward Asians. This research could reveal whether positive or negative portrayals in movies, television, and other media sources impact the prevalence of racism and discrimination. By exploring these areas, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of anti-Asian racism and social/popular media and inform strategies to combat discrimination and promote racial equity. The goal is to create a body of knowledge that supports meaningful change and fosters a more inclusive society for all.

## **Final Reflections**

Writing this master's thesis has been a profound and transformative experience for me. From my perspective as an Asian mother, the process touched me in ways that go beyond academic research, stirring deep emotions and personal convictions.

I am an Asian mother and so the topic of anti-Asian racism has personal significance. It's not just about distant events or abstract concepts—it's about the world my children and I live in. The research provided an opportunity to dive into the experiences and voices of people like me, who navigate a society that has not always been welcoming or inclusive. Documenting the rise in anti-Asian racism during and after the pandemic was challenging. The stories of violence, discrimination, and microaggressions that emerged from the study were heartbreaking. These narratives reflect the reality that many Asian Americans/Canadians face, including the fear and uncertainty that accompany being part of a targeted group. The emotional impact of this research cannot be understated, and it highlighted the importance of creating a safer environment for my family and others like us.

Despite the negative aspects of anti-Asian racism, the research also revealed the strength and solidarity within the Asian community. Social media platforms became spaces where people could share their stories, offer support, and rally against hate. This sense of community is inspiring and serves as a reminder that unity can overcome adversity. It reassured me that my children can find support and understanding, even in challenging times.

The findings underscored the need for advocacy and education. Teaching Asian history and culture in schools is crucial to combating ignorance and racism. I see the value in

ensuring my children learn about their heritage and the broader context of racial dynamics in society. The thesis reinforced the idea that education is a key tool in dismantling systemic racism and building a more inclusive future. Writing this thesis made me more committed to advocating for change. Whether it's pushing for better policies, promoting cultural awareness, or supporting community-based initiatives, there's much work to be done. I feel a responsibility to be a part of that change, not just for my family but for the entire community. Despite the challenges and emotional weight of the topic, I feel gratitude for the opportunity to explore these issues deeply. The process has given me hope that through collective effort, we can create a society that is more just and inclusive. I believe that by addressing anti-Asian racism head-on, we can pave the way for a better future for our children—a future where they are valued, respected, and free from fear.

In conclusion, this thesis journey has been a blend of personal reflection, academic rigor, and emotional resilience. It has deepened my understanding of the challenges faced by the Asian community and strengthened my resolve to contribute to a more equitable world. I hope that my work can inspire others to join this journey of advocacy and bring about meaningful change.

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