



CHAPTER 3 EVERYDAY RACISM

ANTI-ASIAN DISCRIMINATION IN SCHOOLS AND WORKPLACES

Early Schooling: Learning Your “Place”

“We just want a safe environment to learn and make more friends. That’s my dream.”¹

—Wei Chen, 2010 President of the
Chinese Student Association of Philadelphia

On December 3, 2009, fifty Asian American students were attacked on and around their South Philadelphia High School campus. Thirty of them sustained injuries serious enough to warrant a hospital visit. These Asian American students were targeted, and school officials had ignored their complaints of bullying and pleas for protection for years. School days were rough for these Asian American students, as their classmates routinely hurled racial epithets; pelted them with food; and beat, punched, and kicked them in school hallways and bathrooms. The students finally had enough after this day of massive attacks, and they staged a boycott for eight days. Media outlets highlighted the racial tensions between the mostly black student attackers and the Asian American victims.² Lacking in the media discussion was an analysis of the ways in which media stereotypes of Asian American students as “model minorities” could facilitate a lack of cultural understanding in this particular school environment. As noted in Chapter 1, whites have historically used Asian Americans and their

“model minority” status to shame and blame other people of color for economic and educational inequality.

Systemic racism regularly creates *alienated* social relations on four different levels: (1) between whites and people of color; (2) between different racial minority groups (i.e., black-Korean conflict since the 1990s); (3) within a racial/ethnic group (e.g., colorism); and (4) within an individual (internalized racism). While one can argue that some types of racism exist in other countries in the absence of whites, racism is a white-crafted system here in the United States. Racial meanings typically stem from our white-racist foundation, and the students at South Philadelphia High School are part of this society. Systemic racism and its white racial frame are embedded in our educational institutions, and they can cause racial strife even in environments with an absence of whites.

In the public mind Asian Americans are often synonymous with academic excellence, in part because their group scores on standardized tests and their college enrollment levels often exceed those of other groups, often including whites. One study found that whites, African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans perceived Asian Americans to be superior in college preparedness, motivation, and expectations of future career success.³ These perceptions of academic achievement come with a price, however, as Asian American students are also portrayed in the media and in much private discussion among non-Asians as robotic overachievers in the classroom who are nerdy, passive, or inept on a social level.

Yet this racial stereotyping misses the discriminatory character of many U.S. institutions. While their participation in sports, student government, and clubs compared to their white counterparts may not be as extensive, this is often not for lack of trying. Mostly white spaces like these may be uninviting or hostile, keeping Asian American students from wanting to participate.⁴ As we have seen in the opening account and will see throughout this chapter, Asian American students frequently endure blatant acts of racism in their schooling environments. Several respondents have tried to view racial teasing and taunting as normal, as a “fact of young or adolescent life.” The language used by respondents to describe school experiences implies that they must endure a certain standard level of racist teasing and taunting. This incessant mistreatment has driven many to choose all-Asian or mostly Asian friendship groups, yet they frequently seem to lack the concepts to explain why such decisions were forced and how they were made.

Racism as “Elementary”

Social science research indicates that children are not born with racist interpretations or proclivities but learn racial interpretations and racial framing of the

world as they are socialized. As children attend child-care facilities and elementary school, they are gradually introduced to racial socialization in peer groups. Young children's racist behavior is often excused by adults on the grounds that children are naïve innocents and often slip and fall in the realm of social behavior, yet the assumption that children's racist comments and actions are innocuous is incorrect. Based on extensive field research in a large child-care center, Debra Van Ausdale and Joe Feagin concluded that the "strongest evidence of white adults' conceptual bias is seen in the assumption that children experience life events in some naïve or guileless way"⁵ Children mimic adults' racist views and behavior, but that does not mean they do not understand and know numerous elements of the dominant racial frame and use its stereotypes and interpretations to enhance their status among other children. Children perpetuate and re-create society's racist structures in their minds and playgroups. A few researchers have noted, albeit briefly, the racist taunting endured by Asian American children, although to our knowledge none has critically analyzed the role of white children as perpetrators.⁶ When Asian children become targets of racist actions by white children, a particularly strong impression is left in their minds. Early on, they learn their subordinate place in society's racial hierarchy and that white children exercise power from the top. White children, in turn, learn early in life that they are at the top of that racial hierarchy.

Charlotte recalls that she was the only Asian in her school and had to deal daily with an onslaught of racist insults from many white classmates:

I remember in fifth grade specifically . . . I went home every single day in tears because people made fun of me every day. And it probably didn't help that I didn't have siblings. I wasn't particularly tough at all. But I would go home every day in tears because I just felt different, and somebody made fun of me. . . . I felt that I was inadequate and unable to do anything because I was Asian. It was just the little things that kids would say. . . . And I would be well aware of the fact that I was different from them.

Charlotte recalls the extremely painful character of this racist taunting, although she has tried to repress the memories. She had no preparation for the racist treatment she would experience at her school, and there was no one to instruct her in how to manage her white peers. Although harassment by children is frequent during school years, things like clothing, hair, and weight can be altered, but racial characteristics (often physical, but socially constructed) are difficult to change. Many respondents have tried to alter their appearances to appear "less Asian" with little success and with much consequence to self-esteem. As we will see in the next chapter, Charlotte learned to cope with mistreatment in an unhealthy

manner; even though she tries not to remember specific details, the pain of the memories remains. In her interview she further notes that she was cognizant of being at the “bottom of the pecking order,” in her case beneath the white, black, and Latino children. She did not experience any “model minority” advantage in her school. Since there were few Asian Americans, she had no collective support from peers that were like her.

Helena, a Korean American, always felt like an outsider because of being Asian and because of her academic achievement. White classmates made school very hard, as she notes with some pain:

I’m really smart. I took some IQ tests in kindergarten, and they promoted me to first grade. I was actually a year behind everyone, so I was younger. So I felt weird because I was younger. . . . I never quite fit in so, everybody had their own friends already and then there was just me. . . . At least I didn’t have a Korean accent, then it would have probably been even worse. And then I was smarter than everyone too. . . . A couple times when I was growing up, they would say, and you know they were girls, saying stuff, “You are just too smart. I hate you!” That kind of stuff, but it made an impact over time, when all you hear is the negative instead of the positive, so I always felt like the outsider and I was teased for just being Asian, the pulling the eyes down. They always thought I was Chinese.

Helena provides an example of how Asian Americans are often classed together by others. Some white classmates did not bother to find out that she was Korean. When discussing such events, Helena, like other respondents, is still in pain from them and has a difficult time making eye contact. She keeps her head down and speaks softly, crying a few times as she recounts painful memories. She was not accepted for being the smart, high-achieving youngster she was, but was ostracized for her intelligence and identity. Helena fit the “model” myth because she was a standout student. Frank Wu explains that the myth is important because it “is useful, even if it is not true. Its content assuages the conscience and assigns blame, a function that is psychologically needed and socially desired.”⁷ In this otherwise savvy comment Wu never clarifies whom the myth is useful for and does not specifically name whites as the central culprits.

Similarly, Phan, a Vietnamese American, notes that she endured ridicule and racist name-calling from white classmates on a daily basis. Lunchtime became nerve-racking, as it left her feeling foreign:

The kids . . . I guess they probably thought I was really different. I mean, I remember them making fun of my food. Like all the food I brought from

home—my friends wouldn't eat it. You know, my parents weren't rich or anything, and they were working class, so my mom would make me this sandwich every day. And it was this pork patty sandwich. Which is just really nasty. It was two pieces of bread, sliced pork, and then onions and hot sauce. Which is a very odd thing for some five-year-old kid to be eating. Everyone else has PBJ sandwiches, and I get like pork patty, meat, and hot sauce. Which really makes your breath smell good, I imagine. I hated it and I had it every single day. And I was the only one. I stopped eating at one point, and my mother was wondering why I did it. Because it made me nauseous, and I got really so [self] conscious, that's all I got to eat.

Here physical difference is webbed with cultural difference. The power in peer discrimination is such that a five-year-old chooses to not eat her (probably lovingly made) lunch for fear of ridicule. Phan references socioeconomic class as the reason, but the white children's peanut butter and jelly sandwiches were also inexpensive, so this is not likely a factor. Actually, the taunting was probably because white children considered her food indicative of her Vietnamese heritage, which was negatively viewed, and because they thought she lacked knowledge of "normal American" lunch items.

Most school systems seem to allow much racist teasing. Respondents who protested to teachers were usually told not to take racial taunting seriously. Young Asian Americans are told to thicken their skin, while white and other non-Asian children are often allowed to continue. The parents of tormented students are frequently fearful about complaining of racial taunting and teasing and do not want to "cause trouble" or generate white retaliation. In this era of school multiculturalism, many administrators encourage teachers to celebrate diversity in classrooms, and this superficial "be happy" multiculturalism may sometimes reduce their ability to see the impact of such racist treatment on students of color, as well as the underlying reality of institutionalized racism in their educational institutions.

Charlene, a Taiwanese American, shares an example of a well-intentioned classroom assignment:

When I was in the third grade we [did a project] . . . to get to know other people's cultures. And I think I did my project on Canada or something, but there was another [white] girl in my class who did her project on Taiwan and before that, I didn't realize that I was different, I knew that I was Taiwanese, but I didn't really know what that meant, and the implications in that. And her project was all about Taiwanese people don't use forks, they don't use knives, and they poop into holes in the ground, and she was

doing this project in front of the whole class. And I was just crying and I cried. And I don't even remember what happened but I, it was traumatizing. I remember sitting down with my teacher and the other girl and the teacher said, "Don't worry, don't get your feelings hurt. It was just a project."

Her teacher's advice was a routinized "just a project" and "don't get your feelings hurt," which requires a seven-year-old to depersonalize something that is indeed personal and painful. This white teacher is missing the point of how disturbing what was in effect cultural mocking can be on a young Asian American. Note too that the presenting child's work was apparently not critiqued or contextualized by the teacher.

Ann, a Vietnamese American, recalls an early incident in her life where she was made to feel different. She grew up in the Northeast and endured bullying from a white classmate regarding her Asian features.

Growing up, my school was very white. It was very noticeable, even in the second grade, [that] the bridge in my nose is very, almost, not nonexistent, but it's very, very, very, very short and it apparently [makes] my face look flat. . . . One of the bullies in my second-grade class called me "flat face," and I didn't get it at the time. All I knew was that, as a bully, that's just a mean thing to say, but I didn't realize or recognize why he was calling me that. He was like, "You have no nose. Your face looks so flat." No one else really ever said anything, and he was just the one that did it, but that was my first, you know, very much so blatant "I'm different, you're picking on me" type of stuff.

Numerous respondents signaled similar pain and the difficulty of being often lost in a sea of physical and social whiteness as a child and as an adult.

When asked how she reacted to this brutal and stereotyped teasing, Ann responds with a detailed account:

I got really mad. I remember yelling at him, and saying like, "Why are you calling me that? Don't call me that." Little things, I was in second grade, I was like maybe seven or eight. Then I remember, I got so mad because he teased me at recess so much that I eventually started crying. And so the teacher asked, "What's going on?" I told her and after then, of course, after that I got bullied even more because I was a tattletale now. All I know is that she kind of scolded him, but she also, I don't think, realized or even knew what to do either. I don't think she realized the implications for being an Asian American in a very, very white class. How was she to

educate seven- and eight-year-olds about race and racism? All that, so she just scolded him “that that’s not a nice thing to do and don’t do it again.”

Again we see a typical white teacher’s response to racist actions—the treatment of such acts lightly or like any other meanness among children. This worsened the tormenting for Ann. Clearly even minor discrimination can have lasting effects. Although Ann seems to have exculpated her teacher by noting the difficulty of teaching about racism, research studies show that not only do children as young as three or four understand and carry out racist comments and actions, but also that young children can be taught that racist actions are harmful. Historically white schools and their officials have rarely made serious efforts to teach about racist stereotyping and actions, but such teaching is not difficult, and major resources are available for teachers and schools.⁸

Another respondent, Eve, first identified herself to us as an Asian American. Later she revealed that she was half Chinese, one-quarter white, and one-quarter Mexican American. She grew up in a metropolitan area that was very diverse. Replying to a question about memories of racial mistreatment in school, she responds, “No, yeah, no, I went to an all-white high school. It’s a private school, and it was fine. Then in middle school, I went to private school, and it was all white. I was a loner. I was an awkward kid. Elementary was fine, and then middle school. It’s been fine. I am awkward and weird, and people like me because I’m awkward and weird, that’s what I hear.”

Eve sways back and forth as she gives her initial response about her racial memories, changing her responses between “no” and “yes.” Although she clearly remembers the whiteness of the schools, she at first says she is unsure about why she was treated differently. Later in the interview, she explains that the first middle school she attended was “rough,” and because of this her mother placed her in a private school. She attributes problems she faced to the fact that she was “awkward and weird” but does not yet indicate that it was because whites saw her in racial terms.

However, replying to a question about what was challenging at her first middle school, she explains that she had to be sent to a new middle school:

I was sent there because my mom said I got into too many fights in middle school. . . . Kids wanted to pick on me because they thought I was some other girl. It was odd. I was walking home one day and someone was like, “Oh do you remember the other day?” And I’d be like, “I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about!” Then she’d start beating me up. (And I have all this rage now.) It happened another time, and I’m like, “I’m not this girl.” Everyone thought we looked alike.

Eve next notes that she was confused by whites with a Mexican American schoolmate. Her classmates apparently could not differentiate a person who was wholly Mexican American from someone who was one-quarter. As the dominant racial group, whites do not need to take time to differentiate people of color. The latter are often confronted by whites who, carelessly and stereotypically, believe that they “all look alike.” Eve’s first interpretation was that the difficult events were isolated, with no link to the way whites viewed her racial characteristics. Yet, her later comments did recognize the racial targeting, a slow shift in the interview that happened with numerous respondents.

Alice, a third-generation Japanese American from the West Coast, recalled for us many negative memories of her schooling, from elementary school to the university level. In her interview she indicated she was very cognizant of her place in the U.S. racial order, beginning with early experiences in school and today in her professional career. She explained that she had always felt like an outsider in predominantly white spaces, a condition that was aggravated by her knowledge of the very negative experiences with white racism that Japanese Americans, including her family, had during the World War II internment camp years. In her early years she was segregated from whites in school and her neighborhood. Growing up in a predominantly Japanese neighborhood on the West Coast, she also had black neighbors. In her interview she discusses elementary school with detail:

I remember we were, our school, we got bused. So we paid for a bus to pick us up; I guess my parents did. And they bused us from all these different parts of [names city]. One time, there were eggs thrown at the bus by some black kids. I think this is like after the riots, maybe '66, '67, somewhere in there. And then another time, which was more dangerous, a bottle was actually thrown . . . and the bus driver got very nervous about it. So he kind of stepped through, made sure all the kids were okay. Which we were, and we continued from that.

Growing up in the 1960s desegregation era, Alice and other Asian Americans were often in an in-between position as racial tensions peaked in towns and cities. Whites were resisting change in traditional segregation patterns, and blacks were protesting the racial segregation and lack of change. Alice says in her interview that even as a child she did not feel animosity toward the black kids that threw things at her bus, as she understood—likely because of the Japanese American experience with white racism—some of the complexities of a racial order where whites controlled school segregation or desegregation.

More Discrimination: The High School Asian Experience

When our respondents moved from elementary and middle school to high school, the racial problems did not cease, and new types of problems arose, usually from white antagonists. They faced yet more self-esteem issues, now coupled with puberty issues. This was especially problematical for those left out of the social networks or the dating process in school settings that were mostly white. In addition, the model minority stereotype was still in operation in many minds, such as in white teachers' expectations, and this put continuing and heavy pressure on Asian students.

Ann, a Vietnamese American in the Northeast, shares her struggles with self-image as she moved into high school settings:

School was really hard. I'm not gonna lie. It was, you know, I wasn't comfortable in my own skin. I really resented the fact that I was Asian, you know. When the dating phase started kicking in, I never had anyone up until my senior year of high school. And all my friends in high school, even in middle school, had boyfriends or what have you. Middle school is more like, "Let's hold hands" and stuff like that. High school, it got a little more serious, and they were dating each other for a long time. And I was always third wheel or fifth wheel, never had a date, never had anyone, and it was a very painful, high school was very painful.

After noting her great discomfort in "her own skin" in a sea of white bodies, Ann explains with great insight and poignancy the social reality of being a young outsider in a very white space:

Well, Proactiv [acne medicine] wasn't invented by the time I hit puberty. I had a lot of acne at the time and that didn't really help at all. Also . . . I was one of the faster developing girls, but also one of the least noticed throughout high school. It was hard because all the guys I always had crushes on never had a crush on me back. They always had crushes on all my other friends around me. I kept thinking after so many crushes and so many letdowns, it had to be because I was Asian. It didn't make any sense, like, why wouldn't [someone] want to be with me? I'm thin, and I'm smart, and fun. Everything was there. . . . Eventually I gave up. It has to just be because I'm Asian. There's no other way to explain why I don't have a date to any dance. No one would ask me. It's always I asked them, or one of my friends would convince someone else to go with me—and that didn't

ever feel good either. That was eighth grade through junior year. In junior [year] I almost didn't go to my own prom. We don't have a senior prom. We only have a junior prom. I almost didn't go because it was getting crunch time, and nobody had asked me. And at that point everyone was paired up, and I didn't know who to go with. I didn't have any other friends outside of my high school. . . . Finally, one of the guys in our group was like, "Oh, Ann doesn't have anyone yet? Then I will just ask Ann if she wants to go to prom." But he ended up ditching me for another girl in the middle [of the] prom anyways, so that didn't feel good either.

While white friends had no trouble finding dates, Ann faced consolation dating, including being chosen at the last moment. Later in the interview Ann notes that in her senior year she started dating a boy whom she met at work. However, similar to being chosen as a consolation date at school dances, her boyfriend admitted that he had chosen her too out of "convenience," for his last girlfriend, also Asian American, had moved away. Ann became a logical choice because she lived nearby. In a later chapter we will discuss this problem of partnerships.

Ann also reports difficulties with students and teachers in the classroom because of their model minority expectations, which signaled that they did not recognize her as the distinctive and well-rounded individual she was. Although she was rarely recognized for her significant involvement in important extra-curricular activities, people did associate her with academic excellence. While performing well in school made her feel like an outsider, she worked hard for academic success as a defensive mechanism. She explains thus:

It was just the little things like, even my teachers sometimes, when you think about in high school or even in college we get pinned as "model minorities." I hid behind my books because I was so frustrated with the fact that I was almost ashamed of being an Asian female because nobody, barely anyone besides my close-knit friends, I didn't feel like anyone really recognized me. As a result I studied a lot, and even the teachers would turn to me. My classmates would turn to me, "Oh, of course Ann knows the answer to that question," or "Ann wants to answer this question." . . . Teachers were shocked when I got below an 80 on a quiz or something like that, or if I got less than a certain grade. They were like, "What's going on?" I don't think they understood that it was hard. I felt that like from then on there would be these high expectations of me and I had to meet them because it's a small school; teachers talk. . . . From 8th grade and on, it was just these high expectations, and I felt kind of pressured to meet those standards. It was parental pressure too, to get the good grades and to do well in school.

As a rare Asian American female there, Ann was invisible and nonexistent to white peers. Although hard work in academic subjects helped Ann to cope with social isolation, high expectations sometimes made her the unwanted center of attention:

It was a science course, and the teacher said something, made a comment. We were doing a quiz or something, or we were all just goofing around, and we weren't paying attention necessarily. And she wouldn't let us move on or go to the next class or something weird, something really bizarre. She said that we couldn't move on until someone gets this answer right. When she said that, everyone turned to me. Lo and behold, I actually didn't have the right answer for once in my life. Actually, one of the girls that you would almost least expect to get the answer right, got it right. That was huge. . . . It raised awareness with me when everyone turned their heads to me, that they all expected me to get, to pull everyone through, grade wise. That was the hugest moment that I can recollect right off the top of my head.

Once again, Ann's classmates expected her to bail them out. This incident still sticks out in her mind and indicates the immense pressure that Asian American students feel in school settings where they are the special "model students."

In spite of her high-level academic success, Ann, like many other Asian Americans, paid a price for coping thus. She offers this poignant note:

The students in my class would start saying things. I remember freshman-year English. We all had to write a huge paper. And one girl was *so* mad and upset by her grade on that paper, and she just started asking people what they got for grades, like out loud and I didn't want to share, but she saw my paper and she said, "Oh, of course you got a 90, that's no surprise." Where she got something like a 70 or 75 or something. Those are all with the cool kids, or popular kids that didn't excel in school, but everyone knew their names. And whereas the smart kids, the ones known as the nerdy people that are seen as bookworms, were stereotyped. I got pinned on.

By performing well, she reinforced the model stereotype in the minds of teachers and students and got mistreatment from the "cool" white students who were academically weaker. Teachers paid special attention to her issues when they were academically centered, but when she was being brutalized and called racist terms, they typically dismissed her pain and concern.

Ann felt then, and feels now, unrecognized for yet other important accomplishments:

Like when my peers didn't recognize me. . . . I played a lot of volleyball, and I did some tennis. You know, even though I was cocaptain one year, they didn't "see" me. The school didn't recognize me as the cocaptain. They didn't even know. They didn't even recognize that I even played volleyball, whereas my cocaptain, who was the girl-next-door type of look, every guy wants to date her, every girl wants to be her—she was my best friend at that time—got all the attention for the volleyball team. In that sense, I wasn't recognized by anything except for, I'm the honors-track kind of girl. It wasn't until senior [year] that people really saw me as a volleyball player. OK, now the team is doing really well, after four years, then they started recognizing everyone on the team, actually. . . . I don't even think my teachers recognized that I played volleyball, sadly, until senior year of high school.

Her cocaptain was white and thus received much favorable attention from other students and adults. Notice the implicit power illustrated in this example. Once again whites got to decide what accomplishments would be rewarded and for which racial groups. This is a commonly reported experience for Asian Americans of all ages, this being ignored or not seen—a type of social *invisibility* generated by racial difference that has long been reported by African Americans as well.⁹

In his interview, Josh, of Chinese descent, indicates that he grew up in the North. Initially he said that he had not experienced any racial mistreatment. However, when talking in more detail about his life, he contradicted this overview comment. He recalls racial stereotyping and taunting by white members of his high school baseball team, including painful experiences with their mocking his Chinese name with the word "dong" (slang for penis):

I guess if there was any point where I was mistreated, where I got kind of annoyed with it, was when I was in high school. . . . I probably played baseball for three years, and my friends—I guess they were my friends, yeah, they were my friends—would take my baseball hat and draw penises on my hat because, like, it was the whole Dong thing. And actually, most of the time I didn't mind it. But eventually, after a while it just kind of like, they would escalate things, thinking they were funny. And . . . I know they weren't trying to be mean to me; like, they were just having fun. And so they would like, draw a penis on the underbelly of the hat. . . . And then, like, it would eventually move on to other things like notebooks, or it would be someone, like, use White-Out to draw a giant phallic symbol. And I would

take a lot of it in stride. I didn't think it was a big deal. But sometimes it was like, that's enough. I think I definitely at one point said something. And I think at one point I maybe even, like—not physically assaulted somebody but maybe like, put them in a headlock and then told them to stop it. But other than that, I've never actually said, "Stop it."

Josh refrained from saying anything to his teammates about their racist hazing until pushed to his limit. He views his teammates as not trying to be mean, yet in fact they were. The mocking and teasing use of his name involved common white stereotypes pointing out the "foreign" character of his Asian name and visage—and probably white stereotypes of weak Asian male sexuality. Josh initially demonstrates uncertainty over whether the perpetrators were "friends," but then asserts that they in fact were. This demonstrates a poignant aspect of the reality of those who are not white in this society: they often have a complex relationship with whites, wanting to gain their friendship and approval even at the cost of humiliation. Josh did his best to control his anger but still remembers the teasing. We see his pain in his strong if belated reactions and sense it in his narrative voice.

In addition, Josh reports that his family never openly discussed discriminatory incidents they faced. Thus, not until some years later did he hear a story from his sister about a racist incident involving her:

My sister when she was in high school . . . would work on yearbook staff, and some parents' little kids would call her like a "Chink." I was shocked when I heard the story later because I've never heard of anyone being called a Chink, like, among my friends. I always considered that word, that like it's a funny word in the sense that it's an awkward word today. In the sense that I don't feel any particular like negative stigma with it because I've never experienced negative stigma. . . . When my sister was telling me the story, I didn't think anyone actually used that word. . . . So she mentioned it one day a while back and I remember thinking like, ha! Apparently, it wasn't like an adult. It was some kid calling her "Chink." I think he was younger, could have been a year younger than junior high. I think she was kind of like me. She didn't take it to heart at all, but I think she was like shocked because it even came out of this kid's mouth, number one. This kid was younger, way younger. And number two, . . . our family has never, like we never associated the word "Chink" with negative. It just came out of nowhere. So we were kind of like, what? People say that? That's weird. I think she was offended, I mean, I guess I would be offended in a weird way but I wouldn't be like angry. She wasn't either.

Josh indicates a certain disbelief on his part and his sister's that such a thing could occur. In his interview he says that he had never been associated with a negative racial stigma, yet at the same time he reports racial harassment targeting his name and other racist incidents faced by his family. Seemingly, he thinks "Chink" is rarely used, although numerous other respondents indicated that they have heard it frequently. Noteworthy is that Josh's sister never confronted the parent or the child about the racist epithet and did not share the incident with family until years later. Typically, silence about oppression hurts the individual and also prevents the development of a collective memory of white oppression. It teaches whites that if they call Asian Americans racial slurs, they will not suffer any negative responses or consequences for such actions.

In the family responses to racist incidents here, we see some similarities to what has been reported in past research on how African Americans cope with racism. Some earlier studies during the legal segregation era indicated that many African Americans were encouraged, from a young age, to rigidly control their anger and rage over discriminatory incidents affecting them.¹⁰ Historically, it was very dangerous for African Americans to unleash their anger about racist attacks. In earlier decades, black parents taught their children to remain even tempered in the face of extreme Jim Crow oppression, which silence demonstrably had severe effects on self-esteem and mental health—as it likely does in the case of African Americans and Asian Americans today.

In recent decades, numerous school systems have become increasingly attentive to the mental health needs of students and provide more counseling services. However, such mental health counselors may often be ill-equipped to deal with students of color. School counselors with heads full of conventional racial and ethnic stereotypes can be a problem. Violet, a multiracial Asian American who is part Latino, is a member of one of the few Asian families in her city. (Her state does have numerous areas densely populated with Asian Americans.) She reports being invisible as an Asian American and that she has often been grouped by local whites with Mexican Americans. A white counselor at her high school attempted to "reach out" and help students of color by taking them for one visit (and only one) to a local community college for a tour to "inspire" them to go to college:

She gave these really condescending spiels about how minorities have a lower higher-education [attendance] rate and how she wanted to change that—single-handedly, I guess. And it's really bad. And so we were going to get to spend a whole day, we got to miss school, and it was just really horrible. I was fuming at this point because she made it sound like we didn't know how to read or write. And then I . . . told her, "Are you kidding me? This is ridiculous!" And she goes, "Oh Violet, don't worry. You're going

to get a free lunch.” And I just got angry. I looked around. I knew another girl in there. She’d gotten into an Ivy League school. We couldn’t believe what she was doing, our dumb counselor. So we got up, left. I was so mad. She was angry that I left and embarrassed her in front of the counselors.

One of numerous talented students in her high school, Violet resisted her white counselor’s efforts, feeling insulted by the condescension. Her protests about the counselor’s comments were not even taken seriously, and her counselor apparently did not realize why students might be insulted. One reason for the counselor’s insensitivity may have been a racial framing of people of color. The largest group of color in Violet’s city and school was Mexican American, and local whites reportedly often stereotyped Mexican Americans as “lazy” and on welfare.

In Violet’s view, the white counselor, although likely well meaning, showed little understanding of the structural obstacles that students of color face daily. In the interview the counselor was described as “clueless” because she appeared to believe that just one day-trip to a junior college could counter the real economic and other resource barriers that kept many from considering college. Violet’s view seems to be this: the counselor thought that just because they had never been inside a college, they had not thought of attending—and not primarily that they faced major institutional barriers. In addition, such motivational efforts by white counselors and teachers eerily suggest the role of the white “savior” of people of color, one that is often showcased in major Hollywood films.¹¹ Being overly helpful to individuals of color, treating them as though they are unable to help themselves, typically involves a condescending framing and problematic stereotypes.

STOP HERE (I included the "college experience" pages in case you were curious to read more, but you do NOT need to read or annotate after this box.)

Yet More Discrimination: The College Experience

As our respondents moved from elementary, middle, and high schools to college and university settings, anti-Asian discrimination did not disappear. Their white peers were mostly young adults, although the maturation process did not always result in the development of open-mindedness and nondiscriminatory treatment. The racial stereotyping and framing that respondents experienced in colleges and universities were, in fact, often reminiscent of grammar school. For example, aforementioned incidents like the Alexandra Wallace “Asians in the Library” viral YouTube video indicate that universities are often not safe havens for Asian American students.

To take another example, white college students and other college-educated whites in California, home to the largest Asian American and Pacific Islander

population in the United States (about 5.6 million), reportedly use stereotyped language in discussing Asian American college students and certain state universities. Thus, common white nicknames for certain California universities belittle or express a racialized anger about large Asian American student populations there. For example, the University of California at Irvine (UCI) has been nicknamed by whites “the University of Chinese Immigrants,” and the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) has been nicknamed “the University of Caucasians Lost among Asians.”¹² Often the West Coast is viewed by many Americans as a more accepting place for Asian Americans compared to other regions, but these barbed nicknames suggest that numerous West Coast whites are not positively oriented to the academic achievements of young Asian Californians. One need only reflect on the *lack* of any such racially oriented nicknames when whites were most of the (or the only) students at these same universities to conceive how harsh and racialized these stereotypes really are. In addition, researchers have found that white college students in numerous other states also engage in racial mocking of, joking about, and sometimes attacks on Asians and Asian Americans.¹³

Thus, Asian international and Asian American students at U.S. colleges and universities report receiving a great array of stereotypes and discriminatory actions from their fellow white students. Richa, an Asian Indian student, describes some incidents at her prestigious southwestern university:

I’ve heard from a lot of people, Indian students who are doing engineering . . . [or] in the architecture department. If there’s an Indian student who just cooked, and then gone to the office, and he’s smelling like curry, professors have actually singled people out and told them, “Why don’t you shower?” And “why don’t you spray some cologne or something before you come to class because you smell like curry all the time,” and I found that very funny, but at the same time very demeaning as well. I wasn’t aware of this until very recently, about a year ago, when I heard it through somebody that this is how Indians were characterized, that we smell like curry. You know, there’s no way you can react to that besides saying that it’s a very weird stereotype.

Richa recognizes the insult and laughs at its absurdity. Demeaning stereotypes about people being smelly or dirty are a centuries-old part of the racial framing of people of color, and these white professors perpetuate them in barbed comments and other discriminatory actions in the offices and classrooms of such institutions of higher learning. Professors have powerful positions in regard to the self-esteem and careers of their students, and such actions likely make a

strong impression on students, signaling among other things that it is acceptable to stereotype in this harsh fashion.

Another respondent, Ming Huei, provides some insight into the exclusionary character of campus culture. She explains why Asian immigrants might feel left out at a historically white institution:

In college, predominantly white colleges, I don't know if people are as accepting. Not in general, "Oh, Asians are great." So, I don't know. Because at [my university], it was predominantly white. I had Asian friends and stuff, but they weren't accepted. I mean, one in particular, and he was immigrant himself—he wasn't born here. Because he was kind of more Asian than, say, us. He didn't have as much to talk about, football and things like that. He wouldn't consider any white people his friends because he didn't have anything to talk about.

Asian Americans and Asians frequently feel isolated in a white-centered world, which has its own distinctive norms for conversations. The cultural provincialism of whites is here suggested in the centrality of U.S. football as a topic of conversation, especially among male strangers. Those who do not know this unique U.S. sport often remain isolated. Still, Ming Huei seems reluctant to name as racist certain informal norms in her university environment. To her, her friend's inability to converse about U.S. sports and relate to white interests was the stated reason for his alienation. As we observe in other accounts, whites frequently deem Asian Americans as odd, foreign, or unacceptable because they do not understand U.S. popular culture, do not speak a certain white-accented English, practice different religions, eat strange food, have strange names, are too smart, or are too passive.

A Japanese American respondent quoted earlier, Alice, reported that she has had difficulties with whites since elementary school. This discrimination was evident in her experiences at a major historically white university, where she suffered much isolation or exclusion in white-dominated classroom spaces. Although there were numerous Asian American students there, they were unable to change the racial climate. Alice discusses some experiences:

I stayed there six years. I got my master's there too. And by the time I got my master's, I think I had—even the teachers told me, you know, "You have a lot to add. You can't be afraid to say what you think." And that was such a novel concept because even in [my] high school, all girl's Catholic school, and so there's a lot of discussion in class. And you felt comfortable because

it's all girls, and we're all sort of in the same boat. But when you get into a white [college] environment, I rarely did anything else, like participated in class ... because all the previous exposures I had to white people were none too pretty.

Throughout her interview Alice speaks of white-dominated environments that had debilitating effects on her, including when she was in classroom settings. Asian Americans have often been criticized, especially by whites, for being introverted or too academically focused. Alice pinpoints *why* she was quiet in white-dominated environments and found them intimidating. White privilege constantly means that whites do not have to change elements of mostly white or all-white environments that are hostile to people of color. Indeed, whites often purposely set up such environments to keep racial outsiders isolated and at bay.

Alice notes specific college experiences that made her feel this painful hostility and social isolation:

It would be really hard to have Caucasian friends [at the university], because they don't want to have anything to do with you. ... Most Caucasians, at that time again ... a lot of times I get really resentful, because what they would do to get a ticket in a football game, you had to be in a [sorority] rush line, and this was before lotteries and anything. And what they would do is they would save like 1,000 seats even though you get there at the crack of dawn, they would interject the rest of the sorority, and then all of sudden if you were second in line, you would be like 100th because all these [white sorority] people would cut in line ahead of you. And they seemed to have a certain clout and be much more a part of student government and all of that.

One might read this discrimination as just involving students involved with influential fraternities and sororities, and not a matter directly involving race. However, Alice's experience with much other mistreatment by white students indicates that there is likely a racial dimension. When asked to explain why whites felt it was okay to skip them in line, she responds thus:

They knew Asians really wouldn't do anything. I mean, now it's different, but back then, in the early '70s, '60s, Asians were seen as kind of docile, and then it was true. Why would you go and hassle when there's a majority? So we were taken advantage of, so it was more they just pushed their way in line, and you just knew that's what they were going to do, and nothing you could do or say would prevent it because there was just too many of

them. So, like okay, that's the power structure there, and you began to understand that's how it works.

The unwillingness of Asian American students to resist assertively overt discrimination was used by some whites as a stereotyped reason to discriminate further. Note too that almost all campus sororities and fraternities on historically white campuses when Alice was in college were all-white and openly discriminatory in choosing members, as indeed some still are today.

In further comments, Alice adds some thoughts on how she became adept at reading social signals emanating from affluent whites:

The cues were obvious. . . . These girls that came from [names wealthy city] and really wealthy areas of [city where university was]—they kind of snubbed their nose at people like me, who really were working their way through college and didn't have a lot of money for nice clothes. And you know, they always have the nice designer boutique clothes, and we just had jeans and T-shirts. And actually the Asians, there were a couple of clumps of places in the library where Asians would hang out; and we knew that the white folks would give us weird looks, but there wasn't any huge confrontation about it. But we know about [their] rules. Sometimes we would hear a comment, "Oh, those people, du-du-du-du, those state-supported people on scholarship."

The exclusionary discrimination was frequently coded in class terms. Alice reports that she and her Asian friends were not fooled by this socioeconomic coding and knew that white language and looks were often cover for racial prejudice. Indeed, recent analysis of contemporary white commentaries on other racial groups suggests that many have become skilled at talking "nasty about minorities without sounding racist."¹⁴ Alice's mention of the dominant "rules" that Asian American students understood in dealings with whites on campus reminds us of W. E. B. DuBois's discussion of the "double consciousness" about their lives that African Americans have developed.¹⁵ They must understand not only how they internally see themselves but also how whites see them. Asian Americans know what types of behaviors are acceptable in white-normed spaces and what subordinated roles they need to play. Alice and her friends knew that there were scattered places in the library where they were almost quarantined, and where they would get dirty looks from white passersby.

Interestingly, like some other respondents, Alice tries to play down contemporary racism by claiming that things are now different, even though throughout

her interview she describes recent incidents that show she is viewed as an outsider by many whites. Alice still faces discrimination at work and in her neighborhood. Noteworthy in her comments is her use of the past tense when referring to the stereotype of Asian Americans as “docile,” yet as we demonstrate throughout this book, the racial stereotype is still commonplace.

Violet, who lives in an area with a substantial Asian American population, was enrolled in a prestigious undergraduate program. Later, in law school, she became an officer in the Asian law society, an organization that welcomed students from all racial groups. When some of her society’s members discovered that the student representatives hired for an important bar review course were once again *all* white, in spite of the large numbers of students of color on campus, she went to her dean to challenge and eliminate the discrimination, but the dean did nothing. In her interview Violet comments that this “was especially surprising because law school is really diverse, and no one is really blatantly racist at all, or even covertly so.” Thus, Violet found it hard to believe that such discrimination could happen at her law school, again suggesting an assumption indicated by some respondents, as well as many other Americans, that attending colleges and universities necessarily lessens whites’ racist practices.

Another respondent, Jessica, had a similar experience at her prestigious university. She is a member of the Asian American student group that wrote the first detailed report ever about Asian Americans’ facing discrimination on her large campus. One obvious sign of discrimination at the university that the group cited is the fact that, although nearly a fifth of students are Asian American, not one was a member of important student government bodies. After the report was released, white administrators seemed mildly concerned but took no action, while white students generally said nothing. Indeed, the strongest negative public commentary came from some other Asian American students, who were upset that the report aired the “dirty linen” of campus and were thus afraid of a white backlash. Reflecting on all-white representation in key student government bodies, Jessica comments thus in her interview:

But who says they [whites] represent the student body, because they don’t. I mean there’s been one Asian American president in the whole history of student government. One. Our population is very great. There’s a reason why Asian Americans are not represented there, because they don’t want [us] to be there. That’s just the way it is, right? And, yeah, . . . then let’s break it down by ethnicity and see how well represented we are. I mean, come on, where are the Thai students [in student government], where are the Bangladeshi students, where are the Laotian and Cambodian students? Where are they? They’re not here, and there’s a reason. Why don’t we look

into that? But we don't, because our failures are masked by the failures of other ethnicities, and it's pathetic that that's what the university shows us: "Look, you know, we're doing our part, we're catering to your community. Look how many students apply and attend this university."

Jessica is skeptical of what the officials at the university are saying about the lack of involvement by Asian Americans in student government. As she describes it, the lack of Asian representation in student government has to do with the campus being historically white for many decades of its history. She keys in on the campus being "white space," as Alice did earlier, and accents the total absence in student government of numerous Asian groups (Thai, Laotian, Cambodian, Bangladeshi) and the token presence of one or two Asian students from other groups. She amplifies this latter point:

It's not inclusive space. So the students that are in student government, I mean if we break down the students of color that are in student government that actively work within their communities and are a part of their respective communities, it's few and far between. Those who are, are stars; it's so commendable, but it shouldn't be that way. It should be that there is a link between student government and students of color, but it's not. It's very hard to find these students, and it's by chance. . . . They are traditionally, historically white, privileged groups. . . . Just running for student government, it requires like thousands of dollars you have to raise. This is ridiculous. This is student organization. . . . Why do they have to raise thousands of dollars to put people into office? That automatically puts people out of the race. I mean, there is so much privilege that comes with being able to run.

Insightfully, Jessica points out that the few students of color who do enter into the ranks of student government must be campus superstars. She broadens her view to include African Americans and Latinos as well as Asian Americans. As overachievers, students of color who do make it into student government frequently must work alongside many less-qualified whites. Asian Americans enter the white campus and often have, as a group, high rates of educational attainment, yet they too are blocked out of much campus activity by overt or covert racial barriers.

Throughout U.S. history, government offices at all levels have been structured so as to keep them mostly white, especially at or near the top. Thus, white government officials have the power to reproduce again and again old structures of racial inequality, including those central to U.S. schools and colleges. White students benefit from attending schools and colleges typically provided by these

officials with more educational resources. Then they generally score higher on standardized college entrance tests that cater to them, then move on to more advantaged universities, and later enter the workforce where they typically have good (white) networks to better jobs. Whites as a group have been educationally, economically, and politically advantaged for all of U.S. history.¹⁶ Moreover, in the event a person of color manages to enter educational or job settings populated heavily by middle-class whites, he or she often has to overachieve to stay there, as well as endure the marginalizing realities of most such white-dominated environments.

A Bangladeshi American, Fareena, whom we met in Chapter 2, reports that at her college she moved in with white roommates. This all-white environment proved to be very challenging; indeed, her home life became a battleground:

I just moved in with three white roommates. It was a last-minute thing, and they've never lived with a nonwhite person before. So there are issues with cooking; there are issues with dating. "Why do you date a black guy?" It's like, "Am I supposed to date a white guy?" Who am I supposed to date because all their partners are white? And then different stupid questions about "do y'all worship this, and do you support Saddam Hussein" are always there.

Fareena continues with more detail on her recurring roommate problems:

Gosh, there are so many issues. And I was sleeping the other day, and her boyfriend was verbally attacking me, making curry jokes at me. Making fun of the fact that I like to lock the door. And saying, "Oh, we didn't lock the door, then Fareena is going to be mad because a bunch of crazy people are going to come inside the apartment," and all these sarcastic comments when I am right there! I was sleeping on the couch and he came in the apartment with her, and [he said] ... "I smell curry. I smell curry in the house. Someone must be here." And I have never cooked curry in the apartment yet. ... So, it has become a very racially tense house, but the racial things were first thrown at me. I buy Asian food every day. It has to be something Asian or Mexican ... something with flavor. And they think that it smells bad, and it smells like dead carcasses, and they're like, "Well that's just the type of food that you eat." And oh yeah, one of the girls kicked my dog and slammed the door on it. It's an itty bitty little thing, a Pekinese. Yeah, things have gotten really tense, really bad. Every day I have a story to share with my friends.

Fareena cannot find peace even in her home setting. She is questioned about her religious affiliation and her patriotism. Her food choices are like “dead carcasses,” which invokes common stereotyped notions of Asian cuisine being unrefined when compared to European American fare. Luckily for her, Fareena has a group of friends who are supportive and willing to lend an ear. As with numerous other Asian Americans, they often deal with racial mistreatment in silence.

Ann, a Vietnamese American, went to a major university. Like many schools in the North, hers had the reputation of being liberal. Yet she insists that, in spite of that reputation, they had significant problems with racism, sexism, and heterosexism. One series of events was so upsetting that it made her afraid to cook in her dorm. She explains the events:

Every year, you get hit with, there is always a homosexual or racial comment that goes on. But one that really, really, really will always stick with me was—I was a freshman and food for me is huge. As a freshman, I went to [names university], that’s only like forty-five minutes away, so every so often my mom would visit, and she would bring food up. All I would have to do was warm it up and eat it, and not eat the crappy dining hall food. Then, I don’t know what semester it was, there was a hall and some dorms have suites where it’s a common living room, a common kitchen, and a series of bedrooms, like dorm rooms. And one of the Asian females came home one night to a note that said, “Stop cooking your dog food and stinking up our hall!” That made huge, absolutely huge news on campus, of course, and huge discussion. . . . For me, when I heard that happened, and it also affected . . . a bunch of Vietnamese people. . . . I knew a handful of them that lived on that floor and that lived in that hall. . . . The culture events, and the fact they used “dog food,” and the woman that received the note was Asian—and here I am a lowly, new freshman student. My first reaction, for the next couple of weeks I was just terrified that here I am warming up my Vietnamese food in the common kitchen, maybe I would get bombarded with this message too. I was just so scared to warm up my food for a week or to cook anything, because I was so traumatized. . . . It didn’t really help that I knew the girl, or . . . that they were kind of attacked. It was horrible. It really made me feel self-conscious, and it really made me feel threatened.

The strength of her memory is notable. This happened her freshman year and remains one of the strongest of her memories of racist incidents. Note her words describing the incident and her feelings: “traumatized,” “horrible,”

“self-conscious,” and “threatened.” Stereotyped comments scribbled on a piece of paper had an intense impact. Although not a physical confrontation, the emotional effect was great.

Then Ann explains why the term “dog food” was particularly significant in this incident of anti-Asian hostility:

The fact that they used “dog food,” because you always hear, you know, both China and Vietnam are Communist countries, that you hear these horrible things about. I don’t know why, especially with Vietnam. I hear it sometimes, that people say about it in China too, but especially for the Vietnamese that they cook dog or that they eat dog. It just correlates with the Vietnamese for some reason. It made that even worse that of course they had to use “dog food” and not just “food,” that they have to tack on “dogs” to it too.

One white stereotype of Asian Americans, especially of those of Chinese or Vietnamese background, is that they are uncivilized people who eat lots of dogs, the favorite pet of many Americans. As children and as adults, many Asian Americans have had to endure pointed questions from whites about whether they participate in such a culinary practice.¹⁷ This negative stereotype insults and distances Asian Americans as odd, uncivilized, and un-American. Historically, indeed from the earliest decades of European colonialism in the fifteenth century, a central element of the conceptual framing of non-European peoples has been a casting of their cultures, including foods and food habits, as savage and uncivilized. In contrast, Western food habits, such as killing and eating calves and cows on a huge scale, are not seen in the same questioning framework. The ethnocentric stereotyping of Asians as uncivilized in dietary practices helps to reinforce the framing of white superiority versus Asian inferiority.¹⁸

Ann later speaks more about the discrimination she observed in her college environment, incidents that had a significant impact on her own life: “There were a lot of racial incidences. There was one after 9/11. There was an Arab American student, granted he was drunk, but he was walking by a frat [house], and yelling things. And the frat brothers threatened him, beat him up, called him a ‘towel head.’ You know, those types of things. There’s always been, every year . . . there’s one huge racial incident.” While these common racial incidents often involved other students of color, Ann indicates that they had an effect on her, such that she never really felt free or safe on this major historically white campus.

Fareena, the Bangladeshi American who faced self-image issues at her all-white high school, adds that her problems continued during her college years:

I had more overt incidence of racism my first year in college, which was when 9/11 happened. That was my first semester in a community college. And that's when I remember the first time actually getting angry. It was the morning of 9/11, and we were in a sociology class. . . . We were watching it on TV. And I couldn't figure out what was going on. I didn't even think "terrorism" or anything [like] that word would emerge at that time, but the professor and two other men in my class . . . started talking about Middle Eastern people, that they were behind it. And then the next week we studied religion in class. And we were looking at a graph of how many Christians exist in America, how many Buddhists, how many Muslims. And so we were looking at the very small percentage of Muslim people that are in America compared to Christian people. And the professor said something to the effect of, "By looking at the stats of, you know, how small the Muslim population is you'd think we would be winning the war against terror, but they're infiltrating everywhere."

Hostile stereotypes articulated by classmates and a professor felt like personal attacks on her national origin and cultural identity. Appalled at the stereotyped generalizations, Fareena continues by describing her own reactions:

And at that time I identified as Muslim American; I practiced it in a sense. I didn't really give it a lot of thought, but at that time I felt really defensive and I remember speaking out in class. And then all these class members were like, "Why don't you cover yourself up like the other women do? We have been watching how Muslim women are supposed to be, you're not even a real Muslim woman." And then I felt like, damn, I need to read the Koran and find the section of the Koran that says women don't necessarily have to cover their hair. And that's more of a cultural practice than a religious one. I felt the need to defend so many things, and I felt like I needed to defend that I was a good person and that my family was [good].

Note the risks of speaking out against such racial-ethnic stereotyping, for here that generated more verbal attacks that articulated yet more stereotypes. This is a common report from Americans of color who do speak out against the commonplace stereotyping and discrimination.

Fareena then describes how her brother was targeted by the university police. After a fistfight involving several people at a fraternity party, he was the only one who had a warrant out for his arrest after the incident and taken into custody:

He was treated very badly, and like he had to stay in jail. We couldn't afford to get him out for a while. And then we still had to pay fines. We're still paying the bail money. And then I talked about what had happened in [my] class: about when our lawyers had asked the judge to be a bit more lenient because it was a very short, brief fight and it could [jeopardize] his status in America. . . . He could get deported; and the other side, the other lawyers, were like, "Well now this is a matter of national security. Look at him he's an engineering student, a threat. I'm threatened by him. And I think he should get a harsher sentence." The whole [university police department] not communicating at all, and then not being available for questioning or [to] even ask them why do you treat students this way? Why do you shackle them? Why do you not even let them know that they're being investigated? Or that there are warrants out for them? And the [police department] in the past few years, if you look that different, you will be treated differently.

The reactions of the university police and prosecuting attorneys here involve substantial stereotyping and overt discrimination. Fareena's brother was an excellent student with no prior record, yet he was a dark-skinned Asian American whom these whites perceived as "foreign" and a threat to "national security." This latter view revealed significant ignorance of geography on the part of these whites. He was shackled and taken to jail for getting in a brief fight, although the others in the fight were not. His dark skin likely contributed to the police discrimination. In her interview Fareena notes that both her brother and father are often assumed by others to be "black," while her mother is often taken "for white." She herself is often mistaken "for Latina." She indicates that this variation in the way whites and others perceive members of her family has created diverse racialized experiences for them. Yet one thing they share is an inability of others to see their Bangladeshi American identity. Even though Fareena and her family have been in the United States for some years, and her father has indeed become a proud U.S. citizen, they are still sometimes treated as "dangerous foreigners."

The discrimination reported in our respondents' narratives varies in severity and type, but each discriminatory action was recalled with some pain. Memories of past discrimination still evoke significant emotions; there is even some reliving in the telling of these accounts. Time clearly does not remedy or heal the wounds. Racial memories accumulated during college and unfortunately continue to increase as the respondents have moved into jobs and careers in an array of U.S. workplaces.