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Sabrina Jin April 5, 2020

New Perspectives on Race and Racism Among Brazilians of Asian Descent

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Abstract

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Spikes in anti-Asian violence during the COVID-19 pandemic have elicited a variety of responses from Asian Americans living in the United States, but less is known about how Brazilians of Asian descent perceive and cope with COVID-19 associated racism. Questions of race and racism are further complicated in the Brazilian context due to popular belief in the notion of "racial democracy," which suggests that Brazil has overcome racism and is now colorblind to race. This thesis wields ethnographic methods of participant observation and includes 21 semi-structured interviews conducted with self-identifying Asian Brazilian scholars and antiracist activists. Analysis of interview data demonstrated a propensity for intraethnic conflict that was particularly exacerbated by tensions resulting from COVID-19 associated anti-Chinese hate. My research identifies and examines three proximate explanations for this lack of group cohesion and solidarity: different beliefs on the nature of racism in Brazil, varying countries of origin, and different generational perspectives on the utility of activism. I also explore how COVID-19 associated anti-Asian racism perpetuates historically continuous themes of the Yellow Peril and the Model Minority narrative in ways that further challenge Asian Brazilian activist solidarity. This narrative-driven ethnography ultimately serves to illustrate the form and function of anti-Asian racism in Brazil and the manner by which this racial violence is internalized.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction

I. Research Motivations

News of racially-motivated attacks against elderly Asian immigrants struck close to home as I stood in watchful apprehension while living with my grandparents in the San Francisco Bay Area. According to analyses from the San Francisco Police Department, anti-Asian violence rose significantly throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism reported a 160% increase in cases of anti-Asian hate crime from nation-wide Sinophobia associated with the pandemic's origin in China (CSUSB 2021). In various hotspots such as the city of San Francisco, figures of hate crime exploded by as much as 567% during 2021 alone (Chan and Martin 2022).

Sinophobia—defined as the fear of China, Chinese people, or Chinese culture—was undeniably pushed to the forefront of national conversation following the fatal shooting of six U.S.-Asian American women at *Atlanta Gold Spa* on March 16, 2021. As the nation rumbled with an uproar for justice, many were quick to label 2021 as the "Year of Hatred Against Asian Americans" (Hansen 2021). While witnessing the sudden media coverage addressing recent spikes in anti-Asian hate, I found myself feeling torn: As a second-generation U.S- Asian American, I empathized with the sorrow and anxiety experienced by those who live with the perpetual fear of racially-motivated violence. I was therefore pleased to observe increased media coverage on the need for justice. At the same time, I felt frustrated and unsatisfied with the way that COVID-19 associated anti-Asian hate was portrayed.

My training in cultural anthropology has made it all too clear that outbursts of racial violence are rarely as simple and sudden as they appear. Spikes in anti-Asian hate must instead be interpreted with regards to overarching racial structures and the historical continuity of

Sinophobia. Thus, “the Year of Hatred Against Asian Americans” is not so much an isolated spike in COVID-19 associated racism as the phrase itself implies, but rather one spike in the continuation of centuries-long discrimination.

There is also historical precedence around the tendency for spikes in racial violence to erupt during periods of national crises. For instance, the propensity for COVID-19 to inspire anti-Asian slurs involving the rhetoric of disease may be likened to the labeling of the H1N1 virus as the “Spanish flu” of 1918. Scholars believe that creating an association between disease and foreigners is often used as a political strategy to quell nation-wide anxiety through the establishment of a scapegoat (Viladrich 2021). This may explain why politicians across the globe used the COVID-19 pandemic to condemn individuals of Asian descent over their alleged responsibility for being vectors of disease (Quinan, Araujo, and Albuquerque 2021).

Given this history of xenophobic discrimination, it came as somewhat of a surprise to find members of my surrounding Asian American community believing that COVID-19 association racism originated without any historical precedence. Through further observation, I noticed two trends regarding their attitudes towards the rise in hate crimes: First, there was the tendency to overlook the historicity of anti-Asian hate, perhaps reflecting the narrative portrayed by popular media. This observation was made evident through their supposed astonishment, as aptly expressed by one of my friends: “I am just in shock...I really didn’t think racism caused by COVID-19 could make some people so evil.” While this shock was a common element, I also made a second observation that individual responses towards racial violence appeared to differ across age. College-aged peers, including the one quoted above, generally rallied together in activism and indignation. On the other hand, middle-aged adults within my parents’ circles wanted to quell what they described as “making too much fuss.” Differential interpretations

undeniably produced conflict among members of my community and was especially evidenced through parent-child disagreement over the topic of racism.

These observations of my surrounding community—namely, the tendency to overlook the historicity of anti-Asian hate, and the variation in responses across age—fueled my inspiration for this research project. I was also particularly interested in dimensions of the model minority narrative, which loosely characterizes individuals of Asian descent as naturally hardworking and submissive, as a potential source of intergenerational conflict (Museus and Kiang 2009). As such, I aim to build the foundation of this thesis upon the historicity of anti-Asian hate in the Western hemisphere in order to counter narratives that undercut incidences of violence as merely isolated events.

II. Why Brazil?

Brazil offers a compelling site to explore the historical and contemporary manifestations of anti-Asian racism because it hosts the largest community of Japanese descendants outside of Japan. Brazil has also received waves of immigration from Korea, China, Taiwan, and other parts of Asia, thus representing a significant community of the Asian diaspora in the Western Hemisphere (Ezawa 2005). However, this populous community remains relatively unknown among my peers from the United States. There is likewise a dearth of research focusing on the Asian Brazilian community, especially when it comes to discussions of race and racism in Brazil. For instance, a google scholar search on the terms “race in Brazil” only yields results that discuss matters concerning Black and White Brazilians. Using the search function on a journal piece titled “Politics, Nationality, and the Meanings of ‘Race in Brazil’” reveals zero mention of “Asian” or “Yellow,” yet 119 mentions of “Black” and 55 mentions of “White” (Fry 2000).

Beyond this scarcity of existing research, I also became fascinated by the topic of anti-Asian racism in the Brazilian context because it may offer new perspectives compared to ethnographies conducted in the U.S. As will be further explored in Chapter 2.2, Brazil presents a unique backdrop for the study of race and racism because of Brazilians' popular belief in a non-racist "racial democracy" (Twine 1998). This denial over the very existence of racism may pose particular difficulty for individuals experiencing racism-related suffering. According to studies conducted by psychologists in the United States, U.S.-Asian Americans also internalize high levels of racial trauma because racism and mental health are both stigmatized topics in Asian cultures (Misra et al. 2020). I believe that Brazilians of Asian descent may face similar challenges with stigma, especially when combined with model minority stereotypes and the enduring belief that Brazil is a non-racist racial democracy.

III. Intraethnic Antiracist Solidarity

My initial research intent was to explore broad strokes of COVID-19 associated racial violence against Brazilians of Asian descent. However, due to my sampling methods—as will be outlined in Chapter 3—my research sample only consisted of 21 individuals who all self-identified as an "Asian Brazilian antiracist activist." Each have secured a relatively high educational degree, most often in a social science field pertaining to the study of Asians in Brazil. I quickly realized that this extremely narrow research sample was likely not representative of the general population of Asian Brazilians. While this limited my ability to consider the broad topic of anti-Asian racism in Brazil, it did offer nuanced insight into the experiences of those engaging in antiracist activism against anti-Asian hate. In a very "meta" manner, I had unique access into analyzing how Asian Brazilian activists analyzed matters pertaining to race and racism.

The given sample population motivated my decision to center my analysis on the topic of Asian Brazilian antiracist activism. This research inquiry further was further revised early during the interview process when I noticed that many respondents highlighted interpersonal conflict as a hindrance towards their activist efforts. When it became clear to me that group cohesiveness has been especially difficult to achieve, I tailored the remaining interviews to specifically probe about obstacles towards solidarity. This is what influenced the development of my work towards the topic of intraethnic antiracist solidarity.

There is a wealth of work exploring the topic of "interracial solidarity," or the solidarity between members of varying ethnoracial populations (Jung 2016). For instance, Chinese American artist Monyee Chau re-popularized the slogan #YellowPerilSupportsBlackPower in response to the #BlackLivesMatter movement following the murder of George Floyd in 2020 (Kang 2021). A 2021 sociological study suggested that perceptions of job discrimination foster Black-Asian interracial commonality, whereas interpersonal discrimination from White Americans fosters Hispanic-Asian commonality in the United States (Huang 2021). The Hispanic American Historical Review analyzed the persistence of racial hierarchies despite reports of Black-White solidarity among working class Brazilians in 20th century São Paulo (Andrews 1988).

However, less is known about what I would describe as "intraethnic solidarity," or the group cohesiveness within an individual ethnoracial category. Among this dearth of knowledge, emerging research on this topic of study increasingly calls for the addition of nuance when making claims about certain ethnoracial groups. Anthropologist Marie L. Mallet makes this clear by demonstrating the demographic and cultural diversity among Latino immigrants in Miami, Florida. She illustrates how reductionistic it would be to continue generalizing them into the

socially and politically constructed category of "Latino." Instead, more critical exploration of what she calls "intra-group dynamics" would reveal significant divisions between this so-called "community" because many immigrants do not associate with a pan-ethnic Latino identity.

Scattered literature reveals a myriad of factors that serve as barriers to intraethnic solidarity. For example, Mallet's research suggests that these Latino immigrants' different countries of origin account for some of the friction experienced among this Latino "community" (Mallet and Pinto-Coelho 2018). Similar research examining interactions between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants considers how immigration status may also plays a role in complicating Mexican intraethnic solidarity. On the other hand, their shared racial background and class position may encourage cooperative mobilization for intraethnic activism (Ochoa 2000). Research analyzing the pan-ethnic U.S.-Asian American identity shows how differences in class and social status may hinder their pursuit for intraethnic solidarity (Ong et al. 1994). At the same time, the presence of a competing racial group may boost U.S.-Asian American collective action while ameliorating the differences otherwise posed by these individuals' varying national origins (Okamoto 2003).

These findings demonstrate the complexity of intraethnic solidarity and invite further research that may supply aspects of nuance to socially constructed notions of pan-ethnic identity. My research is well-suited for this task because my sample consists of Asian Brazilian activists who loved sharing about sources of conflict and their ongoing pursuit for intraethnic group cohesion. To be more specific than "intraethnic solidarity," I will investigate the topic of "intraethnic activist solidarity" because of my respondents' unique identity and activity as "Asian Brazilian antiracist activists." My findings exploring these challenges to intraethnic activist solidarity will be outlined in Chapter 3.

IV. Proximate and Ultimate Research Goals

Mirroring anthropological practice commonly employed by evolutionary theorists, I seek to organize my findings by distinguishing between proximate and ultimate research questions. As indicated by biological anthropologist Thomas Scott-Phillips, proximate explanations describe how behaviors work, and ultimate explanations describe why the behavior exists (Scott-Phillips et al. 2011). I will adapt and apply these concepts for my cultural anthropology thesis as such: proximate research goals will focus on supplying the most immediate explanation to a given phenomenon. Like Scott-Phillip's example of "how behaviors work," my proximate questions will explore *what* and *how* certain factors stir conflict among my sample of Asian Brazilian activists. Ultimate research goals will expand upon proximate questions by explaining how the historical and contemporary sociopolitical climate may influence that "most immediate explanation to a given phenomenon." Parallel to describing "why the behavior exists," I will consider broader implications to explain *why* certain factors contribute to conflict.

Chapter 3 will explore these proximate research goals by investigating particular barriers that prevent the achievement of intraethnic antiracist solidarity among Brazilian activists of Asian descent. For instance, I question whether Brazil's diversity in Asian immigrants would cause friction between individuals from different national origins, as suggested by Mallet's research on the Latino "community" in Miami (Mallet and Pinto-Coelho 2018). I further explore how Sinophobia during COVID-19 may exacerbate tension between Japanese and Chinese Brazilians.

Ultimate research goals will explore *why* these factors, such as differences in national origins, may result in intraethnic conflict. As I provide explanations by drawing upon the historical and present-day sociopolitical context, I will fulfill another ultimate goal of couching

my analysis within the historicity of anti-Asian racism in Brazil. Chapter 2 will begin this task by providing a review of the literature on the history of Asians in Brazil. Chapter 4 will complete this ultimate analysis by theorizing why certain historically continuous elements, such as the model minority narrative, may worsen conflict between Asian Brazilian antiracist activists.

V. An Anthropology of Anti-Asian Racism

Beyond following the anthropological tradition of examining proximate and ultimate findings, I also wish to address the anthropological intention of my ethnographic research (Scott-Phillips et al. 2011). This project was partially born out of my curiosity for investigating anthropological theories of racialization pertaining to individuals of Asian descent, and comes as a response to the disappointment I faced when observing a startling dearth of existing research. These observations may be best characterized by describing the process I used to pinpoint previous anthropological literature on theories of anti-Asian racism:

Faced by the pressure to situate my findings within the existing dialogue, I went to AnthroSource—the largest database containing publications from the American Anthropological Association—and used "anti-Asian racism" in my keyword search. The results that emerged as organized by degree of relevance appeared to consist of two primary types of literature: The first type generally considered the study of "Asians" within the context of Asian-Black solidarity, which was often connected to recent publications regarding from the #BlackLivesMatter movement. The second type of publication covered theories of race and racism, but operated within a Black-White dichotomy with no mention of Asians or any other non-Black, minority population.

I was astounded by these findings because I could not imagine a more straightforward keyword search than "anti-Asian racism." It baffled me how "anti-Asian racism" could yield

zero results pertaining to the actual study of theories on anti-Asian racism. Given the lack of coverage among anthropological publications, I eventually had to turn to journals dedicated to education and Asian American studies in order to access relevant research. The synthesis of my findings from these other sources will be discussed in the literature review from Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Nonetheless, I desperately wish to emphasize this gap in the research because it reveals how anthropological dialogues on race continue to revolve under the gaze of White supremacy. Increasing attentiveness towards White power and anti-Black racism are only beginning to emerge due to the works of antiracist scholars who expose the racism influencing American anthropology (Baker 2021). Despite this promising advancement, I believe that these scholars' racial theories continue to alienate the study of other ethnoracial populations that are not adequately represented by a Black-White dichotomy.

Not only does current anthropological discourse lack scholarly consideration for the study of Asians, but I would also argue that such research on anti-Asian racism can, and should be, intrinsically anthropological. For instance, U.S.-Asian American scholar Yen Le Espiritu's work calls for increased research on the racialization of an Asian American identity. In doing so, she specifically highlights how "external, structural conditions" as well as "cultural factors" influence "the construction and maintenance of [Asian American] ethnicity" (Espiritu 1992). Understanding processes of racialization would therefore implicate and further reveal these "structural" and "cultural" forces, which already heavily engages with the interdisciplinary way of inquiry employed by cultural anthropologists. Moreover, ethnography and participant observation rise to the forefront as useful tools for analyzing the nature of anti-Asian racism and

processes of racialization. These anthropological methods are well-suited for analyzing everyday narratives and capturing particular sentiments in a nuanced manner.

In short, anthropology has much to offer for the study of anti-Asian racism, and continuing to disregard these important conversations would deprive the field of its fuller potential to act as an agent of change. Exploration beyond the Black-White binary also highlights the complexity of racial formation as it pertains to structural and symbolic violence in contemporary society (Omi and Winant 2014). My ethnography on the Asian Brazilian diaspora seeks to bring such conversation into the anthropological dialogue, with the hope of participating in the larger effort of spurring the field onwards towards its antiracist responsibility.

Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature on Asian Brazilian History and Antiracist Activism

I. Western Colonialism and the History of Asian Migration to Brazil

I begin by reiterating the ultimate goal of my thesis: to explore how and why underlying sociopolitical factors instigate conflict among my sample of Asian Brazilian antiracist activists. To fulfill another goal of couching my analysis within the historicity of anti-Asian racism and activism in Brazil, I start this chapter with a brief overview of Brazilian history. This section will provide background information from the beginning of Brazilian colonialism to the arrival of Japanese and Chinese immigrants to Brazil.

Portuguese sailors came to what is present-day Brazil in the year 1500 as an accidental encounter on their route to India (Fonseca 2006). Eager to capitalize on the availability of exotic resources and generate wealth through agriculture, early settlers exploited the indigenous Tupinambá as a source of labor. Like the trajectory faced by many indigenous populations in other parts of the Western Hemisphere, the Tupinambá quickly succumbed to the violent

enslavement and disease brought from Europe. The Portuguese then turned to the lucrative Atlantic slave trade in order to maintain a stable labor force.

The oppression of African slaves boosted the colonial economy for over three centuries as settlers gained large profits through sugar production and the acquisition of gold (Klein and Luna 2009). The accumulation of wealth was then invested into development projects that transformed the landscape into a more autonomous and hospitable region, eventually attracting increasing numbers of European settlers and leading to the declaration of independence from Portugal in 1822 (Bethell 1969). The abolition of slavery came half a century later, around 350 years after it began, when Princess Isabel de Bragança signed the "Golden Law" into effect (The Brazilian Report, 2020). In 1888, Brazil became the last country in the Western Hemisphere to outlaw enslavement.

Landowners initially hoped to attract European immigrants as a replacement labor source following the official abolition of slavery. However, Brazil's tropical climate and still relatively underdeveloped conditions proved unappealing to Europeans who favored settling in other parts of the Western hemisphere. Desperately in need of laborers, the Brazilian government increasingly turned to Asia for attracting new immigrants.

Brazil's interest in Asia began in the early 15th century when Portugal became the first European state to have direct contact with China (Lesser 1999). A history of maritime trade relations naturally positioned the Chinese as a favorable ethnic group in the eyes of Europeans. At the same time, theories of Social Darwinism popularized the belief that individuals of Asian descent, described in the past as "Orientals," possessed genetic and moral superiority that was comparable to Europeans (Lee 2018). Eugenicists, who supported both Chinese and Japanese

immigration, thus had reason to classify "Oriental" as a distinct racial category with particular affinity for hard work and labor.

Racial theorists also applied beliefs from Social Darwinism to create false constructions of a Black-White continuum. According to their arguments, those with lighter skin pigmentation would be recognized as being the most socially, culturally, and morally advanced. This now-debunked theory placed White Europeans at the highest rung of a purported evolutionary ladder while darker-skinned individuals of African descent were relegated at the bottom. Scholarly thought placed Orientals as a close second on this ladder, located right behind White Europeans, when it came to the degree of evolutionary advancement (Lee 2018). Therefore, proponents of immigration viewed them as an ideal source of labor not only because of belief in their superior work ethic, but also because of their assigned positionality on this evolutionary ladder.

The social effect of widespread Asian immigration to Brazil was a highly contested topic among Brazilian elites. Beyond increasing the labor source, some proponents also believed that Chinese and Japanese immigration could Whiten the existing gene pool through racial miscegenation with undesirable darker-skinned groups. For instance, a number of Brazilian elites claimed that the introduction of Asians could influence Brazil's cultural and genetic composition to eventually eradicate the Afro-Brazilian race (dos Santos 2002). They hoped that generations of mixing would similarly facilitate minority populations' cultural assimilation into Whiteness, thus allowing Brazil to achieve a White national identity (Penha-Lopes 1996).

This optimism was met with simultaneous backlash from many who feared that increased Asian immigration would only pollute the existing gene pool and threaten national security. They characterized Asians as "the Yellow race," an addition that would further muddy what was considered an already darkened gene pool. Despite belief that Asian immigration could be a

solution to the labor shortage crisis following emancipation, Brazilian elites also held many reservations about its potential social ramifications (Lee 2007). This nervousness originated from stereotypes regarding the Chinese as inherently durable, intelligent, and easy to control, a popular characterization that set the foundation for what is known today as "the model minority" narrative (Skidmore 1999).

The unease with Asian immigration was evident through the words of Eça de Queiroz, known in his time as one of the greatest literary geniuses and influencers of modern thought: "*China has a population of four hundred million men (nearly one-third of humanity!); they are all extremely intelligent, an army of ants, with persistence and tenacity only comparable to bull-dogs."* As indicated by this derogatory metaphor, many nationalists feared that the alleged "tenacity" of Chinese laborers would overpower White European labor (Lee 2018). Racial miscegenation would therefore not only move Brazil further away from achieving a national identity of Whiteness; it could also threaten the economic power of Brazilian elites. This fear became described as "the Yellow peril," which further motivated landowners to control immigrants under unusually cruel labor conditions (Nascimento 2013).

Competing aspirations from Brazilian elites resulted in both the welcoming of Asian immigrants and their subsequent oppression. Young Chinese and Japanese laborers, motivated by their desperation to escape poverty and war in their homelands, were promised with the potential for new beginnings in a foreign land. However, deceptive labor contracts and oppressive labor conditions prevented them from achieving social mobility or securing a passageway back to Asia. Subsequent financial loss propelled many into debt and effectively bound them to indentured servitude for life (Tsuda 1999). These deceitful and exploitative

conditions continued well into 20th century Brazil, eventually resulting in the mass suffering of over 250,000 Asian immigrants arriving between 1908 to 1950 (“Brasil 500 Anos” 2007).

Exploring the history of immigrant suffering once again feeds back into the ultimate goal of situating present-day experiences of anti-Asian racism within a historical context. For instance, understanding experiences of exploitation from the past provides important insight into the current effects of generational trauma, a theme that will be further explored in Chapter 3. These stories also capture the historical continuity of racialized tropes from “the Yellow Peril” and “the Model Minority Narrative,” two topics that still work in conjunction to shape the racialization of Asian Brazilians today.

II. Challenging the Myth of Brazilian Racial Democracy

As briefly highlighted in Chapter 1, conflict between my Asian Brazilian respondents has threatened their group cohesion and posed obstacles to solidarity in antiracist activism. I thus move onward in this literature review to narrow my focus around the topic of antiracist activism. To begin, I will first provide background information pertinent to understanding race and racism within the Brazilian context. This section will also supply underlying context that will become relevant to my analysis of race, racism, and activism in Chapter 3.

I want to start by making it clear that conversations regarding racism and antiracist activism often differ between U.S. and Brazilian contexts. For instance, racial categories on the Brazilian census include “Amarela,” or “Yellow,” to account for individuals of Asian descent. My Asian Brazilian interview participants willingly self-identify as Amarela without any reservations. However, this sort of racial identification with such emphasis on color would arguably come as a shock for my peers in the U.S. context because addressing U.S.-Asian Americans as “Yellow” would be perceived as an immense insult.

The sensitivity and discomfort that comes with this racialized rhetoric of color is especially evidenced by the outcry in 2010 to rename Atlanta's Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)'s "Yellow Line" as the "Gold Line." The significance of this event is explained by the fact that the now-called "Gold Line" travels through the Doraville, a city that houses a large population of U.S.-Asian Americans. This association conceivably implies that racial demographics determined the previous labeling of this path as the "Yellow Line" (Hart, n.d.).

The differences between U.S. and Brazilian conceptions of race extend beyond disagreements over the appropriate terminology for addressing individuals of Asian descent. Whereas the "one-drop rule" in the U.S. has historically resulted in the popular perception of a Black-White dichotomy, Brazilian scholars believe that Brazil presents a more fluid spectrum of race due to their emphasis on mixed-race demographics, or the "mestiçagem" (Daniel 2022). These demographics, as well as differing interpretations of racial categorization, produce varying attitudes on the nature and severity of racism (Pravaz 2008).

According to Brazilian anthropologist Gilberto Freyre from the early 20th century, Portuguese colonialists held relatively relaxed attitudes towards mixed-race relations between individuals of European, African, and Indigenous descent. While many other colonies in the Western Hemisphere attempted avoiding what was coined "racial miscegenation" in order to maintain White purity, Brazilian colonists instead viewed mixed-race relations as a viable solution to their labor shortage crisis. The raping of Black and Indigenous women also became a common practice not only for the exertion of White male power, but also to increase the enslaved labor force as mixed-race children continued under the subjugation of their White fathers (Aidoo 2018).

The resulting abundance of "mestiços," or mixed-race people created a large category of individuals for whom racial composition was difficult to discern. In U.S. contexts, these individuals would have likely been characterized as Black due to the belief that any amount of African ancestry was sufficient for this categorization (Fairlie 2009). On the other hand, the mestiçagem in Brazil became part of a large category of individuals who were described to have "racial ambiguity" (Telles 2002).

Freyre argued that these conditions of racial ambiguity allowed Brazil to eventually erase prejudice and achieve a multiracial, multicultural national identity that grew colorblind to race. He therefore popularized the belief that racism would necessarily cease to exist in a nation that no longer recognized the concept of race. This notion that early 20th century Brazil had advanced beyond many other postcolonial nations in overcoming the issue of racism would later be coined as Brazilian "racial democracy" (Twine 1998).

Historian Richard Drayton believes that Freyre's "racial democracy" derived influence from a parallel movement occurring in the United States as influenced by modern anthropology's founding father, Franz Boas (Drayton 2011). Boasian anthropology of the 20th century represented a drastic shift in the field, especially with its departure from anthropology's previous investment in the notion of biological determinism. According to this notion, the inextricable connection between biology and culture provided support for eugenic principles targeting darker-skinned groups as being genetically predisposed to backward forms of culture (Graves Jr. 2015). Boas' subsequent attack on biological determinism stemmed from his desperation to separate anthropology from its history of scientific racism. What emerged from his efforts, however, was not an anthropology of antiracism: Boasian influence instead propelled the field into one that sought for the insignificance of race, which indeliberately resulted in anthropology's paralysis in

antiracist activism (M. Beliso-De Jesús and Pierre 2020). In a similar vein, aversion to concepts of race also deprived anthropological discipline of the power to highlight and dismantle power structures of White supremacy (Harrison 1995).

Gilberto Freyre completed his masters thesis at Columbia University in 1923 after years of mentorship from Franz Boas (Skidmore 2002). Boasian influence was therefore evident in Freyre's conception of Brazilian racial democracy, which similarly placed emphasis on colorblindness to race (Burke and Pallares-Burke 2008). The results were comparable: just as Boasian anthropology ceased direct engagement with antiracist ideology, racial democracy similarly hindered recognition of Brazil's lasting racism.

Abundant progress has been made still then in dismantling the idea of racial democracy. Scholars in the latter half of the 20th century began rapidly turning a critical eye as increasing amounts of expository work revealed a plethora of discriminatory attitudes against Afro-Brazilians and others with mixed-race ancestry (Andrews 1996). The notion that Brazil was colorblind to race was also overturned as a myth because of its inability to explain the disproportionate atrocities committed against darker-skinned Brazilians, particularly evidenced through police brutality and socioeconomic inequality (French 2013). These studies provide hope that overturning the myth of racial democracy may advance antiracist activist efforts for Afro-Brazilians and other mixed-raced individuals (da Silva Martins 2004). What is less clear is how the element of racial democracy affects Brazilians of Asian descent.

Sean T. Mitchell and Edward Telles are two of today's prominent scholars working to dismantle the notion of racial democracy. Mitchell's ethnographic work in Northeastern Brazil highlights anti-Black racism by elucidating the subtle ways that Afro-Brazilians and mixed-raced individuals face continuous pressures to Whiten. The prominence of anti-Blackness is especially

shown through the tendency for mixed-race individuals to self-identify as White. Mitchell argues that these observations are evidence of racial ambiguity, which provides darker-skinned individuals the ability to Whiten as a coping mechanism against anti-Black discrimination (Mitchell 2017).

Sociologist Telles similarly exposes implicit anti-Black racism through the finding that interviewers are more likely to classify mixed-raced individuals as White if the individual holds an advanced educational degree. This bias is the most apparent in regions of Brazil that have high proportions of individuals with "ambiguous" ancestry. Telles additionally asserts that this inherent association between education and Whiteness reveals underlying notions of White superiority that result from systemic inequalities in access to quality education (Telles 2002).

While Mitchell and Telles similarly criticize Freyre's myth of racial democracy, they do so by continuing to allude to the notion of "racial ambiguity." Both scholars argue that the power of White supremacy causes those with "ambiguous" ancestry to experience what Telles describes as pressures for "everyday Whitening." However, conversations that I have with Brazilians of Asian descent—including many with mixed-race ancestry—indicate that racial ambiguity, like racial democracy, may also be a myth. My analysis and interpretation leading to this critique will be further explored in Chapter 3 and 4.

Understanding the history of anthropological inquiry into race and racism is vital context for research that seeks to dismantle remnants of Freyre's racial democracy. It also demonstrates how belief in a non-racist society has been shown to hinder antiracist activism. This leads me to wonder how lingering notions of racial democracy may affect Brazilians of Asian descent in their efforts to pursue antiracist activism. In particular, it reiterates back to an ultimate research goal of understanding how sociopolitical contexts, such as the underlying myth of racial

democracy, may contribute to disagreements among my interview participants regarding the existence or nature of anti-Asian racism.

III. The Asian Brazilian Negotiation of National Identity

As mentioned in Chapter 1, it appears that intraethnic solidarity can be difficult to achieve between individuals with different national origins, even if they share the same pan-ethnic identity. This finding from anthropologist Marie L. Mallet's ethnography on Latino "communities" brings attention to the topic of differing national origins as a salient explanatory factor for challenges to intraethnic solidarity (Mallet 2018). It led me to wonder whether Asian Brazilians' different countries of origin—such as individuals from Japan or China—would also be a source of conflict that impedes their intraethnic solidarity.

A google scholar search with various combinations of the keywords "Asian," "Yellow," "Oriental," "Brazil," "Japanese," "Chinese," and "Solidarity" unfortunately yielded zero relevant results. I could not find any prior investigation into the topic of intraethnic solidarity among Asian Brazilians from differing countries of origin, let alone the broader topic of Asian Brazilian solidarity itself. This overall scarcity of existing research made for a difficult and nebulous research landscape.

I did find promising insight from historian Jeffrey Lesser's *Negotiating National Identity* (Lesser 2007). Lesser's research involving Brazilians of Asian descent—predominantly those with Japanese or Chinese ancestry—sheds light into the particularities of my research population. He further explores the phenomenon of "negotiating national identity" to describe how immigrants and their descendants self-identify with varying national identities as a strategy for avoiding discrimination. This section will explore Lesser's historical research to glean insight

for my present-day analysis of challenges to activist solidarity among Brazilians of Asian descent.

Negotiating National Identity describes how Japanese Brazilian immigrants received national scrutiny as "the Yellow Peril" while simultaneously being viewed as "the Model Minority" (Lesser 2007). This dual characterization varied depending on context: Nationalists who feared potential social pollution through the introduction of "Orientals" were quick to criticize the invitation of the Japanese. On the other hand, proponents of immigration idealized "Orientals" due to stereotyped beliefs in their hardworking character. Social Darwinist theories also popularized the notion of "Yellow" as an intermediate step between Black to White that could potentially bring the nation closer to their desired agenda of Whitening Brazil's racial composition (Lee 2018).

Lesser argues that these two narratives worked in conjunction to shape the racialization of Japanese Brazilians and their descendants. Attempts to evade characterization as "the Yellow Peril" caused many to adopt a submissive and low-laying attitude in hopes of avoiding public attention (Lesser 1999). At the same time, rising xenophobic attitudes towards the Japanese forced many to strive for assimilation into a Brazilian national identity. Immigrants found refuge by emphasizing pride in becoming Brazilian while excising remaining connections to Japan. This coping mechanism against increasing anti-Asian sentiment thus reinforced the model minority trope by characterizing "Orientals" as ideal candidates for assimilation.

Tensions especially erupted during WWII due to Japan's enemy status as part of the Axis alliance. President Getúlio Vargas' attitude towards the Japanese rapidly deteriorated during a tumultuous period leading up to the war, eventually resulting in the passing of successive legislation aimed at restricting Japanese entry (Hastings 1969). Vargas decreed that Portuguese

was the only acceptable language of instruction and sought after the ‘complete adaptation’ of immigrants in an attempt to eradicate all foreign elements in Brazil.

Lesser claims that immigrants and their descendants “negotiated” their national identity in order to avoid rising xenophobia. This reaction was evident through the tendency for the descendants of immigrants to distance themselves from their Japanese origins. Youth began to abandon identification as “Japanese” and instead self-classified as “nikkei,” which literally translates to second generation Japanese Brazilians. They emphasized increasing assimilation into Brazilian culture and established *Transição*, a Portuguese magazine specifically highlighting the transition between the Japanese to Brazilian national identity (Lesser 1999).

Anti-Japanese sentiment carried further implications beyond influencing the rapid Brazilianization of Japanese descendants. Lesser also mentions Chinese Brazilian businessmen placing “Attention: We Are Chinese” posters on their shop windows in order to avoid discrimination associated with the Japanese. This trend echoed the broader publication of “How to Tell a Chinese from a Japanese,” an article disseminated by the Brazilian government in an effort to maintain positive relations with Chinese immigrants due to China’s ally status during WWII (Lesser 1999).

These examples from *Negotiating National Identity* highlight the salience and fluidity of self-defining national identity in response to racist narratives, especially during times of national crises. Reflecting on Lesser’s work, I wonder whether the negotiation of national identity continues in today’s context among Brazilians of Asian descent as they respond to COVID-19 associated racism. I also wonder if these negotiations would evoke tension among Asian Brazilians with varying national origins and inadvertently hinder their intraethnic activist

solidarity. Chapter 3 will explore these questions by analyzing how anti-Chinese rhetoric influences the self-definition of race and nationality among Japanese and Chinese Brazilians.

IV. The Generational Divide

I began this chapter by providing an overview for the historical backdrop of anti-Asian racism in Brazil. Following sections then examined potential challenges to activism due to remaining notions of Brazilian racial democracy and the negotiation of national identity. As inspired by personal observations of parent-child conflict among my U.S.-Asian American community, I will now explore whether challenges to activist solidarity may also emerge due to differing generational perspectives on the topic of anti-Asian racism and activism.

My desire to examine generational perspectives originated from personal observations of my surrounding U.S.-Asian American community. As briefly described in Chapter 1, I became interested with studying anti-Asian racism and activism after witnessing parent-children arguments surrounding the topic of COVID-19 associated racism. College-aged peers frequently described how their "parents were fed misinformation through their WeChat communication" circles. My peers believe that this "misinformation" resulted in their parents' denial of anti-Asian racism, which led to intergenerational conflict when younger individuals expressed desires for engaging in antiracist activism.

I was not able to pinpoint existing research on differing generational perspectives regarding anti-Asian racism and activism about Brazilians of Asian descent. However, the literature does suggest intergenerational conflict to be an important factor that may hinder activist efforts (Dunham and Bengtson 1992). This element was explored by sociologists Stacey Litam and Christian Chan, whose research shows that younger generations of U.S.-Asian American activists struggle to mobilize towards solidarity with the #BlackLivesMatter

movement due to parental disapproval. Their findings suggest that newer immigrants and older individuals face greater discomfort with the idea of antiracist activism because of they primarily lack the cultural and terminological familiarity with a U.S. social justice mindset. Older generations also tend to endorse the idea of assimilation, which likewise hinders their desire to engage in activist efforts (Litam and Chan 2021).

Litam and Chan's study sheds light into why older generations of U.S.-Asian Americans may be particularly inclined to dissuade their younger relatives from actively supporting in #BlackLivesMatter. While their research examined Asian American activism against anti-Black racism, I wonder if similar trends among older generations—namely, the lack of familiarity with a social justice mindset, and the desire for assimilation—may also impede them from supporting activism against anti-Asian racism. Moreover, I wonder if these trends of intergenerational conflict would apply in the Asian Brazilian context as another explanatory factor for challenges to intraethnic activist solidarity.

More research focusing on older U.S.-Asian Americans reveals that they are also especially unlikely to seek professional mental help for racism-related stress. Although this discussion of mental health seeking behaviors appears as a detour from the topic of antiracist activism, psychologists Nita Tewari and Alvin Alvarez argue that they are actually intrinsically related. According to their research, the stigma that prevents Asian Americans from pursuing mental help is directly related to the stigma that hinders them from speaking up about encounters with anti-Asian racism (Tewari and Alvarez 2009). Psychologist Frederick Leong adds to this point by demonstrating how elderly Asian Americans are more greatly impacted by this stigma, thus resulting in their increased aversion towards both health-seeking behaviors and antiracist activism (Leong and Lau 2001).

The model minority stereotype, which is more often attributed to earlier generations of elderly Asian Americans, also contributes to a false belief that this population experiences few psychological hardships (Sue and Sue 1987). Pressure to uphold this model minority image may further reinforce their aversion towards acknowledging the reality of stress and suffering (Cheng et al. 2017). Older generations that suffered from more overt cases of racial violence have also been observed to trivialize or deny present-day experiences with racism (Alvarez et al. 2006), which may also be related to their identification as the model minority.

I believe that the inherent stigmatization of racism and mental health, combined with this model minority narrative, act in conjunction when silencing elderly Asian Americans on the topic of race-related suffering. These factors are further combined with the older generations' unfamiliarity with social justice rhetoric and assimilative tendencies, which also result in their aversion towards speaking up about anti-Asian racism (Litam and Chan 2021). These theories provide some insight into the complex interplay that explains why older generations are less likely to support antiracist activism, which may then led to intergenerational conflict with younger activists.

Other theories focus on younger generations to explore sources of intergenerational conflict. According to sociologist Karen Pyke, who explains that the internalization of racial violence may indirectly result in what she describes as an "intraethnic othering" effect (Pyke and Dang 2003). Pyke argues that second-generation U.S.-Asian Americans face immense pressures to assimilate into Western culture "in order to distance themselves from the stigma associated with their racial group." Negative characteristics associated with the model minority stereotype may pressure second-generation immigrants to de-identify with the former generation, revealing the potency of the model minority narrative in exacerbating the generational gap.

While this mechanism of "intraethnic othering" may allow individuals to evade racial stigmatization, it operates based on the "othering" of the general Asian population by denigrating them as being "too ethnic" (Pyke and Dang 2003). This tactic, while protective in the short-term, ultimately perpetuates stereotyped narratives that only continue to inflict harm. It also alienates the older generation and further exacerbates intergenerational conflict on the topic of antiracist activism.

Chapter 3 will attempt to bring together these theories for analyzing intergenerational conflict among Brazilian activists of Asian descent. I will examine whether different generations respond differently to notions of activism, assimilation, and the model minority narrative. I will then consider whether these generational perspectives play a role in hindering Asian Brazilian antiracist solidarity. Analyzing these proximate questions will provide further insight into the ultimate goal of understanding how the broader sociopolitical context influences my respondents' engagement with antiracist activism.

V. The Construction of Pan-Ethnic Identity

I will now move on in the literature review to provide an explanation for my decision to use "Asian Brazilian" as a pan-ethnic category of analysis. Despite widespread discussion of "Asian" as an ethnoracial group, scholarly critique begs further consideration for the validity and utility of engaging with "Asian" as an analytical category. This critique becomes especially evident when scholarly investigation recognizes ethnoracial groups as "artificial state categories" with no natural properties apart from the social construction of race (Espiritu 1992). For example, there would be little inherent reason for individuals of Japanese and Chinese descent to associate with one another were it not for Westernized narratives of a pan-ethnic Asian identity.

The socially constructed nature of pan-ethnic identities was first highlighted in Chapter 1.3 through anthropologist Marie L. Mallet's research on Latino communities in Miami, Florida. She critiques the popular use of "Latino" as a category of analysis, both in public dialogue and within scholarly spheres, because it grossly overlooks the nuance of varying national backgrounds and improperly assumes "Latino" solidarity. Mallet argues that continued analysis of pan-ethnic identities may hinder anthropologists from accessing and adequately representing intraethnic diversity, which indeliberately perpetuates the oversimplified, prejudiced mindset of White supremacy (Mallet and Pinto-Coelho 2018).

I state these critiques in order to demonstrate my awareness of the potential danger in using "Asian Brazilian" as a pan-ethnic category of analysis. In light of this unease, I still decided to proceed—with caution—because I conducted interviews with members from a Facebook group dedicated to "Asiático-Brasileiros," or "Asian Brazilians." Research participants similar self-identified as "Yellow" or "Asian," which increased my belief that "Asian Brazilian" may serve as an important analytical category, despite its socially constructed nature.

Moreover, sociologist Yen Le Espiritu describes an increasing tendency for Asian diasporic "pan-ethnic organization" to "take precedence over tribal or national affiliation." She explains this increased association around a pan-ethnic "Asian" identity as the result of shared experiences of oppression and deprivation. In other words, "diverse peoples who are nevertheless seen as homogenous by outsiders" have similar experiences with racial discrimination, which thus results in similar strategies for cooperative mobilization (Espiritu 1992).

U.S.-Asian American historian Cindy I-Fen Cheng also contributes to the discussion on pan-ethnic Asian identities by explaining "how racial constructions are conceived in relation to state agendas," which "has, in turn, transformed race into a category of analysis" that can work

to reveal the goals of the state (Cheng 2013). Leith Mullings, former president of the American Anthropological Association, similarly describes the need for investigating race as an analytical category because race also serves as "the structural context for producing oppositional sites of resistance" and activism (Mullings 2005). My analysis of Asian Brazilian antiracist activism therefore responds to these scholars' comments on the usage of pan-ethnic identities as a category of analysis. It is my hope that interrogating perceptions of race and racism will invite further conversation on how the nature of anti-Asian racism influences the creation and sustained racialization of an Asian Brazilian pan-ethnic identity.

VI. Theoretical Considerations of Anti-Asian Racism

One final consideration involves the exploration of existing theoretical frameworks for the study of anti-Asian racism. As previously highlighted in Chapter 1, there remains a startling dearth of anthropological dialogue regarding the racism and processes of racialization targeting individuals of Asian descent. This was demonstrated by the lack of relevant results acquired after using the keyword search for "anti-Asian racism" on AnthroSource. Despite these disappointing limitations and what they suggest about the American Anthropological Association, I was pleased to find a plethora of existing literature from Asian American and ethnic studies journals. The final section of this literature review will thus draw upon these publications to provide a brief overview of relevant theoretical considerations for the study of anti-Asian racism.

One of the most widely accepted, scholarly definitions of racism comes from prison activist and public scholar, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, in her book on criminal justice reform from 2007 (Brooks 2006). According to Gilmore, racism should be understood as "the state-sanctioned and/or legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death" (Gilmore 2007). This definition is particularly well-suited for the scholarly

examination of racism because it provides a useful and succinct framework for analyzing dimensions of racism as different modes of "exploitation." The emphasis on "state-sanctioned" violence also proves useful for critiquing structurally-embedded disparities rather than fixating on the prejudice or intention of individual actors. Finally, the most poignant remark from Gilmore's definition is the aspect of increased morbidity and "premature death" as ultimate consequences of racism. My research will employ these theoretical frameworks as it pertains to the study of anti-Asian racism.

The first element of consideration involves the structural embeddedness of anti-Asian racism in relation to state-imposed narratives on the racialization of Asians. Previous sections of this literature review already explored the history of Asian migration to Brazil, which was saturated with racially discriminatory practices of labor exploitation (Tsuda 1999). These injustices were often overlooked by the Brazilian government because many wealthy elites benefited from the indentured servitude of Asian migrants (Lee 2018). Model minority stereotypes were circulated as popular narratives that praised the hardworking character of Asians, but these tropes were also met with xenophobia as captured by the Yellow Peril (Nascimento 2013).

Historian Cindy I-Fen Cheng argues that these simultaneous beliefs in the model minority narrative and the Yellow Peril contributed to the portrayal of Asians as the perpetual "foreigners-within" (Cheng 2013). While national rhetoric may praise the achievements of certain immigrants, fear of economic competition and social pollution continue to fuel popular discourse that designates Asians as the unassimilable Other (Shu 2012). The notion that Asian immigrants and their descendants are perceived as foreigners in the West continues to this day, which is undeniably highlighted by the abundance of insults calling for Asians to "go back to [their]

countries" (An 2020). Scholars of race believe that this nativist xenophobia provides an element of distinction that sets anti-Asian hate apart from the racism suffered by other minorities (Kim 1999).

Political scientist Clear Jean Kim's work has attempted to account for this particular form of racial discrimination within a framework related to White power and anti-Blackness. Her racial triangulation theory has been widely cited by contemporary scholars of race and racism because it offers important contributions beyond the Black-White binary (Xu and Lee 2013). This theory most notably adds complexity to pre-existing theories of a unidimensional racial hierarchy, which assumes that Asians occupy an in between space on a theoretical Black-White spectrum (Figure 1).

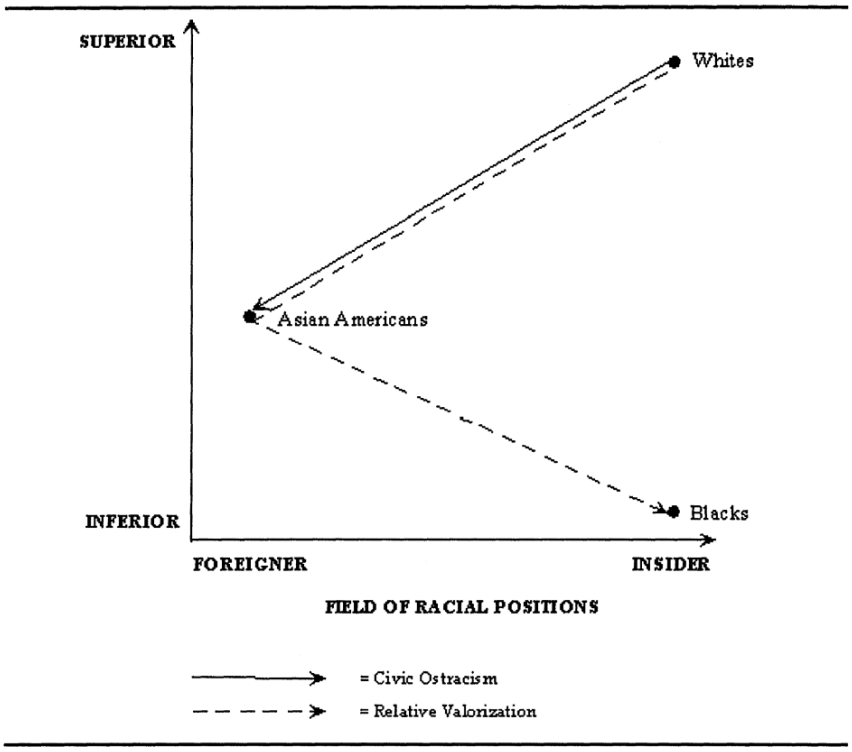

Figure 1. The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans (Kim 1999)

Kim's racial triangulation theory utilizes a "field of racial positions" that captures dimensions of both power and xenophobic exclusion. She argues that Asian American processes

of racialization function through the "relative valorization" of Asians in relation to perceptions of subordinate Black Americans, which is captured by model minority narratives of Asian excellence. However, forces of "civic ostracism" continue to alienate Asians from acceptance into mainstream society, resulting in their "triangulated position vis-à-vis Whites and Blacks" (Kim 1999).

OiYan Poon and colleagues' meta-analysis on the existing literature of anti-Asian racism also echoes Kim's observations of Asian American racialization. Their findings particularly emphasize Kim's theories on model minorities and "relative valorization" through the "middleman minority thesis," which captures the notion of Asians as "buffer groups" between White and Black Americans (Poon et al. 2016). Poon and colleagues believe that this "middleman" positionality "is a tool that exploits Asian Americans" through reinforcing pressures to achieve unrealistic expectations of performance in the workplace. This model minority narrative also serves as an antithesis to stereotypes of Black inferiority, which furthers the idea that Black failure can be attributed to moral decadence rather than the persistence of structural racism (Yi and Todd 2021).

Both Kim and Poon's publications seem to suggest the idea that individuals of Asian descent occupy a "middleman" space that provides some potential for the desirable movement towards Whiteness. Jennifer Ho, president of the Association for Asian American studies, describes the potential in this pursuit of Whiteness as a product of Asian American "racial ambiguity." According to her research, this "national in-between" and ambiguous positionality also poses "cultural anxiety" over the societal acceptance of Asian Americans as "American but not quite" (Ho 2015). Ho's commentary builds upon both dimensions "middleman" valorization and social alienation from Kim's racial triangulation theory.

However, sociologist Eileen O'Brien's investigation of Latinos and Asian Americans in what she describes as "the racial middle" seems to complicate the belief that "middleman" groups strive for movement towards Whiteness. She challenges what is commonly described as "the Whitening thesis" by presenting ethnographic research demonstrating Asian and Latino resistance to possibilities of integration into Whiteness. Their distaste for the idea of intermarriage or cultural integration with Whites particularly challenged the Whitening thesis, as well as the increasing strive for interracial solidarity in antiracist movements. These observations were especially evident among "highly educated" Latinos and Asian Americans with "racially progressive ideologies (O'Brien 2008). Her ethnography therefore suggests that the "racial middle" may be diversifying, or possibly diverging, through different attitudes towards the pursuit or rejection of Whiteness.

These aforementioned publications provide theoretical frameworks for analyzing structurally-embedded processes of racialization and anti-Asian racism, especially when considered in relation to White power and anti-Blackness. Diverse attitudes and behaviors within the Asian pan-ethnic category also points towards the need for increased research on the model minority narrative and the traditional Whitening thesis (O'Brien 2008). In keeping with Ruth Wilson Gilmore's model, I will now move towards examining the existing literature on increased morbidity and premature mortality as functions of racism (Gilmore 2007).

Research exploring the relationship between anti-Asian racism and poor health outcomes is relatively sparse, which is possibly explained by the general perception of Asian immigrants as an "extraordinarily well adjusted" group with healthier trajectories and longer life expectancies (Sue et al. 1995). Gilbert Gee and colleagues' meta-analysis of 62 empirical research articles attempts to address this literature gap (Gee et al. 2009). Their findings counter the popular belief

that Asian Americans enjoy excellent health due to their successful integration and adjustment into American society. On the contrary, increasing research demonstrates significant correlations between anti-Asian discrimination and reduced mental health in the form of heightened depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Hwang and Goto 2008). U.S. psychologists' descriptions of the Asian American mental health crisis during spikes in COVID-19 associated anti-Asian hate have made this association all the more clear (Misra et al. 2020).

One model that is useful for the study of racism-related poor health outcomes is the "John Henryism Active Coping" (JHAC) hypothesis. In the words of epidemiologist Sherman A. James, "John Henryism" describes "a strong behavioral predisposition to cope actively with psychosocial environmental stressors." This phenomenon may also be understood as "a coping mechanism to prolonged stress where an individual expends higher levels of effort and energy at the cost of their physical and mental health" (Rolle et al. 2021). John Henryism was traditionally applied to African Americans in describing overwork and excessive labor as an active coping mechanism for resisting racial discrimination (James 1994). Contemporary scholars have been increasingly adapting this model to the study of heightened Asian American workplace stress as a response to the internalization of anti-Asian racism (Haritatos, Mahalingam, and James 2007).

Whereas the "John Henryism Active Coping" (JHAC) mechanism has been associated with stress, burnout, anxiety, and poor health among African Americans (Rolle et al. 2021), some scholars believe that JHAC actually results in beneficial outcomes for individuals of Asian descent (Flaskerud 2012). For example, research highlights how JHAC produces beneficial effects, particularly among high socio-economic status (SES) U.S.-Asian Americans, as they typically reported better self-rated health (Haritatos, Mahalingam, and James 2007). Since self-related health has been shown to be a strong predictor for actual health outcomes (Schnittker and

Bacak 2014), it may be inferred that Asian American utilization of JHAC produces better health overall through the reduction of chronic stress (Halford, Anderzén, and Arnetz 2003). Many researchers attribute these observations to reduced levels of perceived stress, hypothesizing that JHAC provides individuals with an increased feeling of autonomy and control over experiences of racial discrimination (Logan et al. 2017).

While existing research shows that JHAC produces beneficial results among Asian Americans, behavioral scientist Jana Haritatos believes that these preliminary studies may not adequately account for variations across ethnicity and class (Haritatos, Mahalingam, and James 2007). She calls upon the need for increased research out of recognizing the diversity contained within the Asian panethnicity. Nonetheless, the JHAC model retains powerful explanatory potential because it emphasizes the study of reduced health as a function of structural inequalities and persistent racial discrimination. JHAC is also inextricably implicated with the model minority narrative, as both JHAC behaviors and stereotyped narratives contribute to the reported tendency for Asian immigrants to strive for unrealistically high expectations in the professional sphere (Rolle et al. 2021).

The synthesis of these theoretical considerations provides an important foundation for my analysis of anti-Asian racism. They also highlight the importance of conducting ethnographic research to advance scholarly understandings of how racism is perceived and internalized. While statistical evidence may suggest an association between anti-Asian racism and reduced mental health outcomes, it is the anthropological work of ethnographers that explains the nuanced connection between “state-sanctioned” violence and physical suffering (Gilmore 2007). As such, the intended applications of my research are twofold: First, I aim to interpret narrative evidence in order to supply a richer understanding of the form and function of anti-Asian racism. Because

theories of racial triangulation and JHAC remain limited to studies of U.S.-Asian Americans, I am curious to explore their explanatory potential among Asians in the Brazilian context. Second, I seek to illustrate how everyday narratives and structures of anti-Asian racism may contribute to the internalization of racial violence among Asian Brazilian antiracist activists. While my work does not directly demonstrate links to reduced health, I believe that investigating processes of racialization will provide important background insight to guide further empirical studies of racism-related suffering.

Chapter 3: Challenges to Intraethnic Antiracist Solidarity

I. Introduction and Methodology

Background Information

I spent the summer of 2021 organizing, conducting, and analyzing semi-structured interviews with 21 research participants who live in Brazil and self-identify as an individual of Asian descent. Each participant classified themselves within the Brazilian racial category of 'Amarela,' or 'Yellow,' despite several of them having mixed origins of European, African, and Indigenous descent. None of the individuals encountered through the recruitment process have Southeast Asian ancestry. Therefore, when I reference my interview participants as "Brazilians of Asian descent" or "Asian Brazilians," I specifically mean Brazilians of East Asian descent.

All interview participants ranged from 2nd to 4th generation Brazilians. By this I mean that these individuals are either the children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren of immigrants from Japan, Okinawa, China, or Taiwan. I pause at this moment to emphasize the significance of choosing to include "Okinawan" as a separate category from those of Japanese descent. I made this decision to reflect the attitudes and rhetoric spoken by certain interview participants to decisively highlight their Okinawan heritage as a feature distinguishing them from individuals

from mainland Japan. These Okinawan Brazilian participants' responses lead me to believe that more research is needed to better understand their feeling of being "a minority within a minority" when seen in relation to the Japanese in Brazil. However, for the purposes of this thesis I will focus my analysis on the relation between Chinese and mainland Japanese Brazilians (Chapter 3.3).

Eight participants identified as male, and nine identified as female. The distribution of age ranged from 21 to 57 years old and was skewed towards younger individuals between 21 to 30 years old. The majority of interview participants lived in the well-populated, urbanized areas of São Paulo, Curitiba, and Rio de Janeiro. All of them were either in the process of completing a college degree or were college graduates. Many described themselves as "self-identifying scholars" who also pursued graduate degrees in Asian Brazilian history and other social science disciplines related to the study of race and racism.

I used participants' self-reported demographic data according to the Brazilian class system as a proxy for relative income and wealth, which is described as follows. To provide more context, the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE), or the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, defines 1,100 reais per month ($210.76) as the acceptable minimum monthly salary. Class A represents the Brazilian upper class, B represents the upper middle class, C represents the middle class, and D and E together represent the lower class ("Minimum Wage in Brazil 2021" 2021). According to IBGE standards from 2017, the monthly household salary that qualified classification as "living in poverty" was less than 450 reais ($86.25) per month. Those who received less than 155 reais ($29.71) per month were classified as "living in extreme poverty" ("IBGE Censo Agro" 2017).

Classification	Monthly Household Income
Class A	Above BRL 15,760 (3,020.20 USD)
Class B	Above BRL 7,880 (1,511.30 USD)
Class C	Above BRL 3,152 (604.52 USD)
Class D	Above BRL 1,576 (302.26 USD)
Class E	Below BRL 1,576 (302.26 USD)

Figure 2. Brazilian class system: "BRL" stands for "Brazilian Real," or "reais," the official currency used in Brazil. "USD" stands for "United States Dollar" ("Social Classes in Brazil" 2016).

All interview participants claimed to be within the Class A to Class D categories, with the mean and median number reporting as Class B (Figure 2). This trend suggests that my sample might not be representative of the general population of Asians in Brazil in terms of socioeconomic status. Their relatively high educational attainment also skews my sample, as all interview participants either held college or graduate school degrees, or were in the process of completing their bachelor's degree. While this hinders the generalizability of findings towards the overall Asian Brazilian diaspora, it does provide insight regarding a particular population of activists that serves the purpose of answering my research questions about antiracist activism.

Participant Recruitment

I turned to social media for conducting virtual fieldwork after COVID-19 travel restrictions prevented me from traveling to Brazil. After perusing through platforms including Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, I decided to focus on Facebook because of the ease and ability to join groups centered around specific topics of interest. The particular Facebook group that I joined will henceforth be referred to under the pseudonym "the Asian Brazilian Facebook group" as a precautionary measure for protecting the privacy of its members.

The Asian Brazilian Facebook group is a private Facebook group that individuals may only join by direct invitation from another member. I was invited by my professor and mentor, Dr. Jeffrey Lesser. According to its mission statement, this group serves as a "safe community" for Asian Brazilian activists and scholars to join in conversation about their shared Asian Brazilian identity. All recent posts were written in Portuguese and range from the promotion of academic lectures to expressions of frustration regarding increased reports of anti-Asian racism associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the context of popular belief in a non-racist Brazilian racial democracy, one may conjecture that the privacy settings of this group reflect some acknowledgement of unease that members may feel when discussing topics of potential controversy. Thus, their decision to use a private Facebook group as the setting for organization and discussion holds significance in itself as it suggests these activists' fear of facing backlash from the general public.

Despite the private nature of the Asian Brazilian Facebook group, I was met with great enthusiasm and trust from the members who consented to being interviewed for my research. I recruited participants by directly sending interview invitations to members of the group using Facebook messenger. Out of the 32 invitations that I had sent, 25 individuals responded with interest, and 21 of them ultimately agreed to be interviewed for my research.

"Portenglish"

All interviews took place over Zoom and generally lasted between 60 to 90 minutes. I most often conversed in a mix of English and Portuguese—perhaps "Portenglish," as humorously put by one of the participants—depending on the language preferences of my interlocutors. I am thankful for having conversational proficiency in Spanish because this background made it relatively easy to acquire basic Portuguese after one semester of studying

“Portuguese for Native Spanish Speakers” at Emory University. I am also thankful for my interview participants’ jovial and warmhearted attitude in accommodating my blunders with Portuguese.

I only faced what I would consider to be a significant amount of language confusion when interviewing a few research participants who solely conversed in Portuguese. In each of these cases, I apologized, openly acknowledged my inability to understand their responses, and reassured them that I would be able to understand at a later time after reviewing their interview transcripts. While this unfortunately hindered my ability to probe further into topics of interest, I also believed that my language deficit gave these participants with more space to speak about what they most strongly wanted to convey.

Conducting Virtual Fieldwork

Conducting anthropological research in a completely virtual setting certainly limited me from engaging in participant observation. I also lacked the ability to gain insight into neighborhood conditions, or to immerse myself in my interlocutors’ spheres of culture. Beyond the lack of in-person experiences, I was also initially concerned that the virtual format would limit my ability to converse with individuals who could not utilize Zoom technology. However, the interview recruitment process soon put that concern to rest when it became clear that the pandemic had also normalized the use of Zoom among my Asian Brazilian research participants.

The virtual nature of my research also brought forth multiple benefits: First, Zoom opened up the possibility of speaking to individuals from a wider range of geographical locations within Brazil. Second, it allowed me to more easily process and transcribe interview recordings. Third, I personally felt that the using Zoom during the peak of the pandemic helped to establish a sense of rapport between research participants and myself as we found commonality with

making jokes about Zoom. Finally, engaging with the virtual interview format indeliberately brought me into the personal spaces of many of my participants, which provided moments of insight that otherwise may have been lost had we met in a public setting.

This fourth advantage of using Zoom was especially evident when one participant had to step away for a few seconds to accept a plate of cut apple slices from her mother. Another observer may have been interpreted this event as an act of kindness, but it held particular meaning to me because of the widely popularized narrative of Asian parents bringing cut fruit as their preferred language of love. When I joked with this participant about our parents and their fruit, I immediately felt a bond of recognition established between the two of us due to this shared aspect of our upbringing. The moment conveyed a world of emotion, understanding, and perhaps transnational racial solidarity that could not have been expressed with words alone. This was made possible due to the virtual nature of my research.

Researcher Positionality

I believe my researcher positionality as a 21 year old female university student also helped to establish rapport with many of my interview participants. A number of participants were also writing similar theses and conducting research projects related to the topic of Asian identities within a Brazilian national context. Our shared interest in this topic, as well as many shared experiences growing up as children of Asian immigrants, allowed for increased vulnerability in my participants' narratives of racism-related suffering.

At the same time, I also believe that my positionality as a researcher from the United States may be indeliberately perceived with a sense of authoritative superiority. Despite establishing familiarity through sharing in similar accounts of racism-related suffering, I might simultaneously wield the influence of U.S.-power when conducting global research. Even

holding the identity of a researcher inevitably constructs a hierarchy of power in which research participants may feel pressured to respond in a way that they believe would be best accepted by the researcher. With this in mind, I made consistent effort to remind interview participants of their autonomy and rights to privacy, and strived to establish rapport by sharing about similar experiences that I have had as a fellow child of Asian immigrants.

Interview Process

I began interviews by asking open-ended questions that invited participants to share about their family's immigrant history, reiterating back to the ultimate goal of understanding the historicity of anti-Asian racism in Brazil. Hearing about the stories of past discrimination and trauma provided a glimpse into the ways that familial and social forces may have shaped my interlocutors' upbringing. For instance, many research participants brought up the notion of the model minority status in relation to familial pressures for achieving academic excellence, a phenomenon they believe to originate out of their family's history of racial hardship in Brazil.

I then transitioned towards asking interview participants about their personal experiences of anti-Asian racism, starting from childhood encounters to present-day incidences during the COVID-19 pandemic. I designed these questions with the specific intent of encouraging participants to reflect upon how personal experiences may have influenced their racial and cultural identity development.

At this point I shifted the conversation from reflections about personal identity towards reflections about their engagement in activism against anti-Asian racism. Many participants were quick to highlight the difficulties they faced when participating in activist efforts. I used these conversational opportunities to nudge respondents towards discussing the topic of solidarity among their activist groups. As led by the existing literature on intraethnic solidarity, I was

curious to explore whether factors such as varying national origins would indeed obstruct Asian Brazilian activist solidarity.

Interview Transcription and Analysis

I used scholarships from the Emory Global Health Institute and the Halle Global Fellows program to purchase *Sonix*, an online service that allowed me to rapidly convert interview audio clips into transcripts. I chose *Sonix* over a number of other platforms because of its relative inexpensiveness and its ability to transcribe Portuguese. However, the service's reliance on artificial intelligence technology produced some transcripts that were far from accurate, especially for recordings where interview participants spoke with heavy accents. I spent many hours correcting transcriptions and parsing through different parts of recordings as participants switched back and forth between English, Portuguese, and sentences filled with "Portenglish."

I also purchased *MAXQDA* qualitative coding software to analyze all of the finished interview transcriptions. As an undergraduate anthropology student who has only received sparse amounts of training with *MAXQDA*, I would characterize my work as utilizing somewhat freestyle methods of analysis. While this may have limited the amount of technological maneuvers I could have employed, I also felt that it liberated me to process my data by relying more heavily on the ethnographer's intuition. In other words, I did not allow myself to get boggled down by technicalities, and instead appreciated what I consider to be a more humanistic approach towards processing and synthesizing data.

I began examining interview transcripts by using the Grounded Theory approach of open coding. This method describes the process of breaking up data into discrete parts according to significant themes or commonalities that I had observed (Bryant and Charmaz 2007). I assigned a "code" to each of these themes, and added "subcodes" later on if I felt that each individual

theme warranted further specificity. To provide some examples, themes that I had "coded" included generation of immigration, country of origin, childhood conditions, experiences of racism, anti-Chinese rhetoric, and "academic theories/beliefs" on the nature of racism in Brazil. "Subcodes" listed under childhood conditions, for instance, included urban, rural, public school, and private school.

It was during this process of analyzing my interview participants' responses that I came to observe three distinct challenges to solidarity: activists' varying beliefs on the nature of racism in Brazil, their different countries of origin, and varying generational perspectives on the topic of antiracist activism. Upon recognizing these three themes, I assigned codes for each of these sources of conflict and went back to conduct more interviews with specific questions regarding these areas of tension. While it is very possible that other sources of conflict also exist, I decided to focus on these three areas for further investigation. These proximate explanatory factors for challenges to intraethnic antiracist solidarity will serve as the subject of analysis for Chapters 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4.

II. Anti-Asian Hate: Is it Racism or Prejudice?

Racism or Prejudice: The "Explosive Argument"

Disagreement over the proper classification of anti-Asian hate was the most visible conflict recurring between Asian Brazilian antiracist activists. This conflict first caught my eye when an interview participant, addressed under the pseudonym Xavier, described "an explosive argument" that occurred among his peers due to this disagreement. Here I provide background context for this argument and explore its potential implications on intraethnic antiracist solidarity.

Xavier is Asian Brazilian male in his mid-twenties, and a member of *Masculinidades Amarelas,* a recently founded organization that describes itself as "grupos reflexivos sobre masculinidades para homens amarelas." The name of this group roughly translates to "Yellow Masculinities," and serves as an exclusive place for "Yellow men" to participate in "reflexive groups" on the topic of "Yellow masculinities." *Masculinidades Amarelas* as an organization intentionally distances itself from politics and activism. However, their guidelines for steering away from controversial topics failed to prevent this "terrible, traumatizing argument" originating from disagreement over the use of "prejudice" or "racism" to describe anti-Asian hate. According to Xavier, what was once seen as "a safe space, a comfortable space" for open discussion about the topic of Asian masculinities was transformed into a "shockingly hostile" landscape that immediately caused two members to leave the group out of anger.

Xavier explained that the classification of anti-Asian hate is a recently developing debate brought forth by a sudden increase in awareness of COVID-19 associated violence. Many other respondents similarly echoed his observations regarding how the impact that COVID-19 had on exacerbating this conflict. Multiple interlocutors described how the parallel timelines of #BlackLivesMatter and #StopAsianHate inspired by U.S.-led movements also forced Asian Brazilian scholars and activists to reckon with the relation between anti-Black and anti-Asian hate in Brazil. Their responses suggested that arguments over the use of "prejudice" and "racism" alluded to a broader disagreement over the severity and nature of anti-Asian violence when considered in comparison to anti-Black racism.

Xavier's experiences also revealed that disagreements over the use of "prejudice" and "racism" were strong enough to disrupt group cohesion among his peers in *Masculinidades Amarelas*. Other research participants similarly described recent incidents where arguments

surrounding the interpretation of "racism" and "prejudice" reduced their feeling of solidarity with other Asian Brazilian antiracist activists. My interlocutors' responses regarding this classificatory logic piqued my interest in understanding how Asian Brazilian scholars and activists interpreted meanings of racism and prejudice. This inquiry served to answer the proximate research goal of exploring what factors contribute to conflict among Brazilian activists of Asian descent.

Two Schools of Thought

I conducted my analysis of each side of the debate by focusing on the core disagreement between the two parties: what were their beliefs on how racism generally functioned in Brazilian society, and how has their framework led to differing interpretations of anti-Asian hate in relation to anti-Black hate? I then provided reasoning for why these different interpretations of the form and function of racism also contributed to different understandings of the model minority narrative.

To provide more organization to this analysis, I will structure my writing based on the two competing schools of thought that I had observed when examining participants' responses regarding the classification of anti-Asian hate. I will be referencing these two schools of thought as 'the Comparative Model' and 'the Structural Model.' The former explains why some Asian Brazilians believe that anti-Asian hate is merely a form of prejudice; the latter describes why others believe that it should necessarily be classified as racism.

Before I start, it is important to recognize the limitations that I had with accessing a diversity of thought because all of my research participants felt that anti-Asian violence should be rightfully categorized as "racism." My insight into the "it's just prejudice" side was therefore limited to the descriptions provided by research participants regarding their debates with the

opposing side. However, as will become evident in following parts of this chapter, there is still a wide range of thinking even among those who agree in classificatory rhetoric. Therefore, despite a lack of diversity in opinions represented, there is still much nuance and complexity to unpack regarding participants' justifications for classifying anti-Asian hate as "racism."

"...WHAT WE YELLOWS SUFFER ISN'T RACISM; IT'S PREJUDICE"

Race and Racism: The Comparative Model

I begin my analysis with what I describe as 'the Comparative Model' for explaining why some Asian Brazilians believe that anti-Asian sentiment only qualifies for classification as "prejudice." Returning back to *Masculinidades Amarelas* as a case study, it appears that the "explosive argument" started when one member mentioned how "sometimes there's racism towards Asian Brazilians" during a conversation about hardship during COVID-19. One of the group organizers questioned this assertion: "man, racism is a strong word, I don't know if we can use that for our questions...I don't think you can call it racism because what Yellows suffer isn't racism...but there is prejudice." Here is Xavier's account of what the organizer, addressed as Jason, stated as his reasoning for the non-existence of racism towards Brazilians of Asian descent:

"Maybe what we Yellows suffer isn't racism; it's prejudice. Because in Brazil and perhaps the rest of the world, but especially in Brazil, racism is certainly associated with the Black. Nobody has any doubt that the Black suffer from racism. Nobody has any doubt that the ailments, the suffering and the pain that this population endures, is much greater than the pain of any other population. So when you talk about racism in Brazil, people think about Blacks...not Yellows."

Greg, another research participant and member of *Masculinidades Amarelas,* provided virtually the same explanation for the controversy over classifying anti-Asian hate as a form of racism:

"People don't know if it's racism or not. I think it is, because of all the violence against Asian Americans in the U.S., but there is no agreement, so we are arguing to dispute this. My opinion is yes, it's racism. I even wrote something on Twitter talking about anti-Asian racism and several Black people came to talk. They said 'you [Yellows] don't suffer racism here, only me... Yellows don't die by the police."

These quotes indicate that Jason and many others' classification of racism depends upon the severity of violence inflicted upon a racial group. The violence is specific to overt forms of discrimination that usually result in observable physical harm, as implied by Greg's statement: "I think it is [racism] because of all the violence against Asian Americans in the U.S." It is important to recognize here that both Jason and Greg, despite disagreeing over the proper classification of anti-Asian hate, appear to converge on their descriptions of physical violence as a salient indicator of racism. This often excludes the less visible forms of structural and symbolic violence that produce long-term disparities in wellbeing through the accumulated internalization of discrimination. It is also of interest to note that awareness of U.S. events played a significant role in perceptions of anti-Asian hate in Brazil, even though Greg made no mention of physical violence against Asians in Brazil.

For those who reject the notion that Asian Brazilians suffer from racism, the degree of physical violence is directly compared with the extent of suffering endured by darker-skinned Afro-Brazilians, and populations that experience less violence are deemed undeserving of being seen as victims of racism. These observations echo sociologist Claire Jean Kim's theory of the

"relative valorization" of Asians in their "triangulated position vis-à-vis Whites and Blacks" (Kim 1999). When Brazilians of Asian descent determine "racism" by using anti-Black violence as a baseline for comparison, they indeliberately accept the relative subordination of Blacks as the accepted norm.

Daniela, a 25 year old psychologist and activist, offered another reason for the apparent hesitation and controversy regarding anti-Asian racism:

"...in Brazil, racism is a crime; prejudice isn't. So if you say someone is racist, you say they are a criminal. And that really offends them. But prejudice comes in a lighter form. So people think Asians only experience prejudice."

Daniela's believes that the 1951 codification of racism as "a serious crime in Brazil," for which "a person...can spend up to five years in prison," also influences interpretations of "racism" and "prejudice" (UNHCR). Prejudice is excluded from the language of this legal system for punitive action because it is perceived as "a lighter form of discrimination" that may be distinguished from the severity of racism. This comment reemphasizes two recurring observations from this section of analysis: First, it contributes to what I describe as 'the Comparative Model' that is often used to determine whether other racial groups are victims of racism when placed in relation to the Afro-Brazilian racial group. Those who are perceived to suffer less, such as Brazilians of Asian descent, are deemed unworthy of being classified as victims of racism. Second, classification of racism is much more difficult because of the criminality of "racism" and not "prejudice," reinforcing the belief that "racism" must necessarily involve observable, provable victimhood. This once again connects interpretation of "racism" with the act of hostile behaviors that result in physical violence, leaving less room for identifying indirect forms of structural violence as "racism."

Interpretations of the Model Minority Narrative

Henri, an Asian Brazilian scholar and educator on the issue of racism in Brazil, alluded to the notion of the model minority as another factor that causes push-back against classification of anti-Asian hate as "racism." He additionally claims that "White, Black, and mixed-race Brazilians," as well as many Asian Brazilians, share a similar standpoint according to his personal observations:

"The racial question is mostly about the Black people, and it's really the most important subject, only secondary if we think about the Indigenous. They were exterminated and are still being exterminated. But whenever we wish to talk about racism towards the Asian Brazilian people, both in the past and today, others are often offended...they call it 'mimimi.' They think it's [complaining about] something that doesn't have much importance."

Several other interlocutors also expressed frustration over the inability to talk about anti-Asian racism in Brazil without being accused of being a model minority, or receiving the insult "mimimi." This term is often uttered in a high-pitched manner that resembles the whining of children and is most commonly used as "an attack against Asians" to ridicule their claims of anti-Asian racism (Toueg 2021). One participant's reenactment of "mimimi" suggests that the expression is also communicated by using two fingers to pull back the outer corners of one's eyes, creating the appearance of "olhos puxados" or "slanty eyes" to taunt the phenotypically Asian appearance.

Drawing upon the notion of Asian Brazilians as the model minority provides further evidence that some individuals determine questions of "racism" versus "prejudice" by using a comparative lens. By comparing the severity of anti-Asian and anti-Black discrimination, individuals of this Comparative Model will argue that Asians do not suffer from tangible forms

of racism. Instead, they tend to view the Asian diaspora as a model minority that has risen above discriminatory contexts due to their "intellect, discipline, and a hardworking character."

While both African and Asian immigrants endured racial violence upon arrival in Brazil, the observation of relative socioeconomic ascension among Asians has contributed to both the model minority narrative as well as belief in the non-existence of anti-Asian racism. In this framework as shown below, racism is the causal factor that is expected to result in reduced outcomes of success. Because those expected outcomes were not observed due to pockets of success, it is commonly believed that significant racism does not exist against Asians:

if A → then B

Therefore: if no B → then no A

In other words:

racism → reduced outcomes

Therefore: if no reduced outcome → no significant racism

This framework views outcome as the best indicator for the presence or absence of racism. It rejects consideration of potentially confounding outside variables, such as immigration context and policies for achieving Brazilian citizenship. This framework also results in the essentialization of perceived traits, such as intellect, discipline, and a hardworking character, as innate biological attributes of the Asian race, falling in line with beliefs propagated through Social Darwinist thought (Chapter 2).

My interview participants believe that Asian Brazilians suffer from the model minority narrative because it facilitates belief in the non-existence of anti-Asian racism. This tendency

may be reflected in the frequent use of the "mimimi" phrase to invalidate experiences of racism, which then reduces Asian Brazilians' agency for demanding change. Moreover, these aforementioned observations reveal that individuals who subscribe to the model minority narrative—whether with or without conscious recognition—will be more likely to classify anti-Asian hate as merely a form of "prejudice." These responses ultimately suggest how the model minority narrative simultaneously elevates the perceived status of Asian Brazilians while hindering their full potential for engaging with antiracist activism.

RACISM WITHIN "THE SYSTEM OF BRANQUITUDE"

Race and Racism: The Structural Model

The opposing side believes that anti-Asian sentiment should necessarily be classified as a form of racism. They have abandoned the Comparative Model and instead adopted what I describe as 'the Structural Model' of examining race and racism in Brazil. Unlike the Comparative Model, the Structural Model distinguishes "racism" and "prejudice" as distinct but related phenomena. "Prejudice" is seen as a unique form of discrimination, rather than merely a lesser form of "racism." Those who adopt this Structural Model similarly understand anti-Asian hate and anti-Black hate as distinct but related phenomena, connected through an overarching structure of White supremacy. All non-White racial groups are victims of racism according to this structure, regardless of the extent of racism-induced suffering they endure. These beliefs are expressed through Daniela's explanation of how she understands race and racism in Brazil:

"There is a White supremacy structure that makes Asians feel less. It makes every minority feel less. And there's a racist 'branquitude' attitude, where White people are always on top, and...Black and Indigenous are on the bottom, and Asians are here in the middle. So if you see this power hierarchy, you see 'branquitude.'"

Branquitude describes an everyday attitude that is indicative of White supremacy: an all-encompassing cultural ideal that pressures transformation towards the eventual attainment of Whiteness. When Daniela references *branquitude* along with the relational position of Afro-Brazilians, Indigenous populations, and Asian Brazilians, she alludes to the Black-White continuum largely discussed in academic literature. According to this continuum, the African diaspora is posited in direct contrast against individuals of European descent, and other racial groups—including those of mixed-race ancestry—exist in the middle. The degree of skin pigmentation is associated with positionality on the spectrum, which is then associated with the extent of social evolution in accordance with Social Darwinist beliefs (Chapter 2).

While scholars have long rejected these beliefs for perpetuating falsehoods of scientific racism, pressures of *branquitude* continue to exist in tangible ways that inflict harm upon non-White racial groups. For instance, Daniela and many others believe that the hierarchical structure of the Black-White continuum still means that racial groups positioned at the lowest rung of the continuum are the ones that experience the greatest amounts of racism:

"...of course our suffering is much smaller than the sufferings of the black population. But that doesn't mean it doesn't count as racism...in fact, I need to call it racism because racism against Asians is directly related to racism against Blacks. It's part of the same system of branquitude."

In this manner, my interlocutors agree with those on the opposing side that Asian Brazilians suffer relatively less extreme forms of discrimination compared to the Afro-Brazilian racial group. However, this comparison of suffering remains distinguished from the Comparative Model of understanding race and racism, because any such comparison still operates within recognition of the overarching structure of Whiteness. As such, both Asian Brazilians and Afro-

Brazilians are seen as victims of racism within the *branquitude* racial system, regardless of the extent of suffering they endure.

Not only are all non-White racial groups understood to be victims within this "system of *branquitude*," but there is also room in this Structural Model to adopt a more encompassing understanding of what racism entails. According to another interlocutor, "racism is simply when you are treated differently because of your race, because of your looks, because of where your family originates." The degree of suffering is never mentioned as a criteria by which the experienced is judged as "racism," and "prejudice" is no longer seen as a lesser form of racism. New definitions for how these terms are understood are particularly visible through one participant's explanation:

"Preconceito (prejudice) comes as a pre-concept, a stereotype, that a person thinks about someone's race before actually knowing something...racism is when someone discriminates against someone else because of racial differences. But racism doesn't have to be active. Prejudice is a type of racism...it happens in the mind."

Interpretations of the Model Minority Narrative

What was previously discredited as "racism" under the Comparative Model is now included in the Structural Model, as the definition of "racism" evolves to encompass a broader scope of all racially motivated discrimination. This shift is perhaps most evident when analyzing different interpretations of positive stereotypes from the model minority narrative.

According to those who entertain the Comparative Model, the notion of Asian Brazilians as the model minority serves as evidence for the non-existence of anti-Asian racism in Brazil. The ability for individuals of Asian descent to overcome discriminatory circumstances and achieve success suggests that racism is no longer a significant issue for the Asian Brazilian

diaspora. On the other hand, those who believe in the Structural Model understand these constructions of the model minority narrative as a function of the racism of White supremacy. They recognize how these stereotypes, including positive ones, inflict harm upon Asian Brazilians while simultaneously being used to justify racism against Afro-Brazilians and Indigenous populations.

The two following quotes from David and Carlos reveal how positive stereotypes from model minority narrative inflicts a distinctive form of violence upon Brazilians of Asian descent:

David: *"Here in Brazil, for people who get admission to the best universities, a good part of it is the Yellow people. They joke that 'to get into a top university, you have to kill a Japanese.' They say 'How can you suffer racism if you have access to the best education, to the best jobs, if you earn the best wages?' But they don't realize that discrimination can happen 100,000 different ways."*

Carlos: *"This discrimination is so stressful, so lonely, because we feel like we have no social value to other people. Nobody wants to know us, but everyone wants something from us: our work, our dedication...but not us."*

David's commentary reveals how the stress caused by immense social expectations are maintained on the basis of race. He described to me the constant fear of not living up to the expectations of those around him, which transfers into unrealistic expectations that he has for himself. What is then often uttered as a joke with benign intentions, such as lighthearted gestures towards his "superior intelligence," results in heightened stress and social anxiety. This pressure of needing to live up to the expectations of others is further combined with feelings of loneliness. According to this second participant, being desired only for what you may provide is an altogether dehumanizing experience that contributes to the questioning of whether his existence

has inherent value. They both view these "positive prejudices" as a unique form of racism that functions differently from more overt forms of physical violence, yet nonetheless inflicts lasting harm in less detectable ways.

David goes further to explain how the model minority narrative is also used to degrade Afro-Brazilians and other racial groups along the Black-White continuum:

"People use Yellows to discriminate against Blacks. They say, 'look at how hardworking the Yellows are. I'm so proud of them...man, good job to them, good job to their families.' Then they look at the Blacks and say that they should be more like the Yellows."

This type of statement was a frequent occurrence that I observed throughout my interviews. Many participants discussed incidences where non-White Brazilians would act upon the model minority narrative as they spontaneously expressed praise for the Asian Brazilian racial group. What is interesting is that those of the Comparative Model would often view such a statement as evidence that Asians do not experience racism; they only enjoy the benefits associated with these positive prejudices. Those representing the Structural Model, such as Daniela, would instead argue that the model minority narrative is indicative of an overarching structure of White supremacy: a system that inflicts harm upon both Asian and Afro-Brazilians, though enacted in varying ways.

It is important to remember that this debate of "racism" versus "prejudice" was observed among groups of self-identifying scholars and activists. This leads me to wonder whether certain activists classify anti-Asian hate as a form of prejudice because they fear that classification as "racism" would take away attention from the suffering of Afro-Brazilians. It is possible that they fear accusation of being "mimimi," especially because the form of discrimination against Asians often involves positive prejudices and not overt forms of violence. These activists may also feel

discomfort in claiming themselves as victims of "racism" when they are aware of the ways in which the model minority narrative is used to inflict racism upon their Afro-Brazilian activist counterparts.

There is no equivalent discomfort for those who ascribe to the Structural Model because the model minority narrative is recognized as a product of the racist system overall. Recognition of this overarching structure of White supremacy allows these individuals to see how the model minority narrative inflicts harm upon the Asian diaspora while simultaneously being used to justify further discrimination against Afro-Brazilians. Likewise, there is no discomfort in classifying anti-Asian sentiment as a form of racism because these activists do not believe that it takes attention away from the suffering of Afro-Brazilians. Instead, understanding the ways that Asian and Afro-Brazilians are all victims of racism is an indispensable part of the equation that points towards the overall structure of White supremacy.

Implications

My analysis examined how Asian Brazilian activists differentially interpreted "racism" and "prejudice" to explain their differing beliefs on the nature of anti-Asian hate in Brazil. Those who believe that "racism" necessitates overt cases of violence often discount anti-Asian hate as "merely prejudice." Others who readily classify anti-Asian hate as "racism" recognize the multiplicity of forms that racism can take, independent of severity, within the oppressive logic of White supremacy.

Furthermore, individuals of both the Comparative and Structural Model often elicited comparisons of anti-Asian hate with anti-Black racism, demonstrating their awareness and sensitivity to the relatively elevated position of Asian Brazilians within a structurally constructed hierarchy. Many protested the model minority narrative because they recognized and

disapproved of the tendency for White Brazilians to use positive stereotypes associated with Asians to criticize Black failure. These observations demonstrate how this sample of Asian Brazilian antiracist activists act upon their self-perceived notions "middleman" positionality in striving for greater Asian-Black solidarity in the retaliation against White power (Poon et al. 2016).

This shared acknowledgement that anti-Black suffering is "much greater" also reveals how antiracist mobilization may indirectly perpetuate the notion of Black suffering as the accepted norm. It moreover reveals how individual processes of Asian and Black racialization have occurred relative to, and through interaction with one another, in the oppressive system of White supremacy (Kim 1999). My findings thus provide evidence to support conceptions of racial triangulation theory in Brazil because they demonstrate how anti-Black and anti-Asian racism are often mutually constitutive of one another in a "field of racial positions," rather than remaining as two isolated phenomenon within a unidimensional hierarchy of power (Kim 1999).

Finally, acknowledging the existence of anti-Asian racism in Brazil also takes another step forward toward dismantling belief in a Brazilian racial democracy. While the works of Sean T. Mitchell and Edward Telles have already produced significant change in exposing the reality of anti-Blackness, few scholars have conducted research related to current experiences of anti-Asian racism in Brazil (Chapter 2.2). This section, as well as proceeding sections of analysis, work to supply a supply a richer understanding of how White supremacy operates with the model minority narrative to hinder the antiracist activism of Brazilians of Asian descent. It also comes as a response to the call for going beyond the Black-White dichotomy in the anthropological examination of race and racism (Omi and Winant 2014).

III. The Japanese Brazilian Response to Rises in Anti-Chinese Sentiment

The previous section highlighted current debates on the interpretation of anti-Asian hate as "prejudice" or "racism." It also explored how these debates, in relation to conceptions of the model minority narrative, may worsen Black-Asian relations while posing challenges to solidarity among Asian Brazilian activists. This section will explore the second proximate explanatory factor that hinders intraethnic solidarity: differences in activists' countries of origin. As inspired by historian Jeffrey Lesser's research (Lesser 1999), I will specifically examine how Japanese Brazilians continue to "negotiate their national identity" within the present-day context of anti-Chinese rhetoric during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I decided to examine how different national origins created sources of intraethnic conflict after multiple interview participants described friction between Japanese and Chinese Brazilian activists. I was particularly curious how Sinophobic rhetoric associated with COVID-19 pandemic may exacerbate these pre-existing tensions. While conflict may also occur between other groups of Asian Brazilian activists, I decided to focus on these two groups because they represented the two largest groups of research participants based on original nationality. According to my respondents' accounts, they also represented the two main demographical groups participating in activism against anti-Asian racism in Brazil.

I focused my analysis based on the interview responses from nine individuals who described themselves as having a Brazilian national identity while being of Chinese, Japanese, or Okinawan descent. Two out of these nine individuals also have mixed origins from Europe and Africa but chose to identify with Japanese Brazilian culture and the Brazilian racial category of "Amarela," or yellow.

I decided to include Okinawan Brazilians in this analysis even though I focused on conflicts between Brazilians of Japanese and Chinese descent. This may appear strange at first glance, given that these research participants often emphasized their Okinawan ancestry as to proclaim their distinction from mainland Japan. (Chapter 3.1). However, I observed several Okinawan Brazilian interview participants referring to the Japanese Brazilian population as "we," suggesting that they do feel some level of association with the Japanese. This association became more even more apparent when they described personal experiences of anti-Asian racism in comparison to the experiences of Chinese Brazilians. These observations led me to wonder whether anti-Chinese rhetoric during the COVID-19 pandemic may have pushed Brazilians of Okinawan descent to identify more closely with the Japanese. While this poses another interesting research question for a separate study, my research will focus on the topic of intraethnic activist solidarity between the Chinese, and mainland Japanese and Okinawan-Japanese Brazilians.

Sinophobic Discrimination

My research participants described several forms of anti-Chinese racism involving institutional discrimination, verbal attacks, acts of physical violence, and prejudiced beliefs towards people of Chinese descent. All nine of these interviewees agreed that Chinese Brazilians face stronger accounts of racism compared to Japanese Brazilians.

According to their observations, Chinese restaurants experience greater threats of closure because health inspection critics are more likely to write negative reviews about restaurants that served traditional Chinese food. While critics commonly accept monetary payment in return with providing better reviews, owners of Chinese restaurants rarely have the financial surplus to participate in bribery. One research participant, addressed under the pseudonym Alana,

expressed indignation over the closure of her favorite Chinese restaurant after a review in the local newspaper described “crabs walking on the bathroom floor.” She criticized other Brazilians, namely those of White European descent, for viewing the Chinese as inherently dirty and unsanitary. This attitude stands in direct contrast from the common belief that people of Japanese descent are the epitome of cleanliness and rigorous hygiene. Alana blames these prejudiced beliefs for causing greater amounts of discrimination against owners of Chinese restaurants.

Japanese Brazilian research participants also believe that individuals of Chinese descent face stronger prejudice because they are generally perceived to be more exotic and less accepted into mainstream society. This points towards their “foreigner” status on the foreigner/insider spectrum of Kim’s racial triangulation theory (Kim 1999). For instance, Chinese Brazilian often face accusations for “strange and immoral behavior” according to White Brazilians’ beliefs that “all Chinese eat insects, dogs...” and most recently, bats. When blown into its most extreme form of hatred, one respondent described how Brazilians see China “as an enemy...who wants to end Brazil and dominate the world. It is racism that existed even before Bolsonaro...[they see the Chinese as] communists who are going to eat the kids.” Interlocutors retold stories of their Chinese Brazilian colleagues being labeled with racial slurs such as *cucaracha*, or cockroach, because the insect is known for thriving and proliferating in unsanitary conditions. Individuals also face verbal attacks because of the popular belief that the SARS-CoV-2 virus was invented by the Chinese government as part of their strategy for world domination. Many worry that Brazil is becoming increasingly inhospitable to people of Chinese descent as they pressure Chinese Brazilians to “volta pra seu pais,” or “return to your country,” once again highlighting the deluge of nativist xenophobia (An 2020).

While research participants generally believe that anti-Chinese sentiment existed prior to the pandemic, they also feel that the origin of SARS-CoV-2 in China provided the fuel that exacerbated these already existing tensions. They fear that attacks on elderly U.S.-Asian Americans may cause similar outbursts in Brazil, while others view Brazil to be "more peaceful than the United States. Those who are rather optimistic felt that the most "extreme form of [physical] attack would be spitting on the Chinese." One interview participant also highlighted the robbery of Chinese Brazilian homes as a commonly occurring crime that usually occurs without physical violence. However, she hesitated in classifying targeted robbery as a hate crime because she feels that robbers act not out of racist intent, but because of the belief that Chinese immigrants have a tendency to hide large amounts of cash at home.

Participants mentioned Brazil's political relations with China as another primary factor influencing the historical continuity and recent exacerbation of anti-Chinese sentiment. According to Felipe, "China is viewed as a bigger threat to the Brazilian economy" when compared with the relatively amicable Japan-Brazil relations today. Felipe went further to blame high profile, right-winged Brazilian politicians for using this economic competition to propagate anti-Chinese sentiments in order to rally support for Brazilian nationalism. These responses demonstrate how politicians often spread xenophobic sentiment during times of national crisis—whether that be due to economic competition or infectious disease—as strategies for garnering public support through the establishment of a foreign scapegoat (Viladrich 2021). These nativist narratives similarly inform public attitudes towards persons or products originating from China. To highlight one example, one interview participant explained how White Brazilians describe Chinese merchandise as *Xing Ling,* which translates to *zero stars* in Mandarin to emphasize the low quality of products that are sold. This term has become so ubiquitous that *Xing Ling* in

Brazilian colloquial vocabulary is functionally synonymous to any product that originates from China, regardless of actual quality. Distasteful attitudes towards Chinese merchandise then reinforces beliefs that individuals of Chinese descent are “cheap people” who “work for cheap labor.”

Another respondent, Julia, credited flaws in the Brazilian educational curriculum as the cause for anti-Chinese prejudice. Her experiences with the Brazilian public school system have shown that there is an altogether absence of Chinese migration history because the study of Asian Brazilian migration focuses primarily on those of Japanese descent. Furthermore, the narrative constructed about Japanese immigration is a cherry-picked story that emphasizes friendly Japan-Brazil relations with intentional exclusion of the injustices suffered by migrants. Brazilians observe this story as a celebration of the multiculturalism that emerged from the immigration of “hardworking, intelligent Japanese laborers.”

Julia explains that this cherry-picked narrative provided the origins of the model minority narrative, which “elevates the current status of the Japanese” in such a manner as to degrade those of Indigenous, African, and Chinese descent. She also criticized the Brazilian president for perpetuating the model minority narrative when he spoke of the Indigenous as “a shit people” who ought to “look at the Japanese,” because “they are not lazy, they work very hard.” Similar accounts of racist comparison between the Japanese and the Chinese cause other Brazilians to view those of Chinese descent as “low-quality people” who resembled the quality of products that originate from China.

Earlier waves of immigration from Japan also allowed those of Japanese descent to achieve greater Portuguese language fluency in comparison with Chinese Brazilians from later waves of immigration. One respondent reflected on a conversation in which a White Brazilian

said to him, “I know that you are Japanese because you speak Portuguese. That guy is Chinese because he didn't speak Portuguese. It’s very easy to tell the difference!” He described this conversation as an example showing inherently prejudiced beliefs that regard those of Chinese descent as “less Brazilian” than those of Japanese descent. Not only do these narratives reinforce the perception of Chinese Brazilians as perpetual “foreigners-within” (Cheng 2013), but they also strengthen the positionality of Japanese Brazilians as the idealized model minority.

Conversely, many Japanese Brazilian respondents lamented over their inability to speak Japanese, participate in Japanese cultural holidays, or recount details from their grandparents’ migration histories. They believe Chinese Brazilians maintained more authentic culture from their home country because they spent less generations in a foreign land. My Japanese Brazilian participants envied this preservation of ancestral cultures while simultaneously acknowledging how it continues to result in the alienation of Chinese Brazilians from a Brazilian national identity. Those who appear less assimilated are less accepted into Brazilian society, which further results in the portrayal of Chinese Brazilians as a foreign body that ought to be excised to preserve the autonomy of a Brazilian national identity.

Implications for Solidarity

Japanese Brazilian participants expressed worry, frustration, and a struggle for solidarity with Chinese Brazilians when faced with racism attributed to opportune circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic. Others responded with suppression and forced numbness: they “...tend to avoid these feelings because of the fear of feeling something [they] don’t want to feel...don’t want to feel like a victim.” Many described fears they have for the safety of their family members while citing an incident in which a White Brazilian woman refused to sit beside an Asian Brazilian woman on a train in São Paulo. The unruly passenger claimed that the Asian

woman, who self-identifies as Japanese Brazilian, was responsible for spreading COVID-19. This incident struck a particular chord with Brazilians of Japanese descent because it reveals the potential for indiscriminate violence against all individuals who appeared Asian, irrespective of their country of origin.

Brazilians of Chinese descent suffer stronger acts of racism when there was an identifying aspect that confirmed the individual's Chinese ancestry, such as ownership of a Chinese business. However, anti-Chinese slurs may also be leveraged against all individuals with an Asian physical appearance when ancestry is unclear to the non-Asian propagator. My Japanese Brazilians interviewees were especially frustrated when individuals associated them with China because it "showed a disrespect towards the beauty of distinctive Asian cultures." This insensitivity was evident through the way that a White Brazilian theatrical director created an Asian character by the name of "China," yet dressed her in a traditional *geisha* costume worn by Japanese performance artists. One respondent complained about this incident by stating how "White Brazilians only focused on phenotype: they look and see yellow, they think I need a yellow person for this role, but they don't think about [their] culture." His frustration reveals how Asian Brazilians may resist the generalized gloss of Asian panethnicity because they recognize the ways that it fosters cultural insensitivity among White Brazilians.

Some Japanese Brazilian participants feel that it is unjust for the Japanese to suffer COVID-19 ignited prejudice because they attribute blame to China for the origins of the global pandemic. They expressed indignation over being perceived by other Brazilians as homogeneously Asian and countered with a stronger urge to profess their Japanese heritage. These responses reveal an underlying belief that anti-Chinese prejudice is more justified than generalized anti-Asian prejudice. Their avoidance of association with the Chinese further serves

as a coping mechanism to avoid victimization during rises in COVID-19 associated anti-Asian violence.

Implications for Japanese-Chinese Brazilian Solidarity

As self-identifying antiracist scholars, these Japanese Brazilians maintain a complicated position. They experience tension between their own frustration towards China's mishaps and the desire for solidarity in antiracist activism with Chinese Brazilians. Cultural insensitivity from White Brazilians exacerbates this tension as it heightens Japanese Brazilians' defense in declaring their non-Chinese ancestry while simultaneously highlighting the need for solidarity against anti-Asian hate. This internal struggle was apparent through the reflections of one research participant, Ana:

"*Once I was at my parents' house and there was a man...talking about how he wasn't going to take a Chinese vaccine, only an Oxford vaccine, because he didn't want to take something from China. And you know these microaggressions hurt, and it's weird...when there is a pandemic and then it's my fault because I look like this, you know? It's the Chinese's fault, but I'm not even Chinese. But they look at my face and they see Chinese...and that's not something bad, I like the Chinese Brazilian people here, but White people look at us like we're something weird and bad*."

Before further contextualizing this piece of interview data, I must first emphasize that all inferences are made based off information provided by Ana alone. There is no way to establish the credibility of her description because I was not present to witness her encounter with the man who refused "a Chinese vaccine." What I do know is that Ana was hurt by this encounter because she perceived the man's words as discriminatory language. Her own choice of words

also suggests several pieces of information that may contribute to a nuanced understanding of the way that she views her Japanese Brazilian identity in response to anti-Chinese prejudice.

Ana's pain was contingent upon two assumptions that she made based off the man's wording, which she described as "microaggressions." First, she viewed his refusal to accept the "Chinese vaccine" as a form of anti-Chinese discrimination. I understand that there is the possibility of choosing one vaccine over another without racist intent, especially when one shows a higher efficacy rate. It was unclear if Ana held a similar stance on whether evidence-based vaccine preference was necessarily a form of underlying racism. However, her omission of this detail reveals that vaccine efficacy was not an important consideration in determining racist intent. It was therefore not the man's refusal of the "Chinese vaccine," but rather the way that he announced his refusal, that was likely perceived by Ana as a form of microaggression.

As a scholar I further pondered over the word choice of "Chinese" and "Oxford vaccine." It is curious that nationality and university affiliation are chosen in varying contexts to describe vaccines that could otherwise respectively be regarded as "Sinopharm" and "AstraZeneca." I acknowledge that analyzing wording alone is insufficient to draw conclusions of implicit prejudice because my anthropological inquiry is limited to the encounter as retold by Ana. However, other participants informed me that Brazilians generally associate products from China as "low-quality" and "untrustworthy." Choosing to label the AstraZeneca vaccine in association with a prestigious university would send an opposite message that appears to juxtapose Chinese scams with cutting-edge Western technology. Ana's feeling of victimization therefore suggests how an increasingly inhospitable social environment is often propagated through prejudiced rhetoric. After all, the comment would not have been hurtful if Ana did not already have

heightened sensitivity due to chronic exposure to racist microaggressions and an underlying reservoir of anti-Asian discrimination.

Ana's second assumption personalized her interpretation of the man's racialized rhetoric as she saw herself as a victim of anti-Chinese sentiment. She believes that her Japanese Brazilian identity offers little protection against COVID-19 instigated racial attacks because she fears that other Brazilians would indiscriminately view all people of Asian descent as a heterogeneous body. According to other interviewees, this fear is legitimized through a popular Brazilian saying: "Oriental é tudo igual," or "Orientals are all the same," which once again elucidates national attitudes towards Asian Brazilian panethnicity. Although Ana believes in the importance of antiracist solidarity with Chinese Brazilians, she struggles to adhere to this activist ideology when victimized by anti-Chinese sentiment. The cognitive dissonance was clear when she proclaimed, "but I'm not even Chinese." Choosing Chinese-Japanese solidarity over Japanese individualism is especially difficult for Ana because she believes that China is at fault.

Other research participants were quick in coming to China's defense. They rejected the notion that "China invented the virus to initiate their scheme for world domination" as nonsensical fake news propagated by right-wing Brazilian politicians. Luiz, a sociology graduate student, defended the practice of "eating bat soup" as many Brazilians believe this incident initiated the pandemic. He quickly labeled the negative response as an ethnocentric judgment influenced by Brazil's infatuation with orientalism, which views the Eastern world as exotic and often immoral in comparison to a Western standard.

Luiz went further to defend Brazilians of Chinese descent when speaking of the need for solidarity against anti-Asian hate. He made a conscious decision during his academic studies on race in Brazil to identify with "the yellow phenotype," not because his genetic composition

inherently created any proximity to those of Chinese descent, but because their external phenotype produced shared experiences of suffering. These similar acts of discrimination based on "the yellow phenotype" allows Luiz to feel "near to all of the other Asians in Brazil...not only to [those with] Nikkei-Japanese genes." This provides him with the additional motivation to stand united with Brazilians of Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese descent in the fight against anti-Asian hate.

At the same time, Luiz continues to feel resentment for being mistaken as an individual of Chinese descent: "People blame us for bringing COVID-19, and I'm not even Chinese. I don't know why they blame me." Denying association with the Chinese became a common self-defense tactic that Japanese Brazilians use regardless of their opinion about China. It rejects the notion that Japanese Brazilians are responsible for spreading the pandemic while indirectly placing blame on those of Chinese descent. Japanese Brazilians activists profess unity among the Asian Brazilian diaspora when fighting anti-Asian hate, but divert emphasis to their Japanese ancestry when avoiding hateful rhetoric that specifically targeted the Chinese. Their approach depends upon the population targeted by the hateful rhetoric. In doing so, they negotiate between aspects of their "Yellow" phenotypic and Japanese ancestral identities.

Encounters with anti-Chinese sentiment reveals Japanese Brazilian activists' personal struggles to abide by their goal of unity. Those who professed desires for solidarity and abandonment of the model minority narrative were the same individuals who took refuge in their non-Chinese ancestry. While these tensions existed prior to COVID-19, the pandemic played a role in furthering the wedge of discomfort that complicated Japanese-Chinese solidarity in the fight against anti-Asian hate.

Implications

This study of Japanese-Chinese solidarity proves useful for two purposes: First, analysis of anti-Chinese rhetoric in the context of Chinese economic competition and the COVID-19 pandemic reveals politically-motivated agendas for spreading nativist xenophobia. It underscores some of the form and function of anti-Asian racism by elucidating how structurally-embedded forces label individuals of Chinese descent as perpetual foreigners unworthy of acceptance, which may be understood as a continuation of the Yellow Peril (Nascimento 2013). Furthermore, while Japanese Brazilians claim to derive protection from the Yellow Peril through public perception of their model minority status, it is apparent to me that positive stereotypes of Japanese excellence may similarly contribute to their foreigner positionality. This can be observed through narrative celebrations of "hardworking, intelligent Japanese laborers" when Brazilians attribute these characteristics as essentialized Japanese traits that are worthy of praise. Therefore, I believe that negative stereotypes from the Yellow Peril and positive stereotypes from the model minority narrative may both facilitate the alienation of Chinese and Japanese Brazilians from mainstream society.

The second purpose that this ethnographic endeavor serves is illustrating how the model minority narrative can be adapted as a tool of the state, as well as a tool used by certain minorities to avoid anti-Asian discrimination. When applied by the state, stereotypes of "hardworking, intelligent" immigrants pressures minorities to achieve unrealistic expectations of performance in the workplace. Such narratives inflict harm by reinforcing perceptions of minorities as workers whose worth is derived through their labor alone (Poon et al. 2016), which may subtly continue the historical labor exploitation of Asian Brazilian migrants (Tsuda 1999). The model minority narrative may also be employed by the state as an agent of both interethnic

and intraethnic conflict, which was observed through challenges to Black-Asian and Japanese-Chinese solidarity. In addition, certain minorities—such as Japanese Brazilians—may also wield model minority privilege as a strategy for avoiding anti-Chinese discrimination, further eroding the pursuit for intraethnic antiracist solidarity.

IV. Differences in Generational Perspectives

Generational Conflict

In previous sections of Chapter Three, I explored how countries of origin and different beliefs on the nature of racism have impacted group solidarity among Asian Brazilian activists. This section analyzes the third proximate factor that has hindered activist solidarity: conflict between different generations of the Asian Brazilian diaspora.

Conflict regarding the topic of antiracist activism most often occurred within the family setting. One interlocutor described her quarantine experience with great exasperation, stating her clashes with parents as one of the primary reasons she decided to move out. These clashes originated from her increasing passion for the #BlackLivesMatter movement, which fueled constant arguments with her disagreeing parents. Arturo, a 27 year old activist, provided a similar account of the impact that these differing viewpoints caused within his family:

"I was having this argument with my dad about how #BlackLivesMatter was a legit movement, and he was like 'but all lives matter.' He doesn't think racism is a serious thing in Brazil, so he doesn't want me joining any activist groups. And he ended up...saying 'you can't live here. If you want to live here, you have to keep these communist ideas inside your own mind so your little brother doesn't get them...so it was a pretty bad fight, and many other friends also told me that [their] parents expelled them from home...because of political differences."

These arguments were often intensified to the point where children either decided to leave, or parents felt the need to "expel" their children from home. Remembering the context of uncertainty and hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be inferred that the conflict must have been quite extreme in order to provoke such a response from parents and children. The consequential lack of family stability must have also contributed high levels of stress and emotional turmoil. One respondent described the stress as "internal conflict" that sometimes hindered their engagement in activism. In this manner, the older generations' hesitation or altogether rejection of antiracist activist movements also hindered the younger generations' activist endeavors.

Methods

I was compelled to distinguish Asian Brazilians by 'younger' and 'older' generations because many respondents themselves spoke upon this "divide between the young and the old." For this section in particular, I focused on analyzing interview transcripts from research participants who ranged between 21 to 42 years of age. I chose this range based upon the ages of interview participants who voluntarily shared about personal experiences with family conflict regarding antiracist activism. I also classified these participants as members of the 'younger generation' because these individuals acknowledged about their relatively youthful positionality in comparison with older members of their family.

This section examines what the youth interpret as various historical and cultural elements that have contributed to this divide between younger and older generations. My research examines three aspects in particular that may explain why older generations are less likely to support antiracist activism: historical trauma, the model minority narrative, and differences in education. I discovered these factors as prominent, recurring themes when analyzing my field

notes and interview transcripts. They were later adopted as codes that I used for further analysis with MAXQDA qualitative coding software.

Historical Trauma

Historical trauma stood out as the most prominent explanatory factor that has contributed to the older generation's hesitation or rejection of participating in these activist movements. Multiple interlocutors described the differences between older and younger generations by pointing to "the fact that older generations have suffered from more extreme forms of racism in the past." Their accounts varied from the deceitful exploitation of Asian immigrant laborers in the early 20th century to physical violence inflicted by White Brazilians of European descent.

I argue that these experiences of trauma often resulted in two primary consequences: lasting mental and emotional turmoil, and loss of the family's original language or culture. These two consequences then worked in conjunction to produce a lack of communication between older and younger generations when it came to topics related to anti-Asian racism. This lack of communication finally contributed to the older generations' unwillingness to support or participate in activist movements, which also hindered younger generations from doing otherwise.

Helena, a 25 year old Asian Brazilian psychologist, believes that her parents avoid thinking about the topic of racism in order to suppress painful memories of the past:

"We talk about racism a little, yes, but not so much. My parents care a lot about certain issues: harm against women, oversexualization and objectification, for example. But they don't necessarily talk about racism. They know it's more important as an issue, but it's just hard to express...we are not a family that talks a lot about these things of the past. It's just too painful...so we just don't talk about it."

Helena spoke about the great discomfort that came with talking to her parents about these painful "things of the past." Other informants described similar discomfort because discussion of past suffering necessitated vulnerability, an attribute that was often lacking due to the particular tendency for "Asian families to hide their real emotions, and to just be strong." Emotion suppression appeared to be a conscious choice, according to one informant's description of her clients during psychotherapy sessions: "they know [the pain from racism] is important and real, but it's just too hard to express." This commentary illustrates how older Asian Brazilians, like observations of U.S.-Asian Americans as described in Chapter 2, may be more likely to trivialize or altogether deny present-day experiences of anti-Asian racism (Alvarez et al. 2006).

The lasting mental and emotional turmoil that accompanied trauma was further evidenced through Laura's description of her father's experiences with attending Brazilian public school:

"When he thinks about his past, he says some things that I can't even imagine because they're so sad...He used to be bullied a lot from White people in Brazil because he couldn't speak Portuguese, because of his [Asian] phenotype and the way he looks, and because they were very poor...People joked about him, cursed him, and threw rocks at his head...My father's generation—I mean, he is fifty-five now, he was born in 1965—they experienced the kind of things that left a mark. It's the kind of things I didn't live with because I was born in another time. I don't live with this type of bullying, of stronger forms of racism."

Laura's anecdote emphasized the distinction between her generation and her father's generation due to the different strength of racism suffered by each. Her account described the racial violence inflicted upon her father's generation as "the kind of things that left a mark," reiterating the lasting effects caused by historical trauma.

She also characterized the inability to speak fluent Portuguese as one aspect that "White people in Brazil" targeted when making jokes about her father. This observation revealed another consequence of the trauma endured by older generations of Asian Brazilians: overwhelming pressure to converse solely in Portuguese. Julia, a 21 year old university student, expressed regret for being unable to converse with her grandparents because "nobody encouraged [her] to keep talking in Japanese." Gael provided a similar account of grief:

"This is a very sad story, but I was raised by my own Japanese grandmother and it took me a while to realize that she stopped talking with me in both Okinawan and Japanese when I started attending school because she didn't want me to suffer...so then communication between generations started to fade. This is symbolic in my family; all the children who were born after 1945, they started having Brazilian names and cannot speak Japanese as well. I think this is one of the main traumas that we faced here. I feel very resentful of that."

Previous generations of Asian Brazilians strived to master the Portuguese language in order to avoid discrimination. According to Gael's description, the pressure went beyond acquiring the ability to speak fluent Portuguese: it necessitated a complete erasure of foreign culture, captured in the immediate switch to giving children Brazilian names. Gael's mention of the year 1945 was also significant considering how Japan's enemy status during World War II negatively impacted many Brazilians' perceptions of the Japanese. His family story elucidated the ways that perceived threats to safety and national security often spurred racism targeted against Asian immigrants, resulting in trauma and a subsequent loss of heritage and culture.

This combination of mental turmoil and forced language erasure, both serving as byproducts of historical trauma, ultimately resulted in the unwillingness for older generations to

engage in antiracist activism. When older generations were not on board, younger generations also faced greater difficulty in participating with activist endeavors.

The Model Minority Narrative

While some older individuals were unwilling to talk about the topic of racism because it brought back painful memories, others believed that the present improvement of conditions indicated that racism no longer exists. According to my respondents, the most frequent response they received when talking with their parents about anti-Asian racism is to "stop complaining about things in the past." Continuing to fight in antiracist activism was seen by parents as unnecessary and also may have been perceived as "a call for attention."

I understood these types of responses from parents as beliefs influenced by the model minority narrative. My interlocutors' commentary indicated that older generations of Asian Brazilians had a greater tendency to accept and reinforce model minority stereotypes. This observation was especially evident when Celia described her parents' reply towards her desire to join activist groups:

"Whenever I get mad [about racism], they say 'just shut up and keep working. Stop complaining.' That's pretty much it. They never fight back against racism."

Brazilian elites have historically favored Asian immigration because of the belief that individuals of Asian descent are hardworking and unlikely to complain about challenging conditions. This stereotype became engrained in Brazilian society as individuals continued to have racialized expectations for how Asian Brazilians should perform. Celia's parents perfectly encapsulated the model minority trope as they said "just shut up and keep working," demonstrating the harmful embodiment of these stereotypes into the everyday lives of Asian Brazilians.

It was unclear whether her parents viewed racism to be serious issue, although Celia's comment that "they never fight back against racism" suggests that they do face it to a certain extent. Regardless, they refused to acknowledge the subject altogether by diverting their attention towards work instead, which may be suggestive of their engagement with John Henryism Active Coping (JHAC) strategies as described in Chapter 2 (Rolle et al. 2021). This emphasis on work also led me to make two inferences that connected their experiences of racism with the drive to "shut up and keep working."

First, Celia's parents interpreted the act of working their small, family-owned business as something that stayed within their control. Experiences of racism originated from a broader societal problem that they may have viewed as something that was outside of their control, resulting in an unwillingness to directly engage with antiracist activism. Focusing on work, an activity that they perceived to be within their control, may have benefited Celia's parents by providing them with a greater sense of autonomy. If correct, this inference could potentially explain previous empirical studies that demonstrate how JHAC strategies actually protect the health of Asian immigrants by reducing their perceived stress (Logan et al. 2017).

"...I feel like it's not strategic for them to use this [activism] tool. They see themselves who are in the place of success and privilege. So why really would they stand up and say, hey, I'm not privileged, I'm actually being discriminated against? If they say that, they lose their privilege. It's not useful, really. So for me it's still hard too; I feel like I'm always trying to convince myself that yes, racism against Asians is a real thing...because sometimes I'm like 'I'm just crazy, this is not a real thing.'"

Parents and other members of older generations may feel that participation in activist efforts would directly counter the protective benefits that came with staying quiet, causing them

to strongly discourage youth from speaking up. They also bury themselves with work because it is the one thing within their control that allows them to resist against the broader societal problem of racism. It is perhaps because of these underlying narratives from the model minority narrative that older generations grow more likely discourage activism, regardless of how they feel about the topic of racism itself.

Education and Awareness

According to my interlocutors' responses, I believe that there are three primary means for education and the sharing of information: the public education system, traditional media, and social media. I use the term 'traditional media' to include television, newspapers, or news broadcasting programs. 'Social media' refers to relatively new forms of rapid and widespread communication, and usually involves YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp.

My respondents' descriptions suggest that both the public education system and traditional media sources have failed in spreading awareness because they reinforce the attitudes of the general population, which believes that Asians do not face racism. Most of the discussion about anti-Asian racism only occur on social media platforms—a sphere that remains primarily dominated by the youth. As a result, the older generations' relative lack of using social media also results in their relative unawareness or inattentiveness towards the realities of anti-Asian racism.

I argue that the public education system and traditional media sources work together to portray a certain narrative around the "exotic, hardworking Japanese," continuing stereotypes aligned with the model minority narrative. According to Heloisa, the Brazilian public school curriculum tiptoes around the topic of anti-Asian racism altogether:

"Racism is talked about but I feel like it doesn't get much importance. Especially not racism against Asians. For example, in college, one time we were talking about races and they talked about Whites, Blacks, Indigenous people, and they didn't talk about Yellows. I asked the teacher, "are we are not going to talk about Yellows?" She listened and said nothing. Nobody in my psychology school ever, ever talked about Yellows...and when we learned about immigration history in school, we only learn about people from Japan. No China, no Korea; only Japan. It's a very big thing here in Brazil...[with] tributes and festivals of Japanese culture from Japan. But they never talk about it from the perspective of having Japanese immigrants to replace slave labor."

Not only is there no acknowledgement of racism against Brazilians of Asian descent, but there also appears to be scant regard towards the category of "Yellows" in general. This observation was made by multiple informants regarding their experiences at school, across all levels of study ranging from elementary school to graduate school. Education regarding the legacy of Asian Brazilians was limited to Japanese immigration history while overlooking Okinawan, Korean, and Chinese immigration. This broad stroke of ignorance shapes individuals' understandings of "Yellow" to be synonymous with "the Japanese," resulting in insensitivity and ignorance of the diversity of cultures represented by the Asian Brazilian pan-ethnic category.

Japanese Brazilians in particular are revered for being perceived as "the model minority" as previously explored in Chapter 3.2. This narrative is further perpetuated by the "tributes and festivals of Japanese culture." One informant described these spectacles as "worshiping Orientalism because it's seen as something exotic." When public schools teach a complete erasure of the historical reality of violence against Asian Brazilians but simultaneously celebrate their "exoticism," they market Japanese Brazilians as stellar, hardworking foreigners: the model

minority. These descriptions once again mirror findings from Chapter 3.2 by demonstrating how even positive stereotypes may contribute to the perception of Japanese Brazilians as the "foreigners-within" (Cheng 2013). Television shows similarly pervert Japanese culture to perpetuate this model minority trope:

"I started to understand that there are a lot of different types of racism, like racismo recreativo. It's kind of means something you do for fun, or something you think is funny...like on the TV program of Ana Maria Braga, they made a tribute to celebrate Japanese immigration because it was the anniversary of Japanese immigration in Brazil...[but] to pay tribute, they made fun of the Japanese accent, of how we dress, how we say hi, you know? They do things like this but it's not even real Japanese culture. People don't do these things."

Cultural sensitivity and attentiveness to historical accuracy become irrelevant when practicing "racismo recreativo" because exaggerations or stereotypical tropes are sold as benign jokes. The general belief that racism is non-existent in Brazil makes recognition of "recreational racism" even more difficult for Brazilian of Asian descent. Moreover, this outright mockery of Japanese culture on a television program that is hosted and produced by Brazilians of European descent further perpetuates the sentiment that White Brazilians possess ownership over other non-White groups. Celebrations of exoticism point towards White Brazilians' mockery and mastery over Asian Brazilians while maintaining the image of Asians as foreigners in Brazil.

Heloisa, Deana, and many other participants eventually found space for discussion of anti-Asian racism on social media. The #StopAsianHate movement gained momentum in Brazil when prominent Asian Brazilian actors and influencers brought it into the spotlight, orchestrated by flares of racism and fear during the pandemic:

"...people started talking more. The famous people especially. They started to share more on social media. It was only several people at first, but then it gained strength. The pandemic has increased activism. I got to know other Asian Brazilians like me, because of the pandemic and because of the need for community. So then I studied more, outside of school...I did my research on Instagram. Seeing the #StopAsianHate movement made me cry a lot because it's so meaningful for me. I share about it on my Instagram account too."

Although the public school system and traditional media sources have failed to adequately educate individuals on the realities of anti-Asian racism, the younger generation has found their space on social media. Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube were all mentioned as places where Asian Brazilians activists began their journey of self-awareness:

"I would ascribe this awakening to the Internet and social media...[they] helped a lot in the process of self-understanding the yellow community here. I think education is the key to changing this culture. There is no other way."

Intersectionality at Work

Evan spoke from the perspective of an Asian Brazilian activist who spent the first half of his childhood having little awareness of his Asian heritage. He self-identified as White on Brazilian censuses for many years, even though both sides of his family originated from Japan and Okinawa. His story perfectly portrays how the three factors—historical trauma, the model minority narrative, and differences in education—explains the divide between younger and older generations when analyzed with an intersectional approach:

Evan's grandparents suffered great trauma both during and after their immigration to Brazil. His family avoided talking about the past in order to continue suppressing these painful memories, and Evan's parents were discouraged from speaking Japanese in order to achieve

fluency in Portuguese. Evan's family has also been teaching him to identify as 'White' instead of 'Yellow' for as long as he can remember because of their desire for Evan to receive acceptance into mainstream society. They believed that movement towards Whiteness could be a useful strategy to prevent Evan from being perceived as a foreigner, reiterating scholarly interpretations of the Whitening thesis as mentioned in Chapter 2.6 (O'Brien 2008).

At the same time, Evan's education in the public school system failed to address the painful legacy of Asian immigration while only promoting an outlook of rosy retrospection regarding the addition of Japanese culture in Brazil. Television programs, cultural festivals, and even his peers around him would facilitate 'recreational racism' as gestures of warmth and friendliness—making jokes that never made Evan feel great, yet left him without the ability to understand why.

Evan's journey into racial self-awareness began on YouTube when an influencer denounced the common saying: "kill a Japanese, and gain a spot in the public university." The nature of racism in Brazil is often so hidden that Evan gave no passing thought to this joke, interpreting it only as humorous commentary on the high proportion of Japanese Brazilians who get accepted into universities. It was not until this newfound understanding of anti-Asian racism that Evan began to consciously question his own racial identification as being influenced by familial and societal pressures of racialization. He turned to social media to find community among other Asian Brazilians and joined research collectives and activist groups, which eventually lead to his renouncement of a 'White' racial identity. Evan's subsequent critique of White supremacy and staunch advocacy for "Yellow pride" suggests that increased education and political engagement may provide younger generations with the tools to fight against traditional pressures to Whiten (O'Brien 2008).

Like many other young Asian Brazilians that I interviewed, Evan's parents are still hesitant to support his conviction for antiracist activism. Their experiences of historical trauma, combined with their present-day ascension in financial and social status, led them to reject acknowledgement of anti-Asian racism. Evan's parents also do not use Instagram or Facebook and cannot understand why Evan appeared to "suddenly believe in racism so strongly." Their disapproval causes Evan inner turmoil as he consciously goes against his parents' advice while simultaneously believing that his activism is an act of justice for his family. As described above, the intersectionality of these aforementioned factors worked in conjunction to fuel conflict, demonstrating the third proximate challenge towards achieving intraethnic antiracist solidarity.

Implications

Analyzing these different generational perspectives on the utility of antiracist activism reveals that Asian Brazilians indeed face intergenerational conflict, much like my observations of parent-child arguments among peers in the U.S. context (Chapter 1). One notable feature from my findings is the tendency for older generations to engage in JHAC strategies and model minority stereotypes as methods for avoiding racial discrimination. While there is evidence to suggest that practicing JHAC by focusing on work may provide protective health benefits for individuals of Asian descent (Haritatos, Mahalingam, and James 2007), more research is still needed to empirically investigate this phenomenon among Brazilians of Asian descent. It is additionally unclear whether these potential health benefits outweigh the negative cost of denial and emotion suppression in response to anti-Asian racism.

Furthermore, the promotion of model minority stereotypes has also been shown to impede my research participants' efforts towards antiracist activism. This occurs because the model minority narrative often leads to denial over the existence of present-day anti-Asian

racism, as explored in Chapter 3.2. The model minority narrative may also serve as a tool used by Japanese Brazilians—and older generations of Asian Brazilians, as demonstrated through this section of analysis—that provides some degree of protection from anti-Asian racism. However, this also hinders antiracist activism because it "Others" Chinese Brazilians and younger generations, respectively speaking, thus contributing to conflict and a lack of intraethnic solidarity.

Chapter 4. Conclusion

The previous chapter examined three factors that I have observed to present challenges towards the achievement intraethnic antiracist solidarity among Brazilians of Asian descent: differing views on the nature of racism in Brazil, varying countries of origin, and differences in generational perspectives. Zooming into each of these proximate factors proved useful for exploring the specific narratives that respondents shared when discussing the conflict and formation of factions within groups of Asian Brazilian activists. For instance, different beliefs in racial ideologies—as suggested by what I describe as 'the Comparative Model' versus 'the Structural Model'—have been shown to separate members from *Masculinidades Amarelas* into two distinct groups. Japanese and Chinese Brazilians likewise struggle to stand in solidarity, especially when confronted with COVID-19 associated Sinophobic rhetoric. The internalization of historical trauma has also contributed to differing generational perspectives on the utility of antiracist activism, thus manifesting in familial conflict that discourages younger Asian Brazilians' engagement in antiracist activism.

Re-emphasizing Historicity

To fulfill an ultimate goal of grounding my analysis within a historical lens, I also wish to re-emphasize the historical continuity surrounding each of these proximate challenges towards

activist solidarity. For one, responses from interview respondents suggested that disagreement over the existence of anti-Asian racism has long existed prior to COVID-19 due to comparisons against the backdrop of anti-Black racism. A quick allusion back to Chapter 2.1 and 2.2 reminds us that historical processes of racialization in Brazil further denounced the existence of racism altogether. Historically continuous notions of racial democracy still influence popular beliefs in Brazil, evidently shown through the way that some Brazilians argue against the existence of anti-Asian racism due to the widespread celebration of Japanese culture.

Tension between the Japanese and Chinese diaspora is similarly not a new phenomenon. Neither is the practice of negotiating one's identity as a strategy for avoiding xenophobic discrimination. Historian Jeffrey Lesser's *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil* reminds us that Chinese Brazilians commonly publicized their Chinese ancestry in order to avoid association with the Japanese during the Second World War (Chapter 2.3). Their tendency to portray Japanese Brazilians as 'the Other' provided protective benefits and may be likened with the present-day observation of Japanese Brazilians denying associating with the Chinese to avoid COVID-19 associated Sinophobia.

Analyses on generational conflict specific to populations of Asian diasporic activists is sparse, but the literature contains a plethora of research that demonstrates the propensity for racial trauma to hinder older individuals' participation with antiracist activism (Chapter 2.4). My ethnography builds upon these findings through examining family immigration histories. As respondents shared about their parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents' experiences, it became clear that many individuals from the older generation strived for assimilation into a Brazilian national identity in order to avoid racial discrimination. The tendency to discourage their children from speaking Japanese is one example of how exposure to racial trauma

influences the cultural practices and other behaviors of older generations of immigrants. I believe the discouragement of engaging in antiracist activism is a similar and related phenomenon with historically contingent roots.

I. Intersectionality Through the Model Minority Narrative

In true anthropological fashion, I now wish to begin the conclusion of this project by discussing the intersectionality connecting each of these three proximate sources of division. Even though I previously discussed the factors separately to provide some level of organization for thinking about the complex interplay of conflict, it would be remiss to not acknowledge my observations for how they were presented: a complex interplay. Failing to capture the intersectionality behind these beliefs in racial ideologies, countries of origin, and generational perspectives would strip my analysis of the nuance and humanistic insight that it may offer. After all, any singular interview participant may have simultaneously experienced all three sources of conflict throughout their pursuit of solidarity and antiracist activism.

It was through striving to explore their intersectionality that I had come to view the model minority narrative as a common factor. This caught me off guard. Although I had previously observed how the notion of Asian Brazilians as the model minority was repeated throughout conversations, I did not fully recognize its explanatory potential. Perhaps this reflects the elusive myriad of ways that the model minority narrative, with all its complexity and fluidity, may be utilized and portrayed. I will thus use this section to explain different forms and functions of the model minority narrative in relation to sources of conflict that I had observed among Asian Brazilian antiracist activists. I will also theorize the potential role that COVID-19 associated racism played in exacerbating these already existing areas of conflict.

The Debate on Racism vs. Prejudice

First, the model minority narrative feeds into the underlying ideology of the non-existence of anti-Asian racism in Brazil. Arguments among members of *Masculinidades Amarelas* reminds us that conflicts and hindrances towards activist solidarity emerged in this case due to differing beliefs in the nature of racism in Brazil. Responses from interview participants suggest that those who viewed Asian Brazilians as the model minority were more likely to understand anti-Asian racism through the Comparative Model. For them, the model minority narrative demonstrates the comparatively benign nature of anti-Asian sentiment in relation to anti-Black racism, which results in their altogether denial of anti-Asian racism. It is apparent then that the model minority narrative played a crucial role in these fundamental disagreements between Asian Brazilian activists.

COVID-19 associated racism may be likened to fuel that was added to already burning flames. As reminded by the historicity of xenophobic patterns during nation-wide crises, emerging research similarly reveals how the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to increased racial discrimination for minority populations (Chapter 1.1). The #BlackLivesMatter movement gained especial popularity in this parallel timeline, which not only increased the awareness of anti-Black racism but arguably also increased sensitivity surrounding this topic. My research participants tangentially mentioned how #BlackLivesMatter in conjunction with COVID-19 associated racism made them particularly fearful when discussing personal experiences with anti-Asian racism. They feared invalidation for being perceived as “mimimi,” worrying that their claims would face ridicule due to their alleged positionality as the model minority. This discomfort contributed to tension and ultimately served as a hindrance towards intraethnic antiracist solidarity.

Japanese-Chinese Solidarity

The analysis of Japanese-Chinese solidarity—or lack thereof—demonstrates the fluidity of the model minority narrative as a strategy that may be adapted in varying social climates as a way to avoid racial discrimination. According to my Japanese Brazilian participants' responses, individuals of Japanese descent are currently being widely portrayed as the model minority in Brazil. The present-day context of COVID-19 associated anti-Chinese sentiment may further explain the protective benefits they enjoy when de-identifying with the Chinese by emphasizing their Japanese heritage.

The observed past and present-day fluidity of the model minority narrative also illustrates how ideological constructions of race may be conceived in relation to particular state agendas. For instance, the historical emergence of the model minority narrative during the colonial and post-colonial era was used to advance the image of Chinese and Japanese immigrants as ideal laborers in the Western sphere. The portrayal of their success through positive model minority stereotypes effectively shifted attention away from the need for structural change as it instead focused on celebrating the salience of individual hard work and a morally upright character. This indirect endorsement of racial uplift ideology, or the notion that minority populations were personally responsible for their own social mobility, was then used to justify the subsequent criticism of Afro-Brazilians and Indigenous populations.

The resulting narratives and consequences of the model minority stereotype can be observed today, as seen through my respondents' description of how Jair Bolsonaro generalized the Indigenous as a lazy population relative to the hardworking Japanese. In perhaps more discreet ways, Chinese Brazilians are also criticized for their unsanitary practices in comparison with stereotypes of Japanese cleanliness and hygiene. These examples demonstrate how the very fluidity of the model minority narrative may function as a symbolic weapon wielded by the state

to justify discrimination against non-model minorities. It also demonstrates another avenue, beyond ideological differences on the nature of anti-Asian racism, by which intraethnic and interethnic conflict may emerge.

Differing Generational Perspectives

Finally, differing generational attitudes on the efficacy of antiracist activism bring attention to the element of historical trauma from intense exposures to racial violence. It also provides additional insight into why the model minority narrative continues to thrive among certain parts of the Asian Brazilian community today.

For one, observations outlined in Chapter 3.4 reveal how older individuals—namely, the grandparents and great-grandparents of my respondents—have generally been exposed to more overt cases of racial discrimination. Descriptions provided by my respondents suggest that older family members often dissuade the younger generation's participation in antiracist activism because it brings back haunting memories of the past. Because many older individuals also resisted and coped with racial violence by participating in the model minority stereotype, activism that directly counters this stereotype may come across as deeply unsettling. In this manner, the model minority narrative serves as both a mental block and source of comfort for certain individuals living with racial trauma.

Others also consider the improvement of present-day conditions to be evidence that Asian Brazilians have overcome racism. These older individuals believe that continuing to fight against anti-Asian hate would be a futile endeavor that could only result in ridicule and fuel the "mimimi" stereotype. This fear originating from belief in the non-existence of anti-Asian racism harkens back to similar observations made when analyzing the racism versus prejudice debate. It suggests that these ideological beliefs not only spur tension among my sample of Asian Brazilian

activists, but it also serves as an underlying cause for familial conflict regarding the topic of antiracist activism.

While the influence of COVID-19 on generational conflict was not as clear, it did appear to produce mixed results overall regarding individual responses. For instance, some Asian Brazilian respondents voiced their optimism when explaining how increased cases of anti-Asian violence during the COVID-19 pandemic helped to legitimize their activism in the eyes of older family members. Others voiced frustration instead, suggesting that the pandemic only added to their conviction and stress, but did little to change family members' attitudes on the necessity of antiracist activism.

New Perspectives on the Model Minority Narrative

Analyzing the intersectionality behind each area of conflict has proven useful for generating new perspectives on the form and function of the model minority narrative. While there is evident historical continuity behind the stereotype of a hardworking character and submissive behavior, my research reveals how these forms of the model minority narrative continue to adapt across context and time. For instance, certain stereotypes have become especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic as some individuals grow particularly apprehensive towards speaking up about anti-Asian racism. The sociopolitical context of the parallel #BlackLivesMatter movement, combined with the possibility of repercussion, has exacerbated the tendency for some to remain quietly submissive out of fear. These model minority stereotypes demonstrate that racism is not only enacted through physical violence or racialized rhetoric; it also courses through the underlying ideologies that permeate processes of racialization and influence perceptions of race and racism.

The historical and present-day fluidity of the model minority stereotype further reveals how racial constructions may be conceived in relation to state agendas. With White supremacy as the underlying aggressor, we may observe how the model minority narrative serves the purpose of perpetuating current structures of White power through three following ways: First, those who embody the model minority stereotype may become weaponized as symbols of minority excellence that then justifies the oppression of non-model minorities and promotes the superiority of Whiteness. This Othering effect creates challenges for both interethnic and intraethnic antiracist solidarity, ultimately serving as a hindrance towards activism and the demand for substantive change. Second, the model minority narrative casts doubt on the very existence of anti-Asian racism. While significantly scholarly work has been devoted towards dismantling false notions of Brazilian racial democracy, persistent belief in the model minority continues to deter recognition of anti-Asian racism—once again, hindering antiracist activism. Third, model minority narratives themselves shift emphasis away from the prevalence of structural and symbolic violence while replacing that emphasis on the salience of individual character. These stereotypes deter activism because it places the onus of responsibility on the shoulders of minorities rather than the state.

Despite its long-term hindrance on dismantling racist structures, the enduring popularity of the model minority narrative even among some Asian Brazilians illustrates its attractive nature as a strategy for avoiding racial discrimination. In short, fabrications of the model minority trope offer temporary reprieve from racism while creating difficulty for long-term change.

II. Implications and Future Directions

The Theory of Racial Triangulation

Sociologist Claire Jean Kim's racial triangulation theory provided a useful framework for analyzing anti-Asian racism (Kim 1999), yet much of the existing literature focuses on populations of Asians in the U.S. My ethnography advances the understanding of racialization processes among Asians in Brazil—an unpredictable context imbued with complications stemming from popular belief in Brazil as a non-racist racial democracy (Twine 1998).

Commentary from interview participants provides abundant evidence to support Kim's theory of racial triangulation. The debate over whether anti-Asian hate can be classified as "racism" or as "prejudice" demonstrated how many Asian Brazilian antiracist activists defined racism through comparisons with anti-Black hate as the accepted baseline. Their acknowledgement and sensitivity towards the suffering of Afro-Brazilians, which is perceived to be "much greater" than the suffering of any other population, highlights their sensitivity towards the "relative valorization" of Asians in relation to Afro-Brazilians (Kim 1999). Various attitudes towards the model minority privilege also suggest that respondents perceive themselves with "middleman" status in the hierarchy of power from Black to White (Poon et al. 2016).

At the same time, positive model minority stereotypes and negative Yellow Peril stereotypes both function to reinforce the imagery of Asian Brazilians as perpetual "foreigners-within" (Cindy 2013). This dimension of exoticism and xenophobia prevents their ability to achieve equal status with Whites. In summation, this narrative evidence appears to suggest the "triangulated position" of Asian Brazilians "vis-à-vis Whites and Blacks" (Kim 1999), even despite underlying currents of racial democracy (Twine 1998).

While this multidimensional framework more accurately portrays anti-Asian and anti-Black racism within a structure of White supremacy, it is still ultimately imperfect for capturing the undeniable diversity contained within the Asian Brazilian pan-ethnic category. In fact, any broad strokes of generalization remain dangerous because it often improperly assumes the internal validity of "Asian Brazilian" as a unified category of analysis. My analysis of intraethnic conflict makes this all too clear, where the strive for solidarity across Asians of different national origins and different generational backgrounds proves to be an immense challenge. The relative homogeneity of my sample in terms of educational attainment and average income similarly points towards the possibility of much greater intraethnic diversity.

Herein lies the irony: my ethnography reveals how this diverse sample of antiracist activists fight to achieve pan-ethnic solidarity, likely because these "diverse peoples who are nevertheless [often] seen as homogenous by outsiders" face similar forms of racial discrimination (Espiritu 1992). Pan-ethnic antiracist mobilization then appears to be a useful strategy because it strengthens voices against anti-Asian racism. However, it may also be argued that fighting to achieve this pan-ethnic solidarity indeliberately reinforces external perceptions of "Asian Brazilian" as a legitimate and homogenous category. If panethnicity is understood as a socially constructed ideology formed from the oppressive logic of White supremacy, then panethnic antiracist mobilization still remains entrapped within this existing system of White supremacy. This naturally leads me to question the worth of striving for pan-ethnic solidarity, instead of observing panethnicity as the unquestionable norm—especially when given the evidence of intraethnic conflict.

The Model Minority Narrative: A Mechanism for Labor Exploitation

Assessing anti-Asian racism through the lens of racial triangulation proves useful for highlighting the historically continuous, structurally embedded elements of racism. This harkens back to Ruth Wilmore Gilson's definition of racism as "state-sanctioned violence" perpetuated by the structural embeddedness of racial disparity. The second aspect of Gilmore's framework involves "the exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" (Gilmore 2007), which leads me to argue that anti-Asian racism may also be understood through a lens of labor exploitation.

While my ethnography does not offer direct empirical data on the relationship between racism and mortality among Brazilians of Asian descent, it does provide narrative evidence to illustrate and hypothesize how racial violence may be internalized. I am thus led back to the centricity of the model minority narrative for its explanatory potential in demonstrating how anti-Asian racism often contributes to overwork and high workplace pressure. We already know that stereotyped perceptions of "hardworking Asians" can facilitate unrealistically high expectations leading to stress (Sue et al. 1995), and in turn, individuals may respond to racial stress with expending even more effort as described by JHAC coping strategies (Rolle et al. 2021). Commentary from interview participants, including remarks such as "Asian nerds are good at math," demonstrates this connection between positive model minority stereotypes and the pressure to uphold them. Another piece of anecdotal evidence shows how model minority stereotypes may directly influence Asian Brazilians' social lives and mental wellbeing:

Carlos: *"This discrimination is so stressful, so lonely, because we feel like we have no social value to other people. Nobody wants to know us, but everyone wants something from us: our work, our dedication...but not us" (Chapter 3.2).*

Carlos' commentary on the loneliness of discrimination elucidates how discrimination by prejudiced stereotypes results in two related phenomena: a potential tendency to overwork, as well as the general feeling of having "no social value to other people" outside of work. His words most poignantly illustrate the internalization of model minority stereotypes, their effects on public perceptions of Asians, and the resulting damage it has on social and mental wellbeing. It also points back to the alienation and "civic ostracization" that individuals of Asian descent face in their rejection from mainstream society (Kim 1999).

This is how anti-Asian racism kills: not only does believing or feeling that one has zero inherent value outside of their labor likely lead to chronic stress and loneliness, but I would argue that it also saps enjoyment from life itself. This is how White supremacy kills: by wielding model minority stereotypes to extract labor exploitation from vulnerable populations, this state-sanctioned violence ultimately breeds the oppressive logic that Asians have no meaningful life apart from their labor.

The Theory of Racial Ambiguity

After considering new perspectives on the nature of anti-Asian racism, I would also like to draw attention back to anthropologists Sean T. Mitchell and Edward Telles' work in redefining racism in Brazil. As mentioned in Chapter 2.2, Mitchell and Telles supplied ample ethnographic evidence to dismantle lingering notions of a non-racist Brazilian racial democracy. However, they did so by continuing to draw upon the concept of "racial ambiguity" as a way to explain how racial violence may be internalized for the perpetuation of White supremacy. They furthered this claim by suggesting that ambiguous self-perceptions of race may hinder individual drive for engaging in antiracist activism.

Mitchell and Telles' unidimensional consideration of racial spectrums leads to an incomplete image of the Brazilian racial paradigm. My research supplies nuance to the simplicity of their claims while expanding the understanding from a Black-White spectrum towards the incorporation of Yellowness. This comes as a response to sociologist Claire Jean Kim's theory of racial triangulation (Kim 1999), as well as increasing calls for going beyond the Black-White binary in studies of race and racism (Omi and Winant 2014). In this process, I found ethnographic evidence indicating that the type of racialized rhetoric targeting Brazilians of Asian descent is anything but ambiguous. Not only is COVID-19 associated racism specific the Asian diaspora, but it often extends further to emphasize the specificity of one's country of origin—thus raising the status of the Japanese while making crude claims about Chinese Brazilians.

Given the political climate during the COVID-19 pandemic, I believe that racialized rhetoric is likely to be equivocally unambiguous when it arises from xenophobic sentiment. It specifically targets individuals with past or present connections to states that are political enemies to Brazil. In this case, disdain from Chinese economic competition was further exacerbated by the origins of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China. Politicians and many Brazilians naturally jumped on this opportune period to label China as their scapegoat for national crises, thus resulting in this country-specific racialized rhetoric.

Despite the fact that the specificity in rhetoric degrades Brazilians of Chinese descent, my research has shown that non-Chinese Asian Brazilians may also suffer by association. Therefore, the unambiguous nature of xenophobic rhetoric may still be wielded in ambiguous fashion to target the general population of Asian Brazilians, irrespective of their actual country of origin. This trend indeed falls in line with the observable insensitivity that respondents feel when Brazilians generalize all Asian cultures as one.

Respondents' anecdotal evidence of being labeled as White additionally suggests that the fluidity of classification may even extend beyond countries of origin. While this makes a case for the fluidity of racial constructions, I believe that the term 'fluidity' would be more accurate than the term 'ambiguity.' Ambiguity implies that individuals truly have the autonomy to not only self-declare their own racial identity, but also the ability to define others' perceptions of their identity. Ambiguity also implies that racial classification may emerge from arbitrary processes of choice.

The notion of racial ambiguity would therefore be an illusion, because as we have observed, individuals do not have the true autonomy to command others' perceptions of their own identity. Japanese Brazilians who self-identify as 'Japanese' or 'Asian' may be consistently labeled as Chinese, just as they are sometimes labeled as White. Scrutinizing the fluidity, rather than the ambiguity, of these classifications reveals that they are anything but arbitrary. Analyzing the strategic ways that others classify individuals Asian Brazilians in varying contexts may instead be useful for revealing underlying currents of White supremacy.

Attaining these new perspectives accomplishes the two following purposes: First, it adds nuance to Mitchell and Telles' functional definition of "racial ambiguity" by exposing how racism may function in very unambiguous ways, depending on context. Second, it challenges their claims that the ambiguous nature of race serves as the primary barrier towards motivating participation in antiracist activism. My research reveals that unambiguously xenophobic rhetoric may likewise hinder activism through the degradation of interethnic activist solidarity. I believe these alterations supply complexity to Mitchell and Telles' portrayal of the Brazilian racial paradigm and call for increased anthropological examination of the Asian Brazilian diaspora in the scholarly critique of race in Brazil.

Model Minorities and Intraethnic Othering

The previous section explored how the model minority narrative hinders activism and challenges the solidarity among Asian Brazilian activists. In my initial reflections, I then quickly jumped to the conclusion that dismantling the notion of the model minority would be a necessary first step towards exposing the persistence of anti-Asian racism. I believed that education or gentle discussion, particularly with older members who were more likely to embody model minority stereotypes, may also help to ease the tension concerning antiracist activism. I also optimistically hoped that these kinds of conversations could serve as a starting ground for ameliorating intergenerational conflict as a hindrance towards activism.

Further reflection exposed my initial naïveté. For one, responses from interview participants reminded me that many older Asian Brazilians were very much cognizant of the model minority narrative. Some even acknowledged the potential harm that these stereotypes may bring, yet still chose to continue in their ways. Once I realized that the pervasiveness of the model minority narrative could not be explained by unawareness alone, I also ceased to believe that education would be the primary way to effect change.

Instead, the continued popularity of the model minority narrative may be better explained by the protective benefits that it offers to minorities who comply. For instance, individuals may face less overt discrimination and achieve greater financial success if they focused on their careers while remaining submissive. They may continue in these model minority stereotypes even if they had awareness of the need for antiracist activism, simply because taking action could result in immediate backlash. As such, reducing the attractiveness of the model minority narrative would simultaneously necessitate removing layers of racism so that individuals could pursue activism with increased freedom and autonomy.

Another final implication surrounding the model minority narrative involves the practice of intraethnic Othering, first referenced in Chapter 1.4. This phenomenon was most evident to me when discussing the intergenerational conflict that younger Asian Brazilian respondents faced when conversing with the older generation. According to them, parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents "just don't understand" their desire for antiracist activism. Many respondents blamed the model minority narrative for this disconnect and expressed frustration for how older members of their family embodied the typical model minority.

Even with their frustration, I felt that younger Asian Brazilian respondents still did their best to speak about this topic with restraint and understanding. They concurred that older family members were victims and could not be criticized for their association with model minority stereotypes. At the same time, it was apparent that these younger respondents still believed that changing older generations' perspectives was crucial for advancing forward in solidarity and activism. This desire to change people "so that they can finally see like we do" continued to fuel disagreement and tension despite best efforts at remaining loving.

As a twenty-one year old U.S.-American of Asian descent, I resonated with their frustration as well as the desire to change the viewpoints of my parents. My perspectives towards older generations shifted, however, when I examined myself during conversations with peers. I noticed that even when spoken with loving restraint, I was still convinced that older generations needed to change and see how they were victims of model minority stereotypes. What I failed to consider was that I, myself, was also a victim in varying ways.

I began to notice how many aspects of my childhood were lived out in rebellion: I faced pressure to be perceived as cool, to be socially accepted through assimilation into popular culture. I felt embarrassed whenever my parents took me to afterschool tutoring programs

because I was so concerned with being labeled as a nerd. I still remember the pride I felt when a White classmate approached me to say something along the lines of, “wow, you’re actually cool. You’re not like all the other...you know...[Asians]. I was surprised that you and I could actually have this complex of a conversation, because all of the others don’t really talk to me. Or they only talk about school. But you’re cool because you’re not like those nerds.”

I did not perceive this comment to be a racially offensive, backhanded compliment until years later when I grew in awareness of my own racial identity. I now bring back this anecdote to demonstrate how model minority stereotypes may evolve across generations, depending on context and time. Whereas the model minorities from my parents’ generation may have included stereotypical hardworking, high-achieving students, it appears that the model minority in my generation shifted to include those who may be perceived as “cool” in the eyes of the White gaze.

This observation echoed the sentiments of many respondents who shared similar pressures to assimilate into the “coolness” of White society. One Japanese Brazilian respondent proudly described how he bore body tattoos, rode motorcycles, and hit up neighborhood bars to converse with other “non-traditional Asians.” He beamed when explaining the pleasant hint of surprise he receives from White Brazilians for being perceived as “a non-traditional Asian.”

Whether or not this style and behavior directly emerges out of rebellion against the model minority stereotype, I believe that it inadvertently results in two consequences: For one, it may still feed into ever-evolving model minority stereotypes that perhaps now encompasses “coolness” and assimilation into White culture for younger generations. Recognizing how model minority stereotypes may change across generations complicates traditional understandings of the Whitening thesis, which explains how “middleman” minorities generally strive for

assimilation into Whiteness (O'Brien 2008). Whereas previous generations may have viewed Whiteness and model minority stereotypes as being oppositional to one another, evolving model minority ideals poses a dynamic and unprecedented playing field that warrants further investigation.

Rebellion against the model minority narrative may secondly contribute to intraethnic Othering, where pride in being non-traditional—both in his example and mine—inadvertently legitimizes certain stereotypes about the Other. By accepting backhanded compliments that I was "cool" for not being "like those nerds," I indirectly concurred that other Asians were nerds.

Neither of these consequences are fruitful for dismantling White supremacy and only contribute to intergenerational conflict. These new perspectives allowed me to see the hypocrisy in my previous belief that younger generations needed to rise up to change the perspectives of older generations. While I still believe in the necessity of dismantling the model minority stereotype, I now believe that doing so will require even more sensitivity, humility, and understanding. It will also require more critical examination of the self in recognizing that younger generations similarly fall victim to various model minority stereotypes. I remain optimistic that these approaches may provide better ammunition for achieving solidarity in the fight against the oppressive logic of model minority stereotypes and White supremacy.

III. Reflections

I wish to close this thesis with some concluding reflections on researcher positionality. As inspired by anthropologist Seth Holmes' *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies*, I believe in the importance of engaging with "embodied anthropology." According to Holmes, this requires reflection upon the self as a living "screen through which data" found in the field may be

"filtered and recorded" (Holmes 2013). In other words, ethnographers themselves are the tools through which outside information is processed and understood. This final section will briefly capture some of my personal reflections from the research experience to provide readers with insight into the lens of the ethnographer.

What I want to convey, more than anything else, is how difficult this research turned out to be. While I look back on the process with gratitude, I also reflect on the emotional turmoil involved with writing a thesis on the topic of anti-Asian racism. This project was particularly difficult for three reasons: First, as an individual of Asian descent, it hurt to sit in reflection on topics that struck particularly close to home. My positionality was a double-edged sword. I believe it allowed for immediate connection with many interview participants, but it also catapulted me into their spheres of pain, which only resonated with the echo of personal hurt from anti-Asian racism in the United States. Second, constant analysis of anti-Asian racism and activism often resulted in doubt over the validity of the topic itself. I began to question the importance of my work, especially when I considered the topic in relation to the suffering of other minority populations. I often compared incidences of anti-Asian hate with anti-Black police brutality and could not help but feel some level of guilt. It was difficult discerning whether this guilt came from the fear that others may perceive my work as illegitimate complaints, or whether I also perceived it as such myself. Third, I struggled greatly to situate my analysis within the existing anthropological dialogue, especially when it became clear that anthropology still frustratingly lacks theoretical considerations for the study of anti-Asian racism. How could I engage with a field that, based on search results for "anti-Asian racism," appears to reject or simply neglect this critical area of study? Why is anthropological dialogue

resistant to examining dialogue beyond the Black-White binary, despite an abundance of existing literature from ethnic and Asian American studies?

Looking back, I see how these personal reflections may have mirrored some of the sentiments and experiences felt by my Asian Brazilian respondents. I wondered if their engagement with antiracist activism, like mine, produced mixed feelings of conviction and pain. I realized that acquiring knowledge of anti-Asian racism inadvertently resulted in the increased internalization of racial hurt. The more I learned about the pervasive logic of White supremacy, the more I noticed it through power structures and everyday conversations around me. At times I longed for the ability to shut off this heightened awareness, but soon came to realize that denial was futile. These processes made me more sensitive and empathetic to the work of scholars and activists because I had come to view ignorance as bliss.

I know that many of my interview participants also related to feelings of doubt about the legitimacy of anti-Asian racism and the importance of antiracist activism. We bonded over our areas of confusion and our shared fear that outsiders would ridicule our suffering as "mimimi" in comparison to anti-Black racism. These moments of insecurity were frequent even among those of us who ideologically believed in what I described as 'the Structural Model,' which recognized the legitimacy of anti-Asian racism within an overarching structure of White supremacy. This observation led me to understand how activists may continue to experience feelings of doubt despite maintaining strong belief in the importance of their work. It demonstrates the humanness of my research participants and myself, and the very tangible internal battle that comes with fighting against an oppressive system.

One final observation was the daily realization of just how challenging it was to describe anti-Asian racism intelligible manner. I struggled greatly to organize multifaceted and often

amorphous topics, such as the model minority narrative or conflict between activists, into written work that could be understood. This feeling of messiness also resulted in doubt over the validity of my writing, and exacerbated the fear that I might misinterpret, misconvey, or produce reductionistic conclusions. These difficulties brought me to further reflect upon the nebulous often shape-shifting aspects of anti-Asian racism and the model minority narrative. Perhaps my inability to neatly and precisely capture these elements ultimately suggests some degree of their indefinability. This provided me with greater understanding for just how difficult it was to engage in activism due to the elusive nature of anti-Asian racism. These experiences also led me to wonder whether my Asian Brazilian respondents faced similar fears or frustration in their activist efforts.

Lastly, I wish to provide closing remarks by sharing what I most admired about the Asian Brazilian activists who so graciously opened up to me: their hope. I thought that the rise in anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic could have easily discouraged activist spirits. Many of my respondents did express disappointment and fears of facing backlash for speaking about anti-Asian racism. Despite their worries, I remember still leaving each conversation with a feeling of conviction, optimism, and hope that I received from interview participants. There was the common sentiment that change must be possible, even against the most complex and immovable outlook, simply because change was necessary. The confidence that they held propelled me in my research and development as an anthropologist. It reminded me to not only think critically, but also in an engaged manner in light of optimism and endless determination.

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