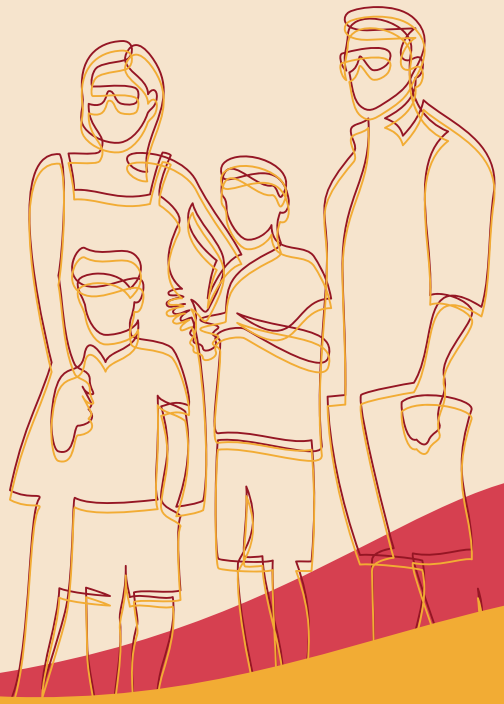
PROJECT APPA

Initial Findings



FACTOR-INWENTASH FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter
HF Care Asian Mental Health and Well-Being
FCEN
FILIPINO CANADIAN SOCIAL & COMMUNITY WORKERS NETWORK
SSHRC CRSH Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada
TACLA
Toronto Catholic District School Board

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Dear Parents,

We are delighted to share this summary report with you, based on the first focus group you attended as part of Project APPA. Since Fall 2024, we have conducted a total of **40 focus groups and interviews** (30 focus groups and 10 interviews), engaging **116 Asian parents across Canada** in the five languages supported by the Project.

As reflected in the demographic information, **parents from across the country**, including Western Canada, the Prairies, Eastern Canada, the Maritimes, and Atlantic Canada, took part in this study, with the majority residing in Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta. We are also grateful to have connected with **parents from a wide range of Asian heritage backgrounds***, such as Chinese, Filipino, Hong Kong, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Sri Lankan, South Asian, Taiwanese, and mixed heritages.

This version of the report represents a **collective effort among multiple collaborators**. Our university-based research team worked closely with our peer researchers, who are Asian parents themselves, to thoughtfully analyze the data and identify themes across participants' experiences. The summary was also reviewed by our community and academic advisory committee, and their feedback was incorporated into this version.

We invite you to see this report as part of an ongoing, shared process. Your feedback, questions, and reflections are deeply valued, and you are welcome to share them with us by email or during the second focus group. **Your voices will directly shape future versions of this report, and together we will decide how it can be used to support and strengthen the broader community.**

This report is a stepping stone for our next conversation. We look forward to welcoming you back as we continue working together to build resources and strategies and to strengthen momentum and collective action for Asian families across Canada.

With gratitude,
The Project APPA Team

**Heritage terms are used to reflect how participants self-identified and are not intended to carry political meaning.*

In This Summary...

Over the past year, we have had the privilege of learning from a wonderfully diverse group of parents, including you, and your experiences are rich, meaningful, and powerful. In this summary, we share key insights across three topic areas that we explored together during the focus groups:

1. **Parents' experiences with racism**
2. **Children's experiences with racism**
3. **How parents talk with their children about racism**

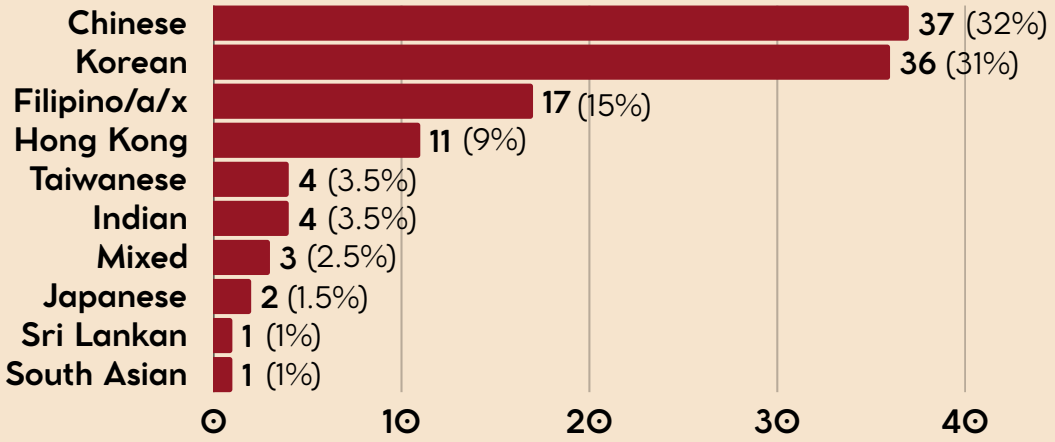
As you review the summary, we hope you will see your own experiences reflected while also gaining insight into the experiences of other parents and the ways they navigate conversations about racism at home.



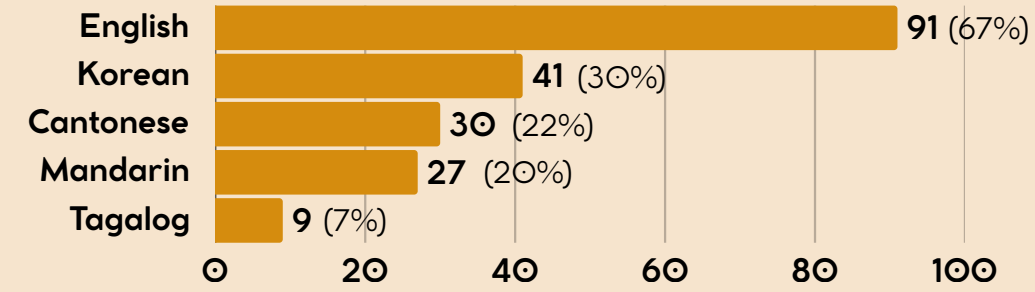
Our Project in Numbers

116 PARTICIPANTS

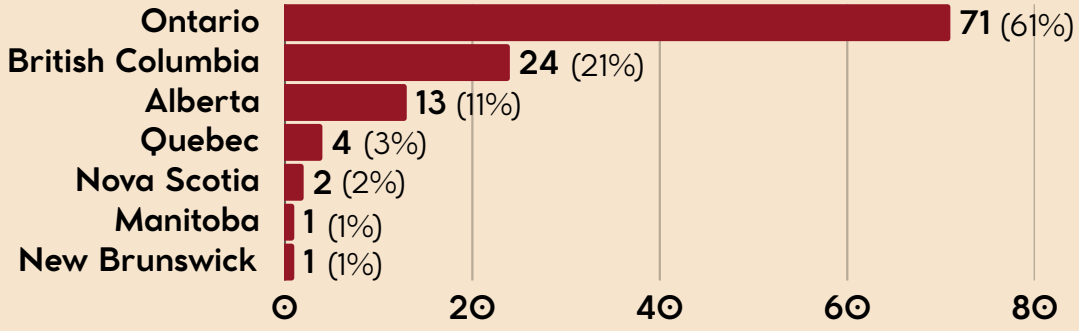
ETHNICITY



LANGUAGE PREFERENCES (CAN SELECT MULTIPLE)



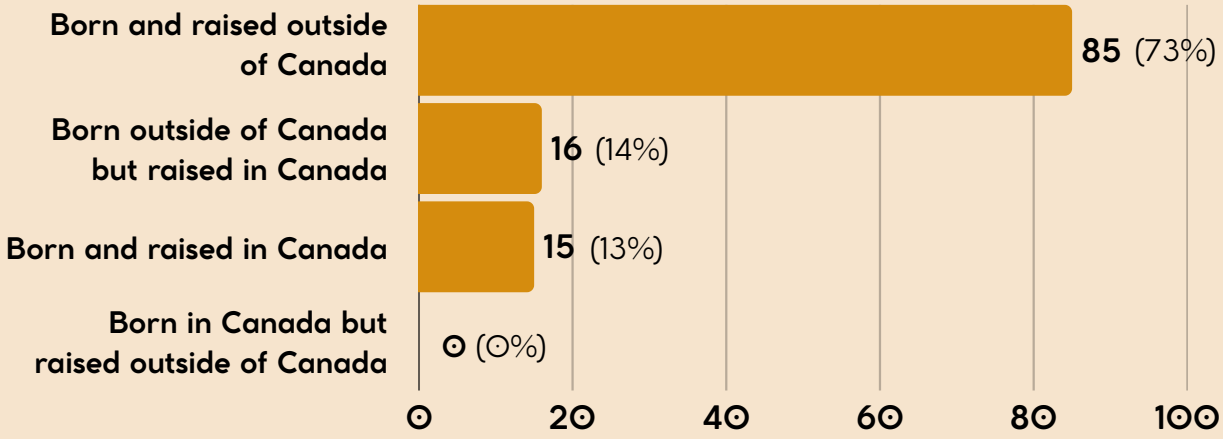
PROVINCE OF RESIDENCE



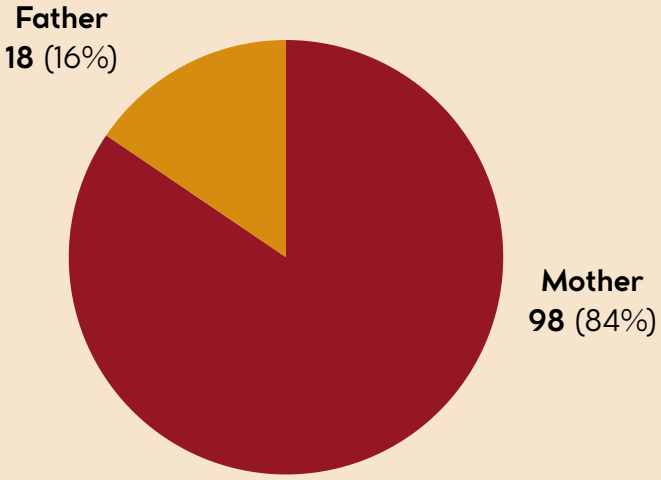
Our Project in Numbers

116 PARTICIPANTS

RELATIONSHIP TO CANADA



PARENTAL ROLE



TOPIC 1

Parents' Experience with Racism

The first section shares **parents' own experiences of anti-Asian racism**. While not all parents in the focus groups said they had experienced racism, and described Canada as a diverse and supportive place, many parents shared that they have faced racism and stereotypes at different points in their lives, such as growing up, at work, while travelling, and in everyday situations.

This section also includes parents' observations about racism within Asian and other racialized communities, as well as concerns related to multiracial families.

The themes are organized to highlight patterns across your stories. Each theme includes a short summary and selected quotes that reflect parents' own words and perspectives. **We invite you to read this section in a way that feels comfortable for you.** Our goal is to make these experiences visible, support reflection, and build shared understanding.



TOPIC 1

Parents' Experience with Racism

1.1 Parents' Childhood Experiences with Racism

1.2 Workplace Racism

1.3 The Bamboo Ceiling

1.4 The Model Minority Myth

1.5 The Perpetual-Foreigner Stereotype

1.6 Accent Discrimination

1.7 Everyday Microaggressions

1.8 Marginalization in Parent-School Communities

1.9 Racism While Travelling

1.10 Intra-Racial Racism

1.11 Internalized Racism & Colourism

1.12 Experiences of Multiracial Families

1.13 The Assumption That All Asians Are Chinese

1.14 The Impact of Politics and Media on the Chinese Community

1.1: Parents' Childhood Experiences with Racism

When asked about how they navigate racism as parents, participants thought about their own childhood experiences with racism. They recalled bullying, exclusion, shame about their culture, and pressure to "fit in." Several recalled learning early to stay quiet because racism was not discussed at home or their experiences were minimized or dismissed. These experiences shaped how parents understand racism and how they care for their children.

HATEFUL COMMENTS WHEN SPEAKING ENGLISH

I came here when I was 14 years old, adapting to a new environment and a new language as a teenager. I remember being in Grade 8 and Grade 9, and friends would make fun of me speaking English. It's not because I don't speak English at all, but obviously **I came with a pretty heavy accent, and I remember some really hateful comments**. As time goes by, I still wonder if kids are meaner these days. You know, it's always been a thing.

P2 (Richmond Hill, ON | Chinese)



COUNTLESS LITTLE EXPERIENCES



Hearing all of your different stories is **reminding me of all the little experiences I've had. There's not one, but there's so many.** In high school, I got made fun of by the white girls because my hair looked like a bird's nest. In elementary school, people make fun of me because of my food and how it smelled. I've been up north, and I've had people stare me down to the point where I felt as if I had no clothes on.

P81 (Toronto, ON | Sinhalese)

SHOUTING FROM THE CAR

When I was growing up in nineties, we knew that we should never talk about [racism]. I guess it was the topic that we're not very familiar with. The first incident that I experienced, **I was standing on the bus station and this car drove by me with a bunch of teenagers shouting at me**. They were definitely saying something stupid. I came home and cried. I was bawling, but my parents were not very understanding. They said it's almost my fault—that I'm too weak for not being able to handle it right. **Since, I experienced many incidents and I never ever spoke to them about it.**

P5 (Toronto, ON | Korean)



1.2: Workplace Racism

Parents described being treated unfairly, overlooked, or judged differently in professional settings because they are Asian. This can include unequal opportunities, exclusion from informal networks, bias about competence, or inappropriate comments from colleagues and supervisors.

ALIENATION

I work for [a large public-sector organization], but my actual office is quite diverse. But the first time that I reported to [the head office] for a meeting, **I walked into the room and all these white people looked at me like, 'Are you in the wrong room?'** And I'm like, "Is this happening in a professional environment?"

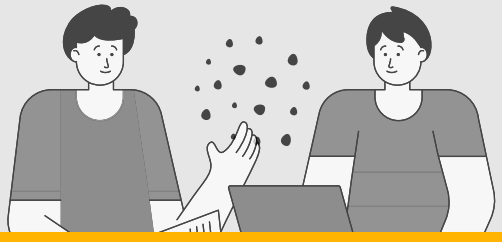
P44 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)



XENOPHOBIC, JOB-STEALING STEREOTYPE

I got a full-time job and, three months after getting hired, **my co-worker said, in my face, that I stole that position**.

P51 (Hamilton, ON | Filipino)



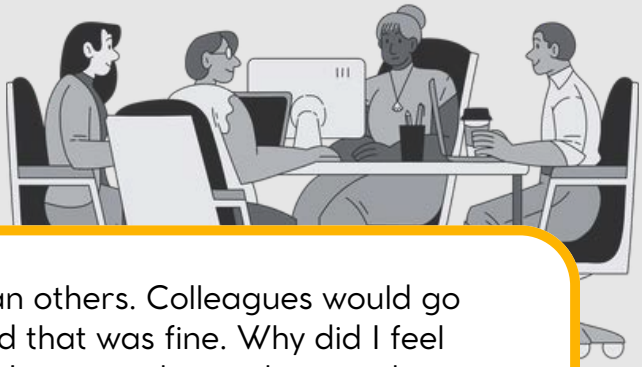
R

FRAMING ASIAN SOCIETIES AS PRIMITIVE

Last year during summer break, I was going back to my country, and I had to work from there. I remember one of the colleagues telling me, **"I hope you'll have good Internet service in India."** I was like, "Dude, I have 5G there on my phone, and it's very, very affordable."

P58 (Montréal, QC | Indian)

1.2: Workplace Racism (Continued)



DEHUMANIZING MICROAGGRESSION

My break time was always shorter than others. Colleagues would go downstairs to buy coffee or smoke and that was fine. Why did I feel discriminated against? Because when I went to the washroom, they would time how long I was in there. I wasn't feeling well, but they told me, **"You Asians are always sick. Who knows if you're really sick or not."** After that, I involved human resources, but it seemed like they didn't care. Their words and actions told me, "Yeah, I've seen your record. You're always sick. Is your health really that bad?"

P30 (Vaughan, ON | Hong Konger)

ASIANS ARE MODEL MACHINES

There seemed to be stereotypes about dark-haired Asians—that they are good at math, diligent, and such—at that company. With those expectations, they hired me, and they mainly made me do all the menial tasks. **I felt that they did not see me as a person.**

P60 (Toronto, ON | Korean)



RACIALIZED DEHUMANIZATION

I heard one of my white colleagues talk to another white colleague about pho. They were talking about Vietnamese food, then the one guy said, **"Well, it's probably dog meat, anyway."**

P94 (Hamilton, ON | Filipino)

1.3: The Bamboo Ceiling

Parents also shared that they experienced barriers to leadership and career advancement. They connected this to stereotypes that Asians are less assertive, unsuitable for management, or better placed in technical rather than strategic roles. These invisible barriers limit professional mobility despite qualifications or performance.

PEOPLE OF COLOUR ARE WAY OVERQUALIFIED

In finance, I see that **people of colour are way overqualified in their credentials**. I mean, it's not hard to see people with a multiple degrees or designations working on the same level. When it comes down to it, a lot of overqualified professionals fight for one specific managerial position or directorial position. I guess that's what you call a structural racism or something.

P16 (Maple, ON | Korean)

THE BAMBOO CEILING DEFINITELY EXISTS

I primarily do work in very male-dominated fields and with a lot of male leaders. I'm very successful but was never really recognized because those other peers are men. So, I've had to push. And now that I'm in a position of leadership, they call me a bit of a unicorn just because **they haven't ever seen another woman in a leadership position before. Especially an Asian woman**. Yes, the bamboo ceiling definitely exists. It sucks and I really had to fight tooth and nail in terms of presenting myself to ensure that I didn't fall into that trope of, like, **a submissive Asian woman who is really just there as "eye candy,"** as one leader put it.

P92 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

DIFFICULT TO BREAK STEREOTYPES

In my current and previous workplace, I have been constantly blocked for any leadership position. **So, for women, we struggle with glass ceiling already. But then there's added layer of bamboo ceiling.** Then it's very difficult to break stereotypes that you're not assertive enough, you know, and that you don't have leadership skills. All that is definitely there.

P14 (St. Catharines, ON | Korean)

PEOPLE TEND TO CHOOSE CAUCASIANS

I'm in an education field, and I see it here almost every day. A lot of teachers are white. I'm gonna just say the word 'white.' And then all the principals are white, right? So, even for me. **I won't get a lot of opportunities because, even though I have better education or I have better experiences, people tend to choose Caucasian.**

P19 (Toronto, ON | Korean)

1.4: The Model Minority Myth

Parents reported pressure to conform to stereotypes that Asians are naturally hard-working, compliant, and high achieving. While framed as positive traits, these assumptions impose unrealistic and high expectations on both parents and children, erase diversity within Asian communities, and minimize experiences of racism.

CAN'T PROTEST WITH CONFIDENCE

Whether it's because we are good at our jobs or that we don't protest being given too much work, **that's the way things seem to be**. The truth is, we're not unaware: it's in every news article and every movie—we all know. While I understand that stereotypes about Asians exist, as there are many prejudices against Asians, **it's also so frustrating that I can't protest with confidence**.

P27 (Waterloo, ON | Korean)

ASIANS ARE STEREOTYPED AS GOOD WORKERS

I read an article about 'Asian passing,' a term that describes discrimination that exists all the time—like the air—but we just tend to accept it and don't consider it discrimination. I realized it at that moment and felt much better. Because I always wondered if I am being sensitive. I think this stereotype toward Koreans or Asians is everywhere: **stereotypes that they are good workers or that they won't complain** even they are given unfair amount of work.

P27 (Waterloo, ON | Korean)

WE'RE SEEN AS THE GOOD MINORITY

A lot of the fallacies of Asian stereotypes is that **we don't get it that bad because we're seen as a good minority**: the one that works hard, are quiet, we just do our work, and we contribute. It's like, "Oh, well, they're Asian, they're not gonna make trouble." And sure, that could be seen as kind of a positive thing, but it's still racism at the end of the day. They are assuming everybody is going to be the same way and assuming you can step all over them because we're mostly quiet.

P22 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)



1.5: The Perpetual Foreigner Stereotype

Some parents encounter the belief that Asians are not truly "from here" regardless of their language and cultural fluency, time in Canada, or citizenship. This appears in comments like "Where are you really from?" and it is rooted in assumptions that parents (or their children) are newcomers, foreign, or less belonging in Canadian society.

"GO BACK TO WHERE YOU CAME FROM"

I think I remember, one time, **someone say, "Go back to China" when I was working in the supermarket**. I feel like that is offensive, and I feel like that is disrespectful. I only have one occurrence in my life. But yeah, it was very, very unforgettable because it is just insulting.

P56 (Vancouver, BC | Hong Konger)



"WHERE ARE YOU REALLY FROM?"

I'm not sure if it's racism or just ignorance. But there have been many times in my life where I was approached by a stranger (or sometimes even my in-laws or their relatives, because my in-laws are white) and asked, "Oh, so where are you from?" And **I would say, "Oh, I'm from Toronto," and then they're like, "No, where are you really from?"** And then I would say, "Well, I'm from Toronto, and I was born in Calgary," and then they'd ask again, "Where were you originally from?" Like they were trying to get the answer that looked stereotypical to them.

P6 (Thornhill, ON | Chinese)

GO BACK TO YOUR COUNTRY

One time we, a group of Chinese people, were walking together in the street. A person driving past us shouted curse words at us as they drove by, **saying stuff like "Go back to your country"** and things like that.

P62 (Halifax, NS | Chinese)

ARE YOU ALL HERE TO STUDY?

Especially on [Toronto public transit], we have had bad experiences. During our first few months here, there was one time when our whole family was out together, including my three children. **One person spoke up and said, "Immigrants, are you all here to study?"** And my husband said, "No, we're workers." But usually, we just let it pass because it's kind of petty to face those kinds of people and because we just arrived few months before. We had this fear that if we did something wrong that we might be deported.

P105 (Toronto, ON | Fillipino)

1.6: Accent Discrimination

Parents with "non-Canadian" accents describe being dismissed, spoken over, assumed to be less educated, or treated with impatience. In this way, accents (and prejudices about them) are used to judge one's intelligence or credibility.

WRONG PRONUNCIATION

When I went out to hang out with some people, and they were immigrants as well, **they kept asking me to repeat myself over my pronunciation.** Even my children spoke on my behalf.

P76 (Toronto, ON | Korean)

IMMIGRANTS HAVE BAD LANGUAGE SKILLS

During my time at the company, they attacked me for my language skills. **It was as if they were questioning my skills and ability.**

P41 (Toronto, ON | Korean)

"DO YOU UNDERSTAND ENGLISH?"

Sometimes, there's a bit of labelling. The unfair treatment isn't always very obvious, but—for example—when you're out shopping, **they might deliberately speak very slowly to you, labelling you as someone who can't understand English properly.**

P54 (Oakville, ON | Hong Konger)

1.7: Everyday Microaggressions

Everyday microaggressions are daily slights, subtle comments, or offhand jokes that are often minimized but are discriminatory, and they build up over time. Some examples of microaggression include intentional mispronunciation of names (or a lack of concern about mispronunciation), social exclusion, discourtesy, and remarks based on assumptions and stereotypes. This leaves people feeling judged, unsafe, and unwelcome.

PRESUMED GUILTY

Back in Ontario, when I just came from the Philippines, I experienced racism in that regard—where **I would be followed around at Walmart. I would be asked if I paid for my stuff and things like that.**

P79 (BC | Filipino)



PASSING REMARKS

In the early stage of COVID-19, I wore a mask when I was shopping at Costco and was at the entrance with a white woman when she said something as she was passing me. I realized a second later that **she had said, "You should stay home" and walked away**.

P34 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

INVISIBLE BORDERS

I went to [a town in Ontario's cottage country] and I was in line at a bakery shop. The line was long and **a child in front of me stared at me and then said something to their mom.** Then the mom turned the child's face away. It was an uncomfortable gaze. This kind of experience was common in Canada. It gives me a feeling that I can't leave North York?

P39 (Toronto, ON | Korean)



ASSIGNED IDENTITY

When I first moved here, a lot of **people assumed I was a nanny**.

P51 (Hamilton, ON | Filipino)

1.8: Marginalization in School-Parent Communities

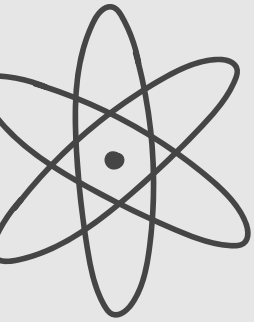
Some parents described feeling, or being treated, differently from other parents in school settings. They noted unequal access to information, limited recognition of their perspectives, and a pattern where white parents dominate parent–teacher association leadership and decision-making roles. This creates a sense of exclusion from parent–school networks and reinforces barriers to meaningful participation in their children's schooling.




ASIAN PARENTS SEEN LAST

A while ago, my second child's enrollment to kindergarten was starting in September and we were invited to visit the classroom. **The teacher came to us, Asian parents, last.** After stopping by all the other groups, other ethnic groups, **even though we were sitting in the front**.

P109 (Vancouver, BC | Korean)



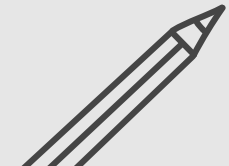
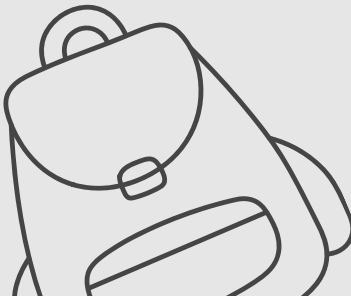

EXCLUSIONARY PARENT COUNCIL

In schools, they have parent groups and parent councils. **As Asians, we struggle to get into them. I tried to volunteer, but they wouldn't take me.** I went, and they told me, "No, we don't need more volunteers. We're full." It felt very exclusionary.

P52 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

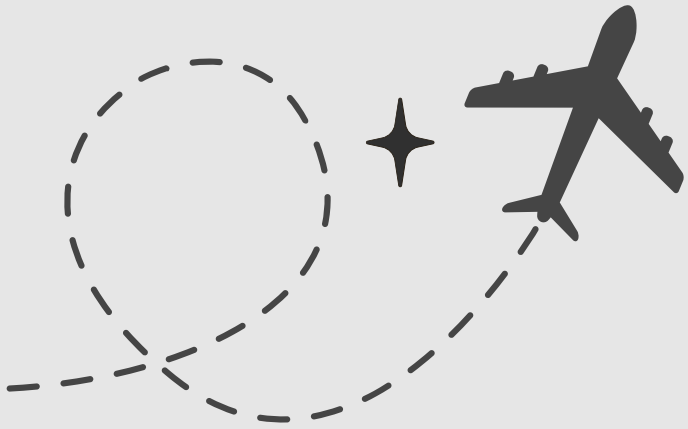




1.9: Racism While Traveling

Parents described experiences of racial while travelling that included profiling, unequal treatment, xenophobic remarks, and fear of being targeted. These moments of "othering" reinforce the feeling of being unwelcome and unsafe. It is also a symptom of racism.



RUDE WAITER

Most recently, my whole family—from in-laws to my children—travelled to London, UK. At a restaurant, the waiter took a very long time to take our order, and when he did, he was very short and abrupt with us, whereas he would make the effort to engage in a conversation with all the other customers. **When my father-in-law asked for hot water, the waiter pretended like he didn't understand.** I interjected and said, "You know he's asking for hot water," and he responded with "What, what did you say?" He understood, but was just giving us a hard time.

P3 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

TARGET ABROAD

When we went to New York, US, in 2022, I told my son, **"Don't speak too loud in Tagalog. We don't want to be a target."** He was not fully aware why are we were being careful, but there was a violent incident in New York a few months prior where they hit a Filipino.

P29 (Fort Saskatchewan, AB | Filipino)

RACIST COMMENTS IN FRENCH

I have an experience in Paris, France, many years ago where a man came up to me and said in French, "On n'aime pas les Chinois." I'm from Ottawa and speak French so I knew that **he said, "We don't like the Chinese,"** and that scarred me.

P1 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)



1.10: Intra-Racial Racism

Parents noted tensions and biases within and between Asian communities (e.g., East Asian, Southeast Asian, and South Asian groups) that shaped how they perceived themselves and others. These tensions are based on stereotypes and discriminatory hierarchies of culture, language, accent, food, etc., from within the groups and the wider Canadian context. These biases can be heightened by social and class differences.

NOT CHINESE ENOUGH

My mother is Chinese and my father is a quarter Chinese, a quarter Indian, a quarter Persian, and a quarter Arabic. So, the Chinese kids looked at me like the non-Chinese guy, even though I can speak fluent Chinese. **They made fun of my background and said, "Oh, you're part Indian; you eat curry; you smell like curry; you smell bad"** and this and that. You can imagine, as a guy growing up like that, you're bound to get into confrontations. It made me feel terrible.

P23 (Markham, ON | Mixed Asian Heritage)

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

I have an experience at an EarlyON centre. My daughter asked me something in Filipino, and other Filipinos approached us after overhearing. They said, "Hey, you're Filipino. Your daughter spoke Tagalog. **We thought you're Japanese or Chinese. That's why we are not talking to you.**"

P105 (Toronto, ON | Filipino)

PREJUDICE AGAINST OTHER MINORITIES

Sometimes **in the Chinese community, we have prejudices against other racial minorities**. We often hear the Chinese community targeting Black people and Indian people. We have biases too.

P8 (Richmond Hill, ON | Chinese)

1.11: Internalized Racism & Colourism

Some parents described their own internalized racism and colourism. This can appear as normalizing and accepting common stereotypes about Asian bodies and work. Parents reflected on how these ideas are not only imposed on them externally, but are sometimes repeated by Asian people and communities themselves. These beliefs shaped how they understood everyday interactions and responded to racialized encounters in public spaces, and it could even lead them to questioned their own self worth.

ASSUMED CAREGIVER

I took my child to the park when he was maybe a year old, and I ran into a couple of Filipino nannies. **They questioned me and thought I was the nanny of my own child.** At first, I was kind of insulted. But after processing, I thought, it's so internalized: Our racism and misogyny is so internalized that they just assumed, "Oh, it's another Filipino woman. She must be a caregiver like us. She can't possibly be anything else."

P51 (Hamilton, ON | Filipino)

COLOURISM

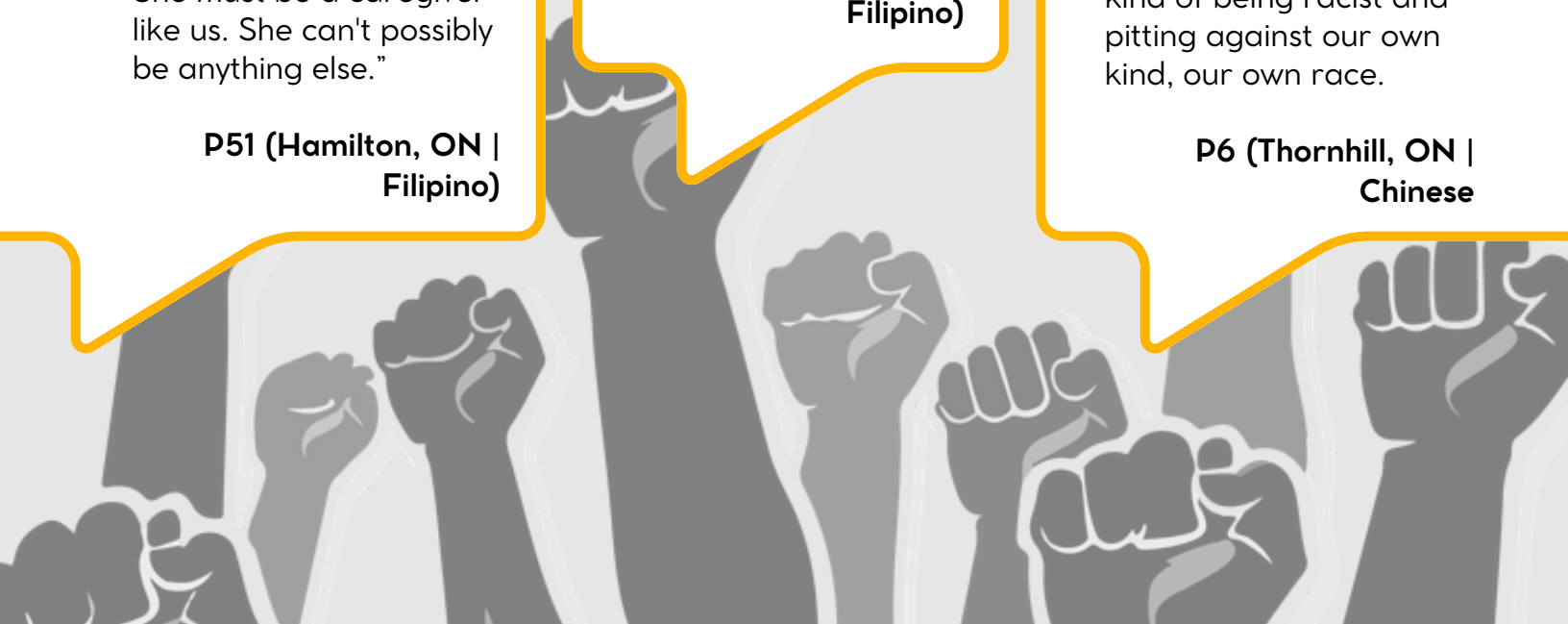
In our part of Asia, colourism is a big topic, because I feel like that was systemically or culturally ingrained in us. **If you have more Caucasian features—like fair skin, blonde hair, or blue eyes—people really gravitate toward that.**

P57 (Toronto, ON | Filipino)

FRESH OFF THE BOAT

I remember **my other Asian friends and I—who were born and raised here—made fun of people who we deem as FOB, or "fresh off the boat."** These were new immigrants or people who didn't really know much English, and they were like our fellow Asians, fellow Chinese. So, looking back, it feels very embarrassing and sad that we did that. It was sad that we were kind of being racist and pitting against our own kind, our own race.

P6 (Thornhill, ON | Chinese



1.12: Experiences of Multiracial Families

Parents in multiracial families recalled moments when both they and their children were not thought to belong. Their experiences included assumptions about relatedness, marginalizing Asian mothers in parent and community networks, and privileging English fluency and whiteness. Parents also described seeing their children's personal sense of racial and cultural identities change over time with shifting pressure from peers and their social environment.



EVOLVING IDENTITIES

People around my daughter used to be majority Japanese. She was kind of identified herself as Japanese Canadian. Now she's identified herself as a Black more. **She's okay with saying she have Japanese blood, but she's saying more that she's Black Canadian.** So, I just kind of observing how it has changed.

P77 (Toronto, ON | Japanese)

WHO'S THE DEFAULT PARENT?

I let my white husband join those parent networks because they would ask for my husband's contact number instead of mine. And event information, such as the birthday party invitation, all went straight to my husband. But this is another form of racism.

P40 (Burlington, ON | Korean)

ARE YOU SURE HE'S YOURS?

This involves my little guy. In the beginning, he doesn't look like me. His genetics have pulled more to Daddy's side, so he's got brown hair, light skin, and dark brown eyes. **I've had someone recently say to me, "Are you sure he's yours?"** Okay, your kid doesn't look like you, but as a mom, it still stings a little bit. But I just kinda laughed it off and said, "Yeah, I was there for the delivery."

P81 (Toronto, ON | Sinhalese)

1.13: The Assumption that All Asians are Chinese

Parents frequently report being mistaken for other Asian ethnicities, particularly Chinese. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this led to widespread experiences of blame, hostility, and Sinophobia beyond the Chinese community. The assumption reduces individual identities to a single stereotype and makes invisible the diverse and rich cultures, complex histories, and personal experiences of Asian people.

THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW (OR CARE)

I think some people said that "COVID-19 is because of you, Chinese people" when **they don't even know whether I'm Korean or Chinese**.

P47 (Toronto, ON | Korean)

CONFLATING ASIAN IDENTITIES

They don't really segregate whether you're Japanese or you're Korean. **Automatically, they think everybody is Chinese.**

P55 (Toronto, ON | Filipino)

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

One time a white client was getting a pedicure, and during our conversation, the client suddenly pointed at me and said, 'You're ... you're Chinese, right?' I didn't react at first. I'm just helping them with their pedicure, so **why did they insist on pointing out that I am Chinese?** It felt so strange.

P53 (Calgary, AB | Taiwanese)

1.14: The Impact of Politics and Media on the Chinese Community

Chinese parents described how tensions between nations and the way China is talked about in the news—especially during COVID-19—shaped their everyday interactions at work, school, and in public. Parents shared memories of being blamed for the pandemic, hearing hurtful comments, and feeling treated with suspicion for events outside of their control. These experiences left parents feeling afraid, angry, and careful about what they said or did in public.

FEAR & HYPERVIGILENCE

It was 2020 and COVID-19 hadn't even arrived in Canada yet, but the news was already portraying China negatively. That was when I really felt like, "Oh, my god. Seriously? Is that necessary?" That was the first time I felt such intense, blatant discrimination. **And then, as COVID-19 got worse, I started thinking that I probably need to protect myself.** I thought, we're Chinese, and if you're around people who aren't, you might get attacked. I became extremely careful and only went to Chinese spaces.

P102 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

NOT FUNNY

In my company, there are very few Asians. During the time that Huawei was banned from working on Canada's 5G system, **my colleagues would say, "You can get COVID-19 from the 5G network, right?"** My colleagues would just bring it up in casual conversation, as jokes. Hearing these comments made me really upset and unhappy, but I felt uncomfortable responding in a work environment.

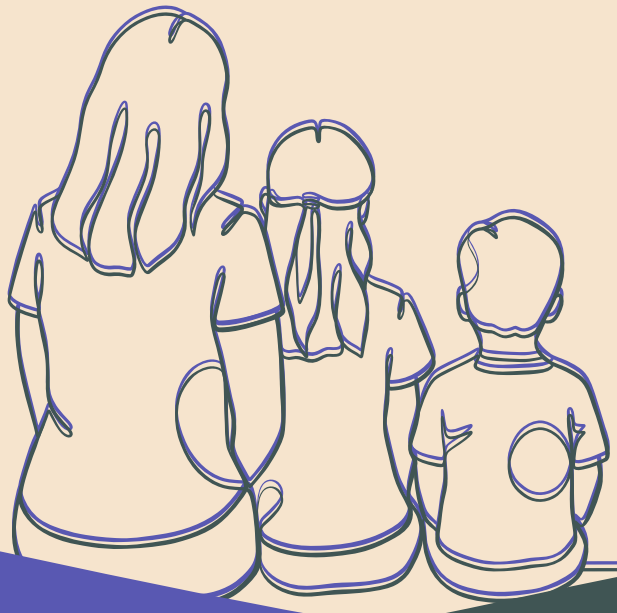
P8 (Richmond Hill, ON | Chinese)

TOPIC 2

Children's Experience with Racism

The second section shares **parents' perspectives on their children's experiences of anti-Asian racism**, most often in school and community settings. These experiences range from children encountering discriminatory stereotypes, being overlooked, singled out, or excluded at school, to experiencing bullying or even physical harm. Parents also highlight children's experiences with racism from other racialized students, as well as the unique experiences of multiracial Asian students.

The themes in this section highlight common patterns across parents' observations. Each theme includes a summary and selected quotes that reflect parents' own words. **We encourage you to move through this section with care, recognizing the challenges children face**.



TOPIC 2

Children's Experience with Racism

2.1 Discriminatory Stereotypes in Schools

2.2 Anti-Asian & Anti-Chinese Sentiment

2.3 Feeling Unrecognized & Under-represented in Schools

2.4 Language & Accent Discrimination

2.5 Food-Based Racism

2.6 Social Exclusion & Barriers to Belonging

2.7 Bullying & Physical Violence

2.8 Early Internalization & Identity Negotiation

2.9 Racism Among Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) Students

2.10 Multiracial Asian Experiences

2.1: Discriminatory Stereotypes in Schools

Educators can harm racialized students by acting on stereotypes, minimizing racist incidents, or perpetuating racist views. In particular, parents let us know that their children had experienced unfair grading, exclusion from opportunities or support, or unsolicited comments about their behaviour or cultural background. These biases reinforce stereotypes within the classroom and create barriers that limit children and parents from asking for, and receiving, support.

THE ASSIGNED FLAG

My child's class had an "international day" to celebrate different cultures. When I looked at the picture that they sent home, the children were lined up and holding flags, and my child was holding a Chinese flag. I thought, "Oh, that's interesting. Why did they give him the Chinese flag when he was born in Canada? **Why were all the Asian kids holding Chinese flags?** Like, where do they even get this information from?"

P7 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)





THE INVISIBLE LICE

When we first enrolled our eldest, age 9 in school, **I noticed that the school staff treated us different compared to those who are who have white skin**. Later, my daughter got lice and, when I arrived to pick her up, I experienced that **they felt gross holding my kid and the school staff kept looking in my hair**. But she was lice-free before and I know a 100% that she got that from school or from some of her friends in Canada.

P105 (Toronto, ON | Filipino)

2.1: Discriminatory Stereotypes in Schools (Continued)

THE "MATH WHIZ"

When my son was in Grade 5, teacher called on my son to answer math problems that no one in the class could answer. He hadn't even been at the school for a full week yet. The teacher said, "You can definitely solve it," and told him to go up and do it in front of everyone. **Why would the teacher assume he can definitely do it? Just because he's Asian?**

P63 (Oakville, ON | Chinese)



THE BLATANT RACIAL COMMENT

In Grade 7, my kid was struggling with math homework and not fully satisfied with the teacher's feedback. He asked the teacher for additional help again and said, "Teacher, this is my answer ... please look over it once more." **The teacher simply said, "I know Asians are good at math, but your answer is wrong"** and did not take any further action.

P28 (Oshawa, ON | Korean)

THE INVISIBLE CHORE

My kid kept staying after school to clean up the classroom. So, I said, "That's weird. Why do you stay there and clean up the classroom?" And my kid answered, **"The teacher told me and my friend to do it because we clean it well." And that friend was Korean, too.** It's hard to judge if what my kid said is true and it's because they are good at cleaning—or if I'm oversensitive, or if the teacher is weird, or if this is due to stereotypes and racism.

P27 (Waterloo, ON | Korean)



THE RACIAL LESSON

When my child mentioned in class that she's Korean, **the teacher responded by saying that Korean people are so rude.** The teacher then said that Korean people are too busy and that Korean people do not apologize when they bump into each other at H-Mart.

P47 (Toronto, ON | Korean)



2.2: Anti-Asian & Anti-Chinese Sentiment

Parents described their children's exposure to racialized harassment in school settings. These experiences included broad forms of anti-Asian racism – where children were targeted based on appearance rather than their actual ethnic background – as well as specifically anti-Chinese sentiment or stereotypes that escalated with the COVID-19 pandemic. These ideas often reflected messages that children heard from adults or in the media, highlighting how racial stereotypes are transmitted and reproduced in school environments.

CATALOGUED AT SCHOOL

At school, **a white child would say things to my kid like "Aren't Asians like this?"** Or, "Asians smell like this," or "You guys are rich, aren't you?"

P25 (Toronto, ON | Korean)

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

I went to pick up my children from the school at dismissal time and some kids behind us were trying to guess where we are from. **I was walking with my daughter, and they were saying we were "Chinese, Chinese, Japanese?" and I could sense that they were trying make fun of me.** So, I turned around and told them "I'm Korean, not Chinese." They were, "Oh, really? Okay."

P109 (Vancouver, BC | Korean)

THE BLAME

My daughter came home, and she said that she thought her teacher was racist, and I said, "Well, what comment did she make?" **The teacher had said that COVID-19 was caused by the Chinese.**

P1 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

THE INHERITED LIE

When my son was in kindergarten, a little Black boy once told him, "You're Chinese. You're a liar! You're a liar!" I was stunned at that moment. **Then the boy said, "My mom told me that Chinese people are always lying and scamming us for money."** I was shocked because he was just a child.

P52 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

THE SLUR

When my son was in Grade 2 or 3, the school was already promoting anti-racism—that everyone is equal. But one day, **a kid called my son "Chinese pig" during class**. My eldest son is very good at protecting himself. At that time, they happened to be in a recorded meeting, and my son immediately brought this video to principal. The kid was immediately suspended from class. They perceived this as a very serious incident.

P102 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

2.3: Feeling Unrecognized & Under-Represented in Schools

Schools do not always fully recognize the diversity within and across Asian communities. This results in mistakes (like mislabelling cultural celebrations) and missed opportunities to learn and connect. This can also look like a narrow focus on Chinese culture. When representation is limited or imprecise, students can feel unseen or excluded.

NOTHING FOR YOU

Most recently, my daughter—who's graduating from high school now—mentioned that **she's trying to look for scholarships and whatnot, and she can't find anything Asian-related** at all.

P79 (BC | Filipino)



NAMING MATTERS

They would say "Chinese New Year" instead of "Lunar New Year." My older daughter's friends mostly say "Chinese New Year" as well. **My daughter said that she was not sure about which term to use because her teacher also said "Chinese New Year"** at the event.

P41 (Toronto, ON | Korean)

FEELING LEFT OUT

In school, they're celebrating Holi. They're celebrating Vaisakhi. They're celebrating Easter. They're celebrating Christmas. They're celebrating so many more occasions. But there are a few occasions that are not being celebrated or even discussed. **We kind of feel left out because we want our kids to experience our culture, big occasions like Eid and Ramadan, openly everywhere.** But it's somehow lacking.

P89 (Vancouver, BC | South Asian)

2.4: Language & Accent Discrimination

Asian children are regularly teased, bullied, or stereotyped based on their language proficiency—or perceived proficiency—and accent. Language- and accent-based discrimination can include, for example, an educator's assumption that students need language support even when they are fluent. Language racism may also appear as a compliment for having a "good accent" as accent hierarchies position Asian accents as inferior.

PEER LANGUAGE SHAMING

My son and another girl are the only Asians in his class. He told me that the girl is very shy, and **a [white] boy teased her, saying, "Do your parents even teach you English?"**

P84 (Vancouver, BC | Korean)

LANGUAGE BIAS FROM TEACHERS

My husband isn't Chinese and, at home, we speak English. For my son, English is his mother tongue. **But somehow at school, because he looks more Asian, he got profiled by his teacher as having poor English.** Without us requesting, he was placed in an English intensive reading class after school, and he had to stay longer to learn English.

P54 (Oakville, ON | Hong Konger)



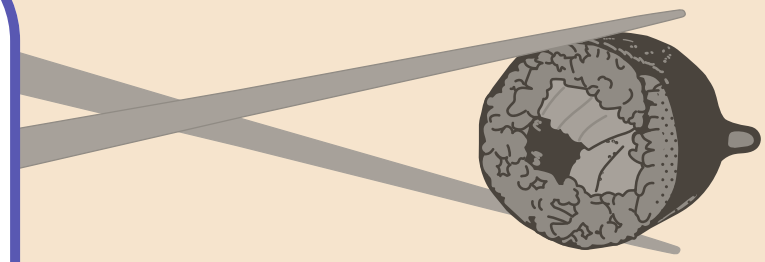
2.5: Food-Based Racism

Asian cultural practices and foods are frequently ridiculed. Children commonly experience being shamed for their lunches, seeing reactions of disgust, and hearing comments about "weird" ingredients or smells. These experiences push many children to hide or abandon aspects of their heritage to avoid being targeted.

"ROTTEN PIZZA"

We have a flat bread called chapati or naan. Once I gave that to her for school, and **her friends made fun of her, saying, "You've got a rotten pizza."** So, she came home, and she said, "Mama, I'm never going to take Indian food to school. My friends make fun of me."

P58 (Montréal, QC | Indian)



"IT SMELLS BAD"

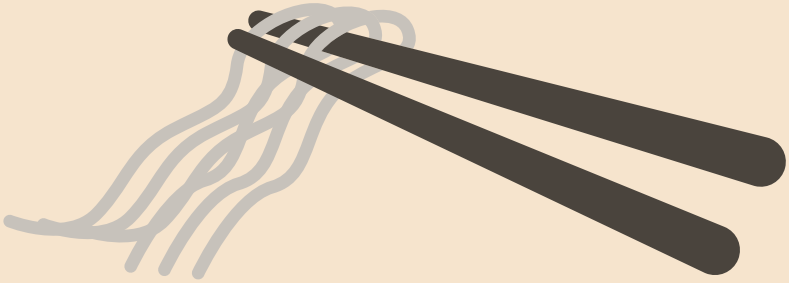
I think the first time was kind of a teachable moment. I think she had like sticky rice or something for lunch, and **someone made a comment like it smells bad**, or something like that. And she loves sticky rice. So, we kind of talked about different, like, cuisines around the world and about being respectful and asking other people to be respectful as well.

P44 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

"DO YOU EAT DOGS"

When my son was five, we sent him to day camp. One afternoon, after I picked him up, he cried in the car on the way home because **another child had said to him, "Oh, you're Filipino? Do you eat dogs?"**

P51 (Hamilton, ON | Filipino)



2.6: Social Exclusion & Barriers to Belonging

Asian children often face exclusion from peers. For example, they may be—or feel—excluded from extracurricular activities, parties, or playdates. This can give our children the sense that they are being treated as outsiders or perpetual foreigners. Over time, these patterns limit social integration and contribute to persistent feelings of isolation.

EXPLICIT RACIAL EXCLUSION

At school, some kids just said that **they don't want to play with my friend's kids because they are Asian.**

P37 (Surrey, BC | Taiwanese)



PLAYDATE EXCLUSION

Playdates are really important for children. My daughter wants to have her white friend as her playdate. **Her friend also said that she wanted to have a playdate with my child in front of her mom, but it never happened.**

P106 (Coquitlam, BC | Korean)



AVOIDANT MICROAGGRESION

One day, my daughter came back and she said, "Can I please invite X?" X is her friend—best friend. And I said, sure. She gets so excited that she will be inviting X at home. She invited her friend, I think, more than five times. Every single time, we would all be ready. We would go and buy snacks because she's so excited, but **there would always be an excuse that that kid could not come** and her parents would say, "You can come over to our house if you want."

P94 (Hamilton, ON | Filipino)

2.7: Peer Bullying, Harassment, and Physical Violence

Children experience a wide range of racially motivated harassment. This can include racial or racist jokes, slurs, and extend to physical attacks like pushing, choking, or hitting. These incidents happen in classrooms, on playgrounds and school buses, and at social events. Repeated exposure creates emotional distress, fear, and long-term trauma.

DISMISSED AS "AN IMMIGRANT"

My daughter is an eager learner, so she has a lot of questions which I think is good. So, she was jumping in and asking many questions in the class when one of the boys, a white boy, said, **"Oh, you—you immigrants, you know, just talking about study, study. You have no life, nothing."**

P104 (Calgary, AB | Indian)

THREE SLAPS, ONE POKE

On the second day at a new school, my son was exploring the school and ended up standing among a group of white kids. **Suddenly, a white boy standing in front of him from the right side just turned around and slapped his face three times out of nowhere**. My son is a well-behaved, sociable child in Taiwan. He was completely stunned at that moment. He asked, "Why did you slap me three times?" The boy just looked at him and then poked the same spot on his face where he had slapped him.

P53 (Calgary, AB | Taiwanese)

SLANT EYES ON A BIRTHDAY CARD

My kid went to a small school with less than 50 students in each grade, so everyone was his friend and from the same town and stuff. **But some mischievous boys drew slant eyes on his birthday and Christmas cards.**

P28 (Oshawa, ON | Korean)

THE AREA AROUND HIS EYES

My kid got beaten up several times at school. There were times when he was slapped and the area around his eyes was torn.

P45 (Mississauga, ON | Korean)

FROM CHOKEHOLD TO CHITCHAT

My child told me that **a male student choked her**. Maybe because she was so shocked, or because she got strangled, but she fainted a bit. But no one came up to her and the lunch supervisor didn't come. So yeah, she walked to the office and **even then, the teachers were too busy chitchatting and the office workers didn't call her teacher**.

P101 (Burnaby, BC | Korean)

2.8: Early Internalization & Identity Negotiation

Some parents described children comparing their appearance, food, language, or cultural practices with that of their peers and valuing traits seen as more socially accepted or "Western." While repeated exposure to racial stereotypes and dominant cultural norms can shape how children see themselves and where they feel they belong, these moments do not mean that children are rejecting their identity. Rather, these often-unconscious efforts to fit in (or avoid standing out) shows children negotiating their identity while reflecting on, and making sense of, messages about beauty, normalcy, and belonging.

BEAUTY NORM INTERNALIZATION

I remember **my kids saying, "Oh, aren't we so lucky that we have double eyelids?"** And I said, "That is something that Asian people focus on because it's seen as a thing of beauty, but there are plenty of Asian people who don't have it. Do you know that the whole double eyelid thing is a trait that you often see in in Caucasian people?"

P42 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

FEATURE-BASED COMPARISON

Once, my child said, "Mama, my hair looks brown in sunlight, and my eyes are also brown in sunlight. So, that means my hair and eyes are not black." She was very happy that she her hair is a lighter tone because **there's a sense that all her friends have light brown or blonde hair, which is more beautiful.** To fit in.

P58 (Montréal, QC | Indian)

UNCONSCIOUS ACCULTURATION

I think after being here for over two years, he genuinely shows more enthusiasm for Western food than Chinese food. He never said that it's because other classmates pointed out that his lunch was different, but I never asked him if anyone made comments about him. He just says he doesn't like it anymore. It's not that he is not proud of this Chinese food. **It's this kind of unconscious influence. Like when he sees his classmates eating a certain way, he wants to be like them.** He doesn't want to be the different one and be seen.

P103 (Victoria, BC | Chinese)

2.9: Racism Among Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) Students

Racism does not only come from white peers. It can also appear among BIPOC students, including those within Asian communities, in the form of 'internalized racism.' As children encounter identity hierarchies and racist teasing, they may repeat these attitudes. Racism among BIPOC students reflects the broader messages that children absorb from their schools, communities, and families.

THEY ARE ALSO FILIPINOS

My daughter approached a Filipino girl and said, "Hey, kumusta ka," but the girl just snubbed her. **Then she went home and said, "Mommy, my Filipino classmate didn't talk to me in Tagalog."** Another time, my daughter said, "Oh, your lunch is also adobo," but the girl will not respond to her. Then my daughter asked, "Is there something wrong that I'm Filipino? Mommy, but they are also Filipinos."

P105 (Toronto, ON | Filipino)



TEASED FOR ENGLISH SKILLS



My child told me that when he first arrived in Canada, some **other Hong Konger kids laughed at his English**.

P32 (Richmond Hill, ON | Hong Konger)

BULLYING IN PUBLIC

My children remembered a time when two Korean children joined their Grade 6 class. Apparently, **there was an Indian classmate who would spray the twins' backpacks with a hidden spray bottle and frequently bully them in public** as well. I can't say that this is the cause, but the twins ended up leaving for Korea earlier than planned.

P97 (Burnaby, BC | Korean)



2.10: Multiracial Asian Experiences

Multiracial Asian children often experience questions or exclusion from their families as well as the wider community. They often hear unwanted and unsolicited comments about their appearance and features. They are also misidentified or mislabelled, or told that they are "not Asian enough" or "too Asian." These children also carry two burdens: they experience both anti-Asian racism and the stereotypes of other racial identities. This can cause a complicated and fragmented identity and belonging.

IN-LAWS' COMMENTS

My in-laws would say, "Oh, it's good that they look more white. They look more Caucasian. People don't think that they're fully Asian."

P6 (Thornhill, ON | Chinese)

LOOKING DIFFERENT

My son is a biracial Asian boy. His dad is Caucasian. But his peers see him as an Asian boy. **He's kind of self conscious about how he looks different.** I think it's getting to him now as he is a teenager.

P14 (St. Catharines, ON | Korean)

WHERE DO I GO?

My son is mixed race. In physical education class, they had to get into one of two groups. The teacher said, **"Okay, we're going to separate the class into two groups: Chinese and not Chinese." And my kid ... he didn't know where to go.**

P70 (Montréal, QC | Chinese)

THE NOSE THING

When my son was little, **my mom was like, "Oh, I wonder how pointy his nose is gonna get."** You know. The nose. We have a thing about noses.

P51 (Hamilton, ON | Filipino)

TOPIC 3

How Parents Talk to Their Children about Racism

This last section shares **how parents described the ways they talk with their children about racism and discrimination**. It focuses on parents' strategies, reflections, and intentions, and highlights how these conversations often grow out of everyday moments, cultural pride, and open communication to support children's understanding of fairness, difference, and belonging.

Not all parents spoke with their children about racism in the same way. Children are at different developmental stages, and parents' approaches are shaped by their own experiences, comfort levels, and concerns about how best to support and protect their children. Some parents shared that they are still figuring out how and when to begin these conversations.

The examples shared here reflect what some parents are actively engaged in and are offered as part of a collective learning process. There is no single "right" way to approach these discussions. **We invite you to read this section with openness**, taking what feels useful, learning from one another, and moving forward in ways that feel right for your family.



TOPIC 3

How Parents Talk to Their Children about Racism

3.1 Start Early with Age-Appropriate Conversations

3.2 Start Conversations Using Everyday Experiences

3.3 Celebrate Cultural Identity

3.4 Teach Respect & Prevent Perpetuating Racism

3.5 Make Home a Safe Place to Talk

3.6 Model Inclusive & Anti-Racist Behaviour at Home

3.7 Speak With Care (Because It's Complicated)

3.8 Prepare Children for an Unfair or Racialized World

3.9 Prepare Children to Face Discrimination

3.10 Use Public, School, and Community Resources to Support Learning

3.1: Start Early with Age-Appropriate Conversations

Parents believed that conversations about discrimination and racism should begin when children were primary school age using simple and age-appropriate language. These parents believed that starting these conversations early would help children to understand diversity, notice differences in healthy ways, and prepare for future experiences.

DEVELOPS RESILENCE AND KINDNESS

Personally, for myself, **I wanna be able to just use simple language because my children are so little**, and the topic of anti-Asian racism is just so complex. I wanna make it simple in terms of giving them an understanding about being resilient individuals and showing kindness to everyone.

P17 (Toronto, ON | Filipino)



4-TO-8 AGE RANGE

I think it's good for that 4-to-8-age range? It's a light discussion. **It's not heavy into racism, but more of, "Do you ever feel excluded? Do you ever notice this?"** But the first time I talked to my kids, I asked them at preschool, "Who did you play with?" I want to know, do they recognize if they are being excluded from certain things? There's a lot of questions [needed] to kind of get an idea if they are being treated differently.

P87 (Vaughan, ON | Mixed Heritage)

GRADE 2/3

My child is in Grade 2 now and has begun to know about friends (like girls playing with girls) and notice that I'm somewhat different and speak Korean. **So, I think Grade 2 and Grade 3 would be suitable.**

P40 (Burlington, ON | Korean)

3.1: Start Early with Age-Appropriate Conversations (Continued)



NEVER TOO SOON TO START

With my kids, **I actually don't think it's ever too soon to start talking about racism**. I already talked to my 4-year-old about this stuff.

P7 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

TEACHES CONFIDENCE

It's a very tricky topic. We have to make sure that we are not overwhelming our kids, and they shouldn't always think about racism. I had a conversation with my daughter when we landed here. I just said, "Please treat everyone just the way you want to be treated—with kindness. And racism just simply means if somebody is not being kind to you, is judging you, commenting on your skin colour, on your ethnicity, or where you belong [in a] very simplified way." **I made her aware early on, and now that she's grown enough to understand, I have said, "Just don't take it.** Just because you are a little different than what they expect ... that doesn't make you any lesser than them." So, I approached it in a very simplified way.

P104 (Calgary, AB | Indian)



3.2: Start Conversations Using Everyday Experiences

Parents often wait for opportunities to start conversations with their children. Incidents at school, interactions with peers, or things seen in the news (such as COVID-19 stories) become meaningful moments to talk about fairness, difference, and racism in ways that feel relevant and concrete.

LEARNING FROM HISTORY

There was Orange Shirt Day in November in elementary school. That was the time when we Googled about the history of orange t-shirt, and how there was a child who wanted to wear a t-shirt to school, and the child was a person of colour. **So, we dug up the history of it and through that I introduced the concept of racism**: discrimination based on their skin colour. She said, “Mom, this is so unfair.” And I said, “Yes, I know this is unfair.” Kids understand those basic concepts so easily. It’s the adults who can’t grasp those basic human rights concepts.

P58 (Montréal, QC | Indian)

EVERYDAY MOMENTS AS LESSONS

Back then, **I used a $10 bill—the one with Viola Desmond, the Black woman—as an opportunity to talk about racism with my daughters**. As a woman living in a big city, we may be afraid and have to protect ourselves in certain ways. Although my children learn about these things at school, applying things in real life can be different. Starting with the $10-bill and story of Viola, I could explain how I adapted in my life.

P47 (Toronto, ON | Korean)

USING NEWS TO CHALLENGE STEREOTYPES

I frequently used the news as a discussion point with my child. **For example, when there were school shootings, people said things like “Oh, those shootings were all done by Black people,” and I would ask my child, “Why do you think people assume that?”** But my child actually said to me, "Not every Black person would do that, right?" And I asked, "So, why do you think people believe that?" and I would guide him in this way.

P53 (Calgary, AB | Taiwanese)

UNCOVERING HIDDEN RACISM

It would start as conversations on an as-needed basis. **For example, if they brought home a song, I would have a conversation with them** and explain, “You know, this line here, the song might sound like nothing to you, but actually they're making fun of our language.” I said, “Would it be okay if someone made fun of me when I was saying this in my mother tongue?” and they're like, “Oh, no.”

P42 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

3.3: Celebrate Cultural Identity

Many parents emphasized the importance of celebrating their children's cultural identity and heritage through language and cultural celebrations. These parents believed that a strong cultural identity would help their children feel grounded and confident so they would be able to handle discriminatory or racist experiences.

CELEBRATING IDENTITY

My wife was all over that when my son was, like, 3 [years old]. My wife **started celebrating our identity as soon as he could probably understand it**.

P3 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, AND OPPORTUNITY

I was not sure I'm doing the right thing, but I don't speak English at home. So, my 13-year-old and 8-year-old are very fluent in Korean, and they can read and write too. I had a practical reason in the first place: Being bilingual could open up new opportunities, job-wise. But I know now I made a kind of right decision because **they developed a good Korean identity in a way**, even though they were born and raised here.

P16 (Maple, ON | Korean)

RAISING CONFIDENT CHILDREN

I also speak native Cantonese in my home **because I want to let my kid know their identity**: they are Chinese from Hong Kong. If there's any race issue, the problem is not them. They believe, "Okay, Asian. Yes, I'm Asian. So, what?" Once they realize, [then] they can trust themselves.

P15 (Calgary, AB | Chinese)

EMPOWERING CHILDREN

It gives them the awareness that there are things they can speak up about—that they can push back against what's wrong. But to do so, **they must first have that internal sense of identity and pride in their culture**, that foundational idea, planted in their minds, **so they're able to respond**.

P103 (Victoria, BC | Chinese)

PRIDE WITHOUT INFERIORITY

I think **I've tried to instill a lot of pride in [my children] as Koreans.** We often talked about how they are racially different, but we aren't inferior or worse off or anything like that.

P99 (Vancouver, BC | Korean)

3.4: Teach Respect & Prevent Perpetuating Racism

Even when coming from different perspectives, parents highlighted the importance of respecting all people's backgrounds and being open-minded. They reported encouraging their children (a) not to judge others based on their appearance, (b) not to repeat stereotypes nor make discriminatory comments, and (c) to build friendships across differences.



EMPATHY FROM EXPERIENCE

I taught them from a young age not to impose on others what they wouldn't want imposed on themselves. If you've experienced discrimination and been hurt, then you shouldn't discriminate against others, whether they're Black, Indian, or from other ethnicities, right? This experience helped them understand this more deeply.

P8 (Richmond Hill, ON | Chinese)

EVERYDAY LESSONS

I didn't have a sit-down session, like, "Hey, this is what racism is about." But we've talked about being respectful: parity, fairness, equality. **The key for me was making sure that my child understands that he has to be respectful of anybody, regardless of how they look, where they're from, what they do.** To be very honest, I think my son was commended for being grateful because he would say thank you to anybody when they do something good to him. We always tell him that he has to be respectful, so I don't think that he will have the racist mindset.

P29 (Fort Saskatchewan, AB | Filipino)



START WITH OUR OWN BEHAVIOUR

I also teach my child not to discriminate against others. I feel like **it starts with our own behaviour**. At the very least, be polite to others.

P33 (Richmond Hill, ON | Hong Konger)

3.4: Teach Respect & Prevent Perpetuating Racism (Continued)

CELEBRATING DIFFERENCES

I always tell my child to start with himself—you have to be kind to everyone, no matter their skin colour. They actually read a lot of books about this, and the school also teaches a lot about it. For example, he says that some people wear headscarves, and some people's skin colour is different. Then, he says he likes his own light skin. At that moment, I teach him that everyone can have different skin colours, and **we need to practice acceptance, be inclusive of everyone, and like everyone because everyone is unique**. I explain it to him like that.

P31 (Mississauga, ON | Chinese)



FAIRNESS THROUGH FAITH

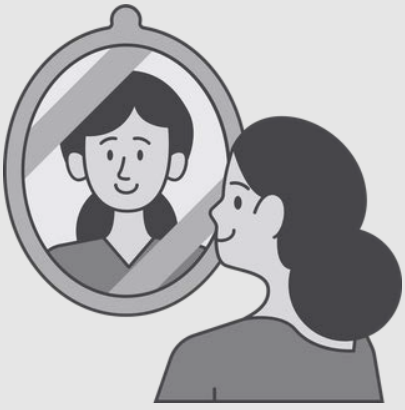
I tend to communicate many of these ideas from my religious perspective: When my daughter experiences something unfair or difficult, I want her to consider things without putting stereotypes on others. **When I use these with religious analogies, she often understands.**

P46 (Toronto, ON | Korean)

THROUGH REFLECTION

Since my child was born here, he hasn't really encountered this issue. But I noticed that recently, in our community, many Indian children have arrived. And I found that many kids, including mine, started to mock their accents, imitating their accents. **So, I told my child, "You must respect them. Just like me, I didn't learn English here, and I also have a heavy accent."**

P66 (Calgary, AB | Taiwanese)



3.5: Make Home a Safe Place to Talk

At home, parents are intentional about asking questions, explaining what racism means, sharing personal experiences, and checking in with their child after a difficult incident. These open-ended conversations help children feel supported and know that their parents are safe to talk to.

A PLACE OF PROTECTION & SUPPORT

It's important to educate kids at home. Discrimination—whether it's racism or another form—is a kind of bullying, even if it's not physical. If my child experiences anything like that, I want him to tell me. **He needs to know that home is a place that will protect and support him.** We help them process it and teach them how to protect themselves.

P31 (Mississauga, ON | Chinese)

DAILY CHECK-INS

Growing up with my kids, **I made sure to speak to them about it and check with them every day.** Do they face racism, any bullying? We have daily discussions of what they do in school.

P87 (Vaughan, ON | Mixed Heritage)

IMPACT OF RACISM

My children are mixed race, so I say to them, "You know you are equally Chinese, as you are the other race. **I need you to see parts of me when people are saying racist things, and to know that you're rejecting half of yourself when you repeat it.**" I think that really stuck with them. Now, they will intervene in racist conversations at school.

P42 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

3.6: Model Inclusive & Anti-Racist Behaviour at Home

Noting that children learn from what they see, parents reported using strategies at home that lead by example to help children understand how to behave in diverse settings. They focused on respectful language use, fair treatment of others, and correcting racist comments.



LEAD BY EXAMPLE

It's actually us—the adults—that shouldn't talk about other race [sic] as well. Like [saying], "Oh, those Asians, those Blacks, those whites, and this." **We have to really be mindful of what we say about others as well**, because they're just kids. They're very innocent. **Sometimes they copy us and what we say.**

P80 (Montréal, QC | Filipino)

PREPARING FOR REALITY

But my kids ... they're half Asian. I have conversations with them that [their experience] is the exception and not the norm. If you are Asian, if you're Black, if you're Indian ... chances are, at some point in your life, you will encounter something. And my kids may not [have experienced blatant racism], just because of the way they look ... but I speak to my children, **"Even though you guys don't experience this, your friends may, right? In our household, we don't tolerate any of that talk."**

P1 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)





TALK ABOUT OTHERS RESPECTFULLY

As a little kid, he doesn't know any better, right? I'm very conscious because I don't want my son going around calling people by the, you know, colour of [their] skin, right? **As a parent, I'm very conscious of how I describe people,** and when he does make that comment, [I] quickly correct it, but then explain why.

P7 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

3.6: Model Inclusive & Anti-Racist Behaviour at Home (Continued)

TEACHING SLURS AND THEIR IMPACT



In school, the children sing this little song where they do hand games, like clapping games, and there was a line in there about Chinese people doing karate, and then also the language ... I'm not going to repeat the word. I'm sure we've all heard the racial slurs for Chinese. But I tell my children, "You know, your friends don't think it's a problem because they aren't Chinese. **I'll let you know that my family has experienced that [slur] before, and it is highly racist and full of hatred, so I don't want to hear you say that.**"

P42 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

CORRECTING BIAS



I think, to be honest, when having family conversation, sometimes my husband speaks something negative: like some racist behaviours. **First of all, I ask my husband not to [speak] that way. Then I try to talk to my son, [and say that] it's not a matter of any race.** Maybe the person is going through something difficult at the moment. Maybe [that is] why they are acting that way. I emphasize that all people, regardless of a race, has human rights and dignity. So, that's why we should always respect and being kind to each other.

P4 (Toronto, ON | Korean)

3.7: Speak With Care (Because It's Complicated)

Many parents shared that they are careful about how they talk with their children about race and racism. They tried to explain in neutral or positive ways, talk about bias without reinforcing stereotypes, and avoid overemphasizing harmful incidents. Some parents also spoke about separating ethnicity from nationality.

ETHNICITY VS NATIONALITY

Here, they have a cultural day. On that day, they gather the kids in the class and the kids can wear traditional cultural clothing, or bring some traditional items, like red envelopes or mooncakes. They can also draw their own country's flag or share stories. It allows all the children to identify their own ethnicity. When my daughter came home, she told me, "I am Chinese. I come from China." **I taught her that ethnicity and nation[ality] are two separate things.** Your nation[ality] is what's on your passport, while your ethnicity is something you're born with and cannot change. Your nation[ality], however, can be changed. ... I want her to understand the difference between ethnicity and nation while she's still young.

P49 (Edmonton, AB | Chinese)

BUILDING AWARENESS OF BIAS THROUGH POSITIVE FRAMING

Make the conversation more about being aware of your bias, so that you don't do it to others. Like saying, "You have the tendency to connect closer to people that eats adobo." **You put it in a positive way, so that he understands, like, the unconscious bias.** When he's aware, we can use that to give him a concept of racism.

P29 (Fort Saskatchewan, AB | Filipino)

3.7: Speak With Care (Because It's Complicated) (Continued)



NOT TO GENERALIZE FROM NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

My child still sometimes asks me why he was attacked, and I [chose] to ... tell them that the other kid is a bad child to avoid reinforcing the idea of discrimination. Since my child is new to this place, I didn't want them to start thinking that all white people are like this or all Black people are like that. **We all know that every racial group has good people and bad people.** I don't think we need to let a few bad apples cause us to stop interacting with people of that race.

P53 (Calgary, AB | Taiwanese)



BALANCING AWARENESS AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY AROUND DISCRIMINATION

I was a bit worried that my kids might not even realize when they are being discriminated against or bullied at school, so I asked my son and daughter if anyone at school had made fun of them because they are Asians, like the time a girl said "ching-chang-chong" to my daughter at a birthday party, but they didn't seem to take it seriously. And **I thought if I take it too seriously, it might make them distressed, so I just ended the conversation there**.

P82 (Ottawa, ON | Korean)

3.8: Prepare Children for an Unfair or Racialized World

Parents reported emotionally preparing their children for the reality of racism. They spoke about different strategies that they used to prepare children for these difficult encounters including (a) building a strong sense of identity early, (b) teaching them that the world isn't always fair, (c) sharing personal experiences, and (d) giving them realistic expectations.

SHARING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

I want to let my child know that there are lots of injustice in the world, not just in the workplace. Toronto is multicultural, but not all parts are, and not all people are open-minded. So, **I would like to share personal experiences with him to prepare him** for, you know, the things that we have gone through. So that he won't be as shocked as we are, because I feel like my parents never gave me any support or training in that growing up. They did the best they could. But I would probably like to paint a more realistic picture of people going through trauma and having really bad experiences.

P12 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

READY TO FACE THE WORLD

I think we were more preventative, as opposed to kind of asking those questions when it happens, because we know that it is going to happen. It's inevitable. **We wanted to educate our kids, share our values and ideas, and prepare them for the world that they're going to face.** We wanted to help them develop a strong sense of who they were first before putting them into the school system.

P112 (BC | Filipino & Japanese)

INEVITABLE BIAS

I feel like children in the future will still experience discrimination as they grow up. So, I believe they have to adapt. **Even if there's no discrimination at school, they'll encounter it in daily life.** Despite speaking English and being Canadian, Asian children in the future won't be fully recognized as being from here. I don't want them to feel like they are second-tier citizens, since they are already second-generation, but they need to understand that once they enter the workforce, **people will still look at their skin colour and appearance**—see that they don't look white—and there will be some level of bias.

P30 (Vaughan, ON | Hong Konger)



3.9: Prepare Children to Face Discrimination

Parents reported teaching their children practical strategies to help them navigate discriminatory or racist situations. While specific details varied, common themes included teaching children to be polite, stay calm, think before reacting, speak assertively, report incidents to trusted adults, and walk away or deflect to stay safe.

TEACHING CHILDREN TO SPEAK UP

There were times when my kid was slapped and the area around his eyes was torn. There was a time when his arm got scratched and torn. When those things happen, **I tell him to speak up and avoid the situation** because we don't really know what could happen in the situation.

P45 (Mississauga, ON | Korean)



DON'T SHY AWAY



I kind of have a different approach. I kind of teaching [sic] them that if you do experience anything, not really keeping your head down, but facing it outright. **To talk back. Don't shy away from situation and deal with it.** Because the more you deflect it, more it's going to come after you, right?

P87 (Vaughan, ON | Mixed Heritage)

3.9: Prepare Children to Face Discrimination (Continued)

UNDERSTANDING AND CALM IN THE FACE OF BIAS

My kid is still young. Maybe he doesn't really know exactly what racism is, but **I try to give him some examples of racism**. It could happen in this country. I also explained that **even if it happens, do not get frustrated, angry, nor act violently**. We need to know why people were thinking in this way to us. I also tell my kids to try not to apologize because [we] look different or something like that.

P88 (Edmonton, AB | Chinese)



BALANCING KINDNESS WITH COURAGE



It was around the age of 10 when we said, **definitely we want to teach [our child] to be kind**, to be forgiving, [and] sometimes to be inclusive, **but it's the time to speak up** if someone is being rude to you and indulging in discrimination acts.

P104 (Calgary, AB | Indian)

BE POSITIVE AND DON'T TAKE IT TO HEART

We always tell them our kids to **speak up to the person in charge**. Like if it happened in school, tell the teacher what happened. Don't keep it to yourself. Tell us, the adults, so maybe we could do something about it. But just be positive. **Just don't take it to heart because they just probably don't know.** They don't know you, know your family, or what you're going through.

P80 (Montréal, QC | Filipino)



3.10: Use Public, School, and Community Resources to Support Learning

Parents reported using a wide range of resources (e.g., books, libraries, public media, school materials, cultural events, and other media) to help children learn about diversity in age-appropriate and meaningful ways. By reading together, watching shows with positive representation, and drawing on school and library support, parents and children were able to focus their conversations on a specific topic or question to support learning at home.

THROUGH EVERYDAY MEDIA

Actually, I watch Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) cartoons with my kids a lot: CBC Kids. Usually, there's a show where they will include different people. They might have some disabilities and different colours. People have different characteristics. **I think they're great shows for kids to learn about racism and differences in in everyone.**

P56 (Vancouver, BC | Chinese)

EXPOSURE TO POSITIVE CULTURAL REPRESENTATION

I have been exposing [my children] more to the cultural events, Filipino events, in town and getting books on them. **At the library, I see a lot of really amazing books on representation.** They're not always necessarily about a Filipino child, but there has been an increase—it's really great—of authors and illustrators talking about specifically Filipino topics. But I'll take out ones about Asians and Asian children.

P111 (Vancouver, BC | Filipino)

THROUGH BARBIE

There was an incident [that] concerned me with my daughter. I put [a Black Barbie] with Ken and, you know, my daughter was like, “No, you can't do that, mom, because she's Black and he's white.” So, I reached out to her teacher because I wanted to [ask], “How can I navigate this?” I figured I better nip this in the bud. The teacher gave me a book, and it basically explained different skin tones and how to be harmonious with everyone. **It was an age-appropriate book, and she gave it to me to read with my daughter to show her that people with different skin tones, everyone, can get along.** I believe after that, [my daughter] understood.

P1 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

3.10: Use Public, School, and Community Resources to Support Learning (Continued)

FINDING DARK-SKINNED DOLLS



My kids are really born and raised in the Philippines, so it was a challenge for us. My 5-year-old, she's not used to see people with dark-coloured skin. It's kind of alarming to us because we need to teach my child about treating others with respect regardless of skin colour. **The school gave us an idea to buy her dolls with different skin colour, because in the Philippines we really find it hard to find doll who has brown skin.** There is Moana and Pocahontas, but not the dark skin doll, so they help us to find a doll like that. And we told her that regardless of skin colour, they are kind person.

P105 (Toronto, ON | Filipino)

USING LIBRARY BOOKS



For me, I can say books from the library. Our local library has a huge collection of books that talk about diversity. And not just racial diversity but [also] gender-based diversity. And if there's pride month, they get books out which are talking about gender identity and sexual orientations. **So, through books is how I can introduce my child to concepts like racial diversity, etc., in the language that she understands and [the format] which speaks to her.**

P58 (Montréal, QC | Indian)

USING A BOOK ABOUT CULTURAL FOODS



Someone **recommended to me [a book called]** ***Lunch from Home***. It talked about different cultural foods that kids are bringing in, and they get made fun of. By the end of the week, everyone's eating sandwiches. The next week, everyone's eating sandwiches. It's just it's boring, and people are missing their home food. So, people are like, “I like my food” and they start having pride in the food that they're bringing in. **I felt [it was] a bit empowering for kids.** That's when my daughter kind of [argued] with her friends, standing up for the food she eats.

P44 (Toronto, ON | Chinese)

Closing Remarks

As we come to the end of this summary, we want to thank you once again for taking part in our focus groups. **Your stories and reflections are at the heart of this work.** We hope this document has offered not only a reflection of your own experiences, but also a sense of connection with other Asian parents across Canada who are navigating similar questions, challenges, and hopes for their children.

As we move into the next phase of Project APPA, **we see this summary as a starting point rather than an endpoint**. The ideas and themes shared here will help guide our next conversations, where we will think together about what kinds of support and resources would be most helpful.

As you prepare for the second focus group, we invite you to simply notice what stood out to you and what feels most meaningful for your family. There is no expectation to have answers, just a willingness to learn from one another and to support our children and communities.

We are looking forward to continuing this conversation with you.



MY SCRIPT
MY VOICE

Asian Parents Participatory Action (Project APPA) is a project led by the My Script My Voice team, spearheaded by Dr. Lin Fang at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work (FIFSW). The project is made possible with support from the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and is in joint arms with several community agencies from different areas of the Asian community, including:

- Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter (CCNCTO)
- HF Care
- Fil-Can Educators Network (FCEN)
- Filipino Canadian Social and Community Workers Network (FCSCWN)
- Kababayan Multicultural Centre
- TACLA
- Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB)

Project APPA engages Asian parents across Canada to promote capacity building, build knowledge and resources, and together envision and curate a parent-centred approach against racism and anti-Asian racism.

Scan to learn more about Project APPA & My Script My Voice!

MEET THE

Project APPA Team

RESEARCHERS (CO-INVESTIGATORS)

- **Lin Fang** (University of Toronto) - **Principal Investigator**
- **Catherine Costigan** (University of Victoria)
- **Eunjung Lee** (University of Toronto)
- **Izumi Sakamoto** (University of Toronto)
- **Monica Batac** (University of Manitoba)
- **Ruth Wilson** (Western University)

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- **Aileen Santiago** (FCEN)
- **Eleanor Marie Yang** (CCNCTO)
- **Grayson Lee** (TACLA)
- **Kennes Lin** (HF Care)
- **Rizza Solis** (Kababayan Multicultural Centre)
- **Veronica Javier** (FCSCWN)
- **Vivian Leung** (Independent Researcher)

PEER RESEARCHERS

- Amy Tsang Lee
- Christine Hui
- Jinah Im
- Jing Wang
- Jiyoung Kang
- Kit Fong
- Marie Tomeoki-Downton
- Maureen Serazon
- Maxie Bai Martin
- Michael Camu
- Sheena Carvery

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

- Amy Huang
- Anabelle Ragsag
- Andrea Batac
- Angelica Alvarez
- Austin Felicisimo
- Erica Sung
- Gilda Hui
- Jasmine Pham
- Jiangyuan (John) Lin
- Kim (Qinying) Wang
- Kimberley Chan
- Lacrecia Kang
- Rinna Kim
- Seo Young Lee
- Sumin Kim
- Yahan Yang
- Yinuo (Wynnie) Wang