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“What it Means to Be an East Asian During the COVID-19 Pandemic – A Second Pandemic Within a Pandemic?”

A Qualitative Study on the Individuals of East Asian Descent with Their
Subjective Everyday Experience in Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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1. Introduction

December 31, 2019. It was the day the WHO's country office in China was notified about several pneumonia cases of unknown cause in Wuhan, China (WHO 2020a). This viral pneumonia of unknown cause was soon found out to have been caused by a novel virus, namely SARS-CoV-2 (Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus type 2). It did not take long until the novel virus obtained its own name – COVID-19, the acronym for coronavirus disease 2019. With the rapid worldwide spread of the novel coronavirus, WHO declared the outbreak as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020 (WHO 2020b). The impact of the novel virus was great enough to change our everyday lives in a matter of weeks - countries around the world had to adopt safety measures such as wearing face masks, social distancing, lockdowns, etc., in an attempt to fight against the unprecedented situation that the whole world was unexpectedly confronted with. However, despite such adjustments in everyday life and efforts to prevent the spread of the novel virus, the number of new cases and deaths around the world continued to rise - as a result, there have been over 240 million confirmed cases and over 4.8 million deaths around the world so far, after almost 2 years since the outbreak of the virus in 2019 (WHO 2021).

Since the outbreak of the novel virus, it is noteworthy that a lot of Asians, especially East Asians around the world have been experiencing an increasing amount of hate crimes and racism/discrimination (although "racism" and "discrimination" are 2 distinct terms, they were used interchangeably by various literature & the interviewees of the study, thus they will be referred to as RD throughout the present thesis. In addition, the term "discrimination" exclusively refers to racial discrimination in the present thesis.) (Human Rights Watch 2020). Since the beginning of the pandemic, there has been a surge of media reports and posts on social media platforms that discuss numerous anti-Asian incidents globally, which has become a second pandemic within the coronavirus pandemic. As quick as the fear of the novel coronavirus and its severity grew day by day, the number of anti-Asian incidents was growing too, resulting in East Asians around the globe suffering from hate crimes and anti-Asian sentiment that outweigh the concerns that arose from the novel virus itself (Croucher et al. 2020). Due to the fact that the novel virus first broke out in China, a lot of Chinese

people around the world have become the target of scapegoating and blaming. However, this problem was not confined to just Chinese populations around the world, but rather affected all the East Asian populations living in the Western world. In the Western world, it did not matter what their nationality and country of origin were – because everyone with an “Asian looking face” was immediately to be the target of hatred and discrimination (Chen et al. 2020). This was also clearly visible on various social media platforms and news reports, where there have been a countless number of viral videos and images of East Asians getting attacked in public, yelled at, spat on, etc.

Such a rise in anti-Asian sentiment and incidents around the world is not only concerning in terms of the victims’ experiences personally, but they are to be seen as a social phenomenon that also has a substantial impact on the society. How racism affects a society (especially a multicultural one) is very well explained by Ali & Keil (2008). In 2006, Toronto police arrested groups of individuals of a certain race & religion (a group of Black youth & a group of Muslims) for the alleged participation in the planning of terrorism. Ali & Keil argue that fear of terrorism in the post-9/11 period fueled RD against certain groups of individuals in Toronto, which is also reflected in the hard-line police action of 2006. Although the police action was highly praised by the Torontonians for security reasons, some were also concerned about the discriminatory aspects of the action. Ali & Keil argue that such pitting of a certain group of people against others in society shows the instability pervading in globalizing multicultural regions around the world. This is why Ali & Keil describe racism as “*a weapon of mass destruction*”. As seen in the example of Toronto police action in 2006, they argue that multicultural cities with diverse cultures/races are susceptible and vulnerable to racism. With regard to this point, Ali & Keil also state that the effects of the threat generated by violence such as terrorism are comparable to the effects of the threat generated by infectious disease/pandemic - the 2003 SARS outbreak in Toronto is a prime example of it (Ali & Keil 2008).

When SARS broke out in Toronto in 2003, Chinese-Canadians in the city were seen as potential carriers of the virus, thus resulting in a sharp rise in racism against East Asians in the city (Leung & Guan 2004). Ali & Keil see this as a fundamental threat to the volatile

multicultural structure of a society such as Toronto. They point out that racialization of disease is not simply a by-product of a catastrophic event like an epidemic, but it reveals the structural condition of the city – which means that racialization of disease can eventually lead to substantial social consequences that fuel RD within the society, which in turn affects the fragile multicultural structure of it. With regard to this idea, Ali & Keil argue that perception of East Asia/East Asians as the origin/carriers of the virus has had serious consequences which affected the lives of East Asian individuals in Toronto, as well as their relationship with the rest of the society (Ali & Keil 2008).

Despite Toronto being one of the most multicultural cities of the world, there is wide concern about hidden problems of racism (especially institutional racism) in Toronto in different areas of everyday life. Ali & Keil argue that Toronto's policy of multiculturalism that promotes and emphasizes the city as a place full of cultural diversity only blinds people from seeing the real problems of racism that the city is faced with. This problem has only become worse since the SARS outbreak in 2003, exposing the fragile fabric of a multicultural society (Ali & Keil 2008).

According to Sarasin (2003), racialization of disease is not a new phenomenon that first happened with the SARS outbreak. He argues that racialization of disease is a natural phenomenon that happens in the course of trying to protect cities from disease – this process usually involves keeping a certain group outside the “popular body” of the society, whereby that “outsider” group is very often racialized and segregated from the rest of the society (Sarasin 2003, 2006). With regard to this, it can be argued that SARS resulted in stigmatization of the East Asian population, as well as the widespread belief of them as the cause of disease. As a consequence, individuals of East Asian descent in Toronto were at risk of racism in everyday life since the outbreak of SARS, and numerous East Asian-owned businesses were affected since they were seen as places frequently visited by carriers of the virus (East Asians) (Leung & Guan 2004).

What we can see from the example of the SARS outbreak in Toronto is not very different from what we see from the current COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. In fact, the SARS outbreak

and COVID-19 outbreak resemble each other in many ways - just like the SARS outbreak, COVID-19 first broke out in China, it is once again racialized, resulting in a surge of anti-Asian sentiment and racism around the world. The only major difference is the magnitude of the outbreak – the 2003 SARS outbreak affected 29 countries in total (with a total of 8,096 reported cases) (CDC 2016), whereas COVID-19 outbreak is a global pandemic with a greater magnitude and thus also fueling anti-Asian sentiment and racism to a greater extent globally.

In the U.S. alone, there has been a flood of anti-Asian RD cases since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was pointed out by a number of studies that coronavirus-related anti-Asian RD in the U.S. was fueled by the former President Trump’s use of racist remarks regarding the novel virus, such as “Kung Flu” and “China virus”. Due to the former President’s deliberate and repetitive use of such racist remarks that blames the Chinese for the pandemic has led to serious stigmatization and discrimination of East Asians living in the U.S. In addition, various social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) also contributed to the spread of anti-Asian sentiment, whereby their users used discriminatory remarks such as “Ching Chong”, “Wuhan virus”, “Kung Flu”, etc. The term “Chink” in particular, was shown to be the most frequently used racial slur on Twitter, having a sharp increase (from 1250 to over 3500) in the same month (March 2020) when Trump first made his racist remarks as mentioned earlier (Hahm et al. 2021).

What we can see from the 2003 SARS outbreak in Toronto and the current COVID-19 pandemic is that racialization of disease is a social problem that has a critical influence on not only the affected population (East Asians in this case), but also the society as a whole. Therefore, it is important that we consider anti-Asian RD during this pandemic as a social pandemic that we are encountered with amid the COVID-19 pandemic. With respect to this, this thesis is going to have a closer look at the experiences of the East Asian population in Vienna, Austria amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This study focuses on individuals of East Asian descent who experienced the pandemic in Vienna, in order to investigate their everyday experiences since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus. The study examines the subjective experiences of the East Asian population of Vienna, to find out how and to what extent the pandemic has affected their social & personal life with a special focus on anti-Asian RD. To

be more specific, this study will look into East Asian individuals' everyday lives to see whether there is a certain pattern within their experiences by looking into their own perceptions on their social/personal life during the COVID-19 pandemic - which could eventually lead to identifying the core problem of the phenomenon and possible solutions. The following is the research question suggested for this study;

“What Are the Everyday Experiences of the East Asian Population of Vienna during the COVID-19 Pandemic and How Has the Pandemic Affected Their Social/Personal Life With Regard to Racism & Discrimination?”

The main focus of this study is to investigate the lived experience of the East Asian population living in Vienna during the COVID-19 pandemic. The underlying assumption in this study is that the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered/reinforced the anti-Asian sentiment around the world, hence the Asian (especially the East Asian) are facing additional problems besides the pandemic itself – which is anti-Asian RD.

What makes the topic of this study especially interesting is its novelty. Since the coronavirus itself is a novel virus that first broke out in 2019, it is a relatively new topic; which means there are a lot of new aspects to be discovered and to be explored. At the same time however, racism as a whole concept has a long history and that is what makes this topic more intriguing – it is a combination of old (racism) and new (coronavirus). Anti-Asian RD related to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus is new, but anti-Asian RD itself is definitely a longstanding phenomenon pervading in our society. The significance of this topic is being increasingly emphasized with the ever-increasing number of experienced/reported anti-Asian RD during this pandemic, which could have extensive consequences (which are most likely to be negative) both short-term and long-term. Anti-Asian RD during the COVID-19 pandemic has been proved to be an actual issue we are facing worldwide, which shows that it is definitely not a myth. By having a closer look at the lived experience of the East Asian population living in the pandemic, we will be able to figure out the pervasive problem that needs to be addressed, as well as the potential solutions that could contribute to alleviating those problems.

In an attempt to answer the research question suggested earlier, a qualitative study that involves semi-structured interviews (data collection) and coding methods suggested by Grounded Theory (data analysis) was carried out. For the semi-structured interviews, the strategies suggested by Adams (2015) were taken into consideration in every stage – from designing the questions/interview guide to conducting the interview. 2 of the 5 interviewees were selected through word-of-mouth recommendation, and then the method of snowball sampling was used to recruit 3 other interviewees through the first 2 interviewees. As a result, a total of 5 interviewees participated in the semi-structured interviews. All the interviews were thoroughly transcribed and then analyzed using the coding methods suggested by Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin 1990). This coding process consisted of 3 steps – open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The main idea of this coding process is to identify different categories in the interview, as well as the interrelationships among them. This will enable the identification of key components of a social phenomenon (anti-Asian RD during the pandemic), and therefore being able to offer an explanation for the phenomenon in question.

The present thesis consists of a number of different chapters including the current chapter (introduction). In the following chapter (chapter 2), the thesis will offer a theoretical background to the topic of research – Racism as a concept, Critical Race Theory, History of anti-Asian RD, Racialization of Disease, Modern sinophobic racialization of disease in 21st century, Type of RD, The 3 levels of racism, and Reactions to experiences of RD. Having a look at the theoretical background to the research topic will enable a better understanding of anti-Asian RD as a social phenomenon with a long history. In chapter 3, the methods used for data collection & data analysis will be presented, whereby semi-structured interview (SSI) and coding methods suggested by Grounded Theory are explained. In chapter 4, the study results will be presented, whereby the results from selective coding in particular will be discussed in detail. Then, chapter 5 will summarize the study results to conclude and finally, chapter 6 will discuss limitations and suggest possible improvements for future research.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Racism as a Concept

Before going into the topic of anti-Asian racism, one should first understand the development of racism as a concept and the propositions related to it. The term “racism” was first recorded in *Oxford English Dictionary* in the year of 1902, with reference to a quote by an U.S. lieutenant colonel named Richard Henry Pratt – it was initially used to describe the radical assimilationist U.S. policy for Indigenous Americans (Hund & Affeldt 2020), which can be seen in Pratt’s quote as the following;

*“Segregating any class or **race** of people apart from the rest of the people kills the progress of the segregated people or makes their growth very slow. Association of **rac**es and classes is necessary in order to destroy **racism** and classism”* (Pratt 1902, cited Hund & Affeldt 2020, p.13)

However, it was only in the 1940s when the term “racism” was first used in the social sciences – *Race and Racism* by Benedict (1945) and *Racism: A World Issue* by Soper (1947) were the 2 earliest books of social sciences that discussed racism as “*incidences in the world community of animus between groups based on visible physical differences*” (Bowser 2017, 573). Since then, the term became increasingly popular during the rest of the 20th century (Bowser 2017).

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was a student organization established in 1960, mainly consisting of Black students to protest against segregation of African Americans in the U.S. (NARA 2020). In this process, they developed 3 realities of racism to find the best way to get to the root of the problem and fight against it. The first reality was that the hierarchy based on race stems from slavery and that it is intergenerational and deeply rooted in the U.S. culture. The second reality stated that racial discrimination in the U.S. was institutionalized, and the way of such an institutionalization was demonstrated differently in the South and the North (the South had Jim Crow system that actively segregated African Americans, which was rather obvious and clear, while the

North had more of a covert system). The third reality was that individual actors' racial hostility (animus) against African Americans was socially influenced, thus claiming that learning of animus takes place in the process of socialization (Bowser 2017).

The Jim Crow system in the South, as mentioned above, carried out an active form of racial segregation of African Americans in society. This did not only result in physical segregation of African Americans, but also affected the social relationships between the White and the Black – which is why the system is said to be the perfect form of racial oppression. It was in 1967 when Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton first described this perfect racial segregation as a combination of the second and third realities – institutional racism & individual racial animus. In their book *Black Power*, they argued that the Jim Crow system is a form of both personal and institutional racism. And in 1972, James Jones wrote *Prejudice and Racism*, which was the very first book to discuss all 3 of the realities (historic/cultural, institutional, and individual) under the concept of racism (Bowser 2017).

The earlier concept of racism as shown above encompasses all 3 levels of racism (cultural / institutional / individual) under a single concept. However, today's discourse of racism views the 3 levels as 3 distinct types of racism. While the earlier concept of racism attempted to interconnect and find interdependencies of all 3 of them in a single theory, this attempt no longer continued with its development. However, even after the abolishment of the Jim Crow system in the South, activists and scholars were aware that individual and institutional racism still persisted in society. Since Jim Crow was no longer in effect, racism took a subtler and more covert form, which proved that racism did not disappear with the abolishment, rather it was definitely still pervading in the country (Bowser 2017). This is why scholars and activists felt the need to develop a theory to be able to explain and combat racial divide, an example of which is the Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement in the 1970s (Delgado & Stefancic 2001).

2.2 Critical Race Theory (CRT)

There are several propositions suggested by critical race theorists, which are the basic tenets of CRT. The first is the belief that racism is a “normal” phenomenon to happen in a society, which considers racism as a common/ordinary thing to happen. With regard to this proposition, critical race theorists argue that racism is hard to get rid of, or even just to address – because it is not acknowledged in the first place. This problem can be seen in e.g. mere formal concept of equality or color-blind racism, with which no substantive solution for racism can be sought. The second proposition believes that our society is based on a system (White over color) that serves/benefits the dominant group (Whites). This proposition is also referred to as “material determinism” or “interest convergence”, which are based on the idea that racism benefits Whites in general (the dominant part of society) – therefore making it unnecessary for the society to get rid of racism. The third proposition of CRT is the “social construction” thesis, which argues that races are socially constructed, thus to be perceived as products of social relations and thoughts. This means that races are nothing that is objective, inherent, or depending on genetic/biological characteristics. Rather, they are what society made by itself and manipulated for its convenience. Of course, individuals of the same origin may have some physical characteristics in common (e.g. skin color), but that does not have anything to do with determining one’s intelligence, social position, etc. The fact that society nevertheless disregards this and decides to “produce” races is what the social construction thesis is mainly arguing. The next proposition of CRT is “differential racialization”. It is the most recent theme of CRT, which describes how minority groups are constantly racialized by the dominant group to serve their convenience and needs. For instance, the Muslim used to be perceived as exotic and harmless group of individuals who are religious and faithful – whereas nowadays they are often stereotyped to be a threat to world peace and security (Delgado & Stefancic 2001). In addition, the Chinese were widely welcomed when they first entered the U.S. to offer low-cost labor for their railroad construction and flourishing economy, whereas as soon as the construction was finished and recessions hit the country, they were immediately perceived as a threat to local Americans and their employment status (Calavita 2000). Such racialization results in the shift

of stereotypes and popular images of a minority group, causing stigmatization and discrimination against them. Finally, the last proposition of CRT is the belief that minority status comes with a natural competence that lets one speak up about racism (Delgado & Stefancic 2001).

The 5 different propositions of CRT as described above demonstrate the basic beliefs that critical race theorists held. One could say that CRT is pessimistic, as it considers racism as an ordinary element of society and that it serves the interest of the dominant group. On the other hand, one could also argue that CRT is optimistic in a sense that it considers race as socially constructed (Delgado & Stefancic 2001). Regardless of it being pessimistic or optimistic, CRT as a theory developed in an attempt to explain racism in society helps us to better understand racism as a social phenomenon, and the way it works in our society.

2.3 History of Anti-Asian RD

After having a look at the concept of racism and Critical Race Theory (CRT) in the previous section, the present section will discuss anti-Asian RD, which in fact, emerged far earlier than the emergence of racism as a concept. Before discussing anti-Asian RD during the COVID-19 pandemic, one should understand that anti-Asian RD is not a brand-new social phenomenon that has first emerged with the outbreak of the pandemic. Rather, it has a long history that goes back as far as the 19th century. Therefore, in this section, a brief overview of the history of anti-Asian RD will be provided with a special focus on the U.S. The reason why the U.S. was chosen to explain the history of anti-Asian RD in the Western world is that they had explicit legislation that actively discriminated against Asians in the country. Although one cannot say that the U.S. anti-Asian RD history is capable of offering a full explanation for anti-Asian RD in many other parts of the world, it still gives us a good overview of how one of the earliest forms of anti-Asian RD started and what impacts it had on the society and those affected.

In 1882, the U.S. Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act that restricts the entry of all

Chinese workers into the country. It was not only one of the country's very first immigration laws, but also the very first law prohibiting the immigration of a certain nationality. From 1850 (when the Chinese first started their migrations to the U.S.) up until the point where the law was introduced in 1882, about 110,000 Chinese people had come into the U.S., whereby the vast majority of them came to stay for a longer period of time working in agriculture, mining, construction, etc. At the very beginning of their immigration, there was rather a welcoming atmosphere in the country (especially by the government and employers), since the Chinese were a great source of low-cost labor which the U.S. exactly needed at that time to complete their Central Pacific Railroad and for many other forms of harsh physical labor. However, as soon as the construction of the railroad was finished and multiple recessions hit the country, the Chinese were no longer welcomed by the country and the people. In addition, as the fear in the U.S. grew that their country and jobs are going to be dominated by foreigners (this included also Mexicans, Latin Americans, Blacks, and Native Americans), xenophobic sentiments started spreading rapidly across the U.S. (Calavita 2000).

While Mexicans and Latin Americans were provided legal protection in the U.S. (thus they were acknowledged as citizens) and other foreigners such as Blacks and Native Americans later also received chances for citizenship application in the U.S., there was no legal protection offered to Asians in the country. This resulted in numerous helpless Asian victims of discrimination, restricted from being able to fully participate in U.S. society such as in politics. Asians' ineligibility for citizenship as a legal handicap made it extremely harder for them to blend in the U.S. society, causing them to be unable to integrate, contribute to society, and learn the culture and language. To make matters worse, the U.S. Congress established a Joint Special Committee in 1876 – which was centered on the belief that the Chinese are racially inferior and thus have no intellectual capacity to participate in U.S. society. 6 years later, on 6th May 1882, the U.S. Congress passed a law that prohibited Chinese immigration for the next 10 years – this was the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. However, the U.S. government realized that the new law was not effective enough to block the Chinese from entering the country, as a lot of Chinese laborers continued to enter the

U.S. through a third country. As a result, the U.S. government passed the new Exclusion Law in 1884, in an attempt to completely block possibilities of Chinese laborers from entering the country – and in 1888, the U.S. Congress banned the return of Chinese laborers (who were already allowed in the U.S. before the enforcement of the Exclusion Law) once they left the U.S. even for a temporary visit to a foreign country. Eventually, in the year of 1902, the U.S. banned the immigration of all Chinese laborers for an unlimited period (Calavita 2000).

However, the Chinese Exclusion Act was not the only time Asians experienced an active form of RD in the U.S. – there were several other cases, e.g. from the 1871 anti-Chinese massacre in Los Angeles to the 1924 U.S. Immigration Act for Japanese exclusion (The Johnson-Reed Act) (Kurashige 2016). From this, one can see that Anti-Asian RD is a deeply-rooted problem that has been pervading in U.S. society for a very long time and that the problem still persists nowadays. However, one should understand that this is not just the problem in the U.S. – anti-Asian RD is a worldwide problem that has affected, and is still affecting the lives of an innumerable number of Asians in the Western world. Due to misbeliefs about Asians as a threat to the Western world (which is often referred to as “Yellow Peril”, as will be discussed in the following section) followed by widespread anti-Asian sentiments, Asians in U.S. history were often subject to racist and discriminatory treatment in U.S. society. The history of anti-Asian RD in the U.S. gives us a picture of how Asians were generally perceived by the Western world and although U.S. history alone cannot give us a full description of the history of anti-Asian RD, it still gives us a good overview of the historic relationship between the Western world and Asians living within. Keeping this in mind, the following section will discuss the history of anti-Asian RD with relation to the racialization of disease – which will allow us to get a better insight into the relationship between RD against Asians and the outbreak of a disease, as well as the social impact they entail.

2.4 Racialization of Disease

In order to understand the connection between anti-Asian RD and racialization of disease, one cannot dismiss the discussion of “Yellow Peril”. The origin of the term goes back to the

year of 1895, when Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II had a dream with a Buddha on a dragon ready to invade Europe. The term then became more widespread, when a British writer Matthew Shiel, published a book called "The Yellow Danger" in 1898. "The Yellow Danger" was a novel about a fictional Asian supervillain who aims for world domination. The novel depicted the Asian supervillain as a highly intelligent (along with other stereotypical traits of Asians as pictured by Europeans and Americans) yet cruel being, who wants to take over the world – which is exactly how Asians were pictured in Europe and the U.S. They were objects of fear in the Western world. Therefore, one could say that "Yellow Peril" is a racist metaphor triggered by fears caused by manifold factors – from alienated images of the Asian and their cultures to their potential domination in the Western world (Billé & Urbansky 2018).

In the previous section, it was mentioned that Asians were feared by Americans due to widespread belief of Asian predomination of the country ever since the beginning of their immigration in the 19th century. The entering of Chinese immigrants in the U.S. since the year of 1850 has caused a great level of tension between local Americans and the Chinese, because locals feared that the Chinese would steal their jobs, thus resulting in competition between the two parties in the labor market. However, the fear did not only emerge due to economic reasons – due to the racial difference and the U.S. being a predominantly White society, the Chinese were seen as dirty and dangerous aliens who did not belong to the country; thus seen as potential carriers of disease (Shah 2001).

During the 1875-1876 smallpox epidemic in San Francisco, the Chinese were largely suspected to be the cause of the rapid spread of the disease and the Health Officer of the city carried out thorough fumigation of the San Francisco Chinatown and all of its houses. This was not only because San Francisco was one of the most sinophobic cities of the U.S., but also there was a widespread assumption that the "dirty and dangerous" Chinese had brought the virus from China and spread it, even though later it was found out that the virus, in fact, originated from East/Midwest of the U.S. This is another example of "Yellow Peril" but with a medical frame, which is the key driver of the racialization of infectious disease with regard to the Chinese/Asians. The medical argument of Yellow Peril was fueled with

relation to infectious disease outbreaks that took place in the 19th and 20th centuries – e.g. bubonic plague, smallpox, etc. This was the period when sinophobia in the U.S. was at its peak, therefore the Chinese were often the target of medical scapegoating in the country (Zhang 2021). Lynteris (2018) argues that this Yellow Peril with a medical frame is based on 4 main imaginations of the Chinese;

The first imagination is the perception of the land of China as the *origin of disease*. The 1894 bubonic plague outbreak in Hong Kong was the very first bubonic plague that was recognized globally, and the plague rapidly spread to the Western world and took millions of lives. This reinforced the imagination of China as the origin of disease, which contributed to a sharp increase in public fear (therefore sinophobic/anti-Asian sentiment), as well as the racialization of this plague as a “Chinese disease” (Lynteris 2018).

It was mentioned earlier that the Chinese were perceived as “dirty and dangerous” – which is very closely related to the second imagination of the Chinese, the image of *Chinese urban spaces as places where diseases are made and disseminated*. There was a medical argument where it was argued that that the Chinese do not care about hygiene/sanitation measures, therefore being a threat to the welfare of the U.S. One of the main reasons such a medical argument was widely accepted throughout the U.S. was because of the highly unsanitary and dirty Chinatowns in the country, where most of the Chinese immigrants resided in. Not being familiar with the Western hygiene measures and medical emphasis on cleanliness, the majority of Chinatown residents were exposed to very unhygienic living environment. For these reasons, Chinatowns in the U.S. were perceived as the epicenter of all kinds of diseases, full of contamination and contagion – and of course, this led to the perception of the Chinese as a threat to the rest of the society (Lynteris 2018).

The third imagination is *the Chinese as special vectors of transmission of disease*. Additional to the second imagination of Chinese urban areas as the epicenter of diseases, the third imagination viewed the Chinese and their bodies as more susceptible to pathogens due to their race & class. The Chinese were perceived to be a genetically/intrinsically inferior race, which was why it was believed that they were more pathogenic than the rest of the society.

Along with the early form of miasma theory which argued that diseases are generated by foul odors, the Chinese in U.S. Chinatowns were stigmatized to be of an inferior race that generates all kinds of diseases, as well as susceptible to those (Lynteris 2018).

The last imagination is *Chinese culture as conducive to disease*. With this fourth imagination, the Chinese culture as a whole is pathologized – e.g. being insensible to pain, lack of effective medicines (which was mainly due to reliance on traditional medicines), superstition, etc. It was argued that their cultural stagnancy that differs from the Western standard of medicine/hygiene caused them to become conducive of disease, therefore enhancing the Western imagination of the correlation between the Chinese and disease (Lynteris 2018).

The above 4 imaginations of the Chinese demonstrate how the idea of Yellow Peril with a medical frame led to the racialization of infectious disease. From this, one can see that racialization of infectious disease is very closely related to sinophobia and anti-Asian RD –the history of sinophobia/anti-Asian RD in the U.S. is very good proof of how alienated bodies were perceived as a threat to the country, and therefore was immediately associated with negative events such as infectious diseases that reinforced the stigmatization and discrimination of the alienated bodies. This is why the racialization of disease is a critical social problem – it is not just a form of discrimination, but it is a deeply-rooted social problem that has been going on ever since the Chinese/Asians entered the Western world. And as we can see from the more current examples of the 2003 SARS outbreak and the COVID-19 pandemic, racialization of disease is still pervading in our society even in the 21st century.

2.5 Modern Sinophobic Racialization of Disease in 21st Century

As soon as the outbreak of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) was first admitted by the Chinese government in 2003, the excessive dramatization of the virus through the media around the world spread globally. This resulted in a modern sinophobic racialization of disease, whereby individuals of Asian descent in the Western world were largely stigmatized

(Person et al. 2004). Just like the 19th century racialization of disease discussed earlier, the 2003 SARS outbreak encouraged the imagination of the Chinese/Asians as more pathogenic, thus highly likely to be potential carriers of the virus. Unfortunately, the 4 main imaginations of the Chinese as discussed earlier were still relevant in the case of the SARS outbreak. An example is when the Chinatown in New York was considered as an “area of contagion” by the rest of the society, although in real there was 0 reported case of SARS in real – which fits to the second imagination suggested by Lynteris as described earlier (Eichelberger 2007).

The current COVID-19 pandemic is also an example of yet another sinophobic racialization of infectious disease. Along with the spread of the novel virus across the world, there has been a surge of sinophobic/anti-Asian sentiments globally – which once again stigmatizes and discriminates against individuals of Asian descent, as can be seen by skyrocketing reports of anti-Asian RD and its victims during the pandemic. Numerous cases of anti-Asian RD have been reported since the beginning of the pandemic, which ranged from verbal hostility and shunning to physical attacks and boycott of Asian products/businesses (Timberg & Chiu 2020). In addition, due to increased use of internet and social media, it is unsurprising that the spread of anti-Asian sentiments during the COVID-19 pandemic happened much more rapidly compared to the case of SARS and other global epidemics in the past (Depoux et al. 2020). Therefore, it could be said that the racialization of disease during the current COVID-19 pandemic can largely be attributed to the advance of technology and social media, which makes it more rapid and powerful compared to past racializations of disease. The spread of anti-Asian sentiments, as well as the spread of misinformation & rumors that reinforce such anti-Asian sentiments have been enabled much more easily than the past – which is why one could say that anti-Asian RD is a second pandemic within the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.6 Types of Racism/Discrimination

Anti-Asian RD during the pandemic takes many different shapes and forms. Before having a closer look at the experienced anti-Asian RD during the pandemic, one should think about different ways in which RD can take place. When one thinks of RD, one usually thinks about

obvious and direct forms of RD such as verbal abuse and physical attacks at first. However, it is important to remember that these are not the only ways RD can occur – in fact, RD can take much subtler and covert forms and sometimes even happen unconsciously (National Research Council 2004). Therefore, various types of RD will be discussed in this section, to demonstrate different ways RD can take place in society.

Explicit & Intentional RD

Allport (1954) carried out an analysis of the sequential steps in which RD takes place, with a special focus on explicit and intentional forms of RD. He argued that RD goes through a gradual progress, developing into a more intense and serious form with each step. In addition, he argued that when one gets support from others for their racist/discriminatory behavior, it will encourage them to proceed to the next step of RD, inducing a more serious form of RD as a result (Allport 1954). He describes 5 types of explicit & intentional RD as the following;

1. Verbal antagonism/Non-verbal hostility

Verbal antagonism involves hostile racial comments or slurs, which might not be considered as serious as RD of later steps since it is not illegal or lawbreaking. However, it is still clearly a form of expression of hostility that is discriminatory against its victims. Verbal antagonism can lead to building of hostile environment in various settings, such as workplaces, public spaces, schools, etc. It can also happen combined with non-verbal forms of hostility, and Allport considers verbal & non-verbal hostility as first stages of explicit & intentional RD. An example of non-verbal hostility could be an interviewer at a job interview not paying attention or cutting the interviewee mid-sentence due to their biased opinion based on race. Allport views verbal hostility together with non-verbal hostility as important indicators of RD, since it builds a hostile environment for the victim, which could also eventually develop into a place for possible illegal/lawbreaking forms of RD.

2. Avoidance

Avoidance happens when one chooses to stay with their own group instead of interacting with other racial groups – the notion of “ingroup” & “outgroup” plays a role here. This heightens the risk of isolation for racial groups that are considered as the “outgroup” in society, who are most likely to be disadvantaged. In this case, avoidance does not simply mean avoiding certain racial groups, but it is usually followed by negative social consequences such as disadvantages in labor markets and social networking. Although the impact of avoidance might not be directly visible, when continued for a longer period of time, it could result in long-term segregation/isolation/exclusion of outgroup individuals. This also means limited opportunities of participation in various settings, e.g. in education, employment, etc. – therefore, in fact, could entail more serious consequences than direct forms of RD in the long term.

3. Segregation

Segregation is when a certain racial group is actively denied access to resources and institutions – e.g. employment, housing, education, healthcare, etc. A study by Bobo (2001) showed that most Americans in the survey (approx. 90%) agreed that opportunities for such resources/institutions should be provided equally to every member of society. However, it was shown that the 10% who were against equal civil rights were highly likely to engage in explicit and intentional RD (Bobo 2001). This tendency is mainly based on the idea of racial outgroups as a threat to the ingroup, which encourages hostility against outgroups (Duckitt 2001).

4. Physical attacks

Physical attacks are known to be often committed by supporters of segregation (Green et al. 1999), and they are also shown to be highly associated with other forms of RD that are more

overt (Schneider et al. 2000). Physical attacks are hate crimes, which is an active and direct form of expressing explicit prejudice about racial outgroups that are perceived as threats to the ingroup.

5. Extermination/Mass Killings

Extermination and mass killings are phenomena that are usually more complex and complicated than other forms of RD explained above, as it often involves historic and institutional RD and prejudice. In addition, a number of different elements contribute to the culmination of extermination/mass killings, such as unfavorable living conditions, leadership with a prejudiced/biased view, social support for racist/discriminatory behavior, wide social acceptance of explicit RD, etc (Allport 1954).

Automatic, Unconscious, Subtle RD

In the earlier section, it was mentioned that the abolishment of Jim Crow in the South of the U.S. led to a more subtle and covert form of RD that encouraged the emergence of CRT. Such a case is a good example of how unconscious, subtle, and automatic types of RD are generated. This is because prejudicial attitudes continue to exist even after such explicit and directly visible form of RD is not in effect anymore, which may not always lead to serious incidents of RD, but generate more subtle and unconscious forms of RD that take place in everyday life. Therefore, in order for these forms of RD to happen, prejudice/prejudicial attitudes play a central role (National Research Council 2004).

1. Subtle Prejudice

Subtle prejudice is known to be largely aided by the media, as the way it portrays different races is highly likely to shape its consumers' attitudes towards those races and thus their prejudicial attitudes, which in turn affects their behavior too. Subtle prejudice usually

consists of unconscious beliefs that one has about individuals of the outgroup, and individuals of the ingroup are often confronted with an internal conflict due to the gap between social norms (of being anti-racist) and the persistence of racial prejudice (Dovidio & Gaertner 1986). In short, individuals of the ingroup are aware of the social atmosphere of rejecting/disapproving racist behaviors, while on the other hand they still own prejudicial attitudes towards individuals of the outgroup. In this process, one may not be directly racist towards individuals of the outgroup (and sometimes even with good intentions), but their cognitions may still maintain racially-biased opinions of a certain outgroup. Therefore, such persistence of internal racial bias often leads to subtle forms of RD that are not directly identifiable, nevertheless still affecting one's behavioral, affective, and cognitive reactions towards individuals of the outgroup. Because of its nature, subtle prejudice is usually ambivalent, ambiguous, automatic, and indirect (Fiske 1998, 2002).

2. Indirect Prejudice

Indirect prejudice is a form of subtle RD that encourages ingroup individuals to blame outgroup individuals for the inconvenience and disadvantage they experience. The outgroup individuals are often trapped in 2 conflicting/contradictory conditions, which is often characterized with a "Catch-22 form" – e.g. outgroup individuals should not be lazy and work harder, while at the same time they should not manifest themselves where unwanted. In this process, ingroup individuals often tend to exaggerate differences (e.g. cultural, linguistic, religious, etc.) between them and outgroup individuals, in an attempt to justify their racist/discriminatory behavior. In addition, such an exaggeration also facilitates the portrayal of the outgroup as outsiders who ought to be excluded and avoided. Furthermore, indirect prejudice does not only affect a single individual's behavior, but it can also shape government policies when expanded – whereby racist/discriminatory policies could be created as a result (National Research Council 2004).

3. Unconscious & Automatic prejudice

Since one's cognition is influenced by subtle prejudice, ingroup individuals tend to categorize outgroup individuals unconsciously and automatically. This includes reactions such as anxiety, fear, negative associations, and behavioral impulses for discrimination towards outgroup individuals, all of which usually happen in a matter of milliseconds (Hart et al. 2000; Phelps et al. 2000; Fazio & Olson 2003; Bargh & Chartrand 1999). However, such instant/automatic responses are also largely influenced by the social context they come into contact with outgroup individuals – it was shown that outgroup individuals who are rather unique, subordinate, and familiar do not evoke the same kind of instant/automatic responses as those who are rather undifferentiated, dominant, and unfamiliar (Devine 2001; Fiske 2002). Nonetheless, unconscious and automatic prejudice still elicit automatic responses to outgroup individuals, which may happen in a non-verbal way, such as racial avoidance that is highly likely to build a discriminatory/hostile environment for the outgroup (National Research Council 2004).

Subtle prejudice is shown to mainly be used as a tool to favor the ingroup, rather than for direct disadvantages of the outgroup – which is the reason why subtle prejudice is considered as “ambiguous”. Prejudice does not necessarily mean a greater dislike for the outgroup, but rather a greater preference for the ingroup. Therefore, ingroup individuals tend to share their resources only within the group, which results in the relative disadvantage of the outgroup. In addition, ingroup individuals tend to have biased (favorable) opinions of themselves, which differentiate them from the outgroup – they believe that their strengths are what it takes to be a member of the ingroup, and justify their discriminatory behaviors as well as attribute the outgroup's disadvantages to the lack of such strengths in them (National Research Council 2004).

Subtle prejudice is also known to be “ambivalent”, as it is not always necessarily followed by general hostility of the ingroup against the outgroup. For example, some outgroups could be disrespected but liked to a certain extent, while some other outgroups could be disliked but respected – of which an example could be White people's attitudes towards Black

professionals. However, in the case of the homeless and the poor, it may not be ambivalent anymore due to the clear hostility towards them (National Research Council 2004).

The reason why subtle prejudice is a critical problem in society is because it creates invisible obstacles/barriers to equal chances for everyone in society. Since subtle prejudice and its manifestations are covert and not easily visible, it is also hard to figure out how exactly they affect one's hostile/discriminatory behavior. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that subtle prejudice can lead to serious negative outcomes that could affect its victims over the long term (National Research Council 2004).

Statistical Discrimination/Profiling

Statistical discrimination/profiling happen when one makes decisions about a single individual from a certain racial group based on their general beliefs/stereotypes about that group. In this case, general stereotypes and characteristics are used to make assumptions about the person, which could lead to their disadvantages in various settings such as in job application/employment. An example would be if an employer decides to not hire a Black employee, just because Blacks are statistically more likely to be criminal than Whites. Therefore, statistical discrimination/profiling can easily happen when there is only a limited amount of information about an individual – e.g. job application and school application, where individuals only have a few pages to describe themselves, or a short interview. In such a situation, those who make decisions (e.g. employer) try to find reliable sources of information about an individual that one cannot fake easily – this is why some individuals tend to rely on statistical discrimination/profiling in certain settings. As a result of statistical discrimination/profiling, individuals of discriminated racial groups tend to behave in a way that could appeal to others as “different” and “better” than their group averages (e.g. wearing expensive clothes, getting higher education, etc.). In this process, those disadvantaged would have to give more effort than those without disadvantages – which will cause costs for those disadvantaged (National Research Council 2004).

In the present section, 3 main types of RD were discussed. However, these are the types that mainly influence individual behaviors which lead to RD of different racial groups. In order to explain racism from a broader perspective, the following section will discuss the 3 levels of racism and their interlinkages/interdependencies with one another.

2.7 The 3 Levels of Racism

Bowser (2017) discusses the 3 levels of racism, namely; *Cultural level*, *Institutional level*, and *Individuals level*. The fact that racism (and animus against other races) continued to (intergenerationally) exist despite all the efforts that strived for an equal and fair society could be explained through the *cultural level* of racism. In spite of the end of slavery in the U.S. in 1865, there were several other policies that attempted to maintain Black oppression/subordination in the country. With regard to this, the cultural level of racism refers to racism as a cultural phenomenon, whereby the transmission and the continuity of racism is largely driven by its own norms and beliefs – thus, it is a distinct worldview, which enables racism to continue and persist in society (Bowser 2017).

In the earlier section, the difference between the South and the North of the U.S. was discussed. It was said that the South had a very overt and clear system of racial segregation and White-over-Black hierarchy, which was called the Jim Crow. With Jim Crow, the South had a “total institution”, whereby all kinds of human institution were racially segregated. All the public spaces and facilities were racially organized, where Whites experienced much greater privilege compared to Blacks – e.g. in hospitals, schools, stores, housing, jobs, etc. On the other hand, it was said that the North had a more covert and indirect forms of racial segregation, which was the complete opposite of the South. There was no total institution or policies that actively segregated Whites and Blacks in public spaces and various facilities. However, racial segregation was still happening in housing, jobs, etc. (and even more intensively than in the South) – it was just not happening so openly like it did in the South (Massey 2007). Although the level of institutional racism was different, both the South and the North had the same purpose of maintaining Black oppression and subordination. This is

why activists argued that a change on an *institutional level* was necessary to eliminate RD – if the law changed, facilities were more integrated, and various policies were introduced to reduce RD; that is what the activists believed that could fight the racial hierarchy that was deeply-rooted in society (Better 2008).

The third level of racism is *individuals level*. Activists found out that racism on an individuals level does not occur by innate motivation. This is based on the idea that racism is “taught”, which means there is possibility of it being “untaught”, too. This emphasizes that one’s motivation for racist behavior is not inherent/innate, rather it is something that one acquires in the course of life – therefore, the level and the extent vary for everyone. For instance, it was observed that individuals who were more informed and educated about other races were less likely to be judgmental and racist (Williams 1975). Furthermore, individuals who were in the environment where racism was not encouraged or tolerated were much less likely to be racist (Pettigrew 1981) – which proves that individuals level of racism is very much depends on the environment and that it is conditional.

On the basis of the 3 levels of racism, activists in the 1960s came up with a theory of racism whereby all 3 levels are interdependent with one another in order for racism to persist. The premises of this theory of racism view cultural racism as the blueprint for institutional racism, whereby institutional racism plays a key role in the intergenerational continuity of racism. Such continuity then reinforces cultural racism in turn, and this process keeps going on. In addition, individual acts of racism are shaped and preconditioned by institutional racism, whereby cultural racism also influences the frequency & intensity of those. However, the frequency & intensity depend on the level of institutional racism – the higher the level, the more reinforced individual acts of racism will be and vice versa (Bowser 2017). All of this is proof that the 3 levels of racism are interdependent with one another, as can be shown in the following diagram;

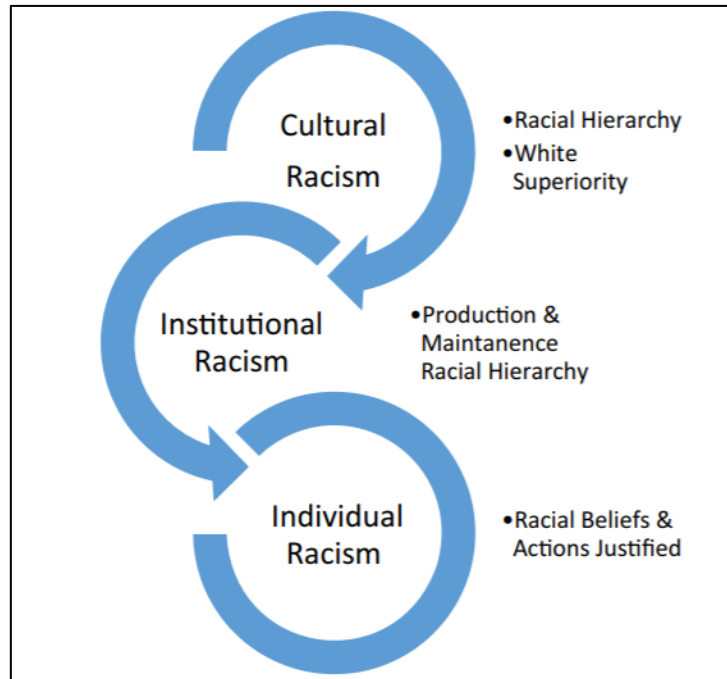


Figure 1: The activist theory of racism (Bowser 2017, 582)

2.8 Reactions to Experiences of Racism/Discrimination

A study conducted by Hahm et al. (2021) examines experiences of coronavirus-related anti-Asian RD and affective reactions reported by U.S. young adults of diverse races (Asian/Asian American & non-Asian). This study was carried out as part of the “COVID-19 Adult Resilience Experiences Study (CARES)”, in order to find out the different types of RD experienced by young adults in the U.S. during the pandemic, as well as what kinds of affective reactions were caused by such experiences of RD. The study used data from the first wave of CARES, which was drawn from U.S. young adults aged between 18 and 30, from April 2020 to September of the same year. The study conducted an online survey with 1331 U.S. young adults in total, of which 95 individuals (34.7% Asian American, 65.3% non-Asians) provided 113 comments regarding COVID-19-related anti-Asian RD (Hahm et al. 2021).

The study divided RD into 3 different levels – *societal/political level*, *interpersonal level*, and *intrapersonal level*. In the case of the *societal/political level*, participants reported having witnessed social/political COVID-19-related RD through various media, e.g. social media,

news, etc. Participants criticized U.S. political leaders' racist/discriminatory remarks regarding China and the Chinese, saying that such remarks fueled RD in the U.S. The *interpersonal level* of RD was either direct or vicarious RD, whereby direct RD could be divided into overt/blatant racist behaviors and covert/microaggressions, while vicarious RD included witnessing/hearing about incidents of RD (both covert and overt), which could happen both in-person and online. Finally, the *intrapersonal level* of RD is a form of internalized racism that describes one's acceptance of widespread negative racial stereotypes and beliefs. It was shown that a lot of A/AA participants showed incidents of internalized racism, where their thoughts and behaviors were affected by widespread negative beliefs/stereotypes of their own race. Such a case was shown to cause an internal conflict, as they felt guilty for discriminating against their own race/culture (Hahm et al. 2021).

The study examined participants' experiences of RD based on the 3 different levels discussed above, as well as their affective reactions to those incidents of RD. It was shown that in-person vicarious RD was the most frequent form of RD (53.8%) observed by the 65 comments regarding types of RD, followed by covert microaggressions (16.9%), online vicarious RD (13.8%), political/societal RD (7.7%), internalized RD (6.2%), and overt RD (1.5%). From the 18 comments regarding affective reaction to racism, it was shown that fear was the most frequent affective reaction experienced (44.4%), followed by anxiety/distress (27.8%), hopelessness/depression (22.2%), and avoidance (5.6%). It was reported that A/AA participants feared going outside because of frequent news/media reports about anti-Asian incidents, but it was shown that non-Asian participants in the study were also afraid and anxious about their A/AA friends and family due to vicarious experiences of RD during the pandemic (Hahm et al. 2021). Therefore, the study showed that anti-Asian RD during the COVID-19 pandemic not only affects the A/AA population, but it could also affect the non-Asian population and their reactions to it – which shows that various forms of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic are not just the problem that Asians are facing, but society as a whole. In addition, as mentioned earlier, a lot of the participants were concerned that anti-Asian RD in the U.S. was being justified and fueled by institutional authority (e.g. former President

Trump's use of terms such as "China Virus"), which encourages scapegoating/stigmatizing of the A/AA population in the country (Hahm et al. 2021). Therefore, the study overall demonstrates the impact of anti-Asian RD during the COVID-19 pandemic, which affects both A/AA and non-Asian individuals' everyday lives.

As demonstrated throughout this section, anti-Asian RD is a deeply-rooted social problem that has a long history. Keeping in mind that anti-Asian RD during the COVID-19 pandemic is a social phenomenon that affects the society and the people within, it is important to investigate how exactly anti-Asian RD during the current pandemic is being experienced. Therefore, in the following section, a qualitative study involving 5 individuals of East Asian descent and their experiences of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic will be investigated in an attempt to find out how and to what extent their social/personal life was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a special focus on possible experiences of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic.

3. Data collection & Data Analysis

In the context of the present thesis, a qualitative study consisting of semi-structured interviews (SSIs) for data collection and the coding methods suggested by Grounded Theory for data analysis was carried out. The SSIs were conducted with a total of 5 interviewees who are of East Asian descent, all of which have lived and experienced the COVID-19 pandemic in Vienna, Austria. The SSIs followed every step and strategy suggested by Adams (2015), which will be discussed in the following.

3.1 Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews (SSIs)

Initially, it was attempted to recruit interviewees using Facebook. Since the study specifically required East Asians (aged 20-35) who have lived and experienced the COVID-19 pandemic in Vienna, as well as due to restricted social interaction during the current pandemic, recruitment via online platform was considered as the most optimal and safest option. A

number of members from various international groups of Vienna were contacted on Facebook and only few of them responded to the request, whereby they refused to take part in the study. Therefore, the recruitment method had to be adjusted – 2 interviewees were recruited through word-of-mouth recommendation from acquaintance, and the next 3 interviewees were recruited using the snowball sampling method, with the help of the first 2 interviewees. As a result, a total of 5 interviewees were able to be recruited to participate in the SSIs.

Making the Interview Guide & Conducting of Interview

Adams points out that the use of word “Questionnaire” is not suitable to SSIs, since the word is rather suggestive of a fixed list of questions to be used in the interview. Therefore, he suggests the use of word “interview guide” to better fit the flexible and interactive nature of SSIs – it offers the outline for designing questions, such as topics to be discussed in the interview. Adams suggests that closed-ended questions are a great way to lead to open-ended questions – for instance, the interviewer could ask a simple yes/no question about a topic, then ask a “why” question to the answer to follow up. Furthermore, Adams argues that questions should not pressure interviewees into giving answers that are socially accepted/expected – which was taken into consideration when designing the interview guide for the present study (e.g. it was avoided to ask sensitive personal questions, while still being able to obtain necessary information by formulating questions in a way that is less explicit). Besides, all participants were assured of data protection and confidentiality, as well as it was attempted to create a comfortable atmosphere during the interviews so that the participants would not feel forced/pressured to give a certain expected answer for a question and express their opinions freely. In addition, Adams recommends not asking what is “bad” directly, since it could evoke defensive reactions from the interviewee. Instead, he recommends asking what could be “improved”, so that possible negative/defensive reactions could be prevented (Adams 2015). The following is an example of how Adams’ suggestion was applied to a question in the context of the present study;

“Are changes necessary? If so, what do you think needs to change and who do you think is responsible for this change?”

Since SSIs should be carried out flexibly, Adams says that the interviewer should be flexible with the flow of the conversation too – that means, even if a conversation jumps from the first to the fifth topic, the interviewer should be flexible and skilled enough to rearrange the order of the topics in a way that the conversation can continue as natural as possible (Adams 2015). This was one of the important points to remember during the SSIs in this study, since it happened quite often that the interviewees jump from one topic to another which was not as planned in the interview guide. Since the interviewer should not interrupt while the interviewee is talking, it was important to find the right moment to smoothly lead the conversation back on track, as well as pick up the topics/questions that were missing.

All interviews were carried out online via Skype in order to minimize the risk of infection and for participants’ safety. All the interviewees were provided with the information sheet and consent form beforehand, with which they were informed with the purpose of the study and assured of data protection/confidentiality. All of the 5 interviewees signed the consent form and allowed the recording of the interview. In the course of the interview, notes were being taken for important topics that emerged during the interviewee’s talking, and when the interviewee was done with talking, questions were carefully asked regarding the newly emerged topic. All the interviews were thoroughly transcribed in order to make them suitable for coding process as suggested by Grounded Theory.

3.2 Data Analysis: Grounded Theory (GT)

For data analysis, the coding process suggested by Grounded Theory (GT) was utilized. Grounded Theory is a methodology first introduced in *“The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research”* by Glaser and Strauss (1967). GT is a methodology with which an explanatory theory is inductively generated based on qualitative data obtained – therefore, the theory is “grounded” in the data, which is why it is called the Grounded

Theory. GT strives to offer a detailed explanation for a phenomenon about which there is a lack of knowledge regarding the phenomenon (Chun Tie et al. 2019). From this methodology of GT, only the coding methods as suggested by Corbin & Strauss (1990) were utilized in the present study, which will be discussed in the following.

3.2.1 Coding Process of GT

In GT research, coding is carried out as the basic method of analysis. This coding process consists of 3 steps – *open coding*, *axial coding*, and *selective coding*. In this section, each of these coding methods will be explained step by step.

Open Coding

Open coding is a process in which data are given *conceptual labels* – all the relevant incidents, actions, and interactions are analyzed to find similarities & differences among them, whereby similar incidents, actions, and interactions are collected together to build categories (Corbin & Strauss 1990). In this process, relevant text passages will be given “codes”, which can be either a paraphrased form of the passage or “in-vivo” (using the exact terms from the interviewees as a code)(Strauss 1987). For instance, one of the interviewees from the present study said, *“Maybe I stopped talking too much about that because, I realized my friends, they can’t understand that and they don’t really pay that much attention because they are White.”* This line was coded as “Lack of empathy from “White” Austrian friends”, in order to paraphrase the whole sentence into a short and concise form. Another interviewee said, *“I mean we are very mixed group of friends, so we have Asians, we have Germans, Austrian, Turkish friends...so, I don’t think that there would be any room for discrimination anyway”*, which was given an in-vivo code “no room for discrimination”. Open coding facilitates the identification of phenomena and categories, which takes place in the next step of coding – the *axial coding*.

Axial Coding

In the course of axial coding process, all the codes from open coding will be grouped under categories. Codes that are related to the same phenomenon will be assigned to the same category, and each category can be explained with subcategories (codes/concepts from open coding). Categories from axial coding are more abstract than codes/concepts from open coding, and these codes/concepts are used to explain & describe categories that are generated during axial coding (Corbin & Strauss 1990). The aim of axial coding is to identify relationships among different categories, as well as relationships between a category and its subcategories (Böhm 2004). These relationships can be visually represented by following the coding paradigm suggested by Böhm (2004). This coding paradigm shows causal condition, consequences, context & intervening conditions, and action strategies for each category/phenomenon in the form of a diagram. Making of such a diagram for each category/phenomenon makes it easier for one to see and understand the relationships as well as what induces a certain phenomenon and what are its consequences (Corbin & Strauss 1990). The following is how the diagram looks like as suggested by Böhm;

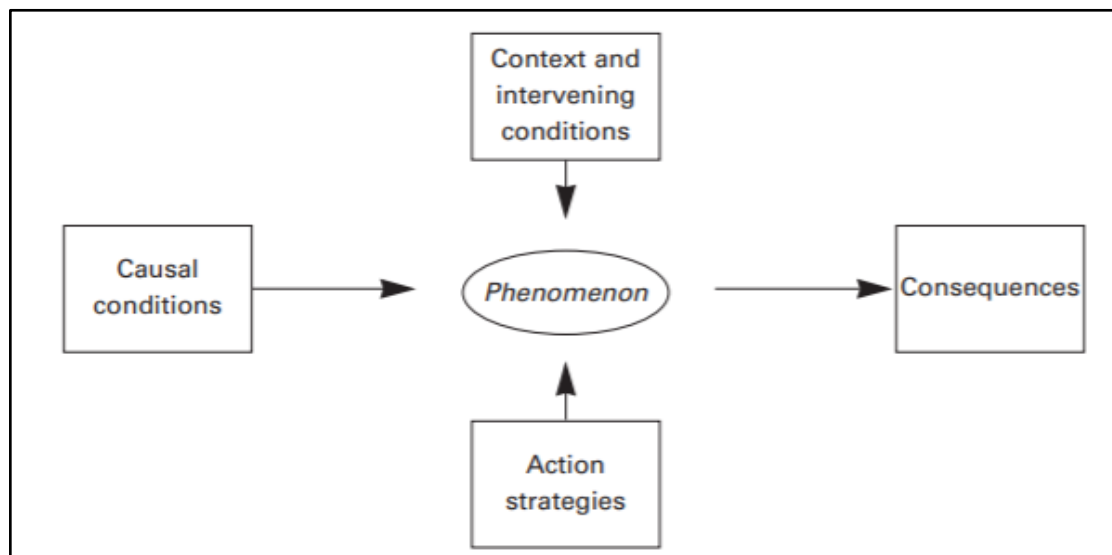


Figure 2: Coding Paradigm (Böhm 2004, 272)

Selective Coding

Selective coding is the final step of the coding process of GT, whereby categories are grouped under “key” categories. These key categories describe the main phenomena of the study, therefore summing up all the findings. During selective coding, insufficiently developed categories may be discovered, of which the conceptual density is low (thus having an insufficient number of concepts to explain the category) – this means they lack of explanatory power (Corbin & Strauss 1990). Having explanatory power is important for categories, as they should be able to characterize the key category (Böhm 2004). In the end, key categories obtained by selective coding should be able to represent the central phenomena of the study (Corbin & Strauss 1990).

In the course of the entire coding process, memos are constantly being written down. This is to keep the researcher on track and stay organized with the questions, concepts, hypotheses, etc. that may continuously arise in the course of the coding process (Corbin & Strauss 1990).

4. Results

In this section, results from the 5 semi-structured interviews with individuals of East Asian descent will be presented. First, case description for each interviewee will be presented in order to provide brief background information about them. After that, results from the coding process based on Grounded Theory will be presented, whereby results from selective coding in particular are going to be discussed in detail.

4.1 Case Description

Dong-Hun Kim is a 27 year-old male from the Republic of Korea (South Korea). He moved to Vienna 4 years ago for his studies. However, he moved back to Korea temporarily as the COVID-19 situation got worse in Austria – which he described as “evacuation”. He explains that multiple factors contributed to his decision to fly back to Korea for a while (November

2020 terrorism in Vienna city center, aggravation of the COVID-19 situation in Austria, and anti-Asian racism during the pandemic). Up until the point where he flew back to Korea, he had lived in Vienna for 3 years in a one-room apartment on his own. He moved to Austria by himself, and he is not sure whether he would stay in Vienna after he graduates from university. He does not eliminate the possibility of staying in Vienna, but he is more likely to go back to Korea or to some other country to find a job or continue his studies. He speaks German to the extent where he has no problem in everyday communication (officially B2 level German), but sometimes he experiences difficulties speaking German in an academic setting.

Xiang Liu is a 24 year-old male from the People's Republic of China. His family (him and his parents) moved to Vienna when he was 8 years old, and he went to an international school in Vienna until he graduated in 2015 and moved to the U.S. for his studies. Due to the mandatory internship at his university, he was in China when the pandemic started (December 2019-July 2020, for 8 months). Although he studies at a university in the U.S., all classes are being held online due to the pandemic. Therefore, he is back in Vienna since July 2020. For now, he is planning to stay in Vienna for a short period of time as he wants to look for a job or an internship after he graduates from university – he does not know where yet. Xiang speaks a little German as he spent his childhood and teenage years in Vienna, but since he went to an English-speaking international school, his German is not fluent. Generally, he has no problem having short talks in German, but he does not think that he can hold a more detailed conversation.

Chih-hao Huang is a 27 year-old male from Taiwan. He was born in Taiwan and grew up in Taiwan until his family moved to Tirol, Austria in 2004 (when he was 10 years old) - he has both Austrian and Taiwanese citizenship. He moved to Vienna for his studies in 2015, and currently living with his Austrian girlfriend in an apartment. His family is still living in Tirol, running a Chinese restaurant in their neighborhood. Although he did not speak a word in German when he first moved to Austria as a kid, now he speaks fluent German as he went to Austrian public school growing up. Once he graduates from university in Vienna, he is planning on “not” being in Austria for the next 15-20 years. While he is very satisfied with

the social system in Austria, he is not satisfied with the people in Austria – he has faced some racial discrimination growing up in Tirol, which he describes as *“Texas of Austria”*. Landing in Tirol without knowing German and just a little bit of English made his childhood much more difficult. However, because of the good social system in Austria, he would like to come back and settle down again in 15-20 years when he has a family and a good job.

Hiroto Takahashi is a 24 year-old male from Japan. His family (him and his parents) moved to Vienna in 2006 - when he was 9 years old. Until he moved to the U.S. for university in 2015, he lived in Vienna with his parents. After 5 years of studying and working in New York, he is back in Vienna since 2020. He started working in the music industry as he was in New York – however, due to the pandemic, he was having difficulties obtaining a working visa in the U.S., which is why his company allowed him to work remotely from Vienna. Therefore, he is currently working from home in Vienna in his own apartment. Although he would say he grew up in Vienna as he spent most of his life in Vienna, he only speaks German *“conversationally”* since he went to an English-speaking international school (therefore his German writing and grammar are not so good in general), and he does not think that he can hold a longer conversation in German. For now, he is planning on living in Vienna indefinitely for a longer period of time.

Peishan Chen is a 35 year-old male from Taiwan. He was born in Austria but grew up in Germany until he came back to Vienna in 2012. He studied for 9 years in Vienna, then moved to Germany for his job as an auditor a few months ago. Before moving to Germany, he was living in Vienna in a shared flat with 2 other people in the fifth district. He considers Vienna as the center of his life, since that is where he lived and studied for a long time as an adult. He speaks fluent German and in a German accent as he describes, *“people think I am German when they listen to me speaking.”*

4.2 Axial Coding Results

In this section, the results from axial coding will be presented by using the axial coding

paradigm as suggested by Böhm (2004). Through the process of axial coding, a total of 13 categories have been discovered. As explained in the earlier section regarding GT, these categories were built with codes/concepts obtained from open coding, of which one can see the relationships with the categories from the diagram. In the following pages, 13 diagrams of axial coding paradigm will be presented. For each diagram, the category is placed in the center, whereby causal condition, consequences, context & intervening conditions, and action strategies for each category are placed around the category. This enables one to see the relationships among different codes/concepts, as well as their relationships with categories.

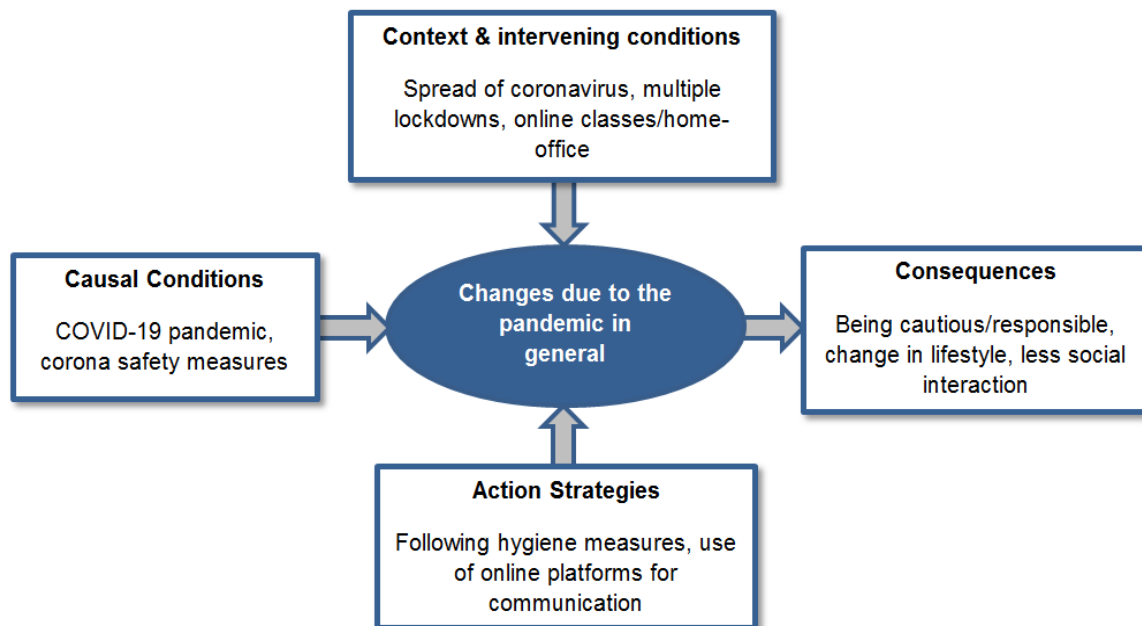


Figure 3: Category 1 - Changes due to the pandemic in general

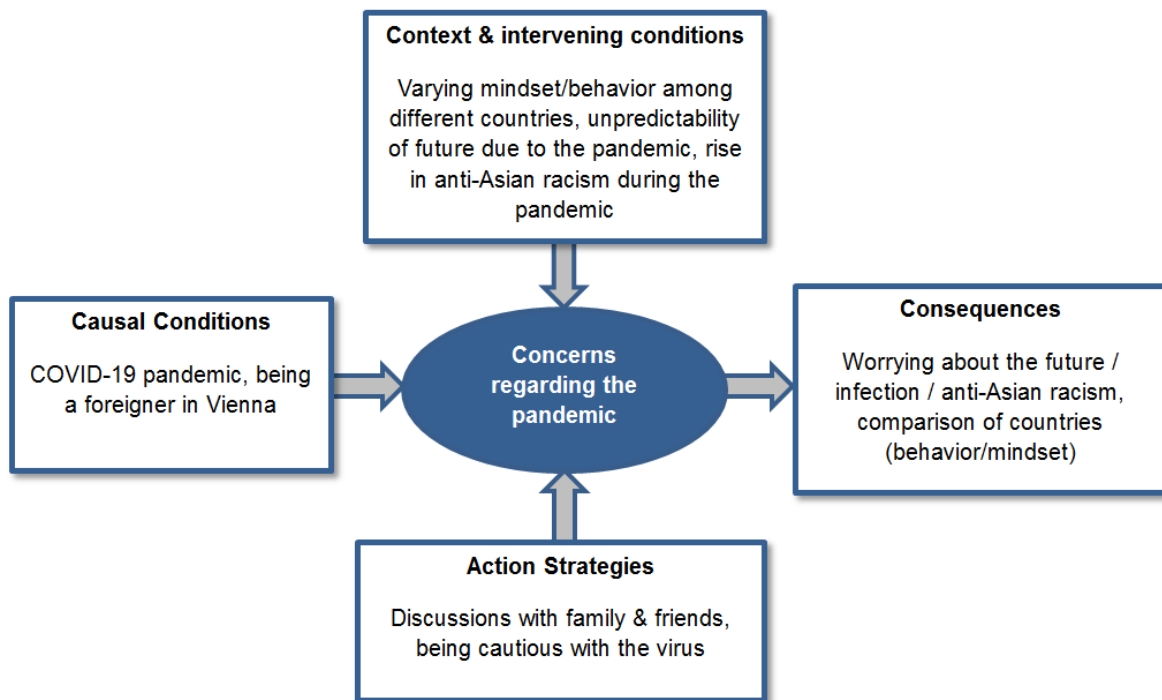


Figure 4: Category 2 - Concerns regarding the pandemic

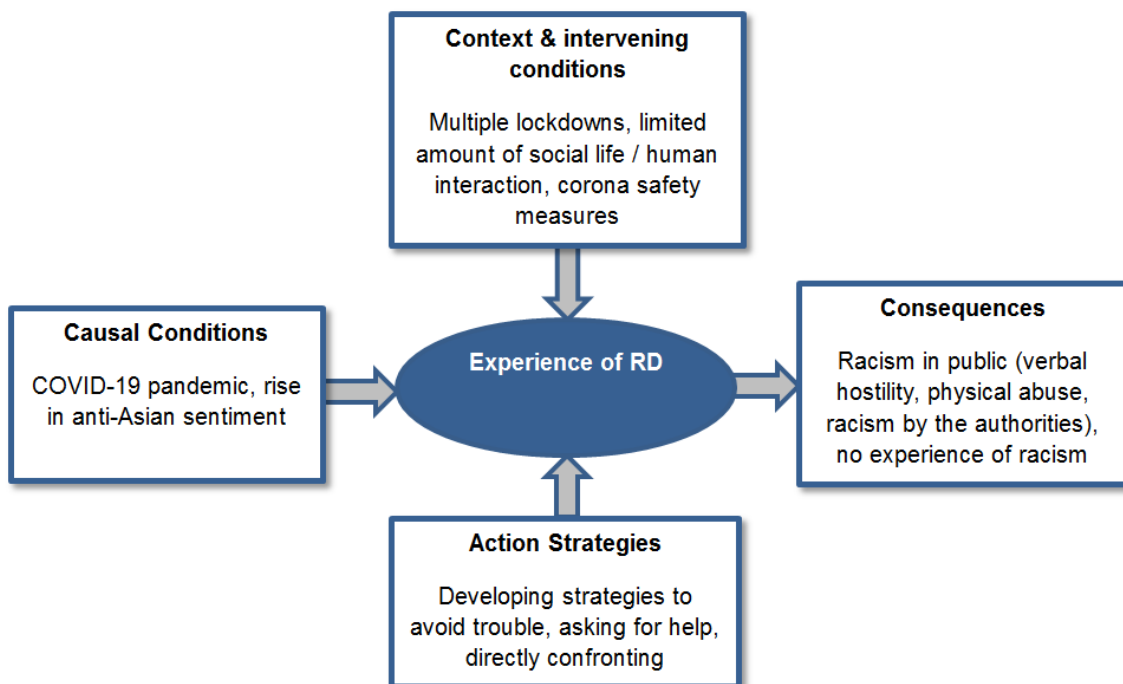


Figure 5: Category 3 - Experience of racism

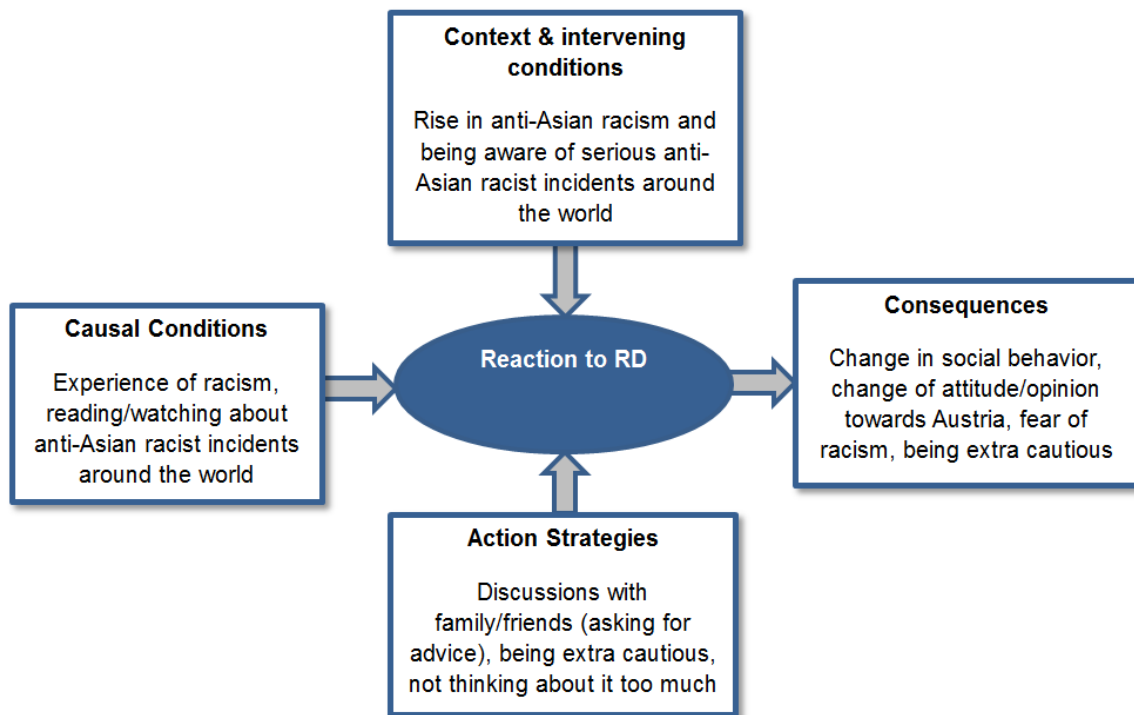


Figure 6: Category 4 - Reaction to racism

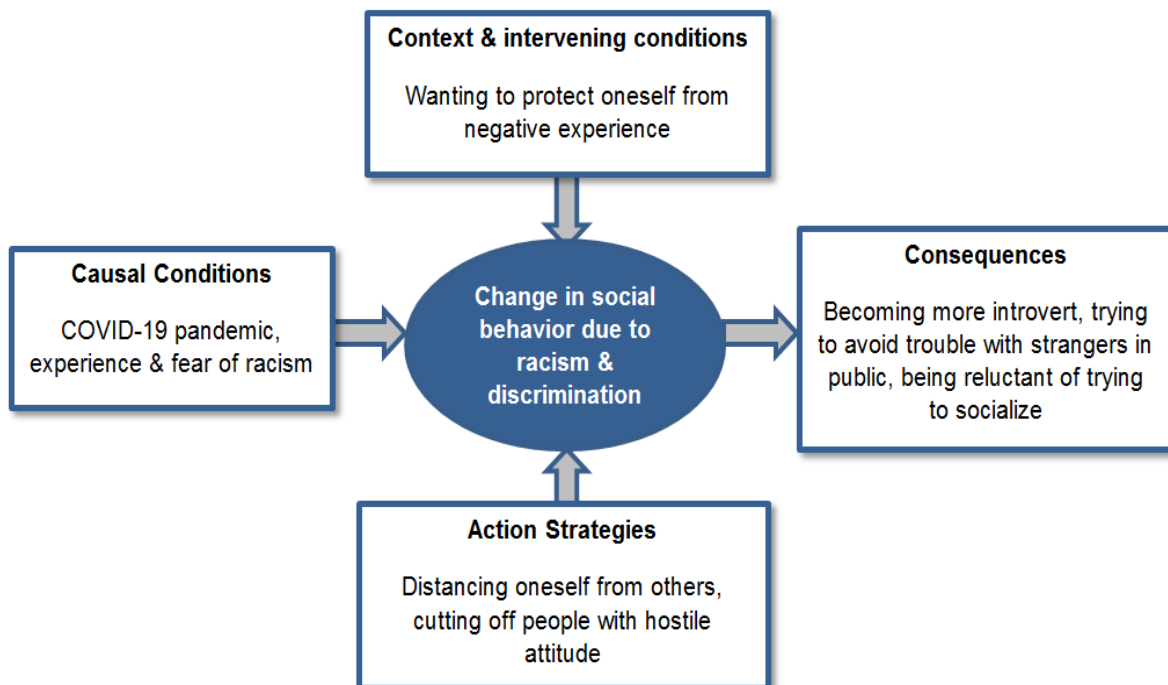


Figure 7: Category 5 - Change in social behavior due to racism & discrimination

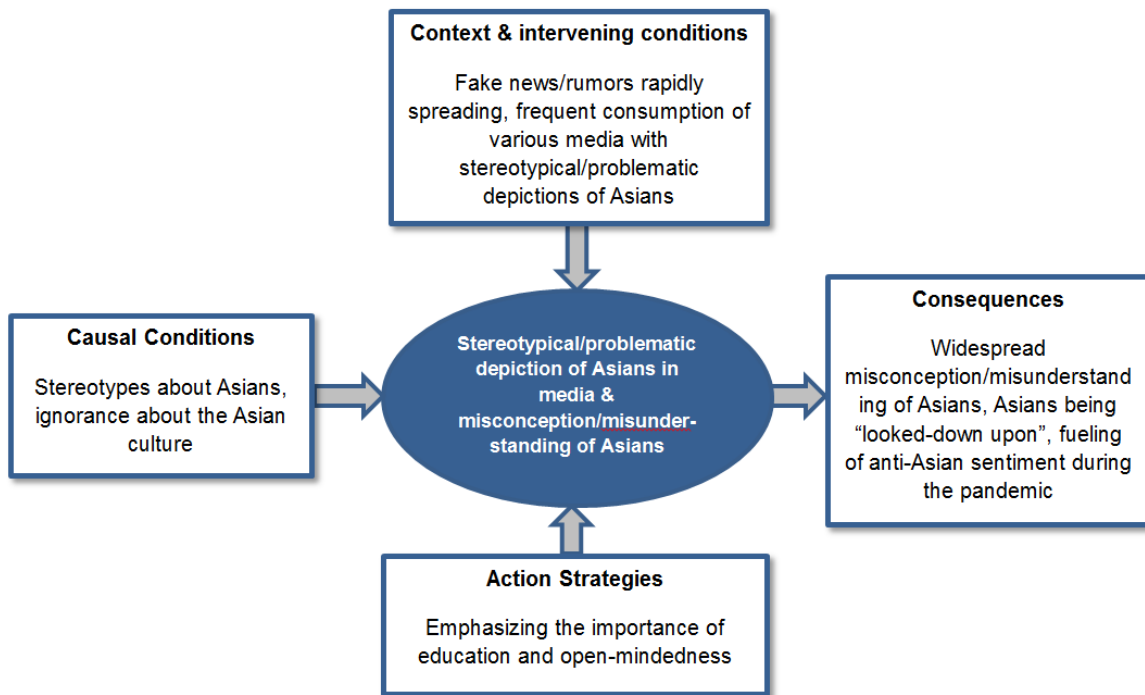


Figure 8: Category 6 - Stereotypical/problematic depiction of Asians in the media & misconception/misunderstanding of Asians

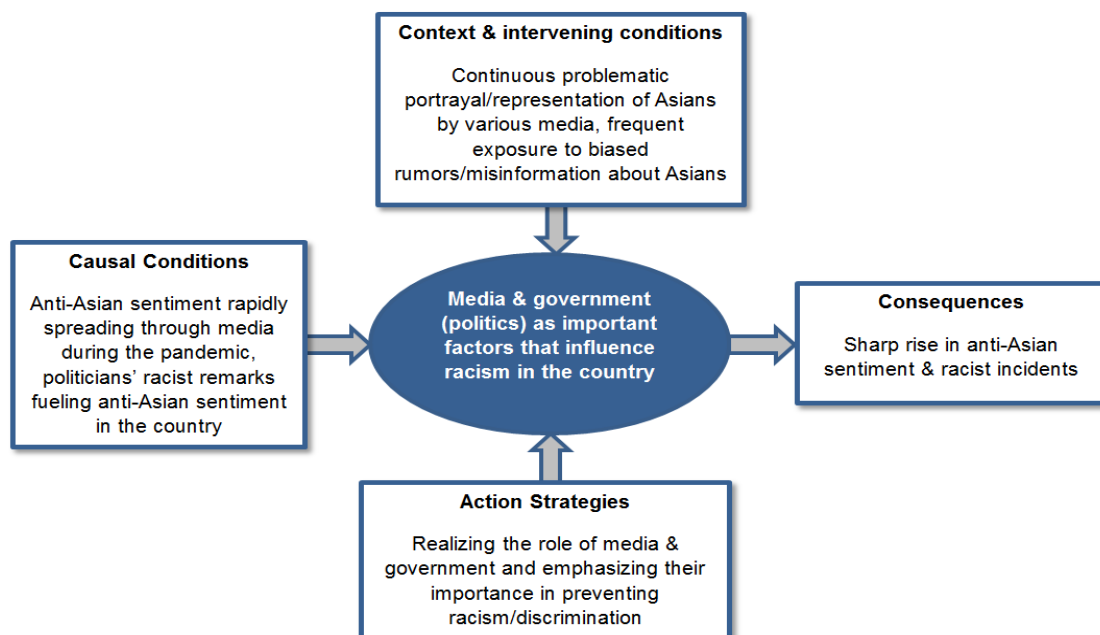


Figure 9: Category 7 - Media & government (politics) as important factors that influence racism in the country

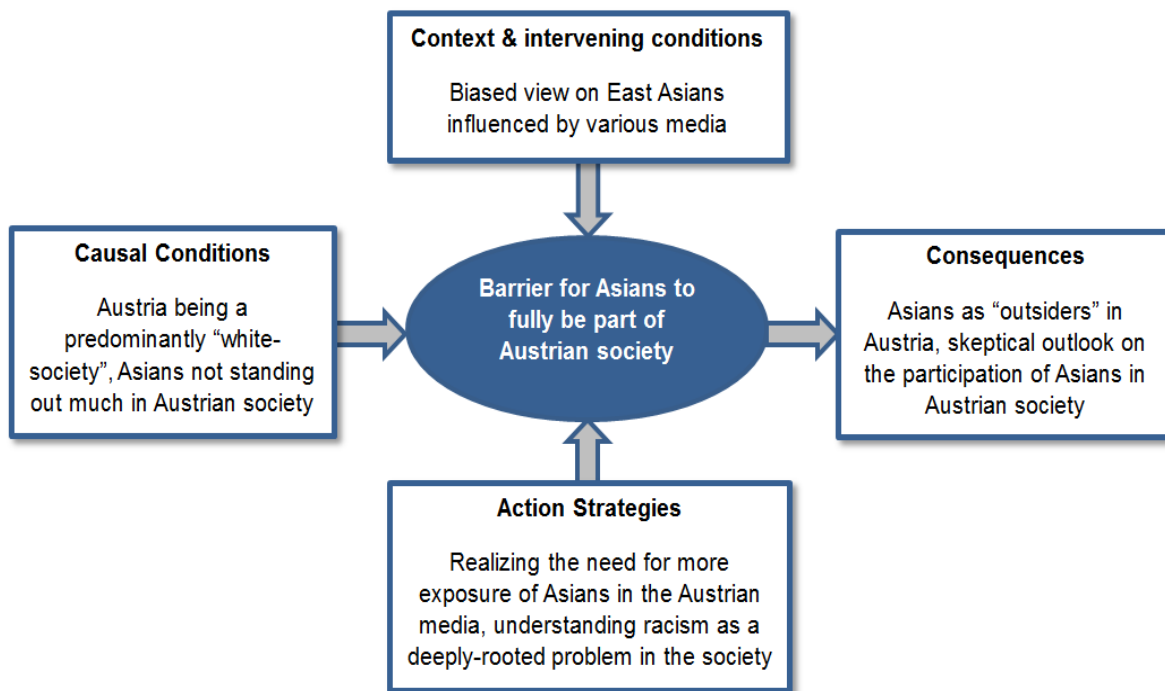


Figure 10: Category 8 - Barrier for Asians to fully be part of Austrian society

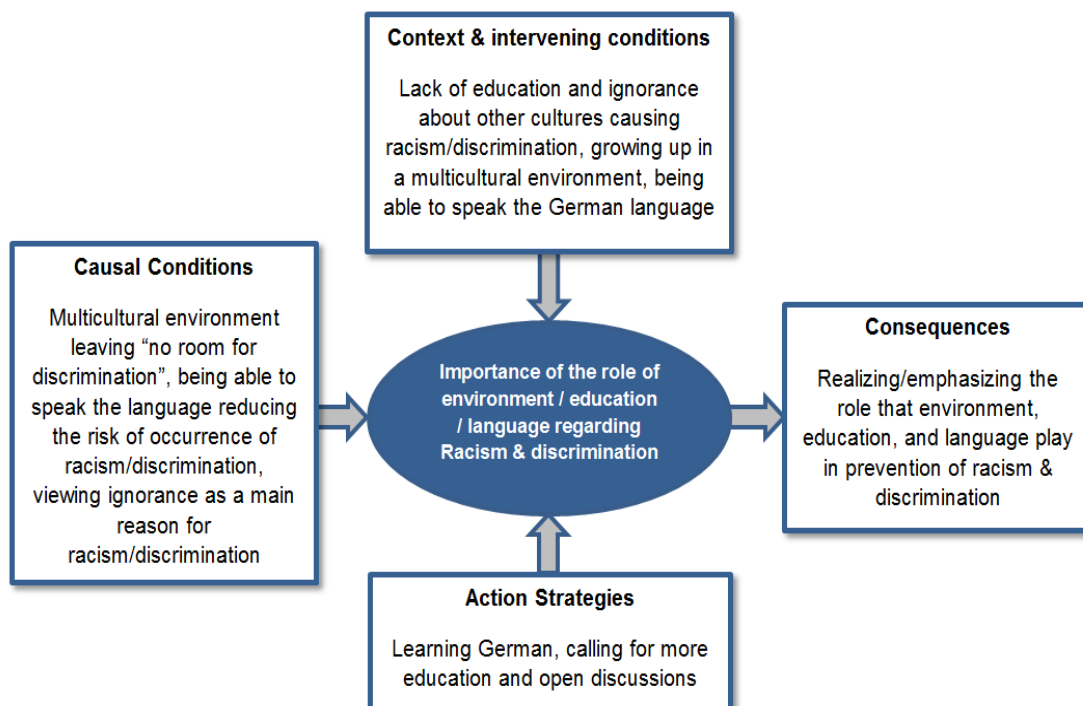


Figure 11: Category 9 - Importance of the role of environment/education/language regarding RD

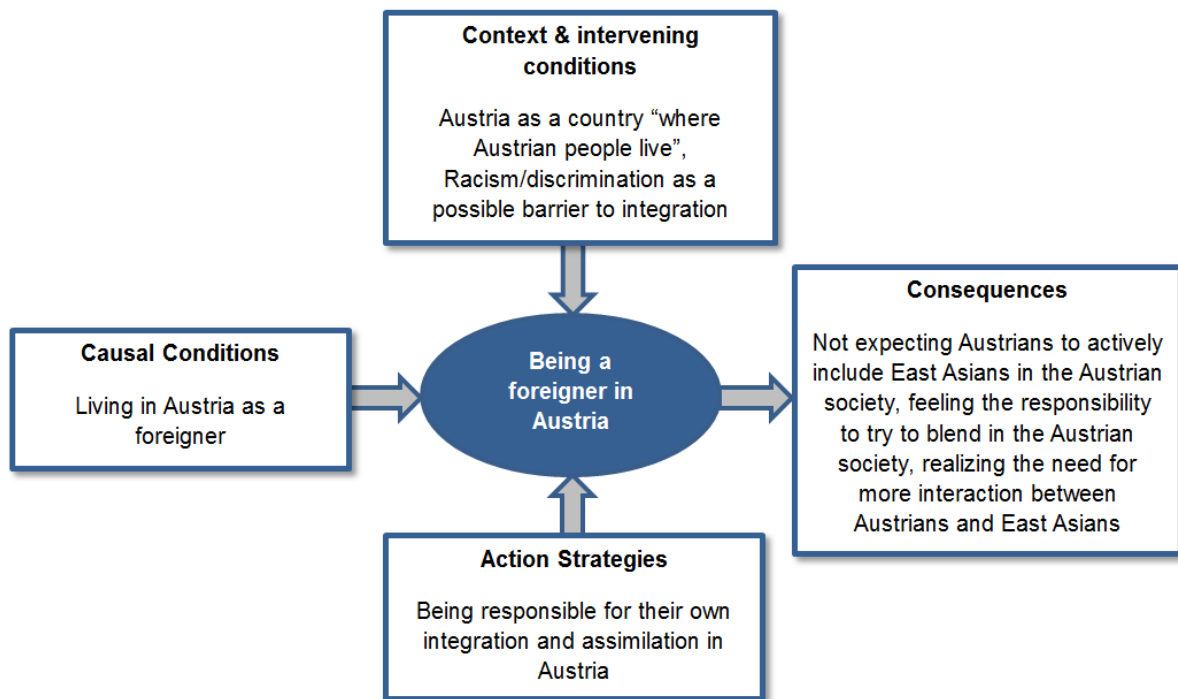


Figure 12: Category 10 - Being a foreigner in Austria

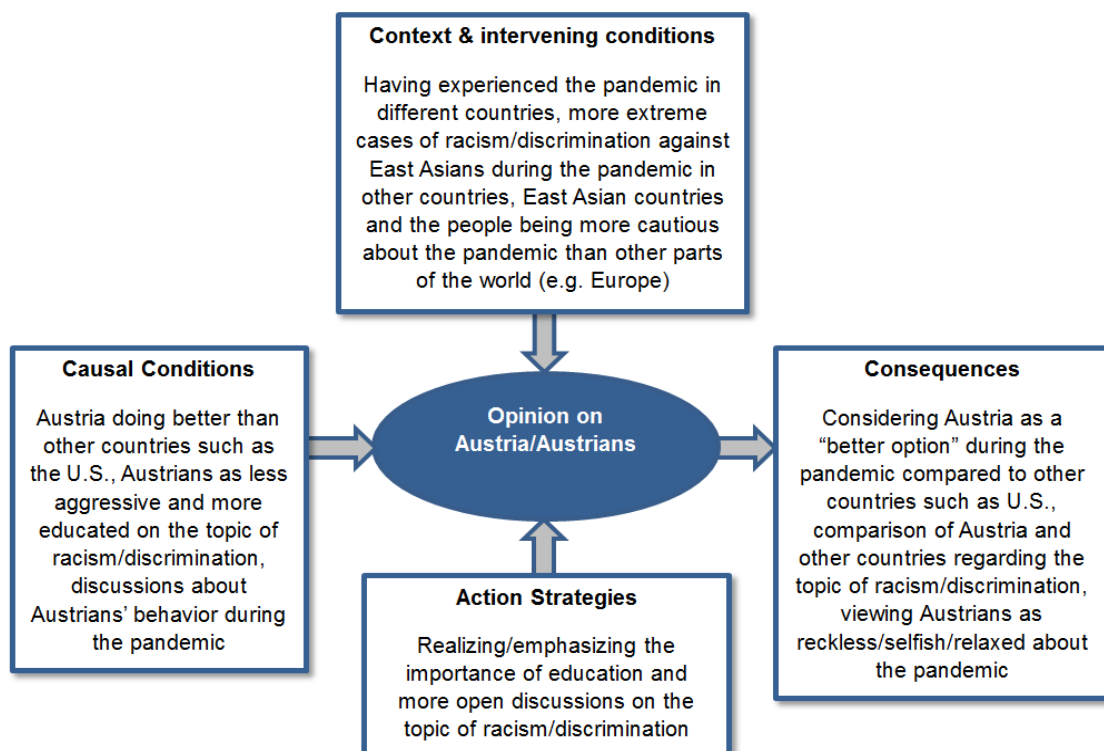


Figure 13: Category 11 - Opinion on Austria/Austrians

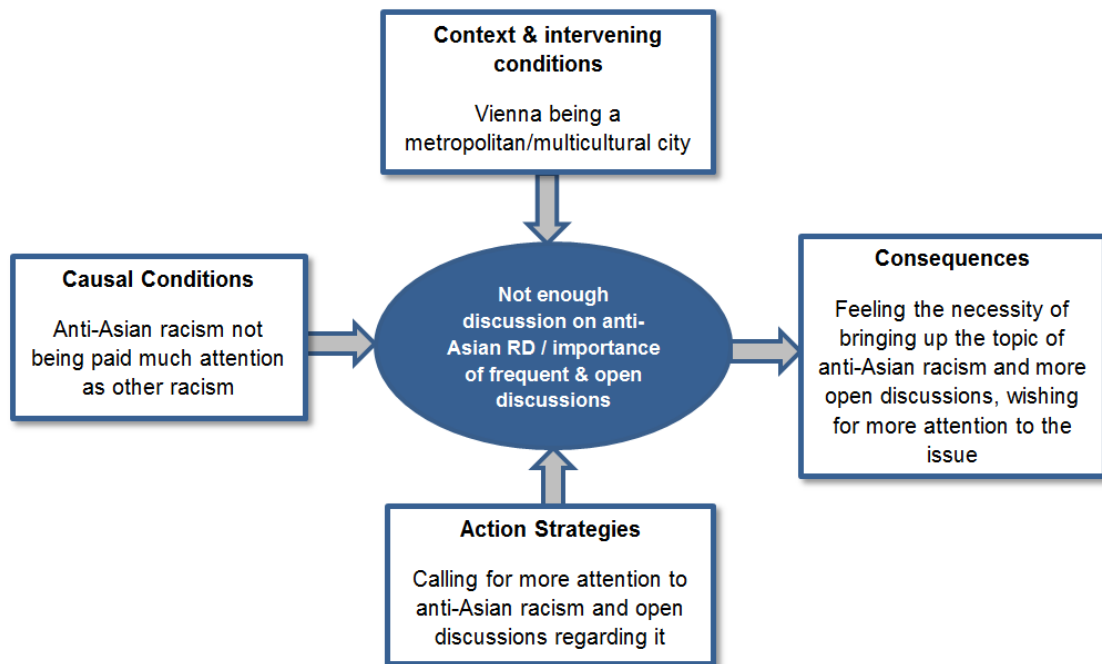


Figure 14: Category 12 - Not enough discussion on anti-Asian RD/importance of frequent & open discussions

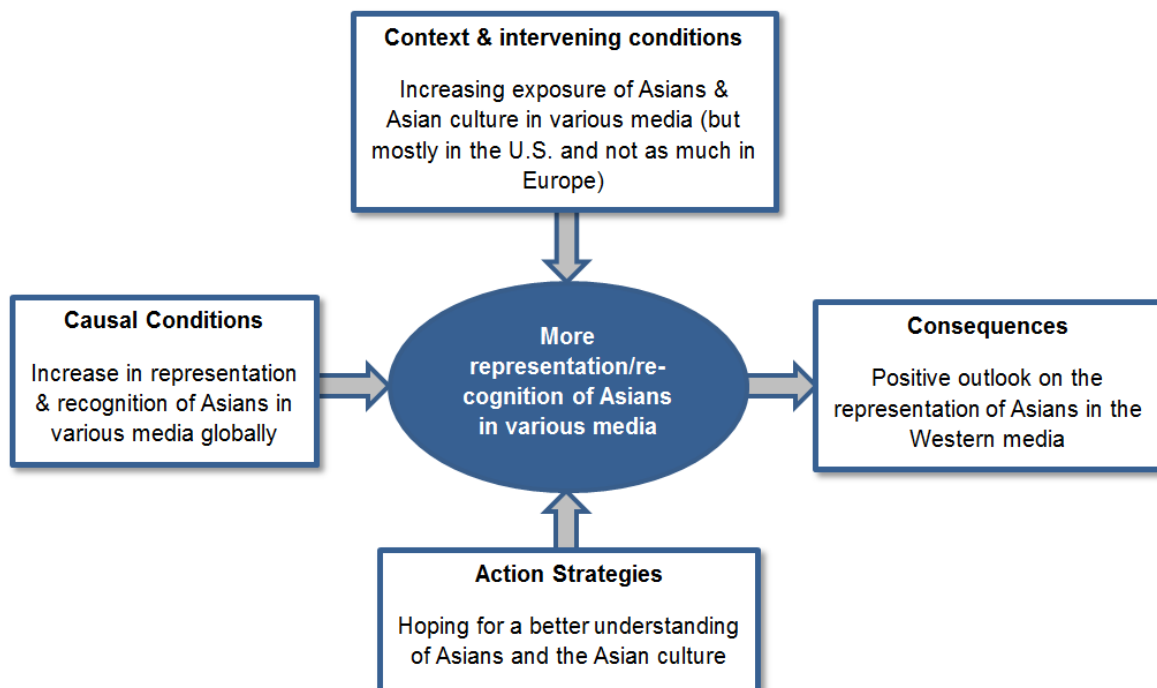


Figure 15: Category 13 - More representation/recognition of Asians in various media

4.3 Selective Coding Results

Based on the results obtained by axial coding as presented in the earlier section, a total of 4 “key” categories have been identified through selective coding. These are to be understood as the main themes of the study, which have an explanatory power that could sum up all the findings of the study. The 4 key categories are as follows;

1. Influence of the Pandemic on Everyday Life
2. Experience of Racism/Discrimination
3. Factors That Influence Racism/Discrimination & Future of East Asians
4. Call for More Attention & Effort

In the following section, it will be attempted to explain why the above 4 key categories were selected as the main themes of the present study.

4.3.1. Influence of the Pandemic on Everyday Life

Regarding the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on everyday life, several changes have been identified as a result of the pandemic by the interviews. When asked about changes that happened as a result of the pandemic, all of the 5 interviewees started by talking about corona safety measures such as wearing face masks, social distancing, lockdowns, and online classes/home-office. All of the interviewees mentioned that they were not able to meet friends and socialize due to multiple lockdowns in Vienna, which caused them to mostly stay at home or go for a walk as it was the only option they had to go outside at the very beginning of the lockdown. Xiang Liu said, *“Because Vienna was in lockdown, so like all the places are closed - restaurant, gym, cinema, mall, and stuff so I couldn’t go anywhere. And also I couldn’t meet up with my friends. So, most of the time I just stayed home and during*

weekends I would just go out to get some fresh air mostly with my parents or on my own. Because of lockdown, I couldn't meet up with anyone." Due to the lockdown in Vienna, all the shops, restaurants, gyms, etc. were closed and one was not allowed to meet others who are not from the same household – which left Xiang Liu with no choice but to stay at home or sometimes go for a walk outside with his parents or by himself. Peishan Chen described the situation during the pandemic as "having no social life" since there were no parties or other opportunities for him to go outside and socialize with others – *"So...there was actually like, no social life. Before the pandemic, I used to meet a lot of people, go to parties, and stuff like that, but ever since the pandemic it never happened. I do like to go out and like...clubbing, or go to bars and stuff and that was not possible anymore."* This statement shows the clear difference in social life before and after the pandemic. Nevertheless, Peishan Chen said that this lack of social life during the pandemic did not affect his mental health, as he said, *"I mean I didn't have any mental problems, it didn't affect me mentally that, I would say that, I was depressed or something? I just found it boring?"* However, Chih-Hao Huang reported the opposite when he said, *"Somehow, afterward I found out I got quite depressive so I went to a therapist. You know, you have so much time to think about yourself, your life...so you kinda getting depression. And you can't go out."* He explained that spending most of his time alone staying at home made him depressive, for which he sought the help of a therapist. However, he tries to see this in a positive light since he believes that this pandemic has given him more time to focus on himself. The same tendency was also reported by Hiroto Takahashi when he said, *"I think the pandemic has made me more self-focused I guess? Like, I've gotten used to finding things to do by myself other than connecting with other people."*

2 of the 5 interviewees reported to be having home-office (Hiroto Takahashi & Peishan Chen), but Hiroto Takahashi's case seemed to have been more severely affected by the pandemic. Hiroto Takahashi used to work in New York (in the U.S.) in the music industry. However, due to the pandemic, the U.S. government was not issuing any more working visas for his job type; therefore he could not stay in the U.S. anymore. Luckily, his company allowed him to work remotely from Vienna as he has permanent residence in Austria, which

is why he moved back to Austria after 5 years of living in the U.S. Hiroto Takahashi describes this as the biggest change that happened to him as a result of the pandemic - *“Well, I mean I guess for me the biggest change would be...in my employment status. Because, if COVID didn’t happen, I would have probably stayed in New York and worked there for a while.”*

Dong-Hun Kim and Hiroto Takahashi mentioned being responsible and cautious during the pandemic. Dong-Hun Kim said, *“At the beginning of the pandemic, my friends and I avoided meeting up because we wanted to be cautious, especially because my friends are living with their family too.”* Hiroto Takahashi also expressed his cautiousness – *“I guess the way you think kinda changes cuz like, I feel like going to a club or something like that, it’s like a super-spreader event so like, I don’t know. At least for now. I feel like no matter how improved it is, there are new variants coming, and yea. [...] I guess somewhere in the back of my mind, there’s also that, you know, worry that that might happen. I mean, it’s happened before. Last year when I was hanging out with a couple of friends here, one of them had corona. So...even though you’re comfortable with a person’s company, I guess if you’re hanging out...you know, you can’t completely avoid someone’s saliva or something hitting you when they are laughing out loud.”* Such efforts to stay cautious and responsible during the pandemic along with the lockdown measures have reinforced the interviewees’ use of online platforms to socialize/communicate with others, e.g. via Facetime, Whatsapp, Skype, Houseparty, etc. 3 out of 5 interviewees mentioned the usability of such online platforms during the pandemic as an alternative to meeting up in person. In addition, the interviewees also explained becoming more mindful of personal hygiene since the pandemic as Hiroto Takahashi describes, *“I’ve become more...cognizant about germs and stuff. So, I make sure, you know, I disinfect myself quite often before I eat or touch anything that might touch me.”* Chih-hao Huang also said that he was still mindful of hygiene measures, although he was not really worried about the pandemic itself – *“I just wore my mask and cleaned my hands and that’s it. Disinfect my hands after I don’t know, going to a supermarket.”*

Additional to the changes in everyday life, the interviewees also presented various causes of concerns influenced by the pandemic. 3 of the interviewees expressed concerns regarding the future, especially with regard to their studies or work. Although Dong-Hun Kim was in

South Korea at the time when the interview took place, he was worried about the COVID-situation in Vienna as he was planning on going back to continue with his studies. Xiang Liu also mentioned that he was worried whether he would be able to graduate on time, as the COVID-situation in the U.S. was getting worse. Peishan Chen talked about the possibility of going back to the office in the future – although he is fine with both home-office and going to the office, he was still very unsure about it due to the unpredictability of the COVID-situation.

Chih-hao Huang and Peishan Chen expressed concerns about possible long-term side effects of the coronavirus infection – Peishan Chen said, *“So I’m not scared of the virus itself, but mostly rather the consequences that the virus entails. Maybe like, regarding the virus, it would be like the long term effect as in...I sometimes see it on TV, or like friends that people who had the virus, they are not as energetic as they used to be, or like they were like running marathon but now they be like, climbing 2 stairs and they cannot breathe anymore. So I’m like more worried about that, but not the virus itself. The possible side effects.”* Chih-hao Huang also said, *“I would be scared if I got it. Cuz I know there are some consequences for your body, for your health. I just protect myself.”* They pointed out that they were not really afraid of or concerned about the pandemic/virus itself, but rather the possible side effects that could linger in case of infection.

It was also shown that one of the most frequent topics of discussion with family/friends is the comparison between varying mindsets/behavior in different countries regarding the pandemic. Hiroto Takahashi talked about his experience in the U.S., saying *“I realized some people from certain upbringings, or certain races took COVID more serious than other people, so that’s one thing. I guess like, most of my close friends, we have like similar values in respect to that so we agreed on how other people were treating COVID and how it wasn’t good.”* He also added that his friends in the U.S. are of the same race as himself (East Asian), implying the fact that East Asians in general tend to be more cautious and aware of the pandemic safety measures (e.g. wearing face masks, social distancing, personal hygiene) compared to individuals from the Western part of the world. The same was also implied by Chih-hao Huang when he said, *“We compare the situation in Austria and in East Asia. Like in*

Austria, at first people didn't really want to accept the mask obligation. [...] We just compare the mind, the way of thinking, the mindset of Austria and other countries like...Asia. So we mostly compare the behavior in Austria and in East Asia." Peishan Chen also described East Asian countries as relatively "doing well" compared to European countries - *"This is like, what we talk most about...and also about like, the pandemic in different countries, cuz like, my parents are from Taiwan so we also talk about the pandemic in Taiwan, and with my Korean friends and stuff, we talk about the pandemic in Korea and umm...not now, but in the past we also talked about how the measures are – like, we all thought that Asia is doing a pretty good job, like Korea did a really good job, and Taiwan did a really good job, and so we were wondering why it wasn't working in Europe for a very long time."* Seeing the interviewees' statements about the comparison between East Asia and Europe/U.S., one can see that the interviewees view East Asian countries/individuals as more conscious about the pandemic, thus being more cautious with the virus and adopting corresponding attitude/behavior to keep themselves and others safe. On the other side, they described European countries/individuals as rather relaxed about the pandemic (e.g. not wearing face masks), which they attribute it to the difference in the mindset of people in Europe and East Asia.

Anti-Asian racism was also raised as one of the aspects by 3 of the interviewees. Dong-Hun Kim said, *"At the beginning of the pandemic in Vienna, I was worried about the way Austrians view me and about racism. Because I am a foreigner there, there were certain things I had to be careful with in the country. I was also worried because sometimes I experienced discrimination based on the stereotypes about Asians."* With this statement, Dong-Hun Kim emphasized his status as a foreigner in Austria, which he thought made him more prone to becoming the target of RD. Besides, he believes that stereotypes about Asians contributed to his experience of discrimination, which was why he was concerned about anti-Asian RD during the pandemic when he was in Austria. However, he added that he is not worried about racism during the pandemic anymore, as he is back in his home country – which once again shows the close correlation between being a foreigner in Austria and the risk of experiences of RD. Xiang Liu describes himself as "lucky" to be in Vienna

during the pandemic instead of in the U.S., since he thinks Austria is much safer when it comes to anti-Asian RD. He said, *“I’m not in the U.S. physically. If I was in the U.S. physically, it would be much different. I’m pretty sure I’m gonna have like, plenty of experiences of racism towards me for sure. But, I’m lucky that I’m in Austria.”* Furthermore, he mentioned that he was concerned *“a lot”* about having to go back to the U.S. for university (which in the end he did not need to) – *“I was concerned a lot. Because I thought I was going to go back to the U.S. but I’m pretty lucky that I could finish final semester here in Vienna.”* Here, he says that he is *“lucky”* once again, which emphasizes his relief about not having to go back to the U.S., where he believes to have much higher risk and more frequent incidents of anti-Asian RD. Hiroto Takahashi also mentioned the situation in the U.S., saying that anti-Asian racism was one of the concerns he had regarding the pandemic in the U.S. - *“I guess like, racism is like one aspect of it. Especially you know, around the time I was in NY and also like after I left, a lot of Asian hate crimes were happening because of COVID related stuff.”*

To summarize the first key category **“Influence of the Pandemic on Everyday Life”**, it could be said that the main influence the pandemic had on the interviewees’ everyday life are corona safety measures (lockdown, social distancing, hygiene measures...) and the consequences that they entailed. In addition, various causes of concerns influenced by the pandemic were also presented by the interviewees, which could be summarized with 3 main aspects – concerns about the unpredictable future and infection, differences in mindsets/behavior of different countries (mainly Europe vs. East Asia), and anti-Asian RD.

4.3.2. Experience of Racism/Discrimination

It was found out that the most frequent form of anti-Asian RD that the interviewees (and their friends/family) experienced during the pandemic was verbal antagonism. Although the interviewees did not report relatively more serious incidents of RD such as hate crimes, 3 out of 5 interviewees (as well as their friends and family) reported having experienced some kind of hostility/antagonism during the pandemic. Although most were intentional expression of hostility, the interviewees also explained that some were not aware of their

comments being racist/discriminatory. An example is shown in Chih-hao Huang's statement - *"In Vienna, yeah...it was just like 6-7 months after the pandemic started, I went to see my Hausarzt (family doctor) and there was a man waiting in the room and talking to the doctor's assistant and he said like "woah woah woah woah, are you Asian? You got coronavirus right?" He was making fun, I think he thinks he was making fun or something like that, but yeah."* Dong-Hun Kim also experienced a similar case at the university - *"Shortly after the pandemic began, I had a seminar at the university and one of my colleagues jokingly asked me, "Bist du krank? (Are you sick?)" At first, I did not realize that it was racist but then my friends told me afterward that it was racist."* As shown by the experiences of the 2 interviewees, one can see that verbal form of RD can sometimes happen even when the original intention was not to express antagonism or hostility against its victims. In such cases, the individual who makes racist/discriminatory comments is usually not even aware of the fact that they are being racist/discriminatory towards the victim. With regard to this, one could say that such an "unintentional" verbal form of RD may emerge due to ignorance about the concept of racism as a whole, since the individuals' original intentions are not to be racist, yet their behavior still results in RD against the victims.

In addition to unintentional verbal form of RD, the interviewees also explained their experiences of explicit & intentional form of verbal antagonism/hostility. Dong-Hun Kim said, *"I was on the tram and someone came to me and started yelling at me about China and corona"* This case shows the person's clear racist/discriminatory intention against him with regard to the pandemic. In addition, the interviewees also talked about experiences of RD that their friends had; Hiroto Takahashi said, *"One of my girlfriend's friend, they are also a couple and they were I guess like, kissing or something. And then they heard someone say like, "stop doing that, you Chinese people. You're spreading corona" or something like that."* Hiroto Takahashi added that the couple were not Chinese (Vietnamese & half Japanese, half Austrian), but the person just assumed that they were Chinese (based on their appearance & race) and immediately associated them with the spread of corona. Hiroto Takahashi explained another incident his other friends experienced - *"One day they were going back on a train from Salzburg, there was like a White family that didn't have a mask on and they*

probably thought that they didn't speak German. So they were saying like, "I didn't know they were letting Chinese people into Austria now."" As shown by these cases, it was mentioned by the interviewees that non-Asian individuals tend to often assume every Asian to be Chinese, as Chih-hao Huang also stated, *"They think I'm from China, actually. (laughs) Like, they say "you're Chinese" – I mean I'm from Taiwan but they don't differentiate. They are like "you look like a Chinese, so you are Chinese". They will say Chinese to you most of the time. Apparently we all look the same to them, I don't know why."* As Chih-hao Huang said, non-Asian individuals tend to not differentiate among Asian individuals of different nationalities, which could partly explain the surge of anti-Asian RD experienced by individuals of Asian descent with various nationalities during the COVID-19 pandemic (combined with the racialization of the disease as a "Chinese disease"). With relation to the racialization of COVID-19, Chih-hao Huang also talked about his siblings' experiences at school. He said, *"Yeah, my brother. My brother is 10, and my sister is 12? 13? (laughs) And children in school were shouting "corona, corona" to them."*

Although 4 of the interviewees reported that they did not experience any type of RD by formal institutions or employers, Chih-hao Huang reported an incident of an unfair treatment based on his race by the police during the pandemic. He described the situation as the following; *"In Tirol I went for a walk with my mother, my 2 siblings, and my girlfriend. It was just like, next to a river. There were also some people walking, cycling. Behind me was a woman with a bike, and next to me was a table and someone's sitting there and chilling, and there's also someone walking. And then, the police car stopped in front of me, and asked me, it was a female police woman and asked me "what are you doing here?" and I said, "umm...walking? We can go for a walk?" And she said "Don't you know what the situation is right now? What are you doing here? Go home!" I was like, "what about the people behind me? We are in the nature!" And...yeah. I was the only Asian there, every other person there was White."* Although this did not take place in Vienna, it is a clear example of racial profiling by the police in the context of the pandemic – even though there were many other people (of which all of them were White) in the same place, the police only reprimanded Chih-hao Huang for being outdoors during the lockdown and told him to go home by raising the

seriousness of the pandemic as a reason. Here, the association of the East Asian race with the pandemic could be assumed once again, whereby the police's racialization of COVID-19 is suspected. All other interviewees did not experience any type of RD by formal institutions, but they added that it was most likely because they did not go anywhere in the first place during the pandemic – therefore, still anticipating the possibility of such experiences of RD by formal institutions, if it was not for the lockdown.

Another important aspect mentioned by the interviewees was “foreigners discriminating foreigners”, which was discussed by 3 of the interviewees. Chih-hao Huang described a situation where the racist individual was a foreigner in Austria himself; *“And there were foreign construction workers, I guess? I can see it from his outfit. He can’t really speak German fluently but...we were like walking down the street and back to our apartment, and he saw us and said, “How dare you that you’re going for a walk right now?” or something like that in German, “You should be at home, you Asians brought this to us, you created the situation, you brought this virus and I have to go to work and you are laughing and walking down the street like nothing happened!” He was like shouting at us like “Why are you still on the street? You should be locked! Because of you, all my family, my siblings are facing this problem in this country!”*” Chih-hao Huang said the person was of East European descent, which means that he was a foreigner in Austria himself. This incident shows that being a foreigner (hence being of the outgroup) in a country does not always mean that an individual can only be a victim of RD; rather, the individual can still be racist/discriminatory against another outgroup of society as shown by this case. Chih-hao Huang talked about another incident of “foreigner-against-foreigner RD” – *“I can remember I just walk on the main shopping street and a group of Turkish people just insult me. I don’t know why. They are also foreigners there, but I don’t know why.”* Hiroto Takahashi also talked about such an incident, whereby a group of “immigrant-looking” men said “ching chang chong” to him and his girlfriend (Vietnamese). Although he is not sure whether this was directly related to the pandemic, he described such an incident as *“somewhat common in Vienna”* to East Asians living in Vienna.

When it comes to anti-Asian RD, Chih-hao Huang argues that people have become more

“direct and offensive” during the pandemic in comparison to the pre-pandemic era. He explained that verbal forms of RD before the pandemic were mostly indirect, jocular, and rather unserious. However, he said that now he mostly gets yelled at and blamed for the pandemic based on his race and appearance. He describes as the following; *“I think people are more direct and offensive. Not indirect just making fun and making jokes, attacking you and insulting you indirectly but now they are direct. Before, it was like at a party and a girl like, “Hey! You’re Asian! Is your penis really small?” or something like that. But after corona, people are coming to me more directly, like they are yelling at me and telling me to go home. Before the pandemic people were just joking and they were not really direct, I guess.”* By this, one can see that the pandemic might have increased the aggression and directness in anti-Asian RD, which seems to have been influenced by the racialization of COVID-19 (as well as China as the origin of the virus). Therefore, one could assume that the pre-existing anti-Asian sentiment and RD might have been reinforced with the pandemic as a justification for such racist/discriminatory behaviors.

While discussing experiences of racism, Dong-Hun Kim and Chih-hao Huang talked about the existence of bystanders in the situation. Dong-Hun Kim explained the RD experience of his friend, whereby no one wanted to help him despite being aware of the situation. In addition, Chih-hao Huang also talked about his childhood experience of RD, where he was physically attacked by a White Austrian male (in his 20s) but no one tried to stop him – *“A neighbor came out, cuz it wasn’t far away from my apartment and he just stood there and said something to the boy but he didn’t go there and stop him.”* Although Chih-hao Huang’s case is not related to the pandemic, it demonstrates the danger of not being able to get any help when faced with physical attacks and other serious hate crimes. The case of Dong-Hun Kim’s friend was also not a serious hate crime. However, considering the fact that racist/discriminatory behavior can develop into more serious forms of RD when being supported by others, it is a dangerous trend that bystanders choose not to help in such situations (National Research Council 2004).

However, all of the 5 interviewees reported that none of their friends/acquaintance changed their behavior towards them as a result of the pandemic. When asked a question regarding

the issue, Peishan Chen said, *“I live in an environment, or I usually meet people who are not like that.”* Dong-Hun Kim also answered, *“Of course not among my friends”* and Xiang Liu said, *“My friends are pretty nice.”* Their answers show their trust in their friends, whereby they consider their friends and the friend circle as a “safe place” from any type of RD – this is also shown in Peishan Chen’s statement; *“I don’t think that there would be any room for discrimination anyway.”* Furthermore, the interviewees also emphasized the role that growing up/living in a multicultural environment plays with regard to RD. Xiang Liu said, *“Growing up with like friends who are from different countries, I learned the skills of having different perspectives for sure.”* Peishan Chen also described his friend group as the following; *“I don’t think that they don’t care about it, they just don’t see the difference. They don’t see the difference in...ethnicity. I mean of course, they acknowledge that I am Taiwanese, or I acknowledge that my friend is blabla...but, it doesn’t make him less good or less bad than any other person. And the other thing maybe, I mean we are very mixed group of friends, so we have Asians, we have Germans, Austrian, Turkish friends...”* According to the interviewees, the environment in which one grows up/lives plays a critical role in shaping one’s attitude towards other cultures, enabling one to learn and respect the differences in various cultures and backgrounds - which is also reflected in their friend circle.

Only Peishan Chen explicitly stated that he did not experience any anti-Asian RD in the context of the pandemic. Although he was worried at the beginning that it might happen to him, it did not happen to him at all – he said, *“It was not a real concern of mine.”* He added that he was aware of news regarding the issue of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic, but most of the cases were in the U.S., which is why he was not so familiar with the issue.

Continuing from the discussion on the interviewees’ experiences of RD, the interviewees also talked about their reactions to their experiences of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic. It was shown that the interviewees showed different reactions or developed strategies to deal with it. Dong-Hun Kim said that he has developed strategies to avoid trouble with strangers as much as possible, e.g. by not getting close to them in public. However, in the case of the tram incident mentioned earlier, Dong-Hun Kim said that he started filming the racist individual and actively asked for help from others on the tram. He described the

situation as the following; *“I was so mad at the moment but I was alone, so I started filming the situation and asked others in the tram for help. [...] When I was done filming, the tram driver came and made the guy get off the tram.”* Here, the situation was put to an end when the tram driver was notified about the situation and made the individual leave the tram. However, if Dong-Hun Kim did not actively ask for help and chose to ignore the situation, it is highly likely that the situation continued, whereby one could not eliminate the possibility of more serious forms of RD such as physical attacks. After the incident, Dong-Hun Kim said that he wanted to publicize the incident, so he sent emails to the press – however, he was not able to receive a response from any of them.

With regard to the same incident, Dong-Hun Kim talked about varied reactions of his friends to his experience. He said that his Vietnamese (born and raised in Austria, thus identifies himself as Austrian) friend said, *“It is a completely normal thing to happen and it happens every now and then.”* – Dong-Hun Kim found it hard to understand that his friend, who is also of Asian descent, was normalizing anti-Asian RD. However, he said that he also had an Austrian friend who wanted to help him with writing emails to the press. With regard to such varied reactions of his friends, Dong-Hun Kim explained that he was *“shocked”* by the Vietnamese friend’s attitude of normalizing RD and that he realized the apathy of some people about anti-Asian RD or RD in general happening in society.

The tram incident seemed to have caused a change in Dong-Hun Kim’s attitude toward Austria. He said, *“To be honest I’d say...I got sick of Austria after the incident. However, it is a place where I study and will stay for a longer period, so I still tried to love Austria. A lot of mixed feelings.”* From this statement, one can see the development of a “love-hate relationship” between him and Austria. Despite his disappointment in Austria, he still shows his attachment to Austria as it is where his life is based on. However, a series of negative experiences encouraged him to temporarily move back to Korea at the end of 2020 – he described it as follows; *“Watching anti-Asian incidents around the world, I thought the danger of anti-Asian RD was increasing, like I thought I could actually be in danger. It was mainly cuz of corona, but also because I was on the site where the November terrorism in Vienna city center happened. I felt a threat to my life from the terror, and on top of that,*

there were not only corona but also anti-Asian racism. My family and I agreed that I was no longer safe in Vienna and that's why I came to Korea." Although it was due to complex reasons, he did not feel safe in Vienna anymore due to the pandemic and the consequences it entailed (especially anti-Asian RD) - which is why he described moving to Korea as an "evacuation". Dong-Hun Kim's case shows that traumatic and life-threatening experiences such as anti-Asian RD and terrorism encouraged him to seek for a solution that could protect him from potential danger – which was done in the sense of prevention.

Chih-hao Huang said that he always takes incidents of RD too seriously or personal – he experienced frequent incidents of anti-Asian RD growing up in Austria even before the pandemic, which is why he does not want to be in Austria for a long time once he finishes his studies. Regarding the incident with unfair treatment by the police mentioned earlier, he described his feelings as the following; *"I was...kinda angry. And...just like, sad, I have to say. I was like "Hey, I did nothing! I was going for a walk! I didn't really do anything wrong!" I was obeying the law. I got my right but I couldn't do anything. "Why? Just why always me?" or something like that. I was just like chilling, and I was sitting there and taking photos. And it just happened there. I was really shocked. She just tells me to go home because I am Asian and other ones are allowed to be here?"* He expressed his frustration by saying *"Why? Just why always me?"*, not being able to comprehend such an unfair treatment by the police. He also described that he was angry and shocked, since he believes that the police was being unfair based on his race (*"She just tells me to go home because I am Asian"*). When asked about his opinion on incidents of anti-Asian RD around the world, he answered, *"What do I think about that? Yeah...shit. (laughs) It's bad, but I don't know what to do. There are only black people and White people, actually. People don't really care about other races than those."* Here, by saying that he does not know what to do, he shows the feeling of helplessness. Besides, one can also see his frustration when he says that people do not really care about other races than Black and White – implying that racism against Asians is being neglected and perceived as trivial.

When asked about his experiences of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic, Xiang Liu said, *"I mean discrimination during pandemic is no different than discrimination before pandemic.*

There's like no difference, you know. I mean, discrimination is always there. And, maybe it's even more now because of the pandemic." With this statement, Xiang Liu expressed his opinion on anti-Asian RD as an unrelenting phenomenon that has always existed in society, which has only been reinforced by the pandemic. Although Xiang Liu did not experience anti-Asian RD during the pandemic, he explained that he usually chose to ignore and avoid a situation where it could be dangerous; he said that he did not want to "risk anything", adding that he would have confronted the person if they looked "harmless", which was usually not the case. He described his experience in the U.S. as the following; *"When I was walking past them they said something – it was something like, "go back to your country" or something. You know the classic, "go back to your country". I would have confronted them if they looked uh...harmless. But the people who said that to me were like, a black female in her 40s or 50s. So it was kinda sketchy u know, so I was like "uhh...maybe I shouldn't talk to her". I don't wanna say this, but...even in Boston, we casually just have gun shootings and stuff like that around my school. So I'm like, yea I don't wanna get shot or something because of what she said to me. So like, don't risk anything man."* From this statement, one can see his attempt of trying to avoid/prevent potential dangerous situation that could harm him. Such a tendency is also shown in his answer to the question regarding his expected reaction to friends' experiences of hate crimes ; *"I'd tell them just run away first, your safety is number 1, just forget about all the discrimination, just be safe first and next time maybe bring something that can help you during that situation."* This statement shows that he considers safety as the no. 1 priority, which explains his usual responses to incidents of RD he has experienced before.

Hiroto Takahashi also reported no experiences of anti-Asian RD that are directly related to the pandemic; however, with regard to his friends' experiences of verbal hostility, he said that the friends have become more cautious as well as their parents. He said, *"[...] their parents have become more cautious I guess. Like they always told them to like, not come home come late anymore. Or like..."if you're gonna come home late after certain hour, don't use the U-Bahn" and stuff like that. And before, it wasn't like that, so."* This case shows a clear change in behavior as a result of the experience of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic.

From this, one can see that verbal antagonism does influence one's behavior, although it is not a crime that could physically harm them – Hiroto Takahashi's friends experienced verbal hostility that caused them to be more cautious in public, which could be attributed to the hostile environment such verbal hostility has created (National Research Council 2004).

Although Peishan Chen has no experience of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic either, he strongly disapproves of it as shown in the following; *“I saw some videos online, and I think it's horrible. When I portray myself in that person, I mean I would feel really sad or even threatened by these situations. I would feel threatened, I disapprove of this kind of behavior. Even if COVID comes from Asia, doesn't mean that we are all carrying it with us. And just blaming random Asians for the pandemic, I don't think it's right.”* Here, one can see his strong disapproval of anti-Asian RD and it clearly shows that he is feeling empathy for its victims. He also criticizes the racialization of COVID-19 as well as blaming of Asians for the pandemic, saying that it is not “right”. However, when asked about his expected reaction to experiences of anti-Asian RD, he said, *“[...] but even if it had happened, I would've thought of it as a single case. [...] even if that would've happened I would think “ok, this is one case, but not everyone in Germany or in Austria hates me.”* By saying that he would think of the incident as a “single case”, he is showing his positive attitude to overcome the situation, implying his will of not wanting to let himself be affected by such negative incidents.

When asked about friends and family's reaction to their experiences of anti-Asian RD, most of the interviewees reported that their most frequent reaction was being “shocked” and “worried”, as well as reminding them to be more cautious and careful in public. Chih-hao Huang described his parents' reaction as follows; *“My parents were like, “yeah, there will be always stupid people. So don't take it personal it will bring you down. Don't focus on these things, because they are stupid people.”* His parents tried to ease and comfort his mind by telling him not to take it personal, as well as by referring to the racist individuals as “stupid people”, implying the abnormality and faulty of them. On the other hand, Chih-hao Huang mentioned that he stopped talking about such incidents with his friends (mostly White Austrians), as he realized that they do not pay much attention and care about it. He describes his friends' attitudes as follows; *“My friends, they were just like, “oh what the fuck”*,

but I think somehow they are...they are Austrian. They can't feel that like me. They don't have a comparison with that. They have been always White. [...] They are White, they have never faced or never experienced that. White privilege." He criticized his friends' apathy and lack of empathy towards his experiences of RD, saying that they cannot understand him because they never had to experience RD. He describes this as "*White privilege*", because he believes that his White Austrian friends would never have to worry about experiences of RD as he does.

Additional to the interviewees' experiences of RD and reactions to them, the interviewees also talked about changes in their social behavior, which were influenced by their experiences of RD during the pandemic;

Dong-Hun Kim said that he has become more introvert when it comes to human relationships; saying that he often gets mistaken for Chinese. Such a change was based on the fact that coronavirus first broke out in China, and that anti-Asian RD during the pandemic is hugely based on one's race rather than nationality (as explained in the earlier section). Therefore, he thought that he was prone to anti-Asian RD during the pandemic, which made him more passive and introvert when connecting with others and socializing. In addition, he explained that he developed strategies to avoid/prevent trouble in public, e.g. not sitting too close to others in public transportation. However, he said that he is still willing to make new friends if possible; though in case of hostility toward his attempt to make friends, he will immediately give up and cut them off. He described as follows; "*If I can be friends with someone and we want to get to know each other better, then I would just forget about corona and all that for a second. But, if the person shows hostility towards me, I would just think "Ok, you are the same as everyone else" and then I would just not try anymore and simply cut them off.*" By this, one can see that he is not completely eliminating the possibility of making new friends and socializing. However, by his expression that he would "*cut off*" the person who is hostile towards him, one can see that he is still aware of the possibility of another experience of RD, as well as his strategy to protect himself from RD and potential danger they entail. This is a good example of how experiences of RD influenced his attitude concerning human relationships/social behavior during the pandemic.

Xiang Liu reported no changes in his social behavior during the pandemic, saying that he had no chances of social life in the first place due to the lockdown. However, when he was asked about expected changes in social behavior if he did experience anti-Asian RD during the pandemic, he described as follows; *“I would start like, be really cautious when I go outside. Maybe before, I would like, watch a movie late at night and go to a bar or club or something, but after that I’d be like, “maybe I shouldn’t do that. I should just work, and then hang out during the day, come back home before the night time” or something like that. I mean, I’m gonna change my behavior for sure. I mean, I would still make friends with new people for sure, but when going out, I would just be more cautious.”* It can be seen by this statement that experiences of RD would make him become more conscious of safety in public, causing him to adjust his lifestyle according to it (e.g. not staying outside until late) in an attempt to stay safe and protect himself. In addition, he specifically mentions that he will change his behavior *“for sure”*, which clearly shows that anti-Asian RD is an issue that plays a role in his decision regarding social behavior. However, just like Dong-Hun Kim, he also shows his willingness to continue making new friends, regardless of negative experiences of RD.

On the other hand, Chih-hao Huang explicitly stated that he *“distanced”* himself from other people as a result of experiences of anti-Asian RD. He said, *“Somehow, if I think back, I guess I got really...I distanced myself from other people, because of some incidents which I take seriously or personal. Somehow I distanced myself and I want to protect myself. You know, not intentionally but, like the reaction of my mind.”* Here, the same purpose of *“wanting to protect oneself”* was shown as by the previous interviewees too – which once again proves that it is one of the main purposes of change in social behavior after experiencing RD. Chih-hao Huang also mentioned that his *“distancing from others”* was not intentionally done, but rather it was an automatic reaction. This shows that experiences of RD also affect one’s cognition, resulting in one’s unconscious/automatic behavior/reaction to certain situations. However, when asked about his willingness to socialize, he answered, *“I think like...umm, not that much maybe. But I will try, I guess.”* Although not showing as much willingness and motivation for socializing as the previous interviewees, he said he would still *“try”* – this shows that he is also not entirely ruling out the possibility of socializing and building new

relationships with others despite his negative experiences of RD.

Although Hiroto Takahashi did not experience any anti-Asian RD directly related to the pandemic, he mentioned that he would try to “protect” himself and become more cautious if he did experience RD – which seemed to be a common tendency among the previous interviewees too. He explained as follows; *“I mean obviously I think I would be less inclined to...go to public spaces, especially like at certain hours, you know. [...] if it were to happen to me, I think it would definitely make me more cautious and like, maybe carry around protection.”* Again, being reluctant of going to public spaces (especially at certain hours) and becoming more cautious were mentioned here, which shows that the interviewees perceive public spaces as a place where there is a high likelihood of incidents of anti-Asian RD, as well as their association of certain hours of the day with higher chances of such incidents. In addition, Hiroto Takahashi described expected changes in his socializing as the following; *“Umm...I don’t know. I mean, maybe I would find myself not hanging out with people that I already know, I might be less inclined to make like...new friend as well. Because, you never know, you start losing trust in people I guess, when those kind of bad things happen to you. Maybe I will hang out more, or talk to more with like...Asian people, I don’t know.”* Here, he implies the possibility of discontinuation of his pre-existing social relationships, as well as his reluctance of building new relationships. He explains that negative experiences such as anti-Asian RD makes one lose trust in people, which shows that trust is an important factor that shapes one’s social decisions regarding human relationships. In addition, he added that he would hang out more with Asian people – which is most likely to protect himself from further experiences of anti-Asian RD, once again proving that protecting oneself is one of the main reasons for changes in social behavior as a result of experiences of RD. Hiroto Takahashi also described his experience when he was in the U.S., shortly after the pandemic started – *“I have a lot of Asian friends in NY, so at that time I feel like a lot of my friends and I, we were trying to avoid those kinda areas, and if we were gonna go out, we-stick-together-type of thing.”* This statement shows how he and his friends developed a strategy to stay safe and protect one another in public spaces or in social settings such as when going out – they *“sticked together”* in a group, in an attempt to reduce the risk of serious incidents of

anti-Asian RD.

Since Peishan Chen did not experience any anti-Asian RD during the pandemic, he also did not have any changes in social behavior regarding that. However, as mentioned earlier, he answered that he would think of it as a single case even if he did experience RD, which implies that it would not affect him and his social behavior much, either. In addition, it was mentioned earlier that he described his environment as surrounded by people who are “*not like that*” – which implies his anticipation of a very low possibility of experiences of RD in his environment.

To summarize the second key category “**Experience of Racism/Discrimination**”, it could be said that the most common form of anti-Asian RD was the verbal form of RD - whether intentional or “unintentional”. It was shown that the racialization of COVID-19 was frequently demonstrated by such verbal RD, and it was reported to have been shown by the police, too (Chih-hao Huang’s case). Concerning racialization, it was found out that nationality does not play a role; rather simply the race (appearance) of an individual did, which is why the interviewees and their friends (of which all of them are of Asian descent) of different nationalities were affected by the racialization of COVID-19. In addition, the interviewees also reported frequent occurrences of “foreigner-against-foreigner” RD, which showed that being a member of an outgroup of society does not always mean they can only be the victims of RD. It was demonstrated by the interviewees’ experiences that outgroups can be racist/discriminatory against other outgroups too. Some of the interviewees also mentioned the existence of bystanders not willing to help in situations of RD; which seems to be problematic, as it could really put the victims of RD in danger. Furthermore, it was shown that friends were seen as a “safe place” from any kind of RD, whereby the interviewees emphasized the importance of environment in which one grows up/lives.

It was shown that the interviewees’ reactions to racism mainly consisted of anger/frustration, fear, and disappointment, which caused them to become more cautious, careful, and also try to seek help/find a solution to avoid or overcome the situation. Strong disapproval of anti-Asian RD was also shown by the interviewees, which is self-explanatory.

It was shown that family usually played a role in comforting the interviewees, as well as giving them advice. Friends' reactions seemed to vary - some friends tried to normalize anti-Asian RD and showed rather apathy/lack of empathy, while the others wanted to offer help.

Changes in social behavior as a result of experiences of RD was also one of the main aspects, whereby it was shown that protecting oneself and strategies to do so were the main causes of changes in the interviewees' social behavior. The topic of protection and being more cautious were mentioned by 4 interviewees, showing the significance of the role they play in one's decision for social behavior. Some interviewees mentioned that experiences of RD made them more introvert and distanced from others - however, they were still willing to make new friends and socialize (despite negative experiences of RD), although the extent varied. It was mentioned that distancing oneself from others was rather an unintentional/automatic reaction, which shows that experiences of RD does affect one's cognition. Furthermore, it was shown that the interviewees developed their own strategies to protect themselves, especially in public spaces and social settings – which once again emphasizes the fact that protecting oneself and staying safe are one of the main goals of their adjustments/changes in social behavior.

4.3.3. Factors that Influence Racism/Discrimination & Future of East Asians

With regard to the third key category, a number of different factors that influence anti-Asian RD were discussed. These factors were discussed with relation to limitations/barriers East Asians are facing in Austrian society, the interviewees' perception of Austria/Austrians, as well as their outlook on the future of East Asians with relation to their representation/recognition in the Western world.

The interviewees pointed out that the ways Asians are depicted in various media, as well as different misconceptions & misunderstandings about Asians are two of the main factors that contribute to anti-Asian RD. When asked about his impression of the ways East Asians are

being depicted in various media in the Western world, Dong-Hun Kim said that there are clearly certain ways in which Asians are usually depicted. He described, *“quiet, almost non-existent, and if the person is Chinese, then usually very loud...but you know, in the stereotypical depiction, Asians are usually quiet and just get their job done silently, while not having much presence in general.”* With this statement, he is saying that Asians tend to not stand out much in the Western media. He argued that there are rather negative depictions than positive ones, however doubting the possibility of changes in such problematic depictions of Asians – *“I do think that it is problematic...but I don’t care much about it because it is just the way they think. And I can’t do anything about it.”* Here, it is shown that he is aware of such problematic Western depictions of Asians. However, he shows rather an indifferent attitude towards the problem, as he thinks there is nothing he can do against it. By this, he is implying the feeling of helplessness with such Western depictions of Asians, whereby he is aware of the problem, yet not being able to confront it.

With regard to the question about the way the Western media depicts Asians, Xiang Liu argued as the following; *“You know, the Western media for sure like, the pandemic should be just like a global virus and that’s it. But the Western media has made it into some kind of like, politics attacks on the Eastern countries, especially China. So yeah, it’s just politics you know.”* Right before this statement, he had said that discrimination has always existed in society, but the pandemic has only reinforced it. Therefore, he is blaming the Western media for making the pandemic a political issue, which in turn reinforced anti-Asian sentiment around the world. When asked about his impression of the ways Asians are portrayed in various media, he said, *“Asians is like a minority for sure in the Western media. And Asians in general are not like the protagonist, you know what I’m saying.”* Xiang Liu describes Asians in the Western media as a *“minority”*, who are usually not the protagonist. This statement is in congruence with Dong-Hun Kim’s statement from earlier, where he said that Asians in general do not stand out so much in the Western media. However, when asked whether he thinks such depictions are problematic, he answered, *“I know that it’s like a way they always do in the media. So...I’m fine. They can just do the same they do to Indians, Africans... it’s not just for East Asians. [...] I think that like, uhh...negative imagery on Asians is definitely*

portrayed by the Westerns. Because I think they see us as like a child or something, even like Russians, it's like another selection of people who they look down to as well. You know in the movies, all the bad guys are Russians. [...] So I feel like in Western media, any race or ethnicity could be portrayed in some kinda way in order to make it more funny or attractive for their consumers." In this statement, he says that he is "fine" with such Western depictions of Asians, as he thinks it is not just Asians the Western media does it to. Although he does think that Asians are portrayed in a negative way by the Western media, he thinks that there are also other "selections of people who they look down to", e.g. Indians, Russians, etc. Therefore, Xiang Liu implies that he is not bothered by Western depictions of Asians, saying that they are just to amuse the consumers of the media. While Dong-Hun Kim showed rather a feeling of helplessness, Xiang Liu seems to accept/understand the way it is, by saying that "it is a way they always do in the media". However, when it comes to the pandemic, Xiang Liu showed rather a strong negative attitude towards the Western media, attributing the rise of anti-Asian sentiment to it.

Chih-hao Huang described stereotypical Western depictions of Asians as the following; *"Asian are like Kung Fu guy, short guy, small penis...yeah, I heard the jokes so often. And...they can't be the main character in a foreign movie."* He mentions Asians not being the "protagonist", which was also told by Xiang Liu. He listed few stereotypical images of Asians such as Kung Fu, short, small penis; and then he also described as follows; *"we are always portrayed like, hard-working, good guy, listening to people, following/obeying...I think it could somehow put us Asians into a sub-category or...like we are seen as lower-level."* Here, he says that Asians are portrayed as a sub-category and lower-level, which goes along with the statements by the previous 2 interviewees; Xiang Liu said that Asians are being looked down upon (*"They see us as like a child or something"*) in the Western media as well as depicted as a minority, and Dong-Hun Kim said that Asians do not have much presence. With regard to the topic of Asians being "looked down upon", Chih-hao Huang described as follows; *"But I think it's a culture thing. You know, for White people. [...] I think many White people, they feel a little bit proud of themselves, or they think they're something better. [...] I feel like he wouldn't say it in that way or he wouldn't tell me this thing in this way, if I was*

White. [...] If they realize you're Asian or foreigner, they are higher than you, they want to lecture, they are in the position to lecture you/teach you/ and tell you how to behave in my country." He believes that it is a cultural thing for "White people" to look down upon Asians, as he had frequent experiences of them trying to lecture him on his behavior. Thereby he is implying that such tendencies of Western people (feeling superior to Asians) are also reflected in the ways the Western media depicts Asians. In addition, he pointed out ignorance & misconceptions about Asians and the Asian culture as the biggest reasons for anti-Asian RD, saying that the media's way of portraying Asians hugely influences Western people's opinion and perception of Asians, thus resulting in misconceptions and misunderstandings of Asians.

Hiroto Takahashi stated that Asians are depicted as "outsiders" by the Western media, as well as that Asians are often portrayed in a stereotypical way – which was also argued by other interviewees too. He took an advertisement of an Austrian food delivery service as an example, saying that whenever Asians are seen in the Western media, they are "so used in the stereotypical way" – e.g. an image of an Asian man eating sushi with chopsticks, even though nowadays sushi is also widely consumed in the Western world. In addition, he said, "[...] if it's like an American production using an Asian actor, then...they tend to be using more Asian ways like, Kung Fu or stuff like that, you know." – which is another example of how Asians are portrayed in a stereotypical way in the Western media. By using the example of the Austrian advertisement and American production, he tries to criticize the Western media's stereotypical ways of "using" Asians and shows his mild discomfort regarding it when he said that they could have also used an image of a Western person eating sushi ("So I'm like, you could've used like a... Austrian person") regarding the advertisement.

Peishan Chen argued that fake news and rumors are the main drivers of misconceptions and misunderstandings of Asians, which he described as follows; "I think nowadays, could be said maybe it's fake news, there's a lot of things going on, and a lot of stories not fact-checked, just not based on facts, but people believe them and facts spread much slower than rumors so..." And then he added that rumors and fake news are often combined with the fear of "something they (Western people) don't know", which is highly likely to lead to anti-

Asian RD. He described this as follows; *“I think the biggest reason is that people may fear something they don’t know. The exposure of them to Asian or to foreigners is not big enough for them to understand that we are no threat, I would say. I think it’s either misunderstanding or they have like some misconception about Asians and they don’t know Asians, and then when they see an Asian, then it just comes up and they have no real verification of whether their conception/misconception of an Asian is true or not. They just let it out.”* By this, he explains that wrong images of Asians spread by the media together with fear of something they (Western people) are not familiar with often lead to anti-Asian RD – which emphasizes the role of the media with relation to anti-Asian RD, or any RD in general.

With relation to the interviewees’ arguments regarding stereotypical/problematic Western depictions of Asians, as well as misconceptions & misunderstandings spread by the media, the interviewees further discussed the media as one of the main factors that influence RD in the country, along with the government (politicians).

Xiang Liu stated as follows; *“I feel like the people are...uhh...like their opinions are definitely influenced by the media. And they fall into a trap, they couldn’t identify the problem by themselves so they just listen to the media.”* He describes the media as a *“trap”*, saying that some people tend to believe everything that is presented by the media during the pandemic, which is very likely to influence their behaviors related to anti-Asian RD. He also expressed his personal opinion on the government, saying that he believes anti-Asian RD has been fueled by some kind of propaganda by the governments in the Western world – *“I mean...right now, uhh...Asians are like the number 1 target, because I think umm...I think the only reason it happened to Western countries is because – it’s just my opinion ok? – I feel like they want to re-focus what’s going on in the country onto like, something else. So like, they’re not doing so well and people know that. And they’re like, “oh shit we can’t let people know this too much” so they transfer the focus onto Asians.”* In this statement, he argues that some governments in the Western world are not able to deal with the pandemic so well, which is why they are trying to transfer people’s attention onto something else to blame – which is Asians. Therefore, he believes that it is also the governments that encouraged anti-

Asian RD in the Western world. The topic of “ignorance about Asia/Asians” appears here again, as he said, *“I mean, most Western people, I say like 80% to even 90% of people have never been to Asia by themselves. So, all the thoughts/ideas/knowledge about Asians are from the media. And media is what, media is like a tool used by the government. So, what I’m trying to say is, people just have like a wrong, messed up imagery about Asians that is set up and planned by the media, by the government.”* Here, he argues that most Western people are not familiar with Asia, thus largely depending on the media’s depictions of Asia/Asians to get an image of them. In addition, Xiang Liu describes the media as a tool used by the government, in order to shape people’s opinions and thoughts in a certain way – he said, *“Cuz right now, the easiest way to pass out or to control people’s minds or desire is from the media.”* By this, one can see that Xiang Liu believes the relationship between the media and the government is what potentially fuels anti-Asian RD in the Western world during the pandemic. Xiang Liu also talked about biased misinformation by the media, especially the news – *“[...] the U.S. media recently [...] like...they posted a graph about the top 10 countries who dealt successfully with the coronavirus. And America is on the top 1. It’s funny because the American people replied to it like, “we died 200 thousand people already, and you still rank yourself number 1?””* With regard to this example, he also added that the media is *“always biased”*, criticizing the media for spreading false and biased information.

Although Xiang Liu thinks of the government as one of the main factors that fuels anti-Asian RD in the Western world, he also thinks that it could also be the one that initiates changes/improvements – *“Uhh...I think the government. Yeah, so...I mean the people who make the rules, or people who decide, all of this is the government, right? And if they want to make a change, I would say start off with social media, or just media in general. And then slowly it will affect people’s opinion and minds. [...] I’d say the government is not the only way to do it, but it’s the most efficient and easiest way to do it.”* As mentioned earlier, he thinks that the government can easily shape people’s opinions and thoughts – which is also the reason why he thinks the government could be the one that could bring about positive changes, too. He considers it to be the *“most efficient and easiest way to do it”*, which is why he emphasizes the role of the government during the pandemic.

Chih-hao Huang argued that the media influences people's subconscious & perception. Especially with regard to his opinion on Western depictions of Asians discussed earlier, he thinks that the media shapes the way people in the Western world perceive and think about Asians. In the earlier section, he mentioned that the Western media tends to put Asians as a sub-category and depict them as lower-level/inferior. He expressed concerns about such problematic depictions of Asians being widespread in the Western world via the media, implying that the media is responsible for the surge of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic. He said, *"I think media's role is quite important, how media report about us but, the media also keep reporting some negative things because they want to attract readers."* He says that the media *"keeps reporting negative things (about Asians) to attract readers"*, which could be discussed in relation to Xiang Liu's statement regarding biased media and the spread of misinformation through it, since both cases contribute to the rise in anti-Asian sentiment. Chih-hao Huang added that politicians are also responsible for making changes – *"And I definitely think that politicians are also responsible, but they've never done anything. Maybe...any politicians stand out for any racist abuse or against Asians and say "ok, that's not right" but when it happens, no one says anything. It needs to be discussed more openly."* He is saying that the issue of anti-Asian RD is not being discussed openly enough, and by saying that politicians have *"never done anything"* against anti-Asian RD, he is criticizing the lack of discussion and attention by politicians regarding anti-Asian RD. His argument goes along with Xiang Liu's argument, since both arguments put emphasis on the significance of the role played by the government (politicians).

Additional to the influence of the media and the government, the interviewees also discussed the importance of the role environment, education, and language play in the topic of RD – which was demonstrated by the interviewees' personal experiences.

Xiang Liu talked about his international school years, whereby he described as follows; *"Growing up with like friends who are from different countries, I learned the skills of having different perspectives for sure."* With this, he suggests the importance of being exposed to a multicultural environment in order to have a better understanding of different cultures and countries. By saying that he *"learned the skills"*, he is implying that being able to do so

(understanding of other cultures) is rather something that one has to teach oneself and acquire in the life course – which emphasizes the importance of the environment that enables such “learning”. The important role of environment was also mentioned by Peishan Chen, when he said that he lives in an environment where RD is not tolerated, as well as cultural/racial diversity is appreciated and respected. He also talked about Vienna being a metropolitan and a multicultural city, which is why he assumes that there might be less RD compared to other parts of Austria that are sub-urban and smaller. This argument could be supported with Chih-hao Huang’s case – it was explained that he has experienced multiple (and more serious) incidents of anti-Asian RD in Tirol (which he described as “*Texas of Austria*”), whereby in Vienna it was not as frequent or serious.

With regard to his statement about ignorance and misconceptions of Asians mentioned earlier, Chih-hao Huang pointed out the importance of education - especially changes in the way of thinking through education as a potential solution to RD that could facilitate equal chances of participation in society for everyone, regardless of one’s background and race. The importance of education was also mentioned by Hiroto Takahashi, when he argued that negative/problematic Western depictions of Asians are to be attributed to “*uneducatedness*”. Peishan Chen said that education combined with an open mind is very important for the prevention of RD, no matter it be at school or at home. He said, “*I think also during education in school, but also education at home, that parents themselves have to be open to different cultures and encourage their kids to interact with other people, other than their own community. Not meaning that they should down-play their own community, but it should be a good mix. I think the environment is very important for you as an individual to experience that something foreign doesn’t mean it’s something bad. I’m a foreigner myself, and it helped me a lot to have a very diverse group of friends, showing me that actually we are all not that different, and we have all similarities and we can get along if we want to.*” By this statement, he is saying that parents should educate their children to be more open-minded for diverse cultures, as well as to interact with other cultures/communities to be able to achieve a harmonious society. This statement demonstrates the importance of both education and environment as the key to solving problems of RD, which shows the

interconnectedness of both factors as well. In addition, by saying *“we can get along if we want to”*, he is showing an optimistic outlook on the improvement regarding RD.

Another important factor mentioned by the interviewees was language, for which Hiroto Takahashi took his experience in international school as an example; *“I think in general, because like, I speak English it (RD) didn’t happen to me too much. But, I would notice that when a new Japanese kid who didn’t speak English would come or stuff like that, they would sometimes be the target of racist remarks and stuff.”* Here, he explains that he witnessed incidents of RD even in an international school, which is characterized by its cultural diversity. According to him, the reason behind such RD in his school was the lack of language ability, which is why he views language as one of the main factors that affect the likelihood of occurrences of RD. In addition, he said, *“I guess like...to participate in Austrian society, I guess it’s like a given that you speak German, for one.”* With this statement, he is saying that being able to speak the language is a prerequisite for one to participate in Austrian society, with which he once again puts emphasis on the role played by language. The topic of East Asians’ participation in Austrian society was further discussed by the interviewees, which will be discussed in the following.

The interviewees showed rather a pessimistic outlook on East Asians’ full participation in Austrian society, as they think there are certain barriers for East Asians to be fully acknowledged as part of Austrian society. When Dong-Hun Kim was asked whether he thinks East Asians are able to participate fully in Austrian society, he answered *“For sure not.”* He added as follows; *“Considering the fact that my Asian friend who was born and raised in Austria still gets discriminated, I don’t think it’s possible for us to fully participate in Austrian society.”* With this, he shows a strong pessimistic view of the participation of Asians in Austrian society. He also took an example of the Korean student association in Vienna – *“I was expecting the association to interact with other communities of Austria and build a network, but it was more about hanging out with other fellow Asians. So just Asians and they don’t interact with Austrians. I know that it is just a student association, but considering that even such a small group cannot manage to participate fully in Austrian society, I think there is for sure a barrier for Asians in general to fully participate.”* It is implied by his statement

that Asians tend to only connect/build a network within the Asian community, and that there is not enough interaction between the Asian and the Austrian community. Therefore, it could be said that he views Asians as outsiders of Austrian society, as they cannot fully integrate themselves in it. He also added that he would not be able to imagine an Asian politician in Austria, which he described as follows; *“Also when I think about politics, I think it’s impossible that there would be an East Asian politician in Austria. Austria is a White society anyway from the beginning, and skin color still plays a big role in Austria. I think in Austrian society, the race is still an important factor.”* He describes Austria as a predominantly *“White society”*, and that one’s skin color and race are still important when it comes to participation in Austrian society (especially in politics).

Xiang Liu also seemed to have a pessimistic view of Asians being able to fully participate in Austrian society, especially in politics. He explained as follows; *“So let’s just say you’re an East Asian person born in Austria, and you want to participate in the politics in Austria. I think for sure it’s gonna be hard for you. Harder for you compared to some local Austrian person. Because you know, straightforward you have an East Asian looking face. That’s gonna be different. Even though you’re like 100% born in Austria, you speak Austrian, [...] But they don’t care. You just look Asian. And when you start looking a different race than its own race, people are gonna right away starting to have some opinions about you. [...] And if there’s some White Austrian dude, [...] people are not gonna be more biased. People are actually gonna focus on what he/she’s doing, rather than focusing on how the person looks and start judging on the looks.”* Here, the topic of appearance is mentioned once again - he thinks that it would be harder for Asians to participate in Austrian politics, since they have an *“East Asian looking face”*. This concurs with the argument by Dong-Hun Kim, whereby he said one’s skin color and race still play a huge role in Austrian politics. In addition, Xiang Liu also emphasizes that Austria is a predominantly White society, therefore making it more difficult for Asians to fully be part of it, and that being of a different race (outgroup) than the majority of society will always be followed by certain opinions (usually biased) and judgements by members of the ingroup - therefore building a barrier for Asians to be able to fully participate in Austrian society. However, when asked whether any changes are

necessary, he answered, *“Mmm...I mean, the problem is like an ongoing issue. And it’s not like a current, or something new. It’s been out there for like ages, like hundreds of years. It’s hard to make any changes. Because, it’s so deeply-rooted in everyone’s mind.”* By this, one can see that he is rather skeptical about the possibility of changes. He says that the problem of unequal participation of a minority group has always been there in society, and that it is a *“deeply-rooted”* problem; which shows his anticipation of very low probability of changes regarding the issue.

Chih-hao Huang also showed a skeptical outlook on the full participation of Asians in Austrian society. He said as follows; *“No. Maybe in 100 years, 200 years. Because we were never part of this culture. Not really like Asian people in U.S., [...] there were Asian people in the beginning of the USA. And they are still not accepted, not really. Not really fully accepted, so Austria it will take really long time.”* By taking the U.S. as an example, he is implying that still a long time would be needed for Asians to be fully part of Austrian society. By saying *“Maybe in 100 years, 200 years”*, he does not only show his skeptical outlook on the full participation of Asians, but also his very low expectations of its occurrence in the near future. Hiroto Takahashi said that some industries in Austria are *“typically deemed White”*, e.g. news and the entertainment scene. He thinks that it is highly unlikely that there would be an Asian news anchor at the Austrian broadcasting center, as well as it would be difficult for Asians to get the main role in the Austrian entertainment scene. Here, he once again mentions how Asians are *“used”* in a stereotypical way – *“I actually...it’s not Austrian but, on Netflix I watched this German TV show called “Biohackers”. In that show, there’s like one Asian character and like, they make her like, “the nerd”. (laughs) So, I feel like Asians even in German media they are still given like, that...like, nerd-type, you know, stereotype TV role.”* By this example, he is implying a limited variety of roles available for Asians in the entertainment scene, which is also another proof that chances of Asians’ full participation in different parts of society is quite limited. He also argued that it does not matter if an Asian was born and raised in Austria, because they will still face some difficulties when trying to be fully acknowledged as a part of Austrian society – which was also mentioned by other interviewees too. Furthermore, regarding Asians’ participation in politics he said as follows;

“Politics I feel might also be difficult. I don’t think... [...] I don’t think it’ll be easy for them to become like president, or prime minister here. Like I think those kinda positions are still deemed to be reserved for White people.” Here, he shows the same opinion as other interviewees, as he also thinks that it would be difficult for Asians to be a politician in Austria. By using the expression *“deemed to be reserved for White people”*, he is implying the deeply-rooted barrier that limits the full participation of Asians in Austrian society, as described by other interviewees too.

Peishan Chen stated that the Asian population in Austria is not big, which is why Asians also do not stand out much in Austrian society. He describes Asians in Austria as very “subtle”, and that there is not enough exposure of Asians (e.g. in the media) compared to the Arab/Turkish/Serbian population for example. With regard to participation in politics, he said, *“not in the near future”* – which is also rather skeptical and pessimistic as other interviewees. He stated, *“Austria is just very conservative. So I can’t see it in the near future. [...] They are mostly of Austrian origin, so I don’t see it in the near future.”* Here, he takes Austria’s conservatism as the main barrier for Asians’ full participation in society, and by saying that he does not see it happening in the near future twice, one can see that he considers it to be highly unlikely to happen due to the difficulty of breaking the deeply-rooted barrier for Asians.

Although all the interviewees showed a pessimistic outlook on East Asians’ full participation in Austrian society, when asked about their perception of Austria/Austrians concerning the topic of RD, the interviewees expressed varied opinions;

Hiroto Takahashi described as follows; *“I think Austria is actually pretty good, I think in that sense. I mean, you’ll never fully get rid of racist people obviously, but I think just looking at...umm...even like the Austrian national football team and seeing how many like, foreign people there, and...just like the culture here like, there’s like a big K-pop culture here, people who like anime and I don’t know, I feel like Austria is like actually one of the few European countries that’s like doing well, maybe.”* Here, he describes Austria as *“doing well”*, since he thinks that Austria is successfully accepting different foreign cultures compared to other

European countries. He also made a comparison between Austria and East European countries, whereby he took an example of football to explain that RD tend to happen much more frequently & openly in East European countries – *“I feel like whenever I hear racist or controversial news from Europe, it tends to come from East European countries more, especially when it comes to football. Yeah...like whenever there’s like a black football player playing and they are not doing well, they make monkey noises and I feel that tends to happen more in East European countries. But, Austria, I feel like people are more educated in that sense in Austria.”* By saying that Austrians are *“more educated in that sense”*, he is implying that Austrians tend to be more aware of the issue of RD, thus tend to be more careful regarding the issue. He also said, *“I feel sometimes racist people in Austria they come more from like the older generations sometimes, where they had less immigrants at that time.”* With this statement, he is saying that the older generations of Austria tend to be more racist/discriminatory than the younger ones, whereby one can observe the importance & impact of environment in RD as discussed earlier. A similar opinion on Austrians was also expressed by Chih-hao Huang, when he said, *“I think Austria, they just talk and they won’t get physical. People are still kinda somehow educated or got “Manieren (manners)”. In Austria they still got a little manners, they don’t punch you or push you. So they can be racist but they still have manners and they don’t physically attack you. They want to make jokes all the time, but they don’t come aggressive.”* Here, Chih-hao Huang is also describing Austrians as relatively more *“educated”* when it comes to RD compared to other European countries. He is saying that even if an Austrian is being racist/discriminatory towards foreigners, they tend to not attack them aggressively/physically, but rather just verbally (mostly jokingly) since they still have basic *“manners”*.

As mentioned earlier, Peishan Chen described Austria as *“very conservative”*. When asked whether he thinks portrayals of East Asians in Austrian media changed in any way as a result of the pandemic, he said, *“No, Austria is very conservative. I mean, I’m not meaning that they discriminate against Asians, but there haven’t been a lot of Asian advertisements or anything in the media so...there is no change. In my opinion, there is not more, but also not less. There’s not just exposure of Asian people [...]”* By this statement, he is saying that there

is not enough exposure of Asians in Austria in the first place for there to be any changes in the way Asians are portrayed by the media in Austria. He attributes this to the conservatism in Austria, implying that it led to very little exposure of Asians in the media. This statement could be placed in relation to Peishan Chen's earlier statements regarding Asians' participation in Austrian society – according to him, Asians' full participation in Austrian society is not possible in the near future due to the lack of exposure of Asians in general, but such a lack of exposure also results in Austria's indifference (due to their conservatism) towards Asians too.

However, regarding the representation and recognition of Asians in various media, a positive outlook on the future was observed by the interviewees; Although still in process, Hiroto Takahashi said that there have been much more representations of Asians in the media, which he described, *"we are heading in a direction of normalizing Asian main roles and movies and stuff like that."* He also added, *"Even with Marvel, I know they have like an Asian super hero or whatever, coming. And music, you know there's like BTS and stuff like that. Also with movies like...what was that movie again? From Korea, that won academy. (Parasite?) Yea, parasite. So I think Asian stuff is getting more recognition."* He also explained that portrayals of Asians from earlier usually only consisted of stereotypical images such as Kung Fu, whereas nowadays he described, *"I feel like recently it's going in the good direction in general."* He said that the Asian culture is getting more global recognition in the media especially (which is not always portrayed in a stereotypical way), which he considers to be positive as it could contribute to *"normalizing"* the Asian culture that could also lead to a better understanding of Asia/Asians.

Peishan Chen also had a similar opinion – *"[...] in general, Asians are more and more on TV, in movies, there's a new Marvel movie coming out with a...he's actually Korean, I don't know if you know...he's playing a super hero, he's Korean but he plays like a Chinese character so his name is Shang. And there was "Crazy Rich Asians", and I think in every major series now, there's at least one Asian. So, whatever I watch, there's at least one Asian. So I think the exposure for Asians in TV or like in entertainment is gradually increasing. But, it's more in the U.S. Not so much in Europe."* He is also saying that the exposure of Asians is *"gradually*

increasing” in various media, although more in the U.S. rather than in Europe. He added as follows; *“I think when we are portrayed in American movies or series, we are very westernized, so sometimes you see that there’s no real Asian characteristics. [...] Just because they say “Umma (“mom” in Korean)” or talk some Chinese doesn’t make it a whole Asian movie, or just because everyone is Asian doesn’t mean it’s an Asian movie. So, I think sometimes the culture comes a little bit short, but I would still support having more exposure of Asian people just to let them see that we are also part of this society and even if it’s westernized, there’s still some...nuance of an Asian culture. And then I hope that they can understand us better that they can see why we do things the way we do.”* By this statement, Peishan Chen is saying that the way Asians and their culture are portrayed in the Western media may not always be “authentic” or “real” – however, he still supports such a rise in the exposure of Asians and the Asian culture, since he believes it could help non-Asians to gain a better understanding of Asians and their culture, as well as to acknowledge them as also part of their society.

From the third key category **“Factors that Influence Racism/Discrimination & Future of East Asians”**, it was shown that the interviewees were aware of certain stereotypical ways in which Asians are usually depicted in the Western media – e.g. Asians as quiet, minority, no protagonist, outsider, inferior, not standing out much, etc. All the interviewees were aware that such Western depictions of Asians are problematic, although their reaction/attitude varied; discomfort, bothered, helplessness, but one of them also showed his understanding for the media. It was mentioned by some interviewees that ignorance, misconceptions, and misunderstandings of Asians and the Asian culture are one of the main factors that fuel anti-Asian RD (especially during the pandemic), and the media was pointed out as the “distributor/spreader” of those. In addition, all of the interviewees agreed that the media has a huge influence on their consumers’ thoughts/opinions, whereby they also showed their concerns regarding misinformation/biased news published and spread by the media. It was also pointed out that people who are ignorant about or unfamiliar with Asia/Asians tend to be more prone to believing everything that is shown in the media, which is why negative/problematic Western depictions of Asia/Asians were perceived as a problem by the

interviewees. Regarding the significance of the government's role, it was said that the government can not only fuel anti-Asian RD in the country, but also it could help initiate changes/improvements regarding the problem – which Xiang Liu described as “*the most efficient and easiest way*” to fight against anti-Asian RD. Furthermore, the need for more efforts and attention by politicians was called for, which once again shows the power/importance of the role played by the government.

The interviewees argued that being exposed to the environment where cultural diversity and difference are respected is important, since it facilitates one's “learning” of skills that enable a better understanding of different cultures. Some interviewees argued that negative/problematic Western depictions of Asians result from ignorance and the lack of education about cultural difference – which, in turn, could also encourage RD against other cultures. Peishan Chen suggested the interconnectedness of education and environment by saying that parents should build an environment where kids can be educated to become open-minded, which could be the key to a harmonious society. In addition, learning German was considered as a prerequisite for Asians when attempting to participate in Austrian society, and this seemed to be relevant for any other societies/communities regardless of which language it is (e.g. Hiroto Takahashi's international school experience). To summarize, it was shown that environment, education, and language have a close relationship with RD, which could not only explain the phenomenon of RD, but also could help find solutions for it.

All of the interviewees showed rather a pessimistic and skeptical view of East Asians' full participation in Austrian society. One of the main reasons was about the topic of appearance – some interviewees said that even if an individual of Asian descent was born and raised in Austria, speaks fluent German, and identifies oneself as Austrian, their appearance (as described by Xiang Liu, “*East Asian looking face*”) is going to be a huge obstacle for them to be fully acknowledged as a part of Austrian society. It was argued that this is because Austria is a predominantly White society, whereby one's skin color and race still play a huge role. The interviewees argued that looking different than the majority of society will always generate biased opinions and judgements, which they view as a handicap for Asians when it comes to their attempt for full participation in Austrian society. It was also mentioned by

interviewees that some fields of Austrian society are still “*reserved for White people*”, especially in politics. In addition, Hiroto Takahashi argued that there are only limited chances for Asians to be allowed to participate in fields that are “*reserved for White people*” – e.g. in the media, where it involves stereotypical depictions of Asians.

With regard to the perception of Austria/Austrians concerning the topic of RD, the interviewees showed varied opinions. Both Hiroto Takahashi and Chih-hao Huang found Austrians to be more “*educated*” in terms of RD compared to people of other European countries (e.g. they usually do not get aggressive or physically attack). It was also argued by Hiroto Takahashi that Austria seems to be successfully accepting different foreign cultures (including the Asian culture) - while, on the other hand, Peishan Chen found Austria to be very conservative, which is why he thinks that there is a lack of exposure of Asians in Austria.

Although the interviewees were rather pessimistic about East Asians’ full participation in Austrian society, they still showed a positive outlook on the way representation & recognition of Asia/Asians in various media are increasing. They are expecting that it could eventually help non-Asians to gain a better understanding of Asians and their culture, of which the importance was already discussed with regard to the topic of misconceptions/misunderstandings, whereby it was suggested by the interviewees that anti-Asian RD often result from misconceptions/misunderstandings of Asia/Asians. Therefore, one could say that the increase in representation & recognition of Asia/Asians is of greater significance especially with relation to the topic of anti-Asian RD.

4.3.4. Call for More Attention & Effort

With regard to the fourth key category, the interviewees expressed their wish for more attention on the issue of anti-Asian RD from Austrians, and more effort from Asians to be better integrated into Austrian society and acknowledged as part of it.

While Dong-Hun Kim expressed his concerns about rising anti-Asian sentiment during the COVID-19 pandemic, at the same time, he argued that it is not necessary for Austrians to

feel responsible for the situation – *“I mean, it would be nice if people paid more attention to the issue and try to help with the situation. But, somehow I also think that Austrians don’t necessarily need to do anything to improve the situation, because Austria is not my home country. It’s kinda like...”selber Schuld (one’s own fault)”*, you know. But of course it would be nice if they wanted to pay more attention to the problem, just because I love Austria.” Here, he is saying that he would appreciate it if Austrians were willing to help with the problem of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic. But at the same time, he thinks that it is not their responsibility to do so, since he is the foreigner in Austria who came to a foreign country. By saying that it is his “own fault”, he is showing rather a “giving in” attitude – meaning that he is the foreigner in Austria, therefore not really being able to complain about the RD he experiences in Austria.

Although Dong-Hun Kim is not expecting Austrians to actively make changes and help Asians to be fully integrated into Austrian society, it was shown that he is still wishing for more attention to the topic of anti-Asian RD from Austrians (*“of course it would be nice if they wanted to pay more attention to the problem”*). In addition, by emphasizing his status as a foreigner in Austria, he is implying that it is his own responsibility to try to integrate into Austrian society. With regard to this, Xiang Liu also expressed a similar opinion - He said as follows; *“I am the foreigner. So I should be responsible to blend in into their society for sure.”* By this statement, he is also saying that it is not Austrians’ responsibility to try to integrate Asians into their society. He says that he is *“the foreigner”*, emphasizing that he is the one responsible for integration while living in a foreign country. He also argued that he considers it “natural” if an individual experiences RD in a foreign country, which corresponds with Dong-Hun Kim’s attitude (*“selber Schuld”*).

Peishan Chen also showed a similar attitude as the previous 2 interviewees when he said; *“I think also a big part is that it’s a 2-way-street. So, we want others not to discriminate us, but we should also see the need to integrate ourselves into the society we live in. I cannot say “My parents came from Taiwan and now I live in this Taiwanese bubble and only speak Chinese”. I think if people then discriminate you, then it’s partly also your fault. You cannot live here for 10, 20, 30 years and not speak the language, or not even know like the...basic*

behavior here.” By pointing out explicitly that it is “partly also one’s own fault” if one experiences discrimination as a result of the lack of effort for integration, he is highlighting the need for one’s own effort to be integrated into a foreign society. He says that it is a “2-way-street”, implying that efforts should be made from both parties – which in this case, Asians and Austrians both. However, Peishan Chen said that for children, it is their parents’ responsibility to integrate them when having moved to a foreign country. He described as follows; “[...] but when you come here as a kid, then I think it’s your parents’ responsibility to see that you integrate yourself, that you do something to live in the society. You cannot just isolate yourself or isolate your child, because this is the life you chose. You came for a reason, and isolating this child would only isolate it from anything. From anything else, from jobs, friends, opportunities he/she could’ve had with this knowledge they could’ve gained. When you’re older, yea it’s your own responsibility. [...] I also think that people should be their own future’s master. And if you came here, then you should find ways to make the most out of it. [...] I mean, as I said it’s a 2-way-street; you will have to do something for others to accept you, but others also have to be willing to accept.” In this statement, he is implying that one’s efforts for integration is inevitable to not be isolated from society. He says that isolation as a result of the lack of integration will isolate them from being part of society in general, e.g. making friends, getting a job, and many other opportunities that are essential in life. Here, he mentions the expression of “2-way-street” again, with which he highlights the need for effort coming from both sides.

Regarding Asians’ participation in Austrian society, he said that Asians are already participating, but he thinks more exposure of Asians is needed - *“I think we are already participating in Austrian society, but we could do more. As I said, also for Asians, there’s like a lot of cases where they just stay with their people...I think we could be more public about what we do [...] I think this is lacking a bit, just showing...exposure of Asians. [...] I think we integrate good, but it’s more like, we live between each other, and not with each other. But like, next to each other. I mean there’s no big conflict I would say, in Austria between Asians and Austrian people, but more interaction would be nice too.”* He says that Asians tend to “just stay with their people”, which concurs with Dong-Hun Kim’s statement from earlier

about Korean student association in Vienna. Both Peishan Chen and Dong-Hun Kim talk about the lack of interaction between Asians and Austrians, which is why Peishan Chen thinks there should be more exposure of Asians that could familiarize Austrians with Asians and their culture, so that more interaction between them can be established. However, when asked whether he thinks there should be more active communication between the 2 parties, he answered as follows; *“No, no no. I would say Asians should be more active in saying “okay we are here, we would like to share our culture with you, would you like to participate?” I think it’s not on the Austrians to ... as I said like, we are all grown people, if we want to be seen more, we should not ask for the government “why don’t you never see us blablabla...”, but we should just take action and say “okay we want all this people to know that we are here.””* By this, Peishan Chen is once again emphasizing the need for Asians to actively make an effort to be seen/acknowledged as part of Austrian society. He says that it is *“not on the Austrians”*, by which he means it is not their responsibility to notice Asians and try to include them in Austrian society. Just like the previous interviewees, Peishan Chen also thinks changes are not necessary regarding Asians’ participation in Austria. However, he added as follows; *“But if there’s a need to change, then it should come from the Asians. If we want to be seen more, then we have to take action, or we can ask for help on how to do it, but I wouldn’t find it fair to say “ok Austrians are not accepting us, they are not integrating us” It’s our own job to do it.”* Here, he is highlighting the need for Asians to make an effort again, saying that it would not be fair to blame Austrians for *“not accepting/integrating”* Asians into Austrian society. By saying that it is *“our own job to do it”*, he once again emphasizes that it is not Austrians’ responsibility to integrate Asians, and that Asians should take action first if they wanted to participate and be integrated into Austrian society.

Throughout the study, it was mentioned by some interviewees that there is not enough discussion on anti-Asian RD as much as RD against Blacks, for instance. As a result, problems regarding the lack of attention to anti-Asian RD were discussed by the interviewees, as well as possible causes and solutions for the problems;

Regarding anti-Asian RD in Austria, it was mentioned earlier that Dong-Hun Kim said, *“it would be nice if people pay more attention to the issue and try to help with the situation.”*

From this, one can see that he is wishing for more attention to the issue of anti-Asian RD. Although it was discussed earlier that he is not expecting Austrians to actively make changes regarding the problem, he still thinks it would be nice to have more people who are at least aware of the issue. Chih-hao Huang also talked about the need for bringing up the topic of anti-Asian RD when he said, *“I think it’s a good time to bring up this topic, because I don’t know why like...somehow there’s only black guy who would be discriminated, they are the poor ones. But like, if you discriminate an Asian guy, it’s nothing. [...] If you make fun of them (Blacks), it’s racist, but if you make racist fun jokes about Asian it’s joke. I never understood that, because racist is racist and why do I have to accept the jokes?”* With this statement, he is criticizing that anti-Asian RD is not considered as serious compared to RD against Blacks, for example. By saying that *“racist is racist”*, he is arguing that RD should not be tolerated in any case, which is why he does not understand different reactions/responses to anti-Asian RD compared to anti-Black RD, for instance. Chih-hao Huang also added, *“There are only black people and white people, actually. People don’t really care about other races than those.”* By this statement, he is pointing out the lack of attention to other races than White and Black in general, whereby he implies that it could be a potential reason why anti-Asian RD is not getting enough attention/not taken seriously as he mentioned earlier.

Hiroto Takahashi talked about his experience in the U.S., saying that racism was *“such a big thing”*, since it was very frequently and openly discussed in society. He described as follows; *“I think for a country like Austria, or like there are other European countries as well, that have a lot of immigrants [...] I think in terms of integrating them as well like, those kind of topics have to be discussed. I think that’s why it’s such a big thing in America cuz like, America is a country full of immigrants. That’s why racism is such a big thing.”* He also added that being exposed to such frequent discussions on RD during his time in the U.S. definitely enlightened him and made him become more aware of the issue, which is why he thinks that in a country like Austria (with a lot of immigrants), the topic of RD needs to be more openly and frequently discussed in society. This argument by Hiroto Takahashi also brings one back to the earlier discussion on the importance of education and environment, as well as their interconnectedness once again. With regard to anti-Asian RD during the pandemic,

he said, *“I think when racism is talked about throughout history, a lot of the times it’s just like you know, the White and Black issue. And I feel like, Asian racism hasn’t been talked about enough sometimes. As someone who’s Asian and I’ve spent most of my life in White countries, I think it’s something that maybe I’ve been low-key feeling.”* Here, one can see that he also thinks anti-Asian RD is not being discussed enough, which was a point raised by Chih-hao Huang too. In the statement, Hiroto Takahashi also mentions that there is only *“the White and Black issue”*, which concurs with Chih-hao Huang’s statement that said *“There are only black people and white people”*. Therefore, both of the interviewees talk about the lack of attention to other races than those two, resulting in the neglecting of problems that are faced by other races, e.g. Asians.

With regard to the last key category **“Call for More Attention & Effort”**, it was shown that the interviewees do not expect Austrians to actively include and integrate Asians into Austrian society; rather, they argued that efforts should be made from Asians first, since they are the *“foreigners”* in Austria. It was mentioned by 2 interviewees that experiencing RD in a foreign country is somewhat natural and normal – however, according to the interviewees and as shown in the earlier section of the study, it was shown that RD is often generated due to the lack of familiarity and knowledge about different cultures. This is why it was argued by Peishan Chen that there should be more exposure of Asians which is actively initiated by Asians themselves, through which a better understanding and interaction between Asians and Austrians could be established.

In addition, it was also shown that the interviewees were wishing for more attention and frequent/open discussions on the topic of anti-Asian RD. The interviewees had an impression that anti-Asian RD is not being taken as seriously as RD against Blacks for example, and they attributed it to the lack of attention to other races than Whites and Blacks in the Western world. Such a trend is not only problematic simply in terms of occurrences of RD, but it is also concerning since it could result in the neglecting of other races and long-term consequences of RD against them.

5. Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the interviewees' everyday social/personal life with special regard to their lived experience of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic. As a result of the qualitative study consisting of 5 semi-structured interviews and coding process as suggested by Grounded Theory, a total of 4 key categories of the study were able to be obtained, which sum up all the important aspects that were discussed throughout the interviews.

It was shown that the biggest changes the pandemic has brought to the interviewees' everyday life were pandemic safety measures and the consequences that ensued. Due to limited/restricted social contact/interaction with others during the lockdown, the interviewees were not able to socialize as much as before the pandemic. This limited amount of social life caused a number of different reactions in the interviewees, whereby Chih-hao Huang experienced depression and sought the help of a therapist, while Peishan Chen just thought it was boring. Some interviewees described the pandemic as an opportunity to focus more on themselves, while the others also mentioned that it caused them to become more cautious and responsible with their behavior to protect themselves and others around them – e.g. by avoiding meeting up in person with friends, not going to crowded places, etc. Along with this, the topic of usability of various online platforms for communication/socialization during the pandemic also arose, as 3 of the interviewees reported that they used those as an alternative to in-person meetings during the pandemic – which seemed to have been encouraged by the pandemic and its safety measures. It was also shown that the interviewees have become more aware of personal hygiene during the pandemic (e.g. washing/disinfecting hands, wearing face masks), which was also one of the changes that happened in their everyday life as a result of the pandemic.

Additional to changes in everyday life due to the pandemic, there were also certain topics of concerns that the interviewees reported to have emerged since the beginning of the pandemic. It was shown that the future was one of the biggest causes of concern, which seemed to be mainly because of the unpredictability in the nature of the pandemic. In

addition, 2 of the interviewees also expressed concerns regarding possible side effects of coronavirus infection that could linger, although they mentioned that the pandemic/virus itself was not the object of fear for them. The interviewees also expressed their concerns regarding the differences among different countries and the people's mindsets and behavior, whereby they described East Asians to be more cautious and responsible during the pandemic (thus adopting corresponding behavior), and Europeans as rather relaxed and less serious about the pandemic – which was why some interviewees found it hard to understand Europeans' behavior. Another cause of concern was anti-Asian RD during the pandemic, whereby Dong-Hun Kim felt threatened as an East Asian foreigner in Vienna (thus temporarily moved back to South Korea), while Xiang Liu and Hiroto Takahashi expressed their relief about being able to stay in Vienna during the pandemic instead of in the U.S., since they believe Vienna is a better option when it comes to the topic of anti-Asian RD (due to more frequent and extreme cases of anti-Asian RD in the U.S. during the pandemic).

With regard to the interviewees' experience of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic, verbal antagonism was shown to be the most frequently experienced form of RD (as well as by their friends & family). Incidents of verbal antagonism were reported by 3 of the interviewees (including the experience of their friends & family), whereby most of them were clearly intentional and explicit. However, the present study also discussed "unintentional" verbal form of RD – whereby the original intention of a racist/discriminatory comment was not exactly meant to be racist/discriminatory against the victim. According to Allport (1954), such a case is referred to as "subtle prejudice", whereby one may not be directly racist towards members of the outgroup, but their cognitions are still driven by racially-biased opinions of the outgroup (Allport 1954). The examples of subtle prejudice described by the interviewees also showed typical traits of subtle prejudice, whereby the "racist" comment was not meant to verbally attack the interviewees and was rather meant as a joke, but still resulted in RD against the interviewees.

However, it was found out that most of the explicit & intentional verbal antagonism/hostility during the pandemic reported by the interviewees had a close relationship with the racialization of COVID-19, where the victims were assumed to be of Chinese descent and

were blamed for the pandemic. The same was also mentioned by Chen et al. (2020), when they argued Asians of different nationalities are frequently treated as a homogeneous population, which also explains why Asians of various nationalities are experiencing anti-Asian RD during the pandemic (Chen et al. 2020). Chih-hao Huang also argued that non-Asian individuals tend to not differentiate among Asians of different nationalities, saying that they just assume him to be Chinese although he is not. Therefore, it was shown from the interviews that there are 2 main drivers of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic – the racialization of COVID-19 & Asians of various nationalities being treated as a homogeneous population.

Some interviewees reported incidents of “foreigners discriminating foreigners”, whereby they experienced intentional & explicit verbal antagonism/hostility by other foreigners in Austria. These incidents proved that being a foreigner in a country (thus belonging to the outgroup of society) does not always mean one can only be a victim of RD, but one can also be racist/discriminatory against members of other outgroups of society. In addition, even in such “foreigner-against-foreigner RD” incidents, the racialization of COVID-19 was observed, which once again shows the intensity and severity of the level of racialization of the disease.

It was argued by Chih-hao Huang that anti-Asian RD has become more direct & offensive as a result of the pandemic. He explained that anti-Asian RD before the pandemic used to be rather indirect, unserious, and meant as a joke. However, he described that he gets yelled at and blamed for the pandemic now, which shows that anti-Asian RD has become more aggressive and direct since the pandemic, especially in combination with the racialization of COVID-19. In addition, his argument could be proof that the pandemic may have only reinforced the pre-existing anti-Asian sentiment, rather than newly creating anti-Asian sentiment.

On the other hand, all 5 of the interviewees reported that none of their friends changed their behavior towards them as a result of the pandemic. With regard to this, the interviewees showed a strong trust in their friends & friend circle, since they implied that they were a “safe place” from any type of RD. One of the main reasons for this was shown to

be the multicultural environment the interviewees grew up and live in, of which the importance was further discussed in the later section of the thesis.

With regard to their (and their friends & family's) experience of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic, a number of different reactions were also observed. Dong-Hun Kim actively asked for help from others when confronted with anti-Asian RD in public, while Xiang Liu chose to rather ignore and avoid trouble for the sake of his safety. It was shown that most of the interviewees' reactions to experiences of RD consisted of being more conscious of their safety and protection – e.g. Dong-Hun Kim decided to temporarily move back to South Korea, Xiang Liu did not want to “*risk anything*” and ignored the racist individual, Hiroto Takahashi's friends have become more cautious, etc. From this, it could be seen that even just verbal antagonism can influence one's personal behavior, despite the fact that it is not what physically harms its victims. It could be assumed that such verbal antagonism created a hostile environment for the victims, which could be the explanation for their changed behavior (National Research Council 2004).

It was demonstrated by the interviews that family (especially parents) usually played a role in comforting/easing the interviewees' mind after their experience of RD, whereas friends seemed to show varied reactions. Chih-hao Huang criticized his “White” Austrian friends' apathy and lack of empathy towards his experience of anti-Asian RD, by describing it as “*White privilege*” – which caused him to stop talking about the issue with his friends. Dong-Hun Kim also criticized his friends' attitude of trying to “normalize” such RD incidents, whereby he said he realized some people's apathy about the issue of anti-Asian RD or RD in general in society, which he finds to be problematic.

With regard to the interviewees' changes in social behavior as a result of experiences of anti-Asian RD, it was shown that some interviewees have become more passive and introvert in human relationships, as well as distanced from others. Such changes in social behavior was shown to have a close connection with the racialization of COVID-19, as Dong-Hun Kim explained that he often gets mistaken for Chinese and therefore he thought he was more prone to becoming the target of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic (which caused him to

become more introvert in human relationships). He also explained to have developed some strategies to avoid trouble with others in public, which shows his attempt to prevent negative incidents of anti-Asian RD. Chih-hao Huang also reported to have experienced change in his social behavior, as he became more distanced from others as a result of his experiences of anti-Asian RD. He mentioned that it was rather his automatic, unconscious reaction to such experiences, from which it could be assumed that experiences of RD can affect one's cognition, which could lead to adjustments/changes in their (social) behavior.

However, one could still see the interviewees' willingness to socialize despite negative experiences of anti-Asian RD. Although the extent varied, the interviewees said that they would still try to socialize and make new friends – however, Dong-Hun Kim said that he would immediately “*cut off*” the person if they showed hostility against him because of his race, which shows his anticipation/awareness of possibility of further experiences of RD and his attempt to protect himself from it. Protecting oneself was shown to be one of the main purposes of change in social behavior, as Dong-Hun Kim was not the only one who talked about strategies to protect oneself in the context of social behavior. It was mentioned by the interviewees that they would become more cautious and might also change lifestyle (e.g. not staying out late, carrying around protection, reducing social contact, only hanging out with those from the same race, etc.) as a result of experiences of anti-Asian RD, which shows that protecting oneself from negative experiences of RD is one of the main reasons for changes in social behavior.

The present study has identified a number of important factors that influence RD as well as the future of East Asians in Austria. It was argued by the interviewees that there are certain ways in which Asians are depicted in the Western media, whereby stereotypes and misconceptions about Asians play a huge role. It was criticized that such stereotypes and misconceptions are what fuel anti-Asian RD during the pandemic, since those often cause ignorance and misunderstanding of Asians and the culture - and the interviewees perceived the media as the spreader/distributor of those. In addition, the interviewees argued that the government also plays a huge role regarding RD in the country (e.g. former U.S. President Trump's racist remarks such as “Chinese virus”). However, it was argued by Xiang Liu that the

government can not only fuel the RD in the country, but could also be the one that initiates positive changes/improvements. He added that it is *“the most efficient and easiest way”*, which emphasizes the power of the government and the potential it has in contributing to positive changes regarding the issue of anti-Asian RD.

The interviewees also talked about the importance of environment, education, and language as factors that are closely related to the issue of RD. It was shown from the interviews that growing up/living in an environment where cultural diversity is respected is important, as it facilitates one’s *“learning”* of skills to respect and understand differences in various cultures. This could be discussed with relation to one of the 3 levels of racism presented by Bowser (2017) – *individuals level*. With regard to individuals level of racism, Bowser argued that racism is *“taught”*, which means that racist behavior is not something that is inherent or innate in an individual, rather one is *“taught”* racism in the course of life (Bowser 2017). The same logic could be applied here, since it was argued by the interviewees that one has to be *“taught”* to respect and understand different cultures – and the environment is what facilitates this process of *“being taught”*. With regard to this, one could also discuss the importance of education as mentioned by the interviewees. The interviewees argued that negative/stereotypical Western depictions of Asians are what encourage anti-Asian RD, and they often result from ignorance and the lack of education about cultural diversity and differences. Peishan Chen talked about the *“interconnectedness”* of environment and education, whereby he said parents should build an environment for their kids where they can be educated about different cultures and grow up to be open-minded. The importance of language was also mentioned, whereby Hiroto Takahashi argued that learning the language is a prerequisite for an individual to participate in a foreign country/society.

However, it was shown that the interviewees have a rather pessimistic outlook on East Asians’ full participation in Austrian society – this was mainly due to the fact that Austria is a predominantly White society, where one’s skin color and race still play an important role - e.g. in politics in particular. Due to this reason, the interviewees pointed out that East Asians’ *“East Asian looking face”* is one of the biggest obstacles for East Asians to fully participate in Austrian society, saying that it will always be followed by certain stereotypes and biased

opinions - which hinder them from being fully acknowledged as part of Austrian society. In addition, it was mentioned that some areas of Austrian society are still *“reserved for White people”*, which emphasizes the limited chances available for Asians in Austrian society.

It was shown that some interviewees perceive Austrians as relatively more *“educated”* in terms of RD, as well as successfully accepting various foreign cultures. It was also shown that the interviewees have a positive outlook on the increasing recognition & representation of Asians in the Western world. With this, the interviewees are expecting that it could better inform non-Asians of Asians and the culture, which could bring about positive changes with regard to anti-Asian RD (e.g. reducing misconceptions/misunderstandings about Asians). However, Peishan Chen mentioned that there is still a lack of exposure of Asians in Austria, which is why he thinks Asians should be more actively engaged in interacting with Austrians if they wanted to be better integrated into Austrian society and acknowledged as a part of it. He argued that it is a *“2-way-street”*, meaning that Asians should put effort to integrate themselves into Austrian society if they want Austrians to accept them. Dong-Hun Kim and Xiang Liu also mentioned that Asians should be responsible for their integration in Austrian society, as they are the *“foreigner”* in Austria. Therefore, it was argued by the interviewees that it is not Austrians’ responsibility to try to integrate Asians into their society - rather it is Asians that should take action first, if they wish to participate in Austrian society.

With regard to the topic of anti-Asian RD, the interviewees criticized the lack of attention to the issue of anti-Asian RD. It was mentioned by the interviewees that anti-Asian RD tends to be often neglected compared to other types of RD such as anti-Black RD, saying that *“racist is racist”* and that more attention is needed on the issue of anti-Asian RD. In order for this to happen, the interviewees believe that more open & frequent discussions are needed on the topic, so more people can become aware of the issue of anti-Asian RD and contribute making improvements.

The present study was able to draw on various aspects around the topic of anti-Asian RD during the COVID-19 pandemic. With regard to the research question of this study, it could be said that the pandemic has clearly had an impact on the interviewees’ social/personal life,

especially with regard to anti-Asian RD. The study has shown that experiences of anti-Asian RD have caused the interviewees to adjust and change their behavior in a certain way, whereby one of the main purposes was shown to be safety & protection of oneself – both in social settings (e.g. in public) and human relationships. In addition, the interviewees’ (as well as their family & friends’) experiences of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic have demonstrated the severity of the racialization of COVID-19. Such racialization was observed in almost every incident of anti-Asian RD during the pandemic described by the interviewees, which proves that it is a serious social pandemic we are faced with during the COVID-19 pandemic. The topic of racialization was also included in one of the propositions suggested by CRT as described in the earlier section, whereby it was explained that minority groups are constantly racialized by the dominant group for their convenience (Delgado & Stefancic 2001) – which could be an explanation for why East Asians are often being scapegoated and blamed for the pandemic. The racialization of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with negative stereotypes/misconceptions about Asians, the novel virus having broken out in China, as well as non-Asians treating Asians of different nationalities as a homogeneous population – all of this had led to a surge of anti-Asian sentiment and anti-Asian RD around the world.

However, in the course of identifying various problems regarding anti-Asian RD throughout the study, a number of suggestions could also be drawn out from the interviews. The study has demonstrated that acknowledging/accepting the diversity in different countries and cultures is the key to reducing RD, along with education for people to be better informed of various cultures, as well as the right kind of environment that could facilitate such education. The idea of “interconnectedness” of environment and education can be highlighted here once again, since the effect of both of them combined was shown to be more powerful by the interviews.

It was criticized by the interviewees that the issue of anti-Asian RD is not being paid enough attention, which seems to result in the neglect and aggravation of the problem. One of the contributing factors to this could be not enough exposure of Asians in the Western world in general, which was implied by Peishan Chen. Although he did not exactly mention that not

enough exposure of Asians was one of the reasons for not enough attention to the issue of anti-Asian RD, he did mention that Austria's apathy & indifference towards Asians is to be attributed to the lack of exposure of Asians in society. Therefore, the same reason could be assumed for the lack of attention to anti-Asian RD – which is why it was argued that Asians should try to achieve more exposure in the Western world. One of the ways to do so is to try to better integrate themselves into society (in this case would be Austrian society), and try to actively interact and connect with others in society (Austrians).

Although it was repeatedly mentioned by the interviewees that it is Asians' responsibility to integrate themselves into Austrian society, it was shown that this process could be aided by the help of the government and the media. As they were shown to be the main factors that influence RD in the country (by largely shaping people's thoughts/opinions), one could say that they could also be the main drivers that could bring about positive changes regarding the issue. Therefore, the following could be suggested based on the study; 1. The media should become more mindful of what they publish and try to avoid the spreading of biased information/misconceptions/stereotypes about Asians, 2. The government should initiate and carry out more frequent & open discussions regarding the topic of anti-Asian RD (or RD in general), in order to build an environment where various cultures are respected and can co-exist, so that a harmonious society can be achieved.

To conclude, the study has demonstrated that anti-Asian RD during the pandemic is a social phenomenon that is associated with manifold factors in our society (e.g. media, government, education, environment, etc.). It was also shown that anti-Asian RD during the pandemic is a social pandemic that affects one's social/personal behavior, which is especially fueled by racialization during the COVID-19 pandemic. The present study was able to identify a number of problems surrounding the issue of anti-Asian RD – which does not only tell us that it is a social problem that needs to be addressed more openly & frequently, but also it suggests direction for how the issue could be better dealt with in the future.

6. Limitations & Future Improvements

The present study consisted of 5 semi-structured interviews, of which the interviewees were all male. Although a number of female individuals were contacted for the recruitment, most of them ignored or refused to participate in the study. Therefore, the interviews were conducted with male participants only, which could have affected the study results. Therefore, it is suggested for future research that it involves an equal number of both male & female participants.

In addition, the sample size of the study is also one of the limitations, as 5 participants are not enough to be able to adequately address an entire social phenomenon. The effect of a small sample size is that it reduces/limits the generalizability and reliability of the study results. Although the present study was able to discuss important aspects surrounding the topic, the study results still lack of generalizability and reliability. For this reason, a bigger sample size is required for future research, so that the study results can adequately represent the phenomenon and can attempt generalization.

Due to the fact that the present study dealt with anti-Asian RD in the context of the novel coronavirus, there were not a lot of previous studies available that were conducted on the exact topic of anti-Asian RD with relation to the novel virus (compared to other topics that are relatively less new/older). Therefore, more studies regarding the topic of anti-Asian RD during the COVID-19 pandemic are required that could help better address the issue as a social phenomenon.

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9. Annex

9.1 Abstract (EN)

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a surge of anti-Asian racism/discrimination (RD) incidents worldwide. However, one should remember that anti-Asian RD is not a brand-new phenomenon that has first emerged with the outbreak of the novel coronavirus - rather, it has a long history that goes back as far as the 19th century. The present study attempts to investigate how the current COVID-19 pandemic has influenced East Asian individuals' everyday social/personal life with special regard to experiences of anti-Asian RD, as well as to understand anti-Asian RD as a long-standing social phenomenon that is influenced by various factors in our society. In the context of the study, a total of 5 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 East Asian individuals who have experienced the COVID-19 pandemic in Vienna, Austria. The interviews were then analyzed using the coding methods suggested by Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin 1990), from which a total of 4 key categories were able to be obtained that could sum up important findings surrounding the topic of research. The study has demonstrated that the COVID-19 pandemic and experiences of anti-Asian RD in particular have had an influence on the interviewees' social/personal life, whereby various key factors that contribute to it were also identified in the process. By identifying these key factors, the study was also able to propose directions for the future that could bring about improvements to better address the issue of anti-Asian RD.

9.2 Abstract (DE)

Seit dem Ausbruch der COVID-19-Pandemie hat es weltweit einen starken Anstieg von Vorfällen der anti-asiatischen RD (Rassismus/Diskriminierung) gegeben. Man sollte jedoch bedenken, dass anti-asiatische RD kein neues Phänomen ist, das erst mit dem Ausbruch des neuartigen Coronavirus aufgetreten ist - sondern hat es eine lange Geschichte, die bis ins 19. Jahrhundert zurückreicht. Die vorliegende Studie versucht zu untersuchen, wie die aktuelle COVID-19-Pandemie den sozialen/persönlichen Alltag ostasiatischer Menschen unter

besonderer Berücksichtigung der Erfahrungen mit anti-asiatischer RD beeinflusst hat, sowie anti-asiatische RD als seit Langem bestehendes soziale Phänomen zu verstehen, das von verschiedenen Faktoren in unserer Gesellschaft beeinflusst wird. Im Rahmen der Studie wurden insgesamt 5 semistrukturierte Interviews mit 5 ostasiatischen Personen durchgeführt, die die COVID-19-Pandemie in Wien, Österreich, erlebt haben. Anschließend wurden die Interviews mit den Kodierungsmethoden der Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin 1990) analysiert, aus denen insgesamt 4 Schlüsselkategorien gewonnen werden konnten, die wichtige Erkenntnisse rund um das Forschungsthema zusammenfassen. Die Studie hat gezeigt, dass die COVID-19-Pandemie und insbesondere Erfahrungen mit anti-asiatischer RD einen Einfluss auf das soziale/persönliche Leben der Befragten hatten, wobei auch verschiedene Schlüsselfaktoren identifiziert wurden, die dazu beitragen. Durch die Identifizierung dieser Schlüsselfaktoren konnte die Studie auch Richtungen für die Zukunft vorschlagen, die Verbesserungen bewirken könnten, um das Problem der anti-asiatischen RD besser anzugehen.

9.3 Information Sheet for Participants & Consent Form

Information for Participants and Declaration of Consent

Dear participant,

Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in an individual interview as part of my MA dissertation.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the everyday experiences of East-Asians living in Vienna during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to find out how and to what extent the pandemic has affected their social & personal life, including possible experiences of discrimination in relation to the coronavirus pandemic.

I undertake to treat your data as strictly confidential. When handling your personal data, I adhere to the legal requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The interviews will be recorded, transcribed and anonymized. They are used exclusively for research purposes while ensuring data protection.

Only researchers have access to the audio files. Completely anonymized excerpts from transcripts (i.e. without naming names and after removing any information that would allow conclusions to be drawn about your person) may be used in the dissertation. The dissertation will be submitted to the University of Vienna in fulfillment of the MA degree requirements and will be marked by my professors. It will not be published.

If you have given your consent to process your personal data, you have the right to revoke your consent at any time. I remain at your disposition at any time for further clarifications and questions about the protection of your data.

This MA dissertation is supervised by Ass.-Prof. Dr. Emma Dowling, Institute for Sociology, University of Vienna. You are also welcome to contact Prof. Emma Dowling (emma.dowling@univie.ac.at).

Declaration of Consent

Name of Participant:

I have read and understood this information letter. All of my questions have been answered and I have no further questions at the moment.

With my personally dated signature, I hereby voluntarily give my consent to participate in an interview.

I know that I can revoke this consent at any time and without giving reasons.

I have received a copy of this participant information and declaration of consent.

I hereby consent to the use of my personal data in the context of research.

Place, Date, Signature (Interviewee)

Place, Date, Signature (Interviewer)

9.4 Interview Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews

Personal Information

1. Could you please tell me your gender, age, country of origin and occupation?
2. Are you here on your own, or are you with your family, partner, etc.?
3. What is your living situation – who are you living with and what kind of living arrangements do you have (dorm, flat, “WG”...)?
4. How long have you lived in Vienna for? Did you grow up in Vienna/Austria or did you move here as an adult?
5. Are you here for a short period only (e.g. to study or to work), or do you live here long-term?
6. Do you speak German?

Perception of the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic

7. How have the coronavirus pandemic and the measures to contain it affected your everyday life? How has your everyday life changed compared to the period prior to the coronavirus pandemic?
8. Do you talk about the coronavirus pandemic and the related issues with your family, friends, etc.? If so, what are the most frequent topics that come up?
9. What do you think or worry about the most with regard to this coronavirus pandemic? Is there anything in particular that you are worried about or scared of?

Experiences of Racism/Discrimination during the Coronavirus pandemic

10. Do you feel like anyone has changed their behavior towards you as a result of the coronavirus pandemic?
11. Have you had any problems interacting with formal institutions or employers during the coronavirus pandemic?
12. Have you personally experienced any type of derogatory remarks, discrimination or abuse in relation to your ethnicity and with reference to the coronavirus pandemic in Vienna/Austria?

If yes,

- a) please describe these experiences. What exactly happened? How did this make you feel?
- b) have these experiences differed from the pre-coronavirus pandemic times?
- c) Did you tell anyone (friends/family; authorities)? How did they react?

13. Have you changed your behavior in any way as a result of these experiences? Is there any visible difference in your social/personal behavior/choices you make after those incidents? (E.g. friendship, at work, socializing...)

14. Do you know other people of East-Asian ethnicity who have experienced any type of derogatory remarks, discrimination or abuse in relation to their ethnicity and with reference to the coronavirus pandemic in Vienna/Austria? If so, have such experiences changed their social/personal behavior and choices they make?

15. Is anti-Asian sentiment in the context of the coronavirus pandemic something that you are concerned about?

Broader Context

16. In your view, have portrayals of East-Asians in Austrian media changed in any way as a result of the coronavirus pandemic?

17. How do you consider the ways in which East-Asians are portrayed/represented in various media, or how they are perceived by non-East-Asians in general? Are these representations problematic? Who do you think is responsible for these representations?

18. Are you aware of incidents of racism or discrimination against people of East Asian descent during the coronavirus pandemic outside of Austria in other parts of Europe or the world? What do you think about these incidents?

19. Do you think it is different in Vienna and/or in other parts of Austria? If so, why? If not, why not?

Future Solutions/Wishes

20. Do you think that East Asians are able to participate fully in Austrian society? What problems, if any, are there in your view?

21. Are changes necessary? If so, what do you think needs to change and who do you think is responsible for this change?