

INTRODUCTION: *The History of the (Racial) Subject and the Subject of (Racial) History*

Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation represents an extensive and evolving collaboration that has lasted for two decades. This book is the result of a comprehensive reframing and rewriting of our various ideas about the social and psychic lives of Asian American adolescents and young adults we have encountered in the classroom and clinic across two generations, from Generation X to Generation Y. Over time, we have witnessed firsthand the shifting demographics, as well as the remarkable psychic transformations, of our students and patients in the face of an ever-growing politics of colorblindness in US society and a rising Asia under neoliberalism and globalization.

In this project, we present two distinct psychic mechanisms by which racialized immigrant subjects process problems of discrimination, exclusion, loss, and grief: racial melancholia and racial dissociation. We use the term “racial melancholia” to refer to histories of racial loss that are condensed into a forfeited object whose significance must be deciphered and unraveled for its social meanings. “Racial dissociation,” in contrast, refers to histories of racial loss that are dispersed across a wide social terrain, histories whose social origins and implications remain insistently diffuse and obscure. We developed our theory of racial melancholia in the late-1990s in relation to Generation X (those born between 1960 and 1980). As we encountered a new cohort of students and patients—millennials from Generation Y (those born between 1980 and 2000)—we came to realize the historical and demographic specificity of our understanding of racial melancholia. Our novel theory of racial

dissociation—to our knowledge, we are the first to explore the concept comprehensively—represents our attempt to understand, describe, and navigate the changing social and psychic landscape of race, racism, and race relations in the United States.

We—a second-generation Chinese American male professor in the humanities and a 1.5-generation Korean American female psychotherapist—originally met at Columbia University, where we worked in the mid-1990s in the Department of English and Comparative Literature and in Counseling and Psychological Services, respectively. A spate of suicides by Asian American students, and the gruesome murder of an Asian American law student by a former boyfriend, brought us together in collective sorrow. This grief was exacerbated by a feeling on the part of our students and patients that there was—and continues to be—little acknowledgment or understanding of the social violence and psychic pain afflicting Asian American communities. This fact is as true on the part of administrators, faculty, and students as it is, most poignantly, on the part of ourselves.

Indeed, the regnant “model minority myth,” which we analyze and discuss throughout this book, persistently represents Asian Americans as nerdy automatons, technically gifted in math and sciences, continuously working, compliant, wealthy, and exempt from discrimination. Asian Americans in fact have the highest poverty rate of any racial group in New York City.¹ More often than not, racism against Asian Americans occurs without recognition and without provoking any serious outcry or protest.

Significantly, “Asian American” is an expansive term. It describes American-born citizens as well as foreign-born immigrants and citizens living in the United States from disparate national, geographic, cultural, education, class, and religious backgrounds who trace their ancestry to East Asia, South Asia, or Southeast Asia. Although students and patients tend to identify with their particular racial or ethnic group—as we do above—a long history of discrimination is what binds Asian Americans together as a collective, and the adoption of a coalitional Asian American identity is often a conscious, politicized choice. Paradoxically, while Asian Americans are always included in diversity statistics, they are largely excluded from affirmative action programs—a significant point of controversy in ongoing national debates concerning the

politics of race and colorblindness. In short, we are seen as a homogenous and self-sufficient community in no particular need of assistance or support. This stereotype is the dominant way we are perceived—socially fixed and psychically formed as subjects. It is woefully inadequate to understanding the circumstances of our various social and psychic predicaments.

Some months after the last funeral at Columbia, we began to discuss the death of one of the students, Shirley Yoon, a popular and well-known senior whose suicide in 1998 affected both of us deeply though neither of us knew her personally. On reflection, her death was the emotional culmination in a series of unbearable losses the community suffered that year. Although dozens of students and family members participated in her burial service on Long Island, we, along with the University Chaplain, an African American woman, were among the few representatives of the university in attendance. We found this deeply unsettling.

In trying to come to terms with Shirley Yoon's passing, we became absorbed with one particular line in Freud's essay on "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) in which he writes that the melancholic "knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him."² In contrast to what he initially describes as healthy mourning, Freud characterizes melancholia as a type of pathological mourning without end, in which the significance of the lost object remains unconscious and opaque: "In yet other cases, one feels justified in maintaining the belief that a loss of this [melancholic] kind occurred, but one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost, and it is all the more reasonable to suppose that the patient cannot consciously perceive what he has lost either. This, indeed, might be so even if the patient is aware of the loss which has given rise to his melancholia, but only in the sense that he knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him."³ In trying to understand what we had lost in Shirley Yoon, we eventually coauthored an article titled "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia." That case history and commentary explored Freud's concept of melancholia in relation to depression and suicide among Asian American college students, and it sought to connect their interminable sadness with difficulties arising from immigration, assimilation, and the racialization they face on a daily basis.

"A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia" was originally published in 2000 in the clinical journal *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*. It comprises the first half

of the title we have chosen for this book as it represents our initial joint endeavor to rethink both psychoanalytic theory and clinical practice so that they might be more useful for analyzing problems of race and racism for Asian Americans and other communities of color. In this book, we argue that what we describe as racial melancholia among Generation X and racial dissociation among Generation Y constitute two psychic mechanisms by which these different generations process social predicaments associated with discrimination and exclusion as well as psychic difficulties connected to loss and grief.

Importantly, by considering histories of immigration, assimilation, and racialization, as well as stereotypes such as the model minority myth and yellow peril, in terms of Asian American subject formation across two generations, we reconceptualize psychoanalytic theory in relation to specific historical moments and times. Throughout the book we investigate the history of the (racial) subject in relation to the subject matter of (racial) history. In this project, psychoanalytic theory is our primary theoretical tool for exploring the shifting history of the racial subject, while critical race theory is our primary theoretical tool for analyzing the evolving subject of racial history. That is, insofar as loss and grief are generated by juridicopolitical mechanisms configuring a long history of Asian American immigration and exclusion, the book pays particular attention to critical race theory's insights on law, structural racism, systematic bias, and social violence as a necessary supplement to our psychoanalytic investigation of the Asian American subject. From Cold War discourse and the legacy of the civil rights movement shaping Generation X's coming of age to our current colorblind moment under neoliberalism and globalization shaping Generation Y's coming of age, we consider how racial melancholia and racial dissociation identify and trace distinctive patterns by which Asian Americans and other people of color are assimilated into, as well as excluded from, the social and political domains.

In addition to depression, suicide, and racial melancholia among model minorities (chapter 1), we write about the politics of mothering and racial reparation in the practice of transnational adoption (chapter 2); racial dissociation, psychic nowhere, and the displacement of parachute children with the rise of Asia under neoliberalism and globalization (chapter 3); and panic attacks and the politics of coming out for gay

Asian parachute children in a colorblind age (chapter 4). We bring together different schools and paradigms of psychoanalytic thought, legal histories of race and racism, and the politics of Asian immigration and exclusion with the aim of creating a more sustained conversation about the lives of Asian Americans and Asians in the diaspora.

In retrospect, we have been investigating for two decades what might be described as the social and psychic structures of a comparatively privileged class of Asian American adolescents and young adults in private and public US institutions of higher education trying to recognize, narrate, and come to terms with what they have lost—as well as gained—in immigration, migration, displacement, and diaspora. It is worth emphasizing we do not presume to represent all Asian American subjects in this project. Nonetheless, we hope the specific case histories and commentaries of the particular students and patients presented here will shine critical light on some general social and psychic dilemmas that many Asian Americans endure. Thus, we hope to forge links among various groups to develop new critical approaches, clinical possibilities, and political coalitions.

The measured pace of our collaboration is due in part to the vicissitudes of our professional and personal lives, but it also stems from the comparative isolation of psychoanalysis and critical race studies as intellectual areas of inquiry largely independent from one another. On the one hand, race and racism are often conceptualized as sociological phenomena and problems of material inequality that have little to do with the formation of the psyche. As conventional psychoanalytic theory places sexuality at the heart of the development of individual subjectivity, it has relegated race to the periphery as sociology, in Kimberly Leary's words, "outside the purview of psychoanalysis altogether, or important only as categories of experience if translated into the metric of sexual desire or the vicissitudes of family life."⁴ Farhad Dalal notes that, insofar as psychoanalytic theory typically approaches social conflict in the external world as a reflection of psychic distress in the internal world, racism is rarely conceptualized as an effect of larger social histories and cultural practices. Rather, it is seen as the result of individual neuroses, phobias, and prejudices.⁵

Psychoanalytic theory has consistently privileged the internal psychic world over the external social world. It has insistently focused on

the “private” realm of family and kinship relations over the “public” realm of law and politics, and it has largely configured the internal psychic functionings of subjectivity as extraneous to the external world of the social. Broadly speaking, both psychoanalytic theorists and clinicians have been slow to examine how histories of race and colonial modernity implicitly frame their field’s evolution—its dominant paradigms and theoretical assumptions. Even today the overwhelming majority of clinical case histories refer only to a patient’s personal family history and interpersonal family dynamics rather than to the subject of (racial) history writ large. Social, political, legal, economic, and cultural factors are bracketed in the analysis of the history of the (racial) subject and the etiology of psychic pain. Put otherwise, psychoanalysis is focused on the mother but rarely considers the motherland; it is attuned to family dynamics but rarely thinks about the family of nations.

On the other hand, agendas in critical race studies have been largely governed by sociological, legal, and empirical accounts of race and racial subordination as *material* inequality—as a problem of political rights and representation as well as economic redistribution and justice. As a result, the field has not adequately considered how psychoanalysis as a critical heuristic for understanding how racial subjectivity is formed and created and race relations are reproduced and sustained as intertwined material and psychic phenomena. For instance, we argue in part II of this book that as race continues to slip into the collective unconscious in a colorblind age, the importance of a psychoanalytic approach that can frame and analyze the political stakes of this significant historical shift—the unconscious and hidden symptoms of what Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton call “institutional racism”—only intensifies.⁶ Similarly, in its largely domestic focus on the history of US constitutional law and black-white race relations, the field of critical race studies has not adequately explored new demographic trends among Asian Americans and other immigrants of color, such as transnational adoptees and parachute children. They are generally absent from analyses of race and racism.

At the same time, scholarly focus in critical race and ethnic studies on problems of *group* discrimination often overlooks critical insights provided by studying the predicaments of *individual* subjectivity.⁷ Such an exploration is not only the hallmark of psychoanalytic practice and

the case history but also at times the harbinger of (or impediment to) an emergent political consciousness—indeed, what Raymond Williams might describe as an emergent social formation and a will for historical change.⁸ In slightly different terms, when identifying with others the individual is also invariably attaching him- or herself to larger group histories as well as social categories and collectives.⁹ It is crucial, then, for both psychoanalytic and critical race theory to consider at once the psychic and social mechanisms of this interchange between the individual and the collective. From this perspective, the book is centrally concerned with psychoanalytic debates over the (biological) nature of the drives in terms of the actual social relations forming our psychic identifications with, attachments to, and investments in (racial) others.

Racial Melancholia, *Racial Dissociation* thus begins with the idea that race and racism are complex phenomena operating in and through social and cultural norms—that histories of race and racism must be approached as both a cause and an effect of individual subjectivity, agency, and will. Throughout the project, we employ insights from critical race theory. A branch of scholarship that grew out of the 1980s legal academy, critical race theory explores how law purports to represent abstract and equal liberal subjects while in fact *producing* racial subjects and hierarchies according to institutionalized structures of white power and privilege. Historically the law has codified racial identity as an instrument of both political exclusion and economic exploitation but, at the same time, it has refused to recognize group claims, embedding legal rights, recognition, and responsibility exclusively in the figure of the abstract individual and in relation to individual agency and intent. Today, under the mandates of neoliberalism and an ever-shrinking public sphere, the idea of entrepreneurial spirit justifies discrimination and racism, social inclusion and exclusion, as functions of economic rationality and private choice. In the process, neoliberalism constricts law and politics to its instrumental logic of individual self-sufficiency—a topic that we explore at length in regard to Generation Y in part II of this book.

Throughout this project, we also employ insights from the humanities and interpretive social sciences in order to situate our legal histories and critical paradigms in relation to a troubled global history of colonialism, liberalism, and race binding together Europe and the Americas with Asia and Africa. Finally, we also turn to a number of authors, art-

ists, and directors whose creative works offer alternative ways of narrating and thus understanding racial history in relation to psychic pain. Indeed, a humanities-based approach to psychoanalysis highlights the political and therapeutic dimensions of narration. Literary, historical, and psychoanalytic practices all converge in their potential to tell the story *differently*, with narration functioning as a kind of individual and collective talking cure in the face of the vicissitudes of law and politics.

In the past two decades, a small but growing number of influential books and articles exploring psychoanalysis and race have appeared in both the humanities and the clinical arena.¹⁰ At the same time, there are a handful of publications in the field of critical race studies considering the place of psychoanalysis in jurisprudence.¹¹ Rarely, however, are humanities scholars and clinicians engaged in a sustained conversation about questions of race in psychoanalytic texts, case histories, clinical practices, classroom dynamics, cultural productions, and the larger social world. Even more rarely does this conversation focus specifically on the social and psychic lives of Asian Americans. To our knowledge, this is the first collaborative book written across the domain of the clinic and the field of the humanities deploying as its primary source materials original case histories and commentaries on Asian Americans. At the same time that this project is an expansion of psychoanalysis in relation to race, and vice versa, it also triangulates polarized black-white binaries of race and racism that often exclude Asian Americans and other people of color from critical analysis altogether, analyzing them instead in a comparative racial context.

In sum, *Racial Melancholia*, *Racial Dissociation* is committed to exploring how a more speculative humanities-based approach to psychoanalytic theory might supplement its clinical applications, and vice versa. In the context of race, racism, immigration, and diaspora—all of which remain undertheorized across various disciplinary deployments of psychoanalysis—such a critical endeavor continues to be especially urgent. As various race and postcolonial scholars have noted, psychoanalytic theory and practice remain largely unaware of their historical conditions of emergence and untroubled by the particular European colonial tradition by which they are framed and in which they inevitably participate.¹² At the same time, the lack of understanding in both Asian American and mainstream society of problems of social violence and psychic

pain afflicting our communities demands a psychoanalytic vocabulary as one powerful conceptual tool—though not the only one—for critical analysis and change. The history of the (racial) subject has an ongoing and intimate connection to the subject of (racial) history, and it is this complex and shifting relationship that the book explores across two decades.

The remainder of this introduction is organized into three sections. The first section examines the subject of (racial) history through the idea of “race as relation” and what Cheryl Harris describes as a long history of “whiteness as property” in US law and jurisprudence tracing its origins to the establishment of the US nation-state through indigenous dispossession and the transatlantic slave trade. We start with the premise that race is not a “thing” as it is commonly understood—an unchanging biological trait, a bodily attribute, a difference of blood quantum or color, a static identity, a reflection of a natural order. Rather, we argue that race is a relation: a continuous, modulating historical relationship among subjects mediated by socio-legal processes of social inclusion and exclusion. Race is as much about skin color and physiological markings as it is about a wide range of disparate social and psychic experiences of segregation and assimilation, absence and belonging, integration and dissociation, inclusion and exclusion. While the first section does not directly engage with psychoanalytic theory, it provides a theoretical base from which to consider how US histories of race and racial conflict illuminate and reflect some fundamental concepts in psychoanalysis regarding problems of subject-object relations.

The second section of this introduction extends psychoanalytic theories of subject-object relations by exploring how race as relation and whiteness as property shape and configure the history of the (racial) subject. For instance, by describing race as processes of social inclusion and exclusion, we can reconfigure psychoanalytic theories concerning the nature of the drives and the constitution of subjectivity in similar terms. We are able to analyze our privileged objects of identification and desire as articulated in and through social norms and relations, in and through historically contingent ideals and prohibitions, rather than as unmediated representations of biological instincts divorced from larger social histories and lived realities.¹³ We examine how race as relation and whiteness as property reconfigure universal paradigms in

psychoanalytic theory such as the Oedipus complex and its privileged subject-object dynamics, while also investigating the intricate social and psychic transactions that work to support what the Swedish Nobel laureate Gunnar Myrdal labeled in 1944 as an “American dilemma.” Myrdal describes this dilemma as the nation’s paradoxical belief in the abstract equality of all American citizen-subjects in the face of a long history of racial disparity and despair.¹⁴ In short, we consider how a repurposed psychoanalytic theory might provide powerful analytic tools for investigating the production of racial subjectivity and subordination, as well as race relations and segregation, in the United States, from which neither the spaces of the clinic nor the classroom are exempt. As Dorothy E. Holmes observes, the space of the clinic—and the university, we would emphasize—are no less prone than any other to keeping issues of race “repressed and unanalyzed.”¹⁵

The third part of the introduction employs our critical discussions of the history of the (racial) subject and the subject of (racial) history to frame the four internal chapters—the case histories and critical commentaries—of this book in terms of the psychic mechanisms of racial melancholia and racial dissociation.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND THE SUBJECT OF (RACIAL) HISTORY

Race is a social relation with a long history in the United States. Modern genealogies of race trace themselves to the era of European colonization and, in particular, to the transatlantic slave trade—its biologization and commodification of human life. The “peculiar institution” of slavery associated with the United States and with ideas of US exceptionalism has configured the problem of race as a particularly American phenomenon, an American dilemma. This displacement of race from Europe to the Americas, along with the coterminous affirmation of a universal (European) liberal subject through the forgetting of indigenous dispossession in the Americas as well as the exploitation and exportation of human life from Africa (and later Asia), necessitates a more serious engagement with global histories of race attached to modern empire, European and otherwise, its tactics of colonial settlement, and its circulation of bodies, goods, and ideas of difference.¹⁶

In the context of the United States, the phenomenon of chattel slav-

ery has often constituted the history of race as a problem of (white-black) *objectification*. After all, slaves were literally commodities—part of a slave ship’s cargo manifest and insurable as such like any other goods.¹⁷ In the process, chattel slavery also helped to shape the idea of race itself as object, as a “thing”—an unchanging identity; a fixed biological trait; a scientific difference of blood quantum and gradients of color immediately visible on the body and apprehensible to the naked eye; an ontology with attendant ideas of mind and matter, civilization and savagery, freedom and unfreedom that helped to justify the colonial enterprise and highly profitable business of enslaving other human beings. We might characterize this modern historical shift in biopolitics as a transition from the problem of anatomy to differences in physiognomy—from the problem of the body to the difference of appearance and skin (color). As race increasingly came to reflect a natural order of the species in the early modern period, race was considered less a verb than a noun. Similarly, color was transformed from an adjective into a noun.¹⁸

Today, we are more accustomed to thinking about race in terms of *cultural* differences, even in the face of increasing scientific advancements in genetics and related sciences in pursuit of a biological basis for and definition of race. Yet even cultural approaches to race tend to configure culture as a static object—culture as something particular racial groups possess and that certain racial groups must learn to relinquish with great difficulty and consequence. One only need glance at the Moynihan Report from 1965, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, or, more recently, Samuel P. Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* to comprehend straightaway how culture becomes a fixed and intransigent “thing.”¹⁹ Such ossification helps to create and reinforce narratives of racial hierarchy and difference, whether it be in the form of a pathologized black family structure or a pathologized religion helping to fuel Islamophobia and the war on terror.

This history of race as objectification was, of course, always in tension with the fact that the slave was not just an object but also indeed a subject—an object possessing a subjectivity. In volume 1 of *Capital*, Karl Marx explores the nature of commodities, speculating as to what commodities might say if they could speak.²⁰ The problem of simul-

taneous objecthood and subjecthood embodied in the personhood of the slave—a commodity that *could* speak—was a lost opportunity for Marx to contemplate this provocative question in specific terms of race and the transatlantic slave trade. The deleterious effects of this confusion continue to persist in problems of race and racism in our time. The peculiar nature of the slave as a speaking commodity allowed Afro-diaspora scholars such as Cedric Robinson to take up Marx’s call and to theorize the academic field of what is now known as “racial capitalism,” the study of the intertwined relationships between race and capitalism in the evolution of US modernity.²¹ The field returns us to the problem of universalism and abstraction in modern capitalism and democratic governance, to the American dilemma, in the enduring face of racial particularity, exploitation, and domination.

Debates in the field of race studies have often ended in an unproductive intellectual impasse, especially in early American studies, concerning the problem of historical causality. For instance, numerous scholars of early US history have deliberated at length as to whether racism is an effect of slavery (as a function of capitalism) or slavery is an effect of racism.²² David Kazanjian observes that the terms of this discussion have been rather poorly posed, entangled as they are in a mechanical understanding of historical causality. Slavery and race, he notes, “are more usefully understood as coextensive formations feeding off of one another and requiring genealogical investigations of effects, rather than discrete entities functioning either as cause or effect and requiring presumptively positivist searches for a singular origin.”²³ Kazanjian sets a different critical agenda by encouraging us to reframe such chicken-and-egg debates. He asks us instead to consider how slavery and capitalism were at once animated by and articulated with race and racial nationalism, and to what specific effects.

In a similar vein, we ought to consider how race is neither pure objectification nor pure subjectification but precisely both at once: a continuous modulating *relation* between object and subject, a coexisting and coextensive formation, a dynamic movement of sociality and casuality. In describing race as a relation, as a process rather than a thing, we treat it more as a verb than a noun. For us, race is a performance rather than an essence. Indeed, we might say that race is a historical effect of the social relations between objectification and subjectification. From a slightly

different angle, to borrow from Lisa Lowe, race may be considered the historical trace of what remains between the affirmation of a universal (European) liberal human subject and the forgetting of a long history of African slavery, Asian indentureship, and indigenous dispossession on which that universalism was constructed.²⁴ These ever-shifting social relations are historically contingent: race as a verb, race as historical processes of *racialization*. Race as relation is thus one key approach to analyzing the subject of (racial) history.

It is useful to consider in greater detail some of the profound and enduring historical effects of slavery and race as coextensive social formations in US politics and law. In jurisprudence, problems of subject-object distinctions appear prominently in property law. We conventionally understand property as an object that a subject possesses, for example, a house or a car—or a slave. An owner—a subject—can purchase or relinquish, buy or sell, property at will. Indeed, liberal notions of property emphasize exclusive rights of possession, use, and disposition—property as, in William Blackstone’s words, “that sole and despotic dominion which one man claims and exercises over the external things of the world, in total exclusion of the right of any other individual in the universe.”²⁵ As an object, property is not connected to the subject in any intrinsic way—it is, in legal terms, *transferable* and *alienable*. To this day, ideas of alienability are at the conceptual heart of our commonsense notions of property.

Two fundamental shifts in theories of property law are critical to register here. First, in the early twentieth century, the jurist Wesley Newcomb Hohfeld (1879–1918) challenged the conventional idea of property as a subject-object distinction, insisting that property is, in fact, a *subject-subject* relation—at heart, a relational concept.²⁶ (From this perspective, we might suggest that Hohfeld’s definitional shift of understandings of property law implicitly engages with the critical logics of psychoanalysis.) Put otherwise, the owner of a piece of land has not only the legal right to be on it but also the legal right to exclude others from being on it. In short, property is a subject-subject relation mediated by legal modes of social inclusion and exclusion.

Indeed, Hohfeld argues that the totality of property relations can be specified through a set of four juristic terms and their opposites: a group of entitlements (rights, privileges, powers, and immunities) and

their correlatives (no-rights, duties, disabilities, and liabilities).²⁷ Given the long and continuing history of black-white racial segregation that overshadows US history and culture, we can apprehend immediately how race might be considered a key term, if not *the* key term, through which subject-subject relations of trespass—of inclusion and exclusion, of rights and no-rights, of privileges and duties, of powers and disabilities, and of immunities and liabilities—are mediated and negotiated.

Second, in the late twentieth century, legal scholars began to challenge the very concept of property as a tangible, physical object, a process that the legal historian Thomas C. Grey has described as “the disintegration of property.”²⁸ For example, in the age of no-fault divorce, educational degrees and professional certificates such as medical and law licenses, which are intrinsically connected to the person who earned them and thus are not alienable in any typical manner as property, began to be considered as a form of property in dissolution of marriage agreements and divorce settlements. Due in part to feminist lawyers and legal scholars who successfully argued that a wife who financially supported her husband during medical or law school is entitled to a part of that degree or license as “property,” we have more abstract notions of what might be considered property today. In a similar manner, the ever-expanding universe of information technology underscores how intangible things such as computer code, big data, and biometric records are increasingly monetized, valued, and legally protected as property—as abstract and intellectual rather than tangible and physical property.

Like educational degrees and professional certificates awarded to particular persons, race is conventionally thought of as *inalienable*, intrinsically connected to a person’s body, although a long history of racial passing would seem to suggest otherwise. The disintegration of property in jurisprudence opens up a theoretical space to consider how race, too, might usefully be considered not as a tangible “thing” but as a type of intangible property, as a relation, as alienable, as a complex range of social and psychic interchanges and experiences. In 1992, critical race scholar Cheryl I. Harris published a field-defining article, “Whiteness as Property,” in which she argued for the idea of race as a special kind of property right.²⁹

Harris’s article explores how “whiteness as property” facilitates a long history of subject-subject relations of social inclusion and exclu-

sion, privileges and disabilities, produced and ratified by US law. Harris begins with the idea that the origins of property rights in liberal society are rooted in racial domination, noting that whiteness was the characteristic, the attribute, the property of free human beings. She writes,

The origins of whiteness as property lie in the parallel systems of domination of Black and Native American peoples out of which were created racially contingent forms of property and property rights. I further argue that whiteness shares the critical characteristics of property even as the meaning of property has changed over time. In particular, whiteness and property share a common premise—a conceptual nucleus—of a right to exclude. This conceptual nucleus has proven to be a powerful center around which whiteness as property has taken shape. Following the period of slavery and conquest, white identity became the basis of racialized privilege that was ratified and legitimated in law as a type of status property. After legalized segregation was overturned, whiteness as property evolved into a more modern form through the law’s ratification of the settled expectations of relative white privilege as a legitimate and natural baseline.³⁰

Contrary to the idea of race as an unchanging thing, as intrinsic to the body, as biology, and as a reflection of a natural order, whiteness as property has functioned as a bundle of legal rights, powers, and immunities that has shored up (white) racial identity and privilege from the time of slavery and dispossession to the era of emancipation, and from Jim Crow segregation to the age of legal desegregation to our putatively color-blind moment.

What is especially powerful about Harris’s argument is the ways in which it tracks different and historically contingent modes of social inclusion and exclusion among racialized subjects throughout a long history of US jurisprudence—indeed, modes of social inclusion and exclusion *creating* racialized subjects and legacies of racial privilege and domination in the United States. Her legal account of whiteness as property thus provides another key approach to investigating the subject of (racial) history in regard to the history of the (racial) subject.

Notably, Harris gestures to “parallel systems” of domination in histories of indigenous dispossession. However, she focuses almost exclusively in her examination of whiteness as property on a white-black

polarity that dominates notions of race in US history, politics, law, and culture to this day. As we argue throughout this book, such polarities are unsustainable both socially and psychically. Racial dichotomies such as black and white fly in the face of social reality and ignore a multicultural US society defined by numerous and overlapping histories of race, racial epistemologies, and racial encounters. Similarly, psychic binaries such as love and hate are affectively untenable in their emotional extremity and repudiation of relationality. As Neil Altman observes, race and racism emerge from “dichotomized thinking.”³¹

Psychoanalysis teaches us that the dyadic deadlock of the imaginary domain—you versus me, black versus white—is resolved and subsumed in the symbolic realm only through an analytic third, through symbolization, triangulation, and the emergence of proper social relations. Bringing together these insights with whiteness as property and other scholarship from critical race, ethnic, and postcolonial studies provides a critical foundation to explore how race as relation can be extended for a comparative analysis of the history of the Asian American subject in regard to the subject of history. The model minority myth and the middleman thesis—of the Asian indentured servant as social buffer between the black slave and the white colonial master—exemplify some of the long-standing patterns by which the figures of the Asian immigrant and colonial laborer have historically triangulated black-white power dynamics globally.³²

In the main chapters of this book, we expand beyond Harris’s discussion of slavery and emancipation to analyze an extensive history of Asian immigration exclusion and bars to naturalization and citizenship that subtend the historical emergence of black-white race relations and mark the specific racial formation of Asian (and Latino) immigrants in the United States as illegitimate and illegal.³³ We also examine how stereotypes of Asian Americans and Asian immigrants as “illegal immigrants,” “yellow peril,” “perpetual foreigners,” “middle men,” and “model minorities” are mobilized in relation not only to whiteness but also to blackness and other racial groups comprising US multicultural society in an ever-shifting network of historically contingent social relations. In our project, citizenship is examined as a key legal component of a sweeping history of whiteness as property that functions to exclude Asian Americans and Asian immigrants as alien(able), to bar them from

full participation and belonging in US culture and society across different political movements, economic periods, and social encounters.

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE HISTORY OF THE (RACIAL) SUBJECT

Psychoanalysis has developed an extensive and sophisticated vocabulary for investigating subject-object relations and their associated dilemmas. Whether one engages with the classical drive theories of Freud, with the language-based analyses of Jacques Lacan, or with the relational approaches of Melanie Klein, these overlapping fields of psychoanalytic inquiry all offer methods for interrogating subject-object impasses that mark not only psychic life but also, we suggest, the long and troubled history of US race relations. Psychoanalysis begins with the premise that we enter the world through objects—whether they are the part objects of Freud, such as the father’s penis; the mirror images of the self-same in Lacan; or the partial objects of Klein, most notably the mother’s breast.

Psychic suffering stems in no small part from the refusal to recognize our objects as subjects. In the language of object relations, psychic violence and pain are a result of the infant’s refusal to see the mother as a proper subject with her own agency and will rather than as a partial object to satiate its hunger and greed—that is, as a good and available or bad and unavailable breast. In sum, psychoanalysis delineates important methods to explore how we acknowledge our objects as subjects, recognize the other as other, and stage ethical encounters with others.

To align this analysis more closely with the legal histories of racial inclusion and exclusion examined above, psychoanalysis might be described as offering a thick vocabulary for evaluating the history of the (racial) subject as a continuous negotiation of subject-object relations, of material and psychic processes of objectification and subjectification, and the resolution of these dyadic structures through a social third. Whether one subscribes to Jacques Lacan’s position on the impossibility of relationality or to D. W. Winnicott, John Bowlby, and W. R. D. Fairbairn’s insistence on the human need for relationality and the importance of early external relationships in infancy to the development of a healthy internal psychic life, psychoanalysis offers a number of powerful theoretical paradigms for understanding how triangulation through

symbolic processes is essential to mitigating subject-object, master-slave, you-me polarities leading to psychic deadlock and grievance. Yet it is only in recent years that psychoanalytic theorists and clinicians have begun to investigate these processes of triangulation and socialization in specific terms of race.³⁴

We commonly understand triangulation through the universalizing model of the Oedipus complex and its privileged *sexual* triangle of mother, father, and son. To consider the history of the *racial* subject in relation to the subject of *racial* history therefore necessitates historicizing and rethinking the Oedipus complex and its privileged sexual objects (mother, father, son) in a longer racial history of European colonialism as well as US structures of race as relation and whiteness as property.³⁵ From a different angle, it demands an exploration of how law and psychoanalysis work to produce the uneven terrain of idealized racial subjects and objects.

To cite one important recent intervention in psychoanalysis, Gwen Bergner argues that the Oedipus complex not only encodes an incest prohibition but also a miscegenation taboo, one demanding that the little boy identify with not just the father but with the *white* father and displace his desire for the mother not just to any other woman but precisely to a *white* woman. In both theory and practice, psychoanalysis has not considered adequately how the universal subject of psychoanalysis is not just a gendered (male) but a raced (white) subject—a fact emphasized as early as the 1950s by the Martinique-born psychiatrist Frantz Fanon and Tunisian-born Albert Memmi in their critique of the psychopathologies of colonialism.³⁶ In other words, the Oedipus complex encodes both a sexual and a racial demand—both a sexual and racial taboo. From the perspective of US history and law, the incest taboo channels and configures the little boy's (hetero)sexual identifications and desires implicitly through an assemblage of racial prohibitions reinforcing and reinforced by a long history of whiteness as property: antimiscegenation prohibitions, fugitive slave acts, segregation laws, mob lynchings, and racial violence meant to facilitate the smooth transmission of property and privilege from one (white) generation to the next.³⁷

If the Oedipal complex frames its (hetero)sexual dictates in the service of maintaining a white racial purity and hegemony, we can rethink W. E. B. Du Bois's writings on "double consciousness" in light of both

race and sexuality.³⁸ Here, we can connect “double consciousness” to Freud’s concept of “double inscription,” the notion that the same idea can appear in the unconscious and (pre)conscious in different and seemingly unrelated forms.³⁹ That is, the traditional ways in which psychoanalysis has been interpreted as a theory of sex and gender relations may be considered the *conscious* manifestation of various *unconscious* ideas, prohibitions, and taboos associated with race. In the context of conventional psychoanalysis, we might describe race as the political unconscious of sexuality as, in the context of US history and legacies of whiteness as property, we might describe sexuality as the political unconscious of race. (We return to an analysis of this doubling in our discussions of colorblindness and racial dissociation in chapter 4.) If, as Lacan asserts, the unconscious is structured like a language, we ought to contemplate how the unconscious is specifically structured by a *racial* language throughout US history, law, and culture.

In other words, the racial subject does not just speak against objectification or rail against stereotypes. In a profound sense, he or she is already constituted and spoken through, indeed subjected to, the compromised racial language and history of an inherited culture—of race as relation and whiteness as property. Psychoanalysis insists that we are born into a world of others, that language precedes us, and that symbolic representations indexing a history of cultural norms and prohibitions frame our entrance to and existence in the world. Psychoanalysis thus alerts us to the fact that our agency is compromised and our will is limited from the beginning, that we are pre-given to and dependent on others, and that any assertion of an autonomous (racial) subjectivity, authenticity, or agency is an illusion already marked by and channeled through an otherness that will never translate into full psychic independence or social resistance. The racial subject, like any other subject, can speak only in and through a long history of prior race relations.

From this perspective, Kimberlyn Leary writes, “racialized experience must therefore be understood to be something that operates through people as cultural forms rather than simply as matters of individual intention and agency alone.”⁴⁰ The political and ethical quandaries posed by assimilation and acts of passing, Anne Cheng observes in a similar vein, “may not be about whether it is right or wrong to act like someone else but rather about whether *acting like yourself* (here the

idiom is itself revealing) may be fundamentally the same as *acting like someone else*.⁴¹ These psychoanalytic insights are crucial to any investigation of the possibilities and limits of our political actions and psychic efficacy, and they are also indispensable for an analysis of entrenched and unconscious racial histories and stereotypes that continue to form the history of the (racial) subject and to dominate public debates concerning race and identity politics in a colorblind age. The purpose of this book is to draw conscious attention to the polarizing racial histories and scripts that both overdetermine and complicate our social and psychic relations in and with the world.

Stef Craps's recent intervention in the field of trauma studies applies to psychoanalysis in general. Craps argues that the single, catastrophic event-based model of trauma studies in which the Holocaust dominates—"an atrocity committed in Europe, by Europeans, against Europeans"—obscures different forms of incremental, long-term, and cumulative traumas connected to the structural violence of institutional racism occurring on a daily basis for various people of color.⁴² On the one hand, the critical interventions of trauma studies implicitly underscore the ways in which catastrophic history shapes group identities as well as individual subjectivities. On the other hand, the problem of particular "chosen traumas," as well as the predicament of how violence comes to be recognized as violence, forecloses recognition of the ties between the social and the psychic, while obscuring the differential ways in which trauma is mobilized to address or to conceal histories of everyday, mundane, and quotidian violence against various subordinated groups.⁴³ For us, the specificities of the case history provide a unique portal to the hidden histories of everyday, mundane, and quotidian violence against Asian Americans.

Insofar as psychoanalytic theorists and clinicians remain blind to this everyday violence and, indeed, insofar as they remain ignorant of psychoanalysis itself as an integral part of history of liberal Enlightenment discourses of universalism refusing to take racial exploitation and difference into account, they naturalize the status quo and sacrifice therapeutic improvement. In such conditions, psychoanalysis becomes part of the problem rather than part of the solution, making it evident that psychoanalysis is not necessarily or inherently better equipped to address racism or to heal racial conflict than any other field or discipline.

Here, Michel Foucault's as well as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's critiques of psychoanalysis as a normalizing discourse in the history of sexuality and capitalism—and, we would add, in the history of racial domination and exploitation—are especially germane.⁴⁴

In this project, we do not wish to idealize either the space of the clinic or the speculative dimensions of psychoanalysis as a panacea for racial conflict. Indeed, to the extent that a patient or clinician almost never initiates therapy to examine his or her racism, racism is not seen as a psychopathology but is rather normalized as an everyday practice. It thereby poses particular difficulties for therapeutic address and may be approached as a topic of enormous repression and resistance. In this book, we engage with specific case histories, “playing,” to borrow a key term from Winnicott, with their specific intricacies in the hopes of creating a more responsive psychoanalytic theory and practice attuned to racial pain and the psychic predicaments of our Asian American students and patients. Indeed, our desire to address in a sustained manner race in psychoanalysis is powerfully motivated by a need for the field to remain theoretically relevant and clinically responsible to the changing demographics of an increasingly multicultural United States.

In sum, psychoanalysis provides extensive theories of how we misrecognize or disavow subject-subject relations as subject-object relations—a history of misrecognition and disavowal in which slavery, racial domination, and economic exploitation are some of the most prominent examples. That psychic suffering results from subject-object misrecognitions is an axiom in psychoanalytic theory and practice. That racial conflict is the consequence of such formative misrecognitions is also well recognized in critical race studies and identity politics. Yet psychoanalysis and critical race studies have not been in sufficient conversation with one another concerning this formative intersection. For instance, as Asian Americans have moved from voting largely Republican in the 1980s and early 1990s to voting firmly Democrat by the 2012 elections, we must consider how this political shift might mark an altered understanding of whiteness as property and exclusion in a colorblind age.⁴⁵

In our analysis of the history of the Asian American subject, psychic processes of racial melancholia and racial dissociation name and mark histories of social inclusion and exclusion facilitating as well as foreclosing the possibility of reciprocal encounters among different racialized

subjects. In part I, we explore racial melancholia as a privileged psychic mechanism for evaluating histories of interminable loss, grief, and exclusion associated with everyday processes of immigration, assimilation, and racialization for Generation X in the wake of the Cold War and movements for civil rights. In part II, we explore racial dissociation as a privileged psychic mechanism for understanding the possibilities and limits of creating a healthy illusion of “me-ness” and racial self in a colorblind and diasporic age for Generation Y.

Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation thus seeks to tell the story differently, all the while recognizing that race is one important master narrative in the modern age that frames social relations among different groups and constituencies. Just as the unconscious symptom recedes, evading capture and demanding continuous reinterpretation of its enigmatic kernel, we recognize that race cannot and will not explain all social relations and dynamics. This is an important theoretical caveat: to endow race with an all-encompassing explanatory value would effectively evacuate the racial subject of any agency or responsibility, universalizing the category of race in unproductive and ahistorical ways. It would render the racial subject a pure victim and thus reenact the totalizing effects of objectification and commodification that we have been careful to criticize and work through in these introductory remarks.

The goal of this collection is therefore to bring about a heightened critical awareness of the various modes of race and racism inscribing our social and psychic worlds. Nonetheless, at the end of the day there can only be, to borrow from the language of Winnicott, “good-enough” analyses of race. This insight generates an important but understudied question: how do we account for race in psychoanalysis in a manner that does not re-create a dialectic of objecthood that would render agency and responsibility of the racial subject moot while also asserting an all-encompassing, authentic, and autonomous racial subjecthood as the only and obvious solution? We hope to interrogate and to understand in much deeper ways the social and psychic production of the Asian American subject, the possibilities of its (racial) agency, and the limits of its (racial) will.

RACIAL MELANCHOLIA, RACIAL DISSOCIATION

In addition to this introduction, *Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation* consists of four chapters and an epilogue. We have arranged them chronologically in two parts—crossing historically from Generation X (part I) to Generation Y (part II)—and we have organized the two parts under the rubrics of “racial melancholia” and “racial dissociation.”

Throughout, we focus on both *intrasubjective* problems of subject-object distinctions and confusions (melancholia, fetishism, hysteria, paranoia, and the unconscious) and *intersubjective* problems of subject-subject conflicts (reparation, transitional objects, false self, dissociation, and attachment) overshadowed by shifting histories of loss that the concept of racial melancholia initially delineates. The book first engages with Freud’s early work on melancholia, composed in the wake of World War I, and then turns to the later object relations theories of Klein and infantile theories of Winnicott, before connecting these critical analyses with more contemporary movements concerning affect theory, trauma studies, and relational psychoanalysis more broadly.

In short, the book moves from psychoanalytic theories of desire, repression, and internal models of neuroses-psychooses governing intrapsychic life to more relational models of attachment, conflict, and trauma organizing interpsychic lives. In revising our understandings of race from both the biological and cultural models to a model of race as relation, we are faced with an opportunity not only for more successful outcomes in the clinic but also for a productive coalitional politics of comparative race studies in our putatively postrace and postidentity moment. As such, we pay particular attention to psychoanalytic practice and the unstated racial dynamics of the clinic, crucial moments between analyst and patient when race becomes affectively charged, when analyst and patient are confounded by their racial positionings.⁴⁶

While racial melancholia describes the politics of loss that overshadow the constitution of Asian American subjectivity for Generation X, the nature of this loss is not fixed but evolves historically over time and space as well as in terms of changing patterns of immigration and diaspora that create new social formations and psychic predicaments for their subjects. Each chapter explores the social and psychic politics of

loss and exclusion in relation to a particular figure (the model minority, the transnational adoptee, the parachute child, and the gay millennial) and a particular psychic dilemma (depression, reparation, dissociation, and panic attacks) at a specific historical moment in time. The first two chapters comprising part I largely engage with second-generation immigrants in the wake of the Cold War and movements for civil rights (Generation X), during which problems of race and structural racism were keenly debated in politics, law, and society. The last two chapters comprising part II largely engage with first-generation immigrants, millennials coming of age under political assumptions of colorblindness and economic mandates of neoliberalism and globalization (Generation Y).

It is important to note that, while difficulties of race and racism appear at the heart of the psychic predicaments of the first two case histories on model minorities and transnational adoption, problems of race and racism recede in the psychic conundrums of the latter two case histories on parachute children and gay millennials. Like many millennials in Generation Y, parachute children rarely bring up issues of race or racism, a striking departure from those in Generation X for whom these topics were central points of discussion during treatment. We consider their social and psychic convergences and divergences in greater detail within the individual chapters themselves.

Indeed, we live in strange times: on the one hand, we inhabit a putatively colorblind and postracial society suffused with proliferating discourses of multiculturalism and diversity; on the other hand, we witness on a daily basis ongoing and escalating racial discord and violence, prominently underscored by the recent 2016 presidential election as well as the “Black Lives Matter” campaign that emerged in response to police racism and violence.⁴⁷ Predicaments of race as well as its putative disappearance in our colorblind age evidently require new psychic approaches and political strategies to narrate the politics of migration and loss. In the face of intensifying racial violence, with the imminent demise of affirmative action, and as the economic gap between the ultrarich and the uberpoor continues to widen globally, the need to rethink the vocabulary of critical race studies through psychoanalytic inquiry remains urgent.

Chapter 1, “Racial Melancholia: Model Minorities, Depression, and Suicide,” explores depression and suicide among Asian American college

students and patients. We use melancholia, Freud's privileged theory of unresolved grief, as a conceptual key to analyze the sustained losses attendant to processes of immigration, assimilation, and racialization for Asian immigrants and their second-generation children as well as depression and self-annihilation that emerge from this psychic state. Freud writes that mourning comes to a conclusion with libido withdrawn from the lost object, place, or ideal to be invested elsewhere. In contrast, melancholia is temporally extended into an indefinite future—it is a mourning without end. Interminable grief and the internalization of loss as self-hatred results from the melancholic's inability to resolve the various unconscious psychic conflicts that forfeitures from immigration—encompassing family and language, home and property, and customs and culture—effect. Moreover, it stems from the melancholic's incapacity to (re)direct psychic investment into new objects, ideals, and places circumscribed by a long history of immigration exclusion and bars to naturalization and citizenship against Asian Americans.

Freud initially formulated melancholia as a pathological, individual, and intrasubjective psychic condition. In chapter 1, we describe racial melancholia instead as a depathologized “structure of feeling,” to borrow another term from Williams, one exemplifying the everyday, collective psychic struggles of Asian Americans.⁴⁸ If experiences of immigration, assimilation, and racialization in the United States are fundamentally circumscribed by the relinquishing of lost but unspeakable Asian ideals as well as foreclosed investments in whiteness attached to histories of immigration exclusion and bars to national belonging, then we must not slot racial melancholia under the sign of pathology, permanence, or damage. Instead, we reconceptualize it as a normative psychic state involving everyday conflicts and negotiations between mourning *and* melancholia, rather than, in Freud's estimation, mourning or melancholia.

Chapter 2, “Desegregating Love: Transnational Adoption, Racial Reparation, and Racial Transitional Objects,” explores mothering and transnational adoption from Asia. About a dozen years ago, more and more students and patients would “come out” to us in the classroom and the clinic—not as gay or lesbian but as transnational adoptees. In recounting their experiences, these students and patients would often employ the language of the closet and the vocabulary of shame. They emphasized how they felt invisible as transnational adoptees and how

they felt compelled to come out of the closet time and again.⁴⁹ In this chapter, we discuss Mina, a transnational adoptee from Korea and a talented artist studying at a prestigious New York dance school. In her presentation, Mina expressed extreme antipathy toward all minorities, especially the Korean nationals with whom she attended classes. Along with the idealization of her white adoptive mother, Mina also vocalized an unrelenting hatred for her Korean birth mother.

We explore in our analysis of Mina how transnational adoption might be a particularly severe form of racial melancholia and self-hate, one not only excluding the transnational adoptee from larger society but also alienating her from intimate structures of family and kinship. Here we turn to object relations and to Klein, the theorist par excellence of infantile emotions, to analyze Mina's primitive and unrelenting splitting of love and hate. What is clear in this case history is the fact that for Mina splitting was not just a gendered but also a profoundly racialized dynamic: the segregating of love and hate between the good *white* adoptive mother and the bad *Korean* birth mother. As such, we use Mina's case history to argue that racial difference is central rather than peripheral to Klein's fundamental notions of splitting and idealization, depression and guilt, and reinstatement and reparation. For Mina, the reparative position ultimately entails the *racial* reparation of her lost and devalued Korean birth mother.

In chapter 2, we also consider more directly the racialized dynamics of the clinic as well as the race relations between the transnational Korean adoptee patient and her Korean American psychotherapist. We argue that the clinician (Dr. Han), who became pregnant during Mina's treatment, functions, to reformulate an idea from Winnicott, as a "racial transitional object" for Mina, as the Korean mother who keeps her baby and, in the process, helps Mina to renegotiate her volatile racial affects and boundaries. Winnicott argues that the clinic can be a privileged transitional space for negotiating the borders between internal and external worlds and thus helps to establish the existence of what he describes as a "true self."⁵⁰ Mina's case history underscores the need to investigate, as Carol Long suggests, how race and racial difference can also interrupt the therapeutic play of the clinic and by extension the larger world, how race poses particular challenges and obstacles to establishing any relation whatsoever between analyst and patient.⁵¹ To the

extent that racism often forces young children to confront social conflict prematurely, the formative psychic role of transitional objects and the formative psychic play of transitional spaces are short-circuited.

Chapter 3, “Racial Dissociation: Parachute Children and Psychic Nowhere,” moves us into the study of Generation Y by investigating the phenomenon of parachute children—adolescents and children who migrate, often on their own, from different parts of Asia to Anglophone nations in the West in search of educational opportunities. Unlike prior populations of second-generation students we have taught and patients we have treated in Generation X, an increasing portion of our undergraduate students and patients today are first-generation parachute children, millennials who were neither born nor raised in the United States but have come directly from Asia for schooling often without the support of any intimate family structure. Parachuting creates divided families, separate households residing on different continents in social and psychic isolation. As Christy Ling Hom observes, parachute kids become *physically* autonomous from their parents once they move to the United States, yet it is less clear if they also become *emotionally* autonomous.⁵²

Although originally an upper-class phenomenon associated with elites from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore, with the global rise of Asian capital parachuting is an increasingly middle-class phenomenon, with parents making considerable financial sacrifices to send their young children abroad. The dominant narrative associated with parachuting describes it as a transnational solution to an overly competitive Asian university system.⁵³ Parachuting is represented as providing underperforming Asian students with a “second chance” at success in the West. It thus reconfigures the model minority stereotype of academic and economic success by implicitly asking in regard to these young (im)migrant children: “How does it feel to be a problem? How does it feel *not* to be a model minority?”

Chapter 3 examines two case histories of parachute children, one from South Korea (Yuna) and another from China (Yung), in terms of Winnicott’s notions of true and false self and Philip M. Bromberg’s ideas of dissociation. False self and dissociation are often thought of as debilitating psychic conditions resulting in a lack of an authentic sense of true self and an absence of attachments to others. However, they also encompass healthy and positive aspects. Indeed, they can function as

psychic mechanisms of self-protection in the face of overwhelming social stress and pressure—for instance, through adopting the social cover of the model minority stereotype as a form of self-protective camouflage. In Yuna’s and Yung’s cases, however, neither is able to find protection in racial stereotypes or to develop healthy illusions of me-ness—to reconcile the ways in which they see themselves with the ways in which others apprehend them. They are not only psychically nowhere but also racially nowhere. Thus, we are faced with the challenge of understanding how shifting patterns of immigration under neoliberalism and globalization, as well as new immigrants, such as parachute children who are racially nowhere, mark a different genealogy of colorblindness disconnected from the concept’s largely domestic, Constitutional legal history. In short, chapter 3 and part II, more generally, explore the psychic structures of colorblindness for millennials today.

Chapter 4, “(Gay) Panic Attack: Coming Out in a Colorblind Age,” continues our discussion of race and racism in the age of neoliberalism and global capitalism. We examine a series of case histories of academically accomplished parachute children from China and India in the diaspora, all of whom identify as gay men. Although living freely as gay people in the West often constituted a key factor in these young men’s desires to immigrate, paradoxically they cited neither homophobia nor racism as significant sites of conflict leading them to seek therapy. Most suffer from debilitating panic attacks, high levels of anxiety that rendered them incapacitated and depressed with inexplicable bodily and psychic pain. If sexuality and race remain largely tangential to their psychic predicaments what, then, is all the panic about?

Our analysis of (gay) panic attacks considers the contemporary politics of coming out in the age of colorblindness. We turn to Freud’s theories of the unconscious as something we can know only through its transformations and translations into consciousness in order to investigate the shifting relations between racism and homophobia across two different generations—Generation X and Generation Y—that is, historically from the age of AIDS to the era of queer liberalism and gay marriage. In so doing, we consider the ways in which race continues to function as the political unconscious of our colorblind age—a self-enforcing social and psychic mechanism in which race constantly appears as disappearing. In our estimation, colorblindness signals not the

absence of racism or homophobia but is precisely the contemporary form in which structures of institutional racism and homophobia appear today. The ideology of colorblindness, we argue, has now been transformed into a collective psychic state of racial dissociation, posing significant challenges to how law and politics might address racial exclusion, exploitation and domination today. Ultimately, it forces us to rethink the ways in which queer liberalism reformulates race as relation and whiteness as property in a colorblind age, to apprehend the dissociated relations among race, sexuality, and economic precarity that define our contemporary multicultural moment under neoliberalism and globalization.