

The Experiences of a Chinese Immigrant Family During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

While the COVID-19 pandemic challenged educators, parents, and students to adapt to online learning, it significantly impacted Asian Americans, especially the Chinese immigrant families, with increased anti-Asian acts of racism and xenophobia. The case study investigated a Chinese immigrant family's experiences transitioning to online learning in the climate of anti-Chinese rhetoric in the United States. The case comprised a Chinese immigrant woman and her twins, a boy, and a girl, who were middle school students in a Northern California school district that transitioned to online learning in March 2020. Narrative interviews were conducted online and via telephone and analyzed using content analysis. The findings indicated the challenges in engaging students in online learning that impacted their interactions with classmates and their learning experiences. The findings also revealed the family's coping mechanisms for dealing with anti-Asian discrimination and prejudice against Chinese immigrants, an issue that the twin's school, teacher, and classmates seem to have ignored, according to their accounts. These mechanisms were grounded in their Chinese culture and parental involvement styles. The study emphasizes the need to educate teachers on the use of technology and online teaching to middle school students, the value of Chinese parental involvement in their children's education, and the dangers of bias, discrimination, and microaggressions to promote inclusive classrooms. The results will benefit the development of online teaching and learning and touch upon students' diversity, policy makers' strategies, and the quality of the learning environment.

The Experiences of a Chinese Immigrant Family During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Since the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought challenges to educators, parents, and students in adapting to online learning due to school closure measures to protect students from getting infected and transmitting the virus (Viner et al., 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, 90% of students from 190 countries were affected by school closures. Parents, students, educators, and schools were dealing with uncertain school calendars, as well as the unknown consequences of online learning and interrupted education for millions of children worldwide (UNESCO, 2020). Facing these challenges, K–12 educators, parents, and students had to radically adapt to online learning, which demanded technological integration in instruction that affected teaching, learning, and social interactions (Prensky, 2014). Online learning also demanded more collaboration among teachers, parents, and students to foster a good home learning environment that would give continuity to children's education (Halpern, 2021; Lu, 2020). However, the transition to online learning revealed that schools were unprepared: often, they lacked fundamental technological support and know-how, and teachers lacked the necessary skills or experience to teach online (Lynch, 2020). Effective communication between teachers, students,

and families is a key component of learning that can lead to essential interactions that enhance student academic achievement (Huck & Zhang, 2021). Many researchers have demonstrated the impact parental involvement at home has on student motivation and achievement (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Olmstead, 2013). For example, parents play a vital role in monitoring student homework and grades and sharing the values of effort and academic success (Goodall, 2016).

An additional challenge brought by the pandemic was increased anti-Asian racism and xenophobia globally. Racial attacks and hate crimes against Asians and their descendants heightened as government leaders supported anti-Chinese rhetoric, including in the United States (Human Rights Watch, 2020; Kim & Shah, 2020; Strohlic, 2020). Recent publications have explored the reflections of Asian Americans concerning discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic, undergraduate and graduate students' perceptions of online learning during universities' closures, and school and family collaboration to foster physical education classes online (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Baber, 2020; Hill & Fitzgerald, 2020; Kim & Shah, 2020; Lu, 2020; Mailizar et al., 2020). These studies were conducted in South Korea, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Ireland, and China. Nonetheless, research is needed to investigate Chinese immigrant families' perspectives on the transition to online learning and their experiences in a climate of anti-Chinese rhetoric in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, this project used a case study to explore how a Chinese American family dealt with the multiple challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, aiming to answer the following research questions:

1. What were the perceptions and experiences of a Chinese immigrant family living in the United States about the transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic school closure?
2. In what ways did the Chinese culture influence the family's perspectives and experiences with online learning during the pandemic, and how did the anti-Chinese rhetoric impact this Chinese immigrant family's experiences during the pandemic?

Our investigation of these research questions will help us get a deep understanding of the challenges in engaging students from Chinese immigrant families in online learning that impacted their interactions with classmates and their learning experiences. Also, our results will reveal the family's coping mechanisms for dealing with anti-Asian discrimination and prejudice against Chinese immigrants based on their Chinese culture and parental involvement styles. The study explored the need to educate teachers the use of technology and online teaching and learning, the value of Chinese parental involvement in their children's education, and the dangers of bias, discrimination, and microaggressions to promote inclusive classrooms.

Literature Review

The following sub-sections lay out the conceptual frameworks that grounded this study: distance learning in K–12 schools, children's and families' online learning—particularly studies on twins and siblings, and the Chinese culture of education and parental involvement. The goal was to provide holistic perspectives on the target population (Chinese immigrant families living in the United States) and the impact of their culture and perceptions on distance learning during the COVID-19 outbreak and school closures.

Distance Learning in K–12 Settings and the COVID-19 Effects

Online/distance learning in K–12 settings has been offered throughout the United States in the past 20 years (Watson et al., 2014). Although the internet has contributed to offering online/distance learning in Advancement Placement programs, little had been done before the COVID-19 pandemic to implement online learning technology into K–12 schools in the United States (Ancil, 2014; Gemin & Pape, 2016). Structural resistance to technology implementation has included political, financial, organizational, and parental pressures combined with the need for “new curricula, new organization, new architecture, new teaching, new student assessments, new parental connections, new administration procedures, and many other elements” (Prensky, 2014, p. 389). Furthermore, many teachers and administrators seemed to be technologically illiterate due to limited opportunities to develop 21st-century technology skills in teacher education programs (Archambault et al., 2016).

Several arguments support the advantages of distance learning, including its accessibility, flexibility, and affordability (Dhawan, 2020). It allows students to access their classes synchronously or asynchronously, from any portable device, in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Moreover, students avoid spending money commuting to schools and other costs of traditional schooling (Singh & Thurman, 2019). However, the context of the COVID-19 pandemic made distance learning a necessity rather than an alternative form of education worldwide, forcing schools, educators, parents, and students to shift rapidly to prevent the transmission of the virus (Carey, 2020).

Chinese Culture and Parental Involvement

Chinese culture, education, and social and individual interactions are highly influenced by the ancient Confucian tradition that values a solid family-centered structure, collectivism, conformity, interpersonal cohesion, and interdependence (Hurh, 1998). Because of the high value placed on education, Confucianism heavily influences East Asians’ perceptions of academic achievement as the first step to personal success and socioeconomic prosperity (Shen et al., 2020). Above all, dedication to education is associated with honoring the family (Zhou & Kim, 2006).

Thus, Chinese immigrants’ parental involvement behaviors are shaped by traditional values and personal experiences that make them sacrifice themselves to support their children’s education, despite the challenges of adapting to a host country’s culture (Zhang et al., 2011; 2016). For example, they become more involved and controlling of their children’s education than American parents, which directly impacts their children’s perceptions of the value of school achievement (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015; Zhou et al., 2020). Hence, the high academic performance of the Western-born children of Chinese immigrants is influenced by factors that go beyond teaching methods and education systems; it is strongly affected by parenting standards grounded in Confucianism and the value their families place on education as a means to thrive in American society (Byun & Park, 2012; Moreno & Wong-Lo, 2011). Nonetheless, Chinese immigrant parents feel more comfortable supervising and monitoring their children’s out-of-school activities, such as homework and projects, than getting involved in school-related activities (Anicama et al., 2018).

Siblings and Twins Learning at Home

Many educators studying siblings and twins learning at home have examined the effects of parental educational background, experience, and cognitive ability (Baier, 2019). The increasing

number of twin births in the United States in the last two decades has prompted scholars to investigate the relationships between their families' role and their learning behavior, academic outcomes, educational attainment, and general well-being (Gleicher et al., 2014; Monkediek et al., 2020; Pison & D'Addato, 2006). The assumption that twins tend to share similar environmental experiences to siblings in non-twin families has affected the external validity of twin studies; the social interactions and values in these two groups are not as equal as often assumed (Nielsen, 2016; Polderman et al., 2015). In fact, twins' discordant development has been explained by reasons ranging from the unequal experiences of their conception to how they are treated by their parents (Asbury et al., 2003; Zwijnenburg et al., 2010). Particularly stressful family environments impede twins' parents' ability to monitor their behaviors and give equal attention to their children, which results in differential treatment for twins compared with siblings in non-twin families (Beck, 2002; Monkediek et al., 2020; Robin et al., 1996). Conversely, when comparing twins to a single child, Goldsmith et al. (1994) found similarities both in physical and personality development. Moreover, in twins' families, the degree of parental involvement in day-to-day activities and the magnitude of parental expression of emotional warmth vary by children's age and developmental stage (Jenkins et al., 2003; Osmanowski, 2016).

Furthermore, consistent with biosocial theory and gender schema theories, differences in parental behavior related to their children's genders are often observed, including how parents use control strategies with boys and girls (Bem, 1981; Culp et al., 1983; Endendijk et al., 2016; Wood & Eagly, 2012). However, to date, there has been no consensus in the literature about the extent to which parents treat their sons and daughters differently, in which areas of parenting this phenomenon mostly occurs, and whether fathers and mothers differ in the extent of gender differentiation (Fagot & Hagan, 1985; Leaper et al., 1998; Lytton & Romney, 1991).

Children and Families' Online Learning During the Pandemic

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and families are still unknown, as researchers continue to investigate the effects of interrupted schooling, school closures, and the transition to online learning worldwide. For example, in Latvia, parents became learning agents, a situation in which mainly the mothers supported their children's learning remotely without much guidance from school teachers. This impacted children's academic gains and performance significantly (Daniela et al., 2021). In the Netherlands, Engzell et al. (2021) found significant learning loss in math, reading, and spelling in K–12 students during the lockdown.

In Pakistan, parents reported numerous challenges in managing their children's learning online. They acknowledged the benefits of traditional schooling in providing structured routines to teach children the importance of scheduling and completing their assignments on time and developing their social skills (Bhamani et al., 2020). Also, while teachers' unpreparedness to teach online caused children to be distracted during classes, they integrated the COVID-19 pandemic topic into children's online classes, resulting in the children becoming more responsible for their health and hygiene than they had been before with traditional schooling.

In particular, Chinese parents held negative perspectives of their children's online learning during the lockdown, reporting feeling unprepared to support their children while managing their professional schedules and responsibilities (Dong et al., 2020). Similarly, Garbe et al. (2020) found that parents struggled the most with balancing their personal and professional responsibilities with their children's online learning involvement. Some of the challenges related to children's online learning included their lack of motivation and engagement, boredom, and difficulty keeping their attention span during online classes. Other challenges included lack of teacher communication,

lack of access to technology and quality internet connection, and lack of resources from the school to maintain online learning. Figure 1 illustrates the relationships among the conceptual frameworks guiding this study. It integrates multiple theories (Rasool & Zhang, 2020; Rasool et al. 2021): multi-faceted parental involvement at home (Gonida & Cortina, 2014; Walker et al., 2010) and parents' sharing of their thoughts related to students' learning processes (Hill & Chao, 2009; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). It also includes interactions and collaboration between parents and teachers at home to support children with learning skills, create learning strategies, set up career goals and educational outcomes (Vygotsky, 1978). Sheldon and Epstein (2005) summarized the types of parental involvement behaviors that influence secondary and elementary school students' educational achievement. In Chinese culture, parental involvement is grounded on a classic Confucianism. Lun Yu suggests "a good official should learn, and a good learner should be an official (仕而优则学, 学而优则仕)" (Yao & Yao, 2000), a utilitarian view of the purpose of learning that values its usefulness for career and social development (Liu et al., 2021).

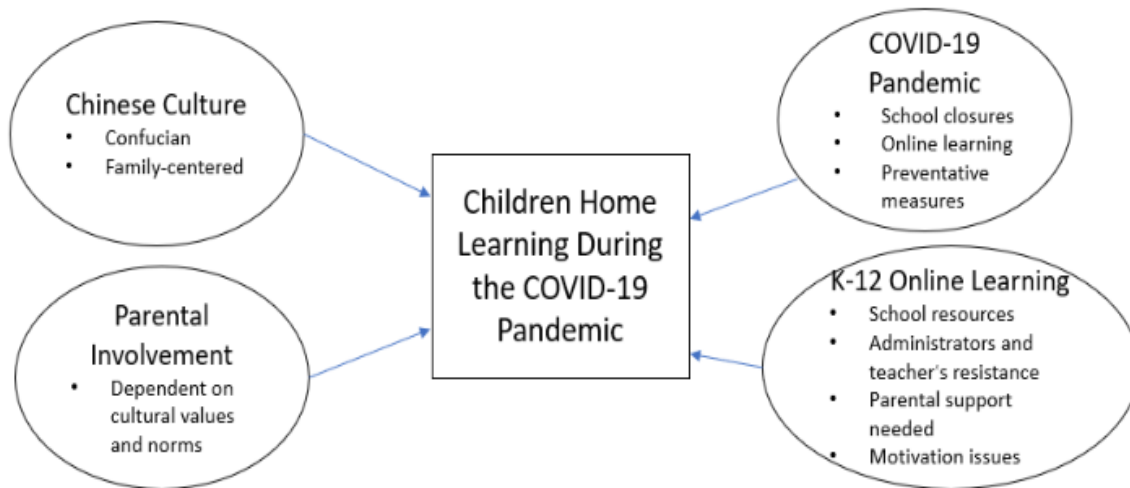


Figure 1. Framework of the Impact of Chinese Immigrant Family Culture on Children's Home Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The literature on the experiences of children and families with online learning during the pandemic has shed light on important challenges; however, it is necessary to investigate the perspectives and experiences of a Chinese immigrant family with online learning in an anti-Chinese climate in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Method

The qualitative case study investigated a Chinese immigrant family's perceptions and experiences during the contemporary, real-life context of the COVID-19 pandemic school closures (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Notably, case studies can investigate one person, one organization, one program, or, in this case, one family (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, according to Stake's (1995) definition; the researchers chose a purposeful case that represented the phenomenon of interest to be investigated. In other words, the family was selected because it exemplified the phenomenon of a Chinese immigrant family who experienced the transition to online learning during the pandemic in the midst of the rise of anti-Asian discrimination in the United States.

Chinese Americans make up the largest Asian origin group in the U.S. with 4.1 million population; California is the most representative region in the country with Chinese immigrants (Gebeloff et al., 2021). The following sub-sections will describe the case, data collection and analysis procedures, and the researchers' positionalities.

The Case: A Chinese Immigrant Family with Twins

Jinjing was a 48-year-old Chinese woman who immigrated from a traditional and well-educated family in Beijing, China, after she got her master's degree in 1995. Then she obtained her Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering in the United States in 1998. Her background was strongly rooted in her intellectual family's traditional Chinese culture and education. At the time of the study, she worked as a senior executive for a prestigious multinational technology company. She was a single mother of 11-year-old first-generation Chinese American twins, Ling (a girl) and Cheng (a boy). The twins were 7th-grade middle-school students in a Northern California school district. Their school transitioned to distance learning in March 2020, and they continued to attend distance learning classes in the 2020–2021 school year due to preventative measures to protect students from getting infected with and spreading the COVID-19 virus.

Data Collection and Analysis

Before the beginning of the study, the researchers got approval from their university's institutional review board. Jinjing, the twins' mother, signed an informed consent form authorizing her and her children's participation in the study. The form ensured their right to non-participation and non-response and described measures to protect their identities using pseudonyms (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data was collected through narrative interviews conducted by telephone and online via Zoom, and field notes were taken during the interviews in September/October 2020 (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). The narrative interviews explored the participants' in-depth perspectives of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic as a Chinese immigrant family. They allowed them to select and order the events and experiences as they wished (Denzin, 1989). The combination of data from the interviews provided a holistic understanding of the participants' perceptions, challenges, and experiences individually and as a family. The researchers used Powell et al.'s (2005) suggested steps for narrative interviewing and asked questions such as a) Tell me about the transition to online classes; b) How are your interactions and relationships with classmates in your online classes?; c) Tell me about your children's transition to online classes; and d) Tell me about the influence of Chinese culture in your involvement with your children's education online and how it compares with your involvement in traditional schooling.

Furthermore, the researchers were mindful of the importance of observing and interviewing children in their real-life settings; thus, their interviews were conducted via Zoom to use their computers in an environment familiar and comfortable to them (Vygotsky, 1978). Moreover, each interview lasted nearly two hours, which allowed the researchers to build trust and rapport with the children and bridge the gap of the inherent power imbalance between adults and children (Lahman, 2008). The following measures were taken to ensure a successful interview with the children: a) they were given initial control over the interview; b) the researchers shared personal information to create a warm, safe, interactive environment to encourage them to talk; c) the purpose of the research was openly discussed so that the children understood the importance of their contribution; d) the researchers ensured that there were no right or wrong answers to encourage the children to speak freely about their perspectives, feelings, and experiences; and e)

the researchers took notice of the children's nonverbal reactions (e.g., body language such as smiling, laughing, nodding, and shrugging) and wrote them in their field notes. These measures generated detailed descriptions of the twins' experiences and perceptions of online learning during the pandemic (Griffin et al., 2016).

The data were collected and analyzed simultaneously (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and combined with the researchers' field notes. The aggregated data was organized, sorted, and grouped into initial categories using analytical coding that sought "interpretation and reflection on [contextual] meaning" (Richards, 2015, p. 112). Inductive coding allowed the researchers to note in analytic memos the codes that emerged progressively during the data collection (Miles et al., 2014). The researchers developed the coding system based on the theoretical frameworks presented in the literature review section that integrated Chinese culture, parental involvement, online learning at home, and the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Then, content analysis was applied as a systematic analysis approach that helped the researchers make sense of the data through qualitative data reduction. For such, the researchers organized the data, grouped them into categories based on the literature review and the purpose of the study, that is, focusing on elements related to family involvement and children's learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and the influence of the Chinese culture in their perceptions and experiences. It resulted in identifying themes and patterns in the data collected that offered meaningful and contextual interpretations of the participants' experiences (Grbich, 2013; Patton, 2015). Based on the narrative interviews with the participants, themes emerged concerning the meanings of and relationships between their experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).

Next, the researchers resorted to two strategies to reduce bias in their interpretation and increase the findings' credibility, accuracy, and trustworthiness. First, they used the triangulating analyst approach, analyzing the data separately and later comparing them to check for inconsistencies (Patton, 2015). Second, the constant comparison method was used to identify similarities and differences in the researchers' interpretations. Finally, external audits and member-checking were used to ensure the study's trustworthiness and credibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Researchers' Positionality

The first author is a Chinese professor living in the United States with over 30 years of teaching, learning, and research experiences in North America and China. Among his broad research interests are the educational experiences of Chinese immigrant families in the host country and teaching and learning strategies in traditional versus online learning environments. The second author is an international doctoral student from Brazil in the United States interested in multicultural and multilingual education, immigration issues in education, comparative international studies, and human rights.

As a Chinese immigrant, the first author considered whether his familiarity with his cultural background and experiences could help make sense of the participants' experiences, opinions, expressions, and behaviors. However, the first author was aware that his interpretations could bear bias, as they were permeated with his epistemological perspectives based on his cultural and ethnic background (Velho, 1978). Therefore, as an outsider to the Chinese culture, the second author took the lead in conducting the interviews and identifying the initial codes and categories for data analysis. Then, the two authors combined their insider/outsider perspectives, considering their

expertise, experiences, and individual biases to explore the meanings of the perceptions and experiences of the participants.

Findings

The content analysis of the data collected from the mother's and twins' interviews resulted in the following themes: disengaged learning, disconnected relationships, Tiger parenting in the pandemic, and performance over bias. Tiger parenting is a form of strict parenting, whereby parents are highly invested in ensuring their children's success. Specifically, Tiger parents push their children to attain high levels of academic achievement or success in high-status extracurricular activities (Chua, 2011; Cheah et al., 2013; Kim, 2013). In addition, the findings pointed out challenges in engaging students in online learning, which impacted their relationships with classmates and friends and affected their learning experiences. The findings also revealed significant aspects of the Chinese culture, in this case in terms of parental involvement and the children's learning and coping mechanisms used to deal with anti-Asian discrimination and prejudice against Chinese immigrants. The first two themes responded to research question one, while the last two related to question two.

Theme One: Disengaged Learning for Twins' Online Learning at Home

The first theme that emerged from the children's perspectives was that going to school was more engaging and yielded a better learning experience than distance learning. However, they felt frustrated and said they were constantly distracted during classes. Ling said, "School is all about going through open tabs. At home, we get easily distracted watching YouTube videos and entertaining." Cheng added, "Things were easier and busier at school. It's harder to focus sitting on my chair and clicking things all day at home. It's painful to do everything online!" The mother agreed with her children: "Sometimes the kids play games while in class, which dropped their grades to B in the past semester" (Jinjing). In addition, distractions with distance learning and the lack of teacher support made the twins more tired than usual and unable to keep up with the amount of homework piled up over the weekend.

Another aspect that caused the twins to perceive distance learning as a disengaging experience was frequent technical issues during the classes: "The website we were using [for classes] crashed, and we didn't do anything last week! No classes! It crashed because of all the people online at the same time. They didn't know what to do about that" (Ling). Indeed, the unprecedented times of COVID-19 caused schools and educators to switch rapidly to distance learning and deal with unexpected technical issues. Therefore, the children associated distance learning with a lack of planning due to the unforeseen nature of online classes during school closures. Conversely, they associated traditional schooling with a sense of comfort and predictable learning.

The children mentioned simple things like their interactions with friends, "missing exercising and having actual books" (Cheng), and "flipping through books' pages, without worrying about online tabs and clicks" (Ling). Jinjing supported her children's perspectives, commenting that distance learning took a toll on their learning motivation, as they stayed on their computers "day and night."

Theme Two: Disconnected Relationships – Boring Connections for Their Online Learning

The second theme that emerged was the children's lack of social and learning interactions during online classes that affected their motivation: "Everything about school was better. Now, the teachers don't care and don't even know what we're doing during class" (Ling). The children also

felt disconnected from their teachers: “I email my teacher asking for help, but I’m pretty sure she gets annoyed at me. She’s not so patient with so many emails from students” (Cheng).

The children discussed the importance of being alert during distance learning classes to avoid missing any details. They could then avoid messaging or emailing the teachers later with questions and feel they were bothering them. In this sense, they talked about the uniqueness of twins taking online classes in the same “classroom,” which helped them remind one another of homework and other responsibilities. They recognized that their classmates did not have the same advantage and were more “on their own” (Ling).

The twins equally complained about having to turn on their cameras and microphones to participate in online classes, emphasizing that this could not replace their physical interactions with their friends: “When classes became online, my first thought was, ‘oh no, we’re going to turn on the cameras.’ The school made us do it, and we just hate it” (Ling). Cheng did not like turning on his camera because of his introverted nature: “In school, I was the quiet kid in the back. I barely spoke to anyone then, and I wouldn’t do it now on camera.”

Furthermore, having to interact with children from the entire school district in the same virtual environment took a toll on their social learning experiences. For example, “Online school is for the whole district. So, we have people from other schools in our class. That’s why [Zoom] breakout rooms are so awkward” (Ling). The lack of familiarity with classmates from other schools inhibited the children from engaging with different students and contributed to their frustrations concerning turning on their cameras and microphones.

Theme Three: Tiger Parenting in the Pandemic—Chinese Culture’s Impact on Parents

The third theme that emerged was the children’s perception that their mother’s primary interest was in their scores and academic performance rather than in how online schooling was working for them during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cheng commented, “Our interactions at home are awkward because our conversations are mostly about our scores.” Despite their apparent disappointment with the lack of parental involvement in other aspects of their schooling, the children mentioned that their mother was busier than usual during the pandemic, working from home, attending online meetings all day, and dealing with an overload of email messages daily. However, they interpreted their mother’s apparent disinterest in their learning and her heavy focus on scores as being due to the pandemic because, as both children stated, their mother was usually “very strict with school.”

Nonetheless, when explaining her apparent distance from the twins’ schooling experiences, Jinjing said she learned to balance her high-performance expectations as a Tiger mother with building her children’s self-motivation and independent learning skills required by the American education system. Jinjing felt that her parental involvement behavior did not change when the twins transitioned to distance learning, as she monitored their performance “on and offline.”

Tiger moms are very aggressive, but I’m not as aggressive as them. While other kids have projects outside of school, my kids are playing games. I’d love to push my kids even harder, but I feel that kids need to self-motivate to study, learn, and solve problems because they must feel it’s important *for them*, not because I’m telling them to. (Jinjing)

Jinjing’s perspectives agree with previous studies that found that Chinese immigrant parents’ involvement in their children’s education is motivated by high expectations and a desire to see their children thrive in American society and their future (Moreno & Wong-Lo, 2011; Zhou et al., 2020). Despite her initial description of herself as a “typical Tiger mother,” Jinjing reflected that

she achieved a balance between her Tiger parenting and the American education system's demands; she had learned that middle-school children in the United States should build independent learning skills rather than being overly monitored by their parents. She explained:

In elementary school, I'd watch and check their homework. Now, I understand that the kids must start to learn to monitor their own progress, and parents need to be ready to answer their questions and monitor their scores and attendance. So, I let them know that I do care about their scores, and I am consistently asking them about their test schedule.

Therefore, Jinjing felt she was exercising her own way of being a Tiger mother, giving her children the freedom to motivate themselves and develop their learning skills while also monitoring their school progress. Also, when asked if the children were aware that her involvement with their schooling was associated with "typical Tiger mom behavior," she affirmed, "They know that! And they're happy looking at their good scores. 'Are they happy to see a B?' Of course not. 'Are they happy to get an A?' Absolutely!" In Jinjing's interview, the words "control," "monitor," "watch and check," "achievement," and "scores" came up repeatedly.

The children emphasized that their mother played a significant role in their decision to continue with online/distance learning when schools reopened: "My mom cares a lot. She taught us that if someone truly cares about themselves and others, why would they go back to real-life school?" (Ling). Thus, even though the children did not like distance learning, the family's cultural background had a heavyweight in their decision to remain in distance learning to prioritize the collective good rather than focus on individual wants and needs.

Theme Four: Performance Over Bias–Stress and Pressure from the Political Climate

The final theme emerged from the family's discussion of the news that referred to COVID-19 as the "Chinese virus" and the widespread discrimination experienced during the pandemic. Jinjing repeatedly stated her commitment to instilling in her children self-reliance, discipline, and unwavering commitment to academic achievement and success, believing that this would fortify their character. Most importantly, she was confident that these traits could divert them from their discrimination experiences and ease the burden that national origin or skin color could bring. Thus, whenever the twins mentioned issues with their skin color and the related COVID-19 news, she would say: "It's not right for the other kids to treat you differently because of your skin color. You were born in the U.S.! You're American, just like the other kids." Jinjing continued: "I came to this country because of its fairness. It doesn't matter if I'm an immigrant, woman, single mother, or my skin color. If you work hard and build strong skills, the country will reward you."

Therefore, like herself, Jinjing believed that her children's accomplishments would also help them find a way around structural bias and divert anti-Asian sentiments, which had mainly arisen during the pandemic. Jinjing firmly believed her sole role was to make sure her children had good grades. Thus, she diminished the microaggressions and prejudice faced by her children—and herself—and justified them as jealousy and envy: "If you have good skills, other kids will say bad things to you as a joke or because they envy your skills."

Jinjing's remark followed Ling's comment about her experience with microaggression before the lockdown: "When one of my classmates sneezed, and I offered him a tissue, he said, 'You're Chinese, and this virus is all your fault.'" Despite saying their classmate's reaction saddened them, the twins followed their mother's recommendations, saying: "Obviously, this was a joke. We always fight because I'm a better student than he is" (Ling). Cheng added, "This guy's always picking on Ling; so, he was probably bothered by her attitudes and performance in class." When

asked about their other classmates' reactions to this incident, Ling said, "Maybe it was a joke because no one ever talked about it. I think no one cares because it's not the first time he's said or done anything like that to me." Jinjing responded: "I know White kids are mistreating them because they're Chinese. The bias comes from their parents, the TV, and the media. So, they learn to behave like that."

Jinjing channeled her matter-of-fact worldview and professional trajectory into her children, ensuring they were well-equipped to deal with obstacles that might manifest in their way. They learned that anything could be beaten through accomplishments, personal skills, and interpersonal relationships despite their skin color, nationality, and gender.

I don't talk to my kids about bias because I don't want it in their minds. It's a way to protect them. Their skin color will never change. But if they think everything is biased, they'll have a hard time adjusting to society. So, I help them focus on what they can do with their personal skills instead of saying their friends have a bias against them being Chinese.

Thus, Jinjing's family distanced themselves from discriminatory manifestations to soften inflictions that could destabilize them. Obscuring discrimination might have limited open communication between the family members when emotional and intimate matters were avoided. Profound and essential themes were relegated to obscurity and deemed unworthy of attention. What was perceived were issues close to the surface, most evidently skin tones, which were seen as easy enough to explicate and overcome with the children's social experiences in school:

No bias! Academics are more important. They must fight for what is right. Show your good academic skills and make friends with them [White kids]. Then, they can achieve what they want, find a comfortable spot in society, and find a way around bias. (Jinjing)

Ultimately, test scores were quantifiable and clear-cut success measures, devoid of bias, and a demonstrable example of American fairness.

Discussion

The *disengaged learning* finding agrees with previous studies that have pointed to online/distance learning barriers in keeping students engaged and focused during their classes. For example, despite the necessity of online learning to maintain children's schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and school closures, its implementation exacerbated the teachers' unpreparedness and the schools' limited resources to engage students online (Dhawan, 2020; Halpern, 2021; Lynch, 2020). In a similar vein, *disconnected relationships* were evidenced in the twins' experiences with their classmates and teachers, including the lack of interactions exacerbated by keeping their cameras and microphones off during online classes (Bhamani et al., 2020; Garbe et al., 2020). This phenomenon was also shared by teachers and students worldwide during the pandemic. Feelings that online learning was "distant" significantly contributed to a lack of engagement in classes and enlarged the distance between teachers and students (Garbe et al., 2020; Halpern, 2021).

Despite the challenges experienced by the twins in online learning, the family was aware that such an abrupt change from traditional to online classes required patience, adaptation, and flexibility in different aspects of education, from curricula, administration, and organization, to instruction, student engagement, and assessment (Dhawan, 2020; Dong et al., 2020). Thus, the family was understanding of the challenges of adapting to distance learning, in which the unpredictability and unprecedented times of a global pandemic added extra pressure to schools,

administrators, teachers, students, and parents that deeply impacted students' social experiences, interactions, and learning (Dong et al., 2020; Garbe et al., 2020; Halpern, 2021).

Concerning the theme of *Tiger parenting in the pandemic*, the family's perspectives agreed with Chinese cultural norms grounded in Confucianism, which tend to make East Asian immigrant parents more controlling of their children's academic performance and place a higher value on it (Byun & Park, 2012; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015). In particular, Jinjing's perspectives agreed with previous studies that found Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education was motivated by high expectations, high emphasis on academic success and achievement based on Confucianism, and a desire to see their children thrive in American society (Moreno & Wong-Lo, 2011; Zhou et al., 2020). However, Jinjing's "typical Tiger" parental involvement had achieved a balance with her understanding of the requirements and expectations of the American culture and education system (Shen et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2020).

The impact of the Chinese culture on the family's experiences with online learning during the pandemic was also evidenced in their decision to keep taking classes online despite the possibility of returning to face-to-face schooling. This decision agreed with a Chinese cultural behavior that highly values collectivism and strong family-centered decisions (Hurh, 1998; Shen et al., 2020). In this sense, the family prioritized the shared, collective good of protecting themselves and others from transmitting and spreading the virus by staying at home rather than individual wants and needs.

The influence of the Chinese culture was also present in Jinjing's commitment to instilling in her children self-reliance and discipline in academic *performance to overcome bias*. She believed that this would fortify their characters in alignment with Confucianism and their cultural background and would divert anti-Asian sentiments, particularly during the pandemic when xenophobia came to the forefront of foreign politics and racial relations were ever more strained in the United States (Byun & Park, 2012; Human Rights Watch, 2020; Kim & Shah, 2020; Strohlic, 2020; Zhou et al., 2020).

In fact, the family's experiences exemplified microaggressions, which are "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). Although the pandemic intensified microaggressions against the children, Jinjing insisted that what mattered was that her children were American, which was enough to negate the phenotypical and cultural baggage they brought to their school. Inadvertently, the mother's perspectives work to perpetuate microaggressions against Asians and Asian Americans, in particular in the form of microinvalidations (e.g., color-blindness) that "exclude, negate, or nullify" a person of color's experiences, feelings, and perspectives related to their racial/ethnic identity (Sue, 2010, p. 29). Moreover, for the mother, the United States was where she found validation, and she was protective of this sentiment. She repeatedly emphasized academic performance and professional success as strong motivators to thrive and stand out in the American education system and society; she believed this emphasis would protect her family against anti-Chinese bias (Moreno & Wong-Lo, 2011). However, this perspective contributes to myths of meritocracy that assert success as a result of individual effort rather than impacted by race. Jinjing's sentiments may contribute to the perceptions that Asians/Asian Americans can be "immune to racism" (Sue, 2010, p. 152) and do not experience racial/ethnic discrimination (Sue & Sue, 2008). Further, the family's experience may reveal the system that oppresses Asians and Asian Americans in the United States, in which the denial of color, race, and ethnicity excludes and denies differences, the existence of power and privilege in society, and, ultimately, the need to take action against racism

(Sue, 2005, 2010). Nonetheless, the literature indicates that racial/ethnic microaggressions impact students' academic achievement and sense of belonging to the school community negatively because they communicate the views that individuals from minority groups are inferior and of less worth than Americans (Halpern & Aydin, 2020; Sue et al., 2007).

Conclusion

This study investigated a Chinese immigrant family's experiences and perspectives on the transition to online learning in a climate of anti-Chinese rhetoric in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. The case provided a holistic view of the shared experiences of a Chinese family adapting to online learning and their coping mechanisms for dealing with anti-Chinese bias, microaggressions, and discrimination. Mainly, the case evidenced how the family's tradition, rooted in Confucianism with its solid family-centered principles and educational values focused on academic success and prosperity, was vital to help them cope with incidents of anti-Chinese bias, discrimination, and microaggressions (Hurh, 1998; Shen et al., 2020; Sue et al., 2007; Zhou & Kim, 2006). In this sense, the notion that Chinese immigrant parental involvement behavior is motivated by their desire to see their children thrive in American society (Moreno & Wong-Lo, 2011) could also be associated with parental strategies to overcome bias and discrimination in the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, previous studies indicate that denial of racial group identity and the adherence to color-blind and the myth of meritocracy perspectives are considered unhealthy coping behaviors that perpetuate racism and microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007). The results might also promote more developmentally appropriate models in Chinese immigrant families and other ethnic minorities and encourage the expansion of available support for their children's continuous and healthy development in North America. The results may also inform school teachers, administrators, and online learning designers of the importance of their support for culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families, notably with discrimination and microaggressions in online and face-to-face learning. Also, policymakers could get some ideas from this study to improve the relevant schooling policies concerning the needs of these students online.

Notably, one of the study's limitations was its method, as case studies do not allow generalizable results. However, as Stake (1995) proposed, the findings provided lessons that could be applied to other cultural contexts when researchers explore participants' experiences and perceptions during the COVID-19 outbreak school closures. Nonetheless, the study's findings contribute to improving teaching and learning online by considering social and cultural factors related to learners' Chinese heritage and offering implications concerning parental involvement to help children overcome the challenges of online learning. The findings may also inform teacher education program leaders and educators about the need to infuse these programs with technology training that considers the needs of culturally diverse children. Finally, they fill the gap in studies related to Chinese families' participation in their children's online learning during the pandemic and explore the relevant patterns in this special period.

Future studies could explore cases of Chinese immigrant families using other methodological approaches, such as mixed methods, to get a holistic understanding of their experiences with online learning during the pandemic. In addition, future studies could compare the perspectives of other Chinese immigrant families during the pandemic from different parts of the United States to gain a broader understanding of the similarities and differences between the cases. Moreover, it would be valuable to compare the experiences of other Asian immigrant families and the diverse challenges they faced concerning bias, discrimination, and microaggressions during the COVID-

19 pandemic. In addition, a large-scale study is recommended to get a holistic understanding of the experiences of families of different immigrant backgrounds with online learning in the United States during COVID-19.

Finally, the study called out the need to educate teachers on using technology and online learning to engage students virtually during the unprecedented times of a global pandemic. The study also highlights the value of Chinese parental involvement in their children's education and how Chinese heritage rooted in Confucianism was essential to helping an immigrant family deal with the dangers of bias, discrimination, and microaggressions. Although the present study initiated a discussion on the strategies that a particular Chinese immigrant family used to cope with bias, discrimination, and microaggressions, future research could focus specifically on the perceptions of and strategies employed by Chinese immigrant families to deal with the same issue. In addition, more cases could provide a larger picture of the experiences of Chinese immigrant families with bias, discrimination, and microaggressions during and after the COVID-19 pandemic and how they make sense of such experiences. Finally, additional research could explore specific strategies that Chinese immigrant parents use to educate and prepare their children to deal with anti-Asian discrimination.

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