



*“Good Trouble, Necessary Trouble”: Dismantling Oppression through Resistance and Activism*

*Special series: Dismantling Systems of Racism and Oppression during Adolescence*

## Acknowledging Anti-Blackness, Overlooking Anti-Asian Racism: Missed Developmental Opportunities for Chinese American Youth

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This paper explores the pathways and barriers to critical consciousness development for Chinese American youth. Thirty-five interviews conducted in 2020 with high-school-aged students in Chicago were analyzed to better understand young people’s experiences developing an understanding of anti-Asian racism and anti-Blackness. Results indicated that participants overwhelmingly engaged in sustained conversations about Black Lives Matter and/or made efforts to address anti-Blackness within their families, but engaged in limited conversations about anti-Asian racism. Furthermore, conversations at home and school often failed to contextualize anti-Asian racism, specifically in relation to the experiences of other oppressed groups. Findings highlight a need for research on and practice with Chinese American adolescents to recognize the unique racial positioning of Asian Americans under White supremacy.

Key words: Asian American youth – Chinese American youth – critical consciousness development

Opportunities to learn about and address systemic oppression are important for Asian Americans who are often overlooked or excluded from critically important conversations about race and racism because of pervasive stereotypes (Sue et al., 2021). This need is particularly pronounced within the current sociopolitical context as Asian communities witness an upsurge in racially motivated attacks throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (Jeung et al., 2021). While research suggests that youth of color who are afforded the space to critically examine their experiences with racism may be better positioned to interrogate their racial positioning (Howard, 2004; Howard & del Rosario, 2000; Sue, 2013) and more likely to acknowledge and address anti-Black racism (Merseeth, 2018), very few studies have examined how these developmental processes

may look differently for Asian Americans (Hope et al., [forthcoming](#)).

This paper seeks to advance understandings of adolescent sociopolitical development by examining the pathways and barriers to critical consciousness development for Chinese American youth. We draw on theories of sociopolitical development (Watts et al., 2003)—with special attention to critical consciousness—and Asian American racial identity formation (Kim, 1999) to inform our analytical framework to better understand the factors that may support or inhibit their development. We analyze 35 semi-structured interviews conducted in the fall of 2020 with high-school-aged adolescents in Chicago, paying special attention to the experiences and resources that support critical consciousness development (a component of sociopolitical development), help youth confront internalized anti-Blackness and/or

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anti-Blackness within the Chinese community, and nurture or sustain participation in Black-Asian racial solidarity efforts. Our paper highlights the significance of peers, online spaces, and youth spaces in deepening participants' understanding about racism and encouraging anti-racist practice, as well as bringing needed attention to the unique challenges Chinese American youth face within their home and school contexts that may complicate their sociopolitical development.

### Theoretical Framework

Sociopolitical development (SPD) describes an ongoing process in which an individual acquires the knowledge, skills, emotional faculties, and capacity to understand and act against systems of oppression (Watts et al., 2003). It requires developing an understanding of the social, historical, and political structures and forces that perpetuate inequities and privileges—known as “critical consciousness”—as well as a capacity to envision and create a more just society (Watts et al., 2003). Critical consciousness (CC), or “conscientização” was first coined by liberation educator and philosopher Freire (1970), who believed that the process of developing an awareness of inequitable social conditions and their historical contexts fostered a sense of agency to act against oppressive systems.

Building on Freire's work, contemporary scholars conceptualize CC as consisting of three domains—*critical reflection* (the process of learning to question social arrangements and structures that marginalize groups of people), *critical motivation/political efficacy* (one's agency and commitment to address perceived injustices), and *critical action* (engagement in individual or collective behaviors to change perceived injustices)—that reinforce each other to aid in one's sociopolitical development (Diemer & Li, 2011; Watts et al., 2003). Social interactions, particularly discussions and experiences that prompt individuals to critically examine and challenge their surrounding sociopolitical environment, can encourage the development of CC (Freire, 1970; Watts & Guessous, 2006; Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015). The majority of studies on CC, however, have focused on Black, Latinx, and low-income youth, and few have examined how CC develops—or may be inhibited—among Asian American adolescents (Bañales et al., [Under-Review](#); Hope et al., [forthcoming](#)). These studies suggest that experiences of racism inform youth's critical social analysis and activism and that their racial and/or immigrant identity influences their

motivation to address issues as well as the types of political behaviors in which they engage (Anyiwo et al., 2018). However, minimal attention has been paid to how learning about and experiencing racism, developing a sense of self in the context of racism, and challenging racism based on one's understandings and experiences may influence CC development for youth (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Bañales et al., [UnderReview](#); Mathews et al., 2020) or how that development may look differently depending on context and identities.

Since the initial arrival of Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century, people of Asian descent have occupied a precarious racial positioning within the White supremacist racial order (Wong, 2015). As Kim's (1999) racial triangulation theory posits, Asian Americans and immigrants are intentionally elevated or marginalized relative to White people and other non-White groups to reinforce White dominance and privilege. This racialization of Asian Americans “profoundly shapes the opportunities, constraints, and possibilities” of not only people of Asian descent but all other groups deemed inferior to Whites (Kim, 1999, p. 107). Thus, examining how the experiences and understandings of Asian American youth may diverge from that of other youth, and under what conditions might their sociopolitical development look similarly or differently, may provide new insights into the interplay between racism and CC development (Mathews et al., 2020) as well as the interplay between racism and anti-racist development among adolescents (Anyiwo et al., 2020; Bañales et al., [UnderReview](#)).

Anti-racism among Chinese Americans requires intentional efforts to address internalized racism and anti-Blackness within the Asian American community (Hwang, 2021). Given that White supremacy structures certain privileges based on perceived phenotypic features, it also includes confronting colorism—or preference for fairer over darker skin tones—which is deeply rooted in Chinese culture<sup>1</sup> and intertwined with existing anti-Black sentiments (Bettache, 2020; Hunter, 2007). These complexities have yet to be fully considered in the theorizing of adolescent sociopolitical development, but likely have significant implications for how youth understand racism, relate to racial oppression, and engage with anti-racism.

<sup>1</sup>Historically, paler complexions indicated nobility and higher class status in ancient Chinese cultures. Thus, skin tone reflected a class-based hierarchical system (Bettache, 2020).

### The Racial Context of Chinese American Youth

Although many studies have examined the racial-ethnic socialization of Asian American youth, few have considered the history and relevance of the racialization of Asians in the United States when examining adolescent development (Juang et al., 2017). Regardless of their citizenship, length of residency, or generational status, Asian Americans have been consistently cast as perpetual foreigners who do not belong to the United States and who threaten White American values, culture, and success (Li & Nicholson, 2021). The yellow peril narrative has intensified within recent years as China's economic power on the world stage has grown and the U.S.' stronghold has weakened (Li & Nicholson, 2021). As has been observed throughout the Trump administration and the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese people—as well as others who are racialized as “Chinese” or “Asian”—have been scapegoated for the growing inequities that have become more apparent amid a shift in global superpowers and a global health crisis (Chang, 2020). The rise in anti-Asian sentiment throughout this time has significant implications for the sociopolitical and ethnic-racial identity development of Chinese American youth. Youth and their families are contending with racialized threats not only in their neighborhoods, schools, ethnic-serving businesses, and other cultural centers but also online (Jeung et al., 2021; Tahmasbi et al., 2021).

Embedded within this highly racialized context is the particularly complicated relationship between Black and Asian communities, which requires thoughtful consideration when examining the sociopolitical and anti-racist development of Chinese American youth. Fueled by the model minority myth and the repeated institutionalization of anti-Blackness, these two communities have been positioned in competition over resources under White supremacy (Kim, 1999). This has resulted in complex racial tensions such as those that contributed to the 1992 Los Angeles Race Riots. Asian Americans have perpetuated anti-Black beliefs and behaviors to maintain partial racial privileges and also because of their own internalized racism, experiences with discrimination, and underdeveloped understanding of systemic racism (Liu, 2018; Tran et al., 2018; Yellow Horse et al., 2021). Without fully understanding the structures and processes that pit these two groups against each other, Chinese American youth may embrace harmful colorblind ideologies and perpetuate racial harm.

This history and current context are important to consider when examining young people's sociopolitical development. Chinese American youth have had to navigate this increasingly hostile racial context at a moment when they are coming into greater social and ethnic-racial awareness (Flanagan et al., 2009; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Hughes et al., 2016). Middle adolescence, which is typically marked by the years associated with secondary education, is a time when young people explore other viewpoints, values, and behaviors that in turn shape their political interests and pathways later on (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). It is also a period during which young people's racial knowledge becomes more complex, compared to younger children, as they develop the capacity to appraise their own experiences relative to the experiences of others, evaluate their own group membership, and recognize the structures and processes of larger systems (Hughes et al., 2016). Thus, to better contextualize and understand their developmental trajectories, it is crucial to examine the sociopolitical and embedded racial contexts in which Chinese American youth are reared.

### Asian American Sociopolitical Development

The sociopolitical development of Asian American youth is largely overlooked and understudied in the literature (Chan, 2009; Pritzker, 2012). Existing studies, which have primarily focused on college student populations, suggest a great deal of heterogeneity and that various demographic and contextual factors predict types of civic engagement behavior. For example, Wray-Lake et al. (2017) found that young adults highly engaged in the electoral process were more likely than unengaged youth to have less educated parents, to report encountering opportunities on campus to explore their cultural identity, and to perceive their campus as more hostile to diversity. Furthermore, researchers found differences in engagement around elections based on ethnic group and immigration status, highlighting a need for data disaggregation among Asian American populations as well as future work that explains youth's divergent paths (Wray-Lake et al., 2017). Building off of this study, Yi and Todd (2021) found that Southeast Asian and South Asian college students tended to engage in more social change behaviors compared to East Asian students. Moreover, the authors found higher levels of participation in racial/ethnic identity-based organizations predicted more social

change behaviors across all Asian ethnic groups (Yi & Todd, 2021). Other prominent factors that can influence civic engagement among Asian American college students include relationships (e.g., family, friends, peers), identity (e.g., racial, ethnic), and acculturation processes (e.g., tensions between youth and caregivers; Chan, 2011). Collectively, available studies on college students indicate that various individual and contextual factors may support or inhibit the CC development of Chinese American youth.

As a primary socializing context, schools play an important role in the sociopolitical development of youth. For example, the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of Asian American history, culture, and experiences within K12 curriculum (Hartlep et al., 2016; Heilig et al., 2012) coupled with pervasive stereotypes of Asians as “model minorities” and “perpetual foreigners” (Cheng et al., 2017; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004) can shape the racial understandings of Asian American youth in addition to their non-Asian peers, teachers, and administrators in ways that deter anti-racist development. On the other hand, educators can positively influence youth sociopolitical development through curricular and facilitation choices (Rodríguez, 2018). Additionally, school administrators can encourage the sociopolitical development of students by promoting awareness of social issues, facilitating dialogue and critique of social inequity, and supporting organized student actions that seek to redress inequities (Ginwright & James, 2002).

Strong evidence suggests youth programs influence both Asian American youth sociopolitical and racial/ethnic identity development. The exploration and self-reflection of racial/ethnic identity is often the catalyst for sociopolitical engagement for many youth (Mathews et al., 2020). For instance, social justice-oriented and peer-led programming targeting Asian American youth which offer a safe space and opportunities for skill building and civic practice have been found to contribute to understandings of race and ethnicity, development of youth’s own racial and ethnic identities, feelings of empowerment, and increased political engagement and social responsibility (Lin et al., 2018; Suyemoto et al., 2015). Targeted programming has also been found to shape CC development and help contextualize Asian-Black interracial tensions (Quinn & Nguyen, 2017). Providing Asian American youth the opportunities to critically engage with their own identities through youth programming can positively affect sociopolitical development.

Social media has been dubbed the “great equalizer” for youth political engagement—that is, social media allows for more youth to transcend historical barriers to political engagement (i.e., socioeconomic status, race; Xenos et al., 2014). Evidence suggests that Asian American youth use social media to explore their racial identity development, share information, and politically organize (Tynes et al., 2011). Additionally, youth use social media to challenge deficit-focused narratives of youth, promote social change through collective action, and assert agency (Stornaiuolo & Thomas, 2018).

Although previous research suggests that parents play a vital role in the sociopolitical development in adolescents of color (Diemer, 2012; Diemer et al., 2009), there is a dearth of research on how this may differ across racial/ethnic minority groups, particularly for Asian American youth. In contrast to other youth of color, Asian American youth often do not have opportunities to discuss and process their racial identity development with their family members (Young et al., 2021). Moreover, for second-generation youth, there tends to be a bottom-up approach to racial socialization (i.e., children teaching parents about race) in Asian American families which is in contrast to processes of racial socialization in other racial/ethnic minorities (Young et al., 2021). To compensate for lack of familial support, Asian American youth may turn to peer support when exploring racial identity and sociopolitical development. Positive interracial friendships and relationships contribute to sociopolitical development by providing support for confronting instances of racism (Diemer et al., 2006, 2009). Furthermore, interracial friendships can challenge negative beliefs and attitudes toward other racial groups (Shelton & Richeson, 2006), which is particularly meaningful when addressing anti-Blackness in Asian American individuals.

## METHODS

The data for this paper are drawn from a larger study examining the opportunities and barriers that support and challenge the sociopolitical development and racial-ethnic socialization of Chinese and Asian American youth. A total of 76 high-school-aged Asian American youth in Chicago participated in the study throughout 2020–2021. Fifty-four youth were surveyed in the fall of 2020. Forty-eight of these participants continued on with the study and were surveyed again in the spring of 2021 along with 22 new participants. Of the 54 youth who were surveyed in the fall, a nonrandom subsample of 35

youth participated in interviews. This paper analyzes these 35 interviews from fall 2020.

Fall participants were primarily recruited through high school Asian American clubs (AACs) and organizations that work with Chicago-area Chinese and Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) communities in September and October 2020. One of these organizations, Chinese American Organization (CAO), played an important role since the pandemic restricted avenues to recruit participants.<sup>2</sup> The organization not only circulated recruitment materials to their own youth members and to youth program facilitators at other organizations via email, a group messaging platform, and during online meetings but also vouched for the first author (who is the Principal Investigator [PI] on the study).<sup>3</sup>

Participants were eligible for the current study if they (1) identified as Chinese, (2) were enrolled in high school grades 9–12, and (3) resided in Chicago or the surrounding suburban area. Participants were selectively invited to interviews by the PI in an effort to have different gender groups, generational statuses, pre-immigration regions (by proxy of dialects spoken at home), residential areas within Chicago, high schools, grade levels, and APIDA youth organizations represented in the interview sample. After completion of the online survey, the PI invited youth from these different demographic groups to participate in an in-depth interview with either her or the other interviewer.<sup>4</sup> Participants were interviewed by one of the two authors over the phone or on Zoom (depending on participants' preference) within the month following participants' completion of the survey. Prior to each interview, interviewers reviewed the survey

responses of their scheduled interviewee to have greater context about participants' background and recent experiences. This allowed interviewers to modify questions in the interview guide and probe participants' responses as needed. Immediately following each interview, interviewers completed an analytical memo to capture useful context, thoughts, comparisons, and connections across cases and to the existing literature, questions, and directions to pursue (Charmaz, 2006). Writing the memos provided interviewers the space to actively engage with the data and fine-tune the interview guide for subsequent interviews (Charmaz, 2006). Each participant was compensated \$10 in the form of electronic payment or gift card for completing the survey and an additional \$15 for the interview.

### Interviewer Guide

Interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately 30 min to an hour. The interview guide inquired about participants' racial socialization experiences across multiple domains (family, school, peers, neighborhood, organization, and social media), including recent experiences engaging in conversations about anti-Asian and anti-Black racism. With consent from the Executive Director, facilitators, and participants, the lead author observed and participated in the CAO youth program member meetings and planning meetings from July 2020 to December 2020, which informed the design of the survey and interview questions. The surveys and interviews took place between October 2020 and December 2020, 7–9 months after the COVID-19 pandemic was declared a national emergency by the U.S. federal government and 5–7 months after the police murder of George Floyd.

### Participants

This paper is based on the interviews conducted in the fall of 2020. As shown in Table 1, over half the sample identified as cis female ( $n = 26$ ) and second generation ( $n = 26$ ). While all participants identified as ethnically Chinese ( $n = 35$ ), a few identified as multiethnic ( $n = 4$ ) or multiracial ( $n = 4$ ). The age of participants ranged from 14 to 18 years ( $M = 15.8$ ). Parental educational attainment ranged from less than a high school education to having an advanced degree, with approximately a third of participants' parents having completed high school or GED (General Education Development). While participants resided all over Chicago, more than a third resided in Bridgeport ( $n = 13$ ) and one

<sup>2</sup>Pseudonyms are used for all organizations, participants, and schools.

<sup>3</sup>Three of the co-authors are either presently or previously associated with Chinese American Organization (CAO). The first author has worked with CAO since 2017, primarily in voluntary roles supporting their youth program and racial dialogue project with first-generation parents. The second author began volunteering with CAO in 2020, primarily on the evaluation of the racial dialogue project with the first author. The fourth author was previously involved with the CAO's youth program as a program curriculum developer and facilitator from 2020 to 2021.

<sup>4</sup>The Principal Investigator (PI) conducted participant observations with the Chinese American Organization (CAO) summer and fall youth programs and had occasionally served as a co-facilitator for the program. She had presented her study to the participants at the end of a virtual meeting. Given the trust she was able to develop in her role as a supporting facilitator, she invited all members of the fall program who consented to participate in the study for an interview.

TABLE 1  
Characteristics of Interviewed Participants

	Frequency	Percent
Gender ( <i>n</i> = 35)		
Female	26	74
Male	8	23
Nonconforming	1	3
Race/Ethnicity ( <i>n</i> = 35)		
Chinese	35	100
Other Asian ethnicity	4	11
Biracial/Multiracial	4	11
Age ( <i>n</i> = 35)		
14	9	25
15	4	11
16	10	29
17	7	20
18	5	14
Grade ( <i>n</i> = 35)		
9th	10	29
10th	4	11
11th	11	32
12th	10	29
School type ( <i>n</i> = 35)		
CPS selective enrollment (Top 5)	30	86
CPS selective enrollment	33	94
Private	1	1
Suburb	1	1
Generational status ( <i>n</i> = 35)		
First generation	3	9
Second generation	26	74
Third generation	6	17
Residence (Chicago Neighborhood) ( <i>n</i> = 35)		
Albany Park	1	3
Armour Square	2	6
Bridgeport	13	37
Brighton Park	2	6
Chinatown	3	9
Edgewater	1	3
Hyde Park	1	3
Little Italy	2	6
Logan Square	1	3
McKinley Park	5	14
Sauganash	1	3
South Loop	1	3
Westridge	1	3
Schaumburg (suburbs)	1	3
Maternal Educational Attainment ( <i>n</i> = 35) <sup>a</sup>		
Less than 9th grade	3	9
Some high school	1	3
High school graduate/equivalent	13	37
Some college/associate degree (AA, AS)	2	6
Technical, trade, or vocational	1	3
Bachelor's degree (BA, BS, AB)	8	23
Advanced degree (M.A., Ph.D., M.D., professional)	6	17
Don't know/prefer not to share	1	3
Paternal educational attainment ( <i>n</i> = 30) <sup>b</sup>		
Less than 9th grade	2	7
Some high school	1	3
High school graduate/equivalent	11	37
Some college/associate degree (AA, AS)	4	13

TABLE 1 (Contd.)  
Characteristics of Interviewed Participants

	Frequency	Percent
Technical, trade, or vocational	1	3
Bachelor's degree (BA, BS, AB)	5	17
Advanced degree (M.A., Ph.D., M.D., professional)	4	13
Don't know/prefer not to share	2	7

<sup>a</sup> One participant lived with her aunt at the time of the study. Therefore, her aunt's educational attainment—rather than her mother's—was considered in this study.

<sup>b</sup> Participants were asked to list the education levels of all household members. Some participants did not list a paternal figure in the household.

participant resided in a suburb outside of the city.<sup>5</sup> Nearly all interviewees attended a Chicago Public Schools (CPS) selective enrollment high school at the time of the study (*n* = 33).<sup>6</sup> Participants also reported a variety of languages and dialects spoken at home, with Cantonese being the most prevalent non-English language (see Table 2).

### Data Analysis

Audio recordings were professionally transcribed for analysis. This study utilized a mixed deductive and inductive thematic analysis driven by grounded theory. At the start of the analysis, deductive coding procedures were used to sort the data as they aligned with researchers' reflections and lived experience growing up as Chinese

<sup>5</sup>According to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (2021), in 2020, Bridgeport's total population was 33,702, with 13,648 Asian residents (39.6%). The Asian population grew 13.5% since 2000. There were 5,323 residents between the ages of 5 and 19 (15.4%). From 2015 to 2019, 12,187 residents (35.3%) were foreign born. As many as 10,778 residents (32.8%) spoke Chinese at home. The median income was \$54,915 and the per capita income was \$29,607. The employment industry sector with the highest number of Bridgeport residents in 2018 was accommodation and food service with 2,074 residents (15.3%).

<sup>6</sup>Students must apply to selective enrollment high schools (SEHSs). Admission into a SEHS is based on multiple metrics of academic performance, including an entrance exam score, and students' socioeconomic status (Barrow, Sartain, & de la Torre, 2018). In the 2013–2014 academic year, about 22% of students attending a Chicago Public School (CPS) SEHS identified as White, nearly 30% identified as Hispanic, 35% as Black, and 9% as Asian (Quick, 2016). However, a report using admissions' data from the 2012 to 2013 school year suggests a different racial composition at the most competitive SEHS: during that academic year, 34% of students at the most competitive SEHSs were White, 39% were Latino, 11% were Black, and 17% were Asian (Quick, 2016).

TABLE 2  
Languages and Dialects Spoken at Home ( $n = 35$ )

<i>Language and/or Dialect</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Cantonese	16	46
Mandarin	10	29
Toishanese	11	31
English	29	83
Fujianese	1	3
Khmer	1	3
ASL	1	3
More than one dialect	9	26
English-only	7	20
Chinese-only	6	17

American youth, as well as to compare the data to existing theories and studies about the CC development of youth of color. Throughout all stages of the analysis, inductive coding procedures were employed to allow for the emergence of themes from participants' reflections and recounting of racialized experiences (Charmaz, 2006). This process, which followed Charmaz's (2006) grounded theory approach to qualitative research and Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis, involved iteratively coding and analyzing the data as they were collected and after all the data were collected. The process of critically reviewing participant responses to determine appropriate coding and the formation of themes from the coded data was systematic and included consensus procedures at each stage (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Charmaz, 2006).

The initial codebook was created by the two interviewers based on related experiences, coding memos, consensus meetings, and related literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Charmaz, 2006). The codebook was refined as several research team members participated in the data analysis. After being trained on how to analyze the interviews using the codebook, all coders analyzed the same two transcripts with the aim of further developing codes, adding new codes, and removing or condensing codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Throughout all stages of the analysis process, research team members clarified existing codes and suggested new codes to better capture relationships within and between cases and the literature (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Codes addressing the questions of this paper are presented in Table 3.

Emergent themes were discussed and evaluated collectively in team meetings and consensus was obtained on a needed basis. Given the absence of Asian American experiences in the adolescent

sociopolitical development literature and the surface-level attention to racial oppression in Freire's (1970) conceptualization of CC, close attention was paid to the racial-ethnic learning experiences of participants in the initial coding of the data. Discussions about the data focused on the nature and consequences of race conversations and racialized experiences as shared by participants. As ethnic-racial minorities in the United States, research team members drew from their experiences and reflections at times, most often in the moments where existing literature had little or nothing to say about the development of Chinese American youth.

### Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

The first and third authors conducted all interviews and identify as second-generation Chinese Americans. While sharing a cultural background with participants may encourage interviewees to more openly discuss questions about race (Weeks & Moore, 1981), a number of studies found a shared social group identification between interviewer and interviewee to be associated with higher levels of socially desirable bias (Krumpal, 2013; Nederhof, 1985). To cope with this bias, the PI designed interview questions with more neutral language and utilized a semi-structured interview format (de Kock & Hauptfleisch, 2018; Krumpal, 2013; Nederhof, 1985). Moreover, interviewers emphasized confidentiality and provided context for study throughout the recruitment and interviewing process, authentically empathized with participants and using forgiving language when appropriate, and exercised reflexivity throughout the data collection and analysis process (Charles & Dattalo, 2018; Krumpal, 2013; Prior, 2018; Wolf, 1996). Lastly, the remote format of interviews allowed participants a degree of anonymity relative to in-person interviews which may have lowered social desirability bias.

All listed authors and one research assistant participated in the analysis of the interview data. Similar to the majority of participants in the study, the authors identify as Chinese American and second-generation. This shared ethnic and diasporic background means greater familiarity with the cultural and familial factors that may shape participants' experiences. Additionally, as current or past residents of Chicago, all research team members are familiar with the local context that shapes the experiences, perspectives, and development of participants. Furthermore, the fourth listed author and

TABLE 3  
Coding Schema and Corresponding Codes

<i>Schema</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Codes</i>
Ethnic-racial learning	Racial and cultural messaging, awareness of and experiences learning about the context of such racial and cultural messaging	Unlearning stereotypes Exposure to dominant stereotypes Learning about oppression and privilege Reflecting on positionality Learning about/reflecting one's culture
Racial discrimination	Experiences with and understanding of racism, specifically marginalization and discrimination	Lack of Asian representation Presence of Asian representation Interpersonal experiences with racism Observations of racism Reflection on experiences with racism Minimization of racism Never acknowledging discrimination
Anti-Blackness	Discussion of their own thoughts/actions or observed thoughts/actions	Anti-Blackness in Asian communities Anti-Blackness in broader society
Racial dialogue	Experiences with and reflections of conversations on race and racism across various settings	Race talk -School -Peers -Family
Youth spaces	Discussion of experiences with Asian American-centered spaces	Asian American-centered spaces
Complications and opportunities	Catchall categories to highlight challenges and opportunities to engaging in learning about race/racism not captured by other codes	Complications Opportunities

research assistant were raised in Chicago, graduated from one of the high schools included in the study, and close in age to participants (2–3 years older than the average age). The fourth author was also a member and leader of Asian American organizations in her school and community for many years.<sup>7</sup> These experiences along with a familiarity with participants' immediate context enhance inter-pretability of the data.

While our backgrounds offer invaluable insight into the anti-racist sociopolitical development of youth participants, we are also limited in understanding the range of experiences of our research interlocutors. For example, the migration journeys of our families and of the families of participants likely differ in terms of pre- and postimmigration context. Relatedly, three of the authors grew up in predominantly White suburban areas outside of Illinois—areas absent of the rich cultural connections found within the Chinese American communities of Chicago—and are from different generations than the young people in the study. We attempted to minimize overinterpretation of youth's experiences through our personal lenses by keeping these important differences in mind as we

analyzed the data. Specifically, we addressed potential bias by having multiple coders and meeting to discuss findings at multiple points throughout the analytical process.

## RESULTS

In the subsections below, we highlight the pathways and barriers to anti-racist political activism for Chinese American youth in our study. We describe the supports and challenges youth encounter in four prominent socializing contexts (home, school, youth spaces, and online spaces), paying special attention to the ways in which these contexts shape—and are shaped by—their racial awareness development and participation in anti-racist efforts. Lastly, we discuss the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement may have contributed to not only changes in young people's understanding of race and racism, but also interest and engagement in political activism.

### Pathways to Anti-Racism Political Activism

In our study, we found that online spaces and youth spaces provided young people with resources that supported their racial and political

<sup>7</sup>She also assisted with recruitment of the study before joining the research team.



learning. While some of their learning occurred in school classes, participants often pointed to online resources and engagement with peers as important facilitators of their understanding of systemic racism. Furthermore, these resources were often shared or created by their peers, which illustrates not only youth political agency but also the potential influence of social networks on young people's understanding of race and racism.

The ways in which social media and internet search engines facilitate the development of a critical and informed perspective are reflected in the interview with Gabe, a 9th grader at Grandview Prep. Gabe shares:

I've just been reading more and just understanding the appropriate terms to refer to groups of communities because, again, our educational system—it's f\*cked up. Literally [we learn] nothing when it comes to history. We have to find our own resources to understand why are we here at this certain time and why are people doing this or talking about us in this certain light.

In his interview, he criticizes at length how his schooling has repeatedly centered White narratives and perspectives and avoided confronting White supremacist ideology out of a fear of upsetting White people. He goes on to share how social media platforms like TikTok have helped him develop this critical awareness and inspired him to be more informed and vocal:

I've been just adjusting my feed to just reflect on contemporary issues that we face today and all these marginalized communities face today. . . . I really love that [TikTok]'s been more politicized because it's been a platform that has brought youth to politics and push them to like, "Maybe I'll pursue a career in politics. Maybe I'll try to help enact some systemic change". . . . We are just creating a more progressive generation as TikTok is emerging, as social media is emerging. Twitter and Instagram and TikTok. All those things are really helping people get more into politics, especially youth. It's so important.

Although Gabe and several other participants in the study shared a particular interest in learning history on his own, we find that such interest was not a requisite for the development of racial

awareness and political positioning among youth in our study. Most participants in the study were like Jasmine, a 9th grader at Oak Hills, whose social connections played a significant role in their racial awareness development. When asked where she has learned about contemporary racial injustices, Jasmine replied:

I'd say it was mostly through my friends on the internet. On a lot of social platforms, you go and you see a bunch of things about the Black Lives Matter protests. I didn't even find out about the protests until I got on Instagram, and I saw a bunch of it on the trending page on my homepage, everything. . . . We didn't know about it until my friends started talking to me about it, and I was like, "Oh, my God, that happened."

As illustrated above, much of Jasmine's racial learning throughout 2020, particularly on the subjects of anti-Blackness and the BLM movement, was defined in large part by her peers and other existing social connections online as was the case for many other youth in the study. It is important to note, though, that all youth in our study spent more time online because of the COVID-19 pandemic (which forced most of their social interactions onto virtual platforms) so it is perhaps not surprising that online spaces played such an important role. Interestingly, peers seem to serve not only as conduits of information but also as vital supports for processing racial learning as evident in Jasmine's comments:

Mostly, they just notify me about, if there's any movements or protests happening. If something bad happens, then they'll usually be the first ones to tell me. Sometimes we do discuss thoughts. Sometimes if someone's feeling upset about it, we have Discord, and there's one channel where people just put down their thoughts about it, and we all comfort them or whatever.

Peers in other settings also provided important anti-racist learning support. For example, a number of youth in the study shared that their high school's Asian American Club (AAC) organized workshops to help members—and others within the school community—develop a deeper, more complex understanding about systemic racism as well as to identify ways to respond to racial inequities on both individual and collective levels. These

workshops were typically organized and led by the student leaders of the AAC. Youth who participated in these workshops often discussed how much it helped them better understand their own racial identity and the racial experiences of others as in Josh's case:

I feel like I've learned and grown a lot from . . . being a leader in an identity club and working with other identity club leaders. I think I've learned more about the differences between race and I guess in middle school I knew that we were different races or things and we were all different but it wasn't explained to us in a way with regards to culture and history. . . . I've learned a lot about Southeast Asia, East Asia, South Asia, and all the differences. I think going to Oak Hills and joining AAC has definitely helped me to learn more about myself [and] learn more about different identities.

Josh, who is a 12th grader at Oak Hills and a leader of the AAC at his school, shares how participation in AAC complemented other racial and political learning both within his school and outside of it. In his interview, he also mentioned how participation in the club provided him with opportunities to work with other identity clubs to raise racial and political awareness among students and staff:

This past summer, we worked with BSU [Black Student Union] to host a presentation over Zoom that talked about anti-Blackness and the Asian American community. We reached out to different high schoolers and teachers across Chicago, and we gathered around 125 plus people. We had a discussion and presentation surrounding the topic. . . . I learned a lot about our community and how collaboration is really needed between different identity groups. Beyond that initial presentation, we actually . . . presented it to our Asian American classes this year, so I had the opportunity to present it with different leaders to a broader range of students. We also partnered with an organization that I'm part of, for the presentation to be given out to other high schools in Chicago.

Thus, some youth spaces not only facilitated critical racial awareness but also presented

participants avenues for engaging in anti-racist political activism and resistance across audiences.

For participants in our study, out-of-school youth organizations, youth-led collectives, a handful of teachers, and school-wide initiatives (sometimes led by students) also helped shape racial understandings and resistance efforts. For example, some youth participants shared that their youth organizations and youth-led collectives made space to talk about Asian American identity and highly publicized racialized events, like the murder of George Floyd and the BLM movement, which contributed to their understanding of the current social and political context and their racial positioning within this context. Some participants also shared that certain teachers or school-wide initiatives helped them develop a more critical perspective on racial issues as well as the confidence to talk about these issues. Jasmine describes the impact some of these efforts had on her:

During advisories, they make presentations on diversity, and especially after the Black Lives Matter movements and protests, we had a couple advisories and counseling sessions to introduce students to different kinds of change and different types of movements. We had a couple on how we should and shouldn't interact and use language or just don't be insensitive to people of different races, that kind of thing. . . . I felt removed at first because it was all just on a screen, but then I remembered one of my classmates and we were talking about it and she had to go off call because she was really stressed and crying about it. I guess I really learned how some people view it and how serious it can get. . . . A lot of my classmates deal with similar issues, and they've had similar experiences. It really means something to them when something like this happens, when people start having movements, and people start getting killed and things.

The efforts made by her school helped Jasmine to learn about current racial injustices and efforts to address these injustices but perhaps more importantly, decreased the emotional distance between her and these issues and increased her ability to empathize with those who have different experiences and identities.

Perhaps most notably, many youth in the study reported attempts to address anti-Black sentiment

and/or garner support for the BLM movement within the Asian American community. An overwhelming majority of youth shared that they engaged in conversations with family members about BLM and/or called out family members for anti-Black remarks. In her interview, Chloe, a 12th grader at Oak Hills, shares:

In May, George Floyd, his death was widely publicized in all the news, all the news sources were putting videos of his murder on TV and I guess that was the first time my family had watched it. They're like, "Oh, that's really wrong. Why would they do that?" Then I was able to bring up the policing system in America and how it's always been anti-Black, and how Black people are really disenfranchised especially within the policing system and law enforcement, and the justice system in America. I think they really were able to internalize that because in the past, I know my parents have made some ignorant or problematic comments about the Black Americans. It might or mostly not, probably mostly related to college stuff.

While not all youth were as successful as Chloe, their efforts highlight an important generational difference in racial awareness and attitudes between youth and their family members—and also counter popular assumptions of Asian American political apathy.

Additionally, a small number of participants in the study worked with other young people to create and disseminate resources to educate others on BLM and ways to show solidarity, including interrogating their own anti-Blackness. Participants like Avery, a 12th grader at Blue Lake, for example, joined a youth-led social media education effort called *Dear Asians Initiative*. In addition to translating letters in support of BLM into different Asian languages, *Dear Asians* members conduct and translate research on a variety of social issues, such as voter suppression and anti-Black bias, into Instagram posts to educate their followers.

### Complications to Anti-Racist Development

While many accounts offered by youth in our study present an optimistic snapshot of youth engagement and activism, some experiences and reflections shared by participants also reveal conditions that can thwart young people's anti-racist development and reinforce problematic

perspectives and behaviors that are harmful to communities oppressed by White supremacy. In this section, we highlight the challenges youth face at home and at school in their efforts to become more racially aware and anti-racist.

*Anti-Blackness and cultural challenges within youths' families.* Young people commonly remarked on how deeply ingrained their parents and elders' anti-Black prejudices are and how difficult it is for them to change their family members' perspectives. As Olivia, an 11th grader at Northview notes:

They have quite strong stereotypical beliefs about Mexicans and Blacks. Every time they say Blacks are bad, it's like, "This conversation again." [Interviewer: Do you talk to them about it?] Yes, it doesn't go well. I don't think they can absorb it, unless they really see it firsthand. I don't think they'll really have an opportunity to. It's basically to the point, if a Black man does not save them personally from dying, they will not believe that Black people are not bad.

Olivia's insight that her parents have not had experiences that would counter their prejudices is shared by other participants in the study. Youth observe that the racial attitudes of their family members are often reinforced by family members' own personal experiences of discrimination, their social networks, and a general unawareness of systemic racism. For example, Caitlin, a senior at Hillsdale shares:

My parents just don't feel comfortable with a lot of people that are different than them just because they come from a very different background than a lot of people from other cultures or other racial groups. They personally experienced a lot of racism as immigrants especially when they first moved and their English wasn't very good. I think that in some ways has shaped their perception of certain groups because they just received a lot of racism from specific groups when they first came which gave them a negative impression of the group as a whole.

For many first-generation Americans, regardless of country of origin, social networks tend to be more ethnically or culturally homogeneous as people are more comfortable interacting with those

who share a common language and/or cultural framework. However, when the individuals that new immigrants are connected to endorse anti-Black perspectives and are unaware of systemic racism, this can exacerbate or reinforce prejudices. As Spencer, a 9th grader at Blue Lake, candidly shared about his family, and specifically his father:

They hold a very strong belief that all African Americans are criminals, they're drug addicts, they're supposed to be in jail. Especially my father. He mentioned it to me once that if I marry an African American woman, he will use a broom to get me out of the house. . . . These are beliefs that—well, maybe not all Chinese but the majority of Chinese have. I know that I can't change his beliefs, I've been trying very hard these couple of years to change his beliefs, but I don't think that he will ever change that belief. . . . He has a very strong prejudice against African Americans. I've been trying to tell him that everyone's different, African Americans are people too, they're not subpar to humans but then he just keeps rebuking. I have no other way to change his mind on that.

Just as social media influences the perspectives of youth, young people observe how online engagement by their parents and elders influence the racial attitudes of their family members. For example, Chloe remarks on how challenging it is to change her parents' perspective on affirmative action given the information her parents' friends share on WeChat: "I know at least in their WeChat groups they're always talking about affirmative action and all the stuff, and how—I don't know. It bothers me and I don't know how to address it because they seem to have evidence or whatever." Family members' media consumption can significantly challenge or support young people who are trying to confront prejudices held by family members. More often than not, parents and elders are exposed to media that portrays racial injustices in problematic ways as is reflected in Simon's interview:

Recently we had the Black Lives Matter protest . . . downtown and my dad was like, "Why are they just looting everything?" I'm trying to explain to them . . . "They're not trying to do it on purpose. They're just trying to send a message that they need to be treated equally. You've got to look away from the

looting and look at the main message they're trying to point out." They finally understood after a few minutes of explaining to them about it.

In this example and in many other cases, youth shared that their family members—and sometimes even themselves—consumed media that often fixated on property destruction and looting during the BLM protests. These portrayals are problematic because they oversimplify complex racial narratives, ignore historic injustices, center White feelings and biases, and further damaging stereotypes. Thus, the uncritical consumption of such dominant narratives by many family members and for some youth in the study seemed to contribute to a misunderstanding of BLM and behaviors that perpetuated anti-Blackness or were antithetical to anti-racist efforts.

In addition to trying to work against these socializing factors, youth in the study also expressed difficulty finding common ground with parents and other elders because of language and differing cultural attitudes. For example, Gabe shares that even though he is able to engage with his parents conversationally, it is difficult for him to discuss systemic racism with them in a way that they can understand or empathize with:

For my family it's really a language barrier. Yes, I can engage in conversational topics, but my mother cannot consider or recognize racism to be a construct that is not beyond my imagination. She often believes that just because I am born here that suddenly I'm crazy or the things that I have said have no reliability. She often talks like, "You're only just talking about this because you're born here," or, "Racism isn't real. You're just talking about it because you're born here," something like that. I'm just trying to explain to her what racism is because she does say some racist things and I have to really call her out. I often get mad at her because I have to tell her that. I tell her that she chooses to be ignorant. I've offered her resources, I've offered to give her resources and articles, and I was like, "These articles can be translated into Chinese, you can literally read this. You can really gain a different perspective on this." It's just this lack of solidarity for my parents. They realize that their community needs better things . . . but they cannot imagine that for other communities. They cannot imagine the same

oppression, or even oppression that's even worse than ours, in other races or other communities or people with other identities. That is just so bad because I'm trying to explain to her why something that she has said is so bad and I can't really explain to her that well because of that language barrier which pisses me off a lot. I'm like, please, I'm just trying to make her understand these things.

While this interview excerpt highlights how language may be a barrier to productive conversations on racism, it also highlights the challenge of communicating with others who do not see the interconnectedness of their struggles with others', and who, because of systemic racism, are unlikely to have many experiences or supports to help them identify these connections. To further complicate matters, these difficult conversations may elicit unhealthy responses from family members as was evident in the experiences of Angela, a 9th grader at Grandview:

For me, I disagree with their views because Asians are minorities and I feel like if we treat one minority badly, another minority will treat us badly as well. I think it's only right to treat other minorities how we want to be treated. . . . I'm kind of scared to just say my thoughts in front of them because I'm afraid that they might despise me because of my views on society and social issues. I've been yelled at for having a certain view. I think it's not right to be yelled at just because of a certain view on social issues and politics in general.

Several youth shared that they stopped trying to talk to certain family members about anti-Blackness because of the psychological harm those conversations may elicit. Youth are cognizant that the pandemic can heighten the impact of such harm for them given that they are restricted to spend more time at home. Furthermore, disagreement with one's elders may be seen as disrespectful in some Chinese families which complicates such conversations as young people are expected to yield to the opinions and perspectives of their elders.

For some youth participants, combating family members'—as well as their own—internalized racism can be an additional challenge to their anti-racist development and sustained engagement in

resistance efforts. Observations from a few youth in our study suggest that family members view being political as a dangerous activity and so discourage their youth from political engagement as is evident in Jasmine's case with her parents:

Some of us think that we should be more outspoken about these things. Some of us are like they don't think it matters as much. They just want to lay low. If it happens, as long as it doesn't impact us too much, as long as it's not violent or harmful in any way, then we should just try to stay safe for the time being. Me and my sister were told that don't mention racism in the house because it's a really super touchy subject, and they don't want us talking about it. Then, at the same time, we're also told if an incident ever happens, that we should report immediately, that we should tell someone, and we should make sure that we let them know that it's not okay to say stuff or do stuff like that.

The demand to not bring up issues of race at the home and to "lay low" about racist incidents echoes ways in which marginalized groups have learned to cope with experiences of racism and at the same time, reinforces the pervasive stereotype of Asians/Asian Americans as the model minority. The instruction to only bring up racism that they experience also highlights how Jasmine's parents are unable to see the oppression of Black people in relation to the oppression they or their children experience. This disconnect is noticeable not only at home but also in schools and perhaps is one of the more significant challenges to the development of CC and resistance efforts of Chinese American youth.

*Curricular challenges to the development of critical consciousness.* While our interviews reveal that some teachers prioritized anti-racist political education in their curricula, youth more often shared instances in which their schools failed to acknowledge and address racial injustices. One common criticism was how school administrators handled racist incidents perpetuated by students. Olivia, an 11th grader at Northview, shared the following about how her school handled a popular student's use of an anti-Black racial slur on social media: "They didn't really respond in the most effective way, to be honest. Essentially, what it boiled down to was just like, 'Hey, kids. Don't do

that again.' It wasn't really effective and I'm guessing that behind closed doors, it probably still will happen." She shares in the interview that this same student was also accused of harassing female students and recalls how a different student who used anti-Mexican racial slurs received a similar consequence.

Additionally, young people reveal ways in which curriculum and instruction may discourage or undermine the development of CC and racial solidarity efforts. Caitlin's reflection below illustrates the promise of critical political education as well as the missed developmental opportunities within her school:

If teachers don't address something and the current news that's really relevant and important to a lot of people. For instance, the election that recently happened, a lot of the student body—or if it's not addressed in their classes, it feels like the teachers are ignoring something that's really important to them and that's relevant. At the same time, if a teacher does decide to talk about it and they don't discuss it well, or they aren't able to facilitate the conversation in a way that takes care of everyone's emotional feelings, it's almost worse because people leave with even more negative feelings than they came in with. There are some teachers that I've had that have done a really good job of addressing things and other teachers that have either just ignored it or not done a good job.

Through curriculum and instruction, teachers may perpetuate racial ignorance and misconceptions as well as generate distance from racial injustices. We find the latter to be especially true when schools encourage dialogue and learning about anti-Blackness but overlook or minimize anti-Asian racism. This was a common experience for most of the young people in our study.

For some young people in this study, learning about the legacy of anti-Blackness, as well as the ways in which Black communities have organized to change societal conditions for themselves and other marginalized groups, is powerful. However, for those who do not come to learn or understand the interconnections between their cultural group's experiences with racism and privileges and the historical and current violence toward Black communities, it may be difficult for them to understand how to work against White supremacy and racial oppression as is the case for Spencer:

They keep talking about how African Americans are being harassed, intimidated, left out. . . . I think they neglect everything else. They go with their narrative that Black and Hispanics are the ones [who] are the most poorly treated right now but then we have another victim that's silent right now. There's no one talking about that. [Interviewer: How do you feel about that?] I just feel that we're being left out of the racial movement right now. We have BLM that's happening right now, everyone's talking about how Black lives matter, but then Black lives do matter, they do matter, but do Asian lives matter? Do other people's lives matter? Does only Black lives matter and nothing else? I really don't get why they would leave this part out. It's solely focused on the African American community. . . . As Chinese, we're like the silent victims. We're the ones that are being victimized for "spreading the Coronavirus". . . . I just feel left behind [in the] movement.

While BLM and the pandemic have heightened young people's racial awareness and sense of responsibility, schools seem to present anti-Black racism in ways that may deter Chinese American youth from fully recognizing their racial positioning and the development of racial solidarity. Teachers and administrators may unwittingly see students of Asian descent as model minorities and fail to acknowledge their experiences with discrimination—as well as the racism that Asian communities have experienced throughout the pandemic. This can consequently lead not only to the exclusion of Asian and Asian American experiences from conversations about race and racism but also to feelings of resentment from young people. These instances at home and in schools illustrate a need for developmental supports that not only center at times the struggles and resilience of Asian communities, but also help build understanding of the context-dependent privileges associated with one's racial positioning within a White supremacist racial hierarchy.

## DISCUSSION

Contemporary theories are only beginning to unpack the multidimensional nature of racism and how these various dimensions interact with youth's sociopolitical development (Bañales et al., 2021). This paper advances current conceptualizations of CC development by illuminating the ways

in which Chinese American youth's shifting positionality under White supremacy shape their experiences with, and understanding of, racism. Furthermore, the current study calls attention to the unique cultural challenges Chinese American youths navigate in order to engage or sustain participation in anti-racist political activism, as well as highlights the influence of peer and online spaces in fostering critical social analysis.

Similar to other adolescents of color, the present study found that experiences of racism and discrimination motivated Chinese American youth to interrogate their own racial positioning, which may in turn be a catalyst for CC development (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Bañales et al., 2020; Watts et al., 2003). The study also found that engagement online and with peers in both structured (i.e., youth programs, school clubs) and less structured spaces (i.e., text message group with friends) encouraged critical reflection and contextualization of racialized experiences within systems of power and oppression. These instances underscore the significance of social interactions in encouraging the development of CC as theorized in the literature (Watts et al., 2003; Watts & Guessous, 2006) as well as bring attention to Asian American youth efforts to resist racism in school settings which is sparsely accounted for in the literature.

As such, CC among Chinese American youth may be enhanced in the school context (i.e., expansion of curriculum to include Chinese American history), in targeted after-school programming (i.e., Asian American Club), and among peers (i.e., conversations about race and racism). Given the multiple domains and actors within school systems that may influence racial awareness and political action, interventions to support the CC development of young people must be multipronged. For example, school administrators and educators could set the stage by first recognizing racial injustice and change curricula, pedagogy, and other support systems for students within schools accordingly. These actions may facilitate a more complex understanding of racism, particularly one that recognizes the multiple levels of racism as well as the shifting privileges and oppression ascribed to racial groups under White supremacy (Bañales et al., 2021). Furthermore, changes within schools must include listening to young people, responding to the injustices that they identify within their environments, and allying with them in their efforts to address racism.

This study also makes an important contribution to the literature on Asian American sociopolitical

development by illustrating the pervasiveness of anti-Blackness within family systems and how these beliefs may inhibit young people's social analysis and political participation. Although youth in the current study explicated multiple ways in which they engage in anti-racist learning and action, they often encountered challenges when attempting to discuss anti-Blackness with their family members. Participants commonly expressed frustration and uncertainty when attempting to address family members' prejudices—particularly in cases where family members' perspectives were reinforced by personal experiences of discrimination, an underdeveloped understanding of systemic racism, and homogeneous social networks and social media bubbles (e.g., WeChat). Additionally, these challenges were often compounded by other factors, such as limited language fluency and cultural expectations. For example, a common cultural norm in Chinese American families with more recently immigrated elders is filial piety, which positions parents and elders as authoritative figures whose views and values should not be challenged; to do so would be considered disrespectful and inappropriate (Guo et al., 2020; Lieber et al., 2004). Thus, future research should consider further exploring these important cultural factors and how they may inhibit attempts at discussion with family members and Asian American youth sociopolitical development.

Contrary to deficit-based narratives, youth in this study proactively engaged in critical self-reflection and conversations with their peers about racism. They sought out and remained open to resources that expanded their understanding and challenged previously held beliefs. Additionally, youth strategically used online tools to address gaps and biases in their education. Consistent with the literature, participants commonly shared schooling experiences that centered White experiences and viewpoints, "othered" Asian Americans, and reduced Asian American history to a few key events (i.e., Chinese Exclusion Act, Japanese internment) or overlooked Asian American experiences (An, 2016; Hartlep et al., 2016; Hong & Halvorsen, 2010; Rodríguez, 2018; Suh et al., 2015). This finding expands previous research on Asian American high-school-aged youth, such that social media was used by participants to not only explore their racial identity and share information (Tynes et al., 2011) but also to construct a more comprehensive understanding of history and systemic racism.

Lastly, the current study also highlights the need to recognize group heterogeneity and to

differentiate supports accordingly so that young people can more fully participate in the current movement for racial justice. Within this study, 13% of participants identified as first-generation immigrants (meaning they were born outside of the United States) and 70% identified as second-generation (they were born in the United States but at least one of their parents was not). New immigrants tend to settle in areas with an established ethnic community (Zhou & Xiong, 2005). These areas tend to be highly segregated and historically under-resourced, like in Chicago, positioning new immigrants against other historically marginalized communities in competition for scarce resources (Kim, 1999). These conditions often limit positive interactions with people outside of one's ethnic group, as well as exacerbate racial animosity and prejudice (Yellow Horse et al., 2021). Thus, the anti-racist efforts of youth participants importantly exemplify resistance to oppression while also highlighting how pathways and barriers to CC development may look differently for young people depending on context and identities.

There were several limitations in this study that should be noted. Given that study participants were Chinese American youth who grew up in Chicago, these findings are demographically and geographically limited and may not be reflective of Chinese American youth from other nonmetropolitan regions in the United States. In urban cities with a large Chinese population, Chinese American youth may be more heterogeneous in their identities and experiences. Additionally, data for the current study were cross-sectional, which do not allow for examination of sociopolitical and anti-racist development over time and this may limit generalizability of findings. Although the study sampled youth who participated in Asian American after-school programming as well as those who did not, the vast majority either currently attended or had attended a selective enrollment high school. In the Chicago context, selective enrollment schools are the top-performing and most resourced schools. As a result, this may have skewed the sample to not include Chinese American youth from schools that are less resourced.

This study highlights a need for spaces that help youth contextualize and connect their experiences as racial and ethnic minorities. For Chinese Americans, such introspection may lead them to challenge the model minority myth and other harmful racialized stereotypes that prevent cross-racial solidarity. Under White supremacy, Chinese Americans are forced to be at odds with other

minoritized groups (Kim, 1999), but this is a relationship that can be dismantled and redefined. As illustrated in this study, Chinese American youth overwhelmingly engaged in sustained conversations about BLM and made efforts to address anti-Blackness within their families, yet encountered few opportunities and sources of support to process anti-Asian racism despite it weighing heavily on them. We therefore recommend that schools and youth-serving organizations ensure that sustained opportunities are available to young people, particularly those who experience marginalization, to develop a comprehensive understanding of their own racial and ethnic identities and position within society. For example, the investment and development of AACs as after-school programming appears to be promising, as it affords a space for Asian American students to connect with one another, discuss topics related to race and racism, and coordinate collective efforts and resources. Additionally, we strongly encourage these organizations to collaborate with and support existing efforts led by young people to interrogate their own and their families' internalized racism. Future research should further investigate and support developmental opportunities and resources that not only encourage the political education and activism of Asian American youth, but also acknowledge interconnectedness of the liberation of Black and Asian communities.

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