AUTHOR:

P.A. Kong[1]

X. Yu[2]

A. Sachdev[3]

X. Zhang[2]

N. Dzotsenidze[2]

AFFILIATION:

[1]Drexel University, USA

[2]Lehigh University, USA

[3]East Stroudsburg University, USA

FROM "HOW ARE YOU DOING?" TO "HAVE YOU EATEN?": UNDERSTANDING THE DAILY LIVED EXPERIENCES OF ASIANS IN AMERICA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ABSTRACT

During the COVID-19 pandemic, as part of shelter-in-place orders for families, their homes simultaneously became a school, work and social activity space. The physical spaces available to families shrunk considerably. These series of events have quickly changed the daily lives of those living, residing and learning in the United States. We used the photovoice methodology to share the COVID-19 experiences of seven Asian families. We follow how Asian parents address their children's educational needs as they adapt to the compression and expansion of the physical boundaries of their homes. We found that the family space became a multipurpose site, a place where multiple activities happened simultaneously to include school, workplace, social and extracurricular activities. The compression of space is an opportunity to examine how Asian parents are involved in their children's schooling, outside of the school walls. We found that Asian parents are involved in their children's schooling and hold a broader conception of education that is less focused on academic learning. Asian families adapt to the disruptions in daily life due to COVID-19 by strategically engaging resources and addressing the stress related to changes in their schooling environment.

Keywords: *Asians and Asian Americans; parental involvement; COVID-19 pandemic; education; photovoice.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyday life across the globe. In the United States, by March 2020, most states issued stay-at-home orders that closed schools and most non-essential businesses[1] to combat the spread of

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1   Non-essential businesses are defined at the State-level and the types of businesses closed vary across states. Most states classified theaters, gyms, salons, museums, casinos, shopping malls and sporting venues as non-essential business. There is variation across states with bars, liquor stores, construction and home office supply stores classified as non-essential business.

COVID-19 (Mervosh, Lu & Swales, 2020). During this time, families, schools and communities, all witnessed change in their daily operations and lives. Family space, once viewed as a place to retreat to at the end of the day, has now become a hub of school, work and social activities. Using the photovoice methodology, this study is aimed at giving voice to Asian[2] families in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic to tell their own stories of the changes they have experienced in their homes, schools and communities.

What do you think of when you are asked "Have you eaten?" Maybe you are trying to recall what you ate for lunch or dinner. You may think someone is asking you out to dinner. If the person asking this question is Chinese, he or she is probably not asking you out to dinner or interested in what you really ate. Instead, the person is greeting you. In the Chinese culture, "Have you eaten?" is equivalent to "How are you doing?" To highlight Asian voices, we draw on what anthropologists call the emic perspective of the participants, the insider's perspective, instead of the etic perspective of the observer, the outsider's perspective. To obtain the emic perspective, ethnographers immerse themselves in a cultural group, experience the culture, listen to participants and obtain in-depth information on beliefs and practices of a society that may otherwise be ignored (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013). Asians in America are the fastest-growing minority population in the United States and are estimated to double between 2014 and 2060 (Colby & Ortman, 2015). Individuals of Chinese descent are the largest Asian population in the United States and in 2015 comprised 24% of the Asian American population (Lopez *et al*., 2017). Asians and Asian Americans perspectives are often overlooked and our study is based on an emic perspective to listen to how Asians in America are doing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parental involvement in children's education during the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a new form. Parent involvement does not require parents to go to school and engage in activities that the school has designed. On the contrary, parents now help to facilitate learning in their homes. During the pandemic, the physical boundaries of home and school have blurred and students stay at home and connect to school virtually, but it is not home-schooling. The curriculum and instruction are still designed and conducted by the schools. However, parents and children must navigate the new realities of virtual schooling from their homes. Families negotiate time and space in their homes to accommodate the academic and social needs of their children.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Parental involvement in children's schooling

Parents play a vital role in their children's lives. Family practices are important for positive student outcomes (Coleman, 1988; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Epstein, 1995; Fan & Chen, 2001). Parental involvement in children's education is related to a student's educational success (Anicama, *et al*., 2018; Boonk *et al*., 2018; Chowa, *et al*., 2013; Rothon *et al*., 2012). Children whose parents are more involved in their schooling tend to have higher academic achievement and are less likely to drop out of school (Fan & Chen, 2001; Gubbels *et al*., 2019; McNeal, 1999).

Children grow up in multiple environments, including in families, schools and communities (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Parents are a key partner in their children's education and parental

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2   Asian families are very diverse and include families from Central Asia, Eastern Asia, South-eastern Asia, Southern Asia and Western Asia (United Nations Statistics Division [UNSD], 2021).

involvement in their children's schooling is the bridge that connects the various environments of their children's development (El Nokali, Bachman & Votruba-Drzai, 2010). At home, parents provide an environment for learning including holding educational aspirations, providing learning materials such as books for children to read and monitoring their educational progress (Lareau, 2000). In schools, parents communicate with teachers to establish a partnership for their children's schooling and in communities, parents take advantage of community resources such as libraries, playgrounds and gain educational information through networks they build with other parents (El Nokali *et al*., 2010; Siordia & Saenz, 2013; Small, 2006; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Using traditional measures of parental involvement, studies find that families from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds are not involved in their children's schooling (Li & Sun, 2019; Turney & Kao, 2009). Moreover, most of the models of parental involvement are grounded in the activities of middle-class Caucasian families (Garcia Coll *et al*., 2002). For example, Hwa-Froelich and Westby (2003) described Chinese immigrant parental involvement as being inactive because of an Asian cultural belief that parents respect the school sphere as the domain of teachers. Chinese immigrant parents believe that the home and school spaces are two separate parts of a child's education. A parent's role is to coach and monitor a child's education at home. The teacher's job is to teach a child at school. Previous studies also found that some teachers reported feeling discouraged by Chinese immigrant parents as they were not involved in their children's schooling (Li, 2006; Sy, Rowley & Schulenberg, 2007). There is evidence that families from diverse backgrounds want to participate in their children's schooling despite the challenges (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Antony-Newman, 2019). Moreover, that parental participation in education should include an understanding of the power differential rooted in racism and wealth (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995).

2.2 Parental involvement of Asian American parents

Parental involvement behaviours of Asian American parents are described as being focused on providing resources in the home for learning and highly focused on academic achievement. Asian American parents structure their home-based learning environments by arranging children's after-school activities and assigning additional academic practise opportunities (Chao, 2000). Hidalgo, Siu & Epstein (2004) conducted a literature review and concluded that Chinese immigrant parents closely monitored their children's schooling, emphasised family obligation, valued school grades, were less satisfied with their children's accomplishments and emphasised effort over innate ability than their western counterparts.

Home-based involvement. Asian immigrant parents are considered less involved in their children's schooling, based on traditional measures of parental involvement in schooling that rely on school-based parental involvement. Studies of parental involvement of immigrant Chinese parents in their children's education suggest that these parents prefer home and community-based activities to school-based involvement (Sy, 2006; Zhong & Zhou, 2011). Studies that investigate Asian parents' home-based involvement reported that Asian parents help with homework, assign supplementary homework and supervise children's use of time for the sake of their academic success (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Klein, 2008). In addition, community-based involvement is a key characteristic of Asian immigrant parental involvement. Shin (2009) found that Asian American immigrants tend to acquire educational information and resources through their membership in their ethnic community networks instead of getting involved with direct collaboration with schools. (Bempechat *et al*., 2018). With the compression of spaces due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the home and school

boundaries have been blurred. Home and school are no longer separate parts of a child's education. Parents are reimagining their role in terms of parental involvement and adapting their responses to their children's educational needs. Our first research question is how do Asian families describe their home, school and community spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Focus on academic achievement. Asian immigrant parents' involvement in education is often characterised in the literature as having a keen focus on academic achievement (Chao, 2000; Hidalgo *et al.*, 2004; Sy, 2006; Turney & Kao, 2009). Chinese immigrant parents may hold different cultural attitudes toward their children's education from commonly portrayed American parental attitudes. Chinese immigrant parents place a high value on education and focus on supporting their children's education at home; for example, parents assign supplementary homework and teach their children at home (Li, 2006). Asian parents' community-based involvement is also portrayed as being focused on educational achievement and attainment. Other parental involvement activities such as sending children to music schools, is also portrayed as a strategy parents employ to help their children open doors into higher education later in life (Lu, 2013). Chinese immigrant parents attend community academic advising workshops and register their children in after-school tutoring programmes or weekend Chinese schools (Zhou & Kim, 2006). Our second research question is: How do Asian families support their children's learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

3.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical underpinnings of the study are grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model within the context of a crisis. Many research studies draw on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model to conceptualise how the different physical spaces that an individual resides in impacts their development and how these spaces are nested within one another. A fundamental element for Bronfenbrenner's (1979: 22) ecological model is the concept of setting, "a place where people can readily engage in face-to-face interaction". Thus, according to Bronfenbrenner, each level of the model requires a "spatial dimension" and an "interactional dimension" (Neal & Neal, 2013: 727).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the spaces delineated by Bronfenbrenner have substantially shrunk, overlapped and reconfigured. People's connections and interactions transcended physical spaces. We further ground our study in Neal and Neal's (2013) alternative networked model to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. In the networked model, each level of the system is not nested. Instead, each level can be overlapping and each of the ecological environments are directly or indirectly connected to a focal individual. Based on "actual patterns of social interaction rather than a priori expectations" (Neal & Neal, 2013: 730), the networked approach allows ecological environments to emerge from data analysis rather than researchers prescribing what participants' environments are from their assumptions. In sum, we examine the life of Asian families during the pandemic from the lens of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model with an understanding of how the physical spaces have collapsed and in-person interactions are disrupted. We document the actual environments and interactions of Asian families beyond those pre-defined in Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework.

4. METHODS

4.1 Photovoice

The study uses photovoice as a way to include Asian families to tell their own stories about their COVID-19 experiences. Photovoice is a participatory visual research methodology (Wang & Burris, 1997) and is used to explore the daily realities and meanings as defined by participants themselves through the medium of photographs and also their own verbal explanations of the photographs (Ho *et al*., 2011). Photovoice has several advantages for this study because first, it allows participants to share their experiences from their own point of view, which provides valuable information on their daily lives (Ho, *et al*., 2011). Second, participants can reflect and group dialogue[3] about their perceptions and subjective perspectives of a situation (McIntyre, 2003; Wang and Burris, 1997). Moreover, it allows participants to discuss issues that are important in their lives but may have been taken for granted in their everyday lives (Aschermann *et al.,* 1998). Lastly, photovoice is grounded in the principle of empowerment and provides a medium for individuals from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds to reflect on their lives and raise community awareness of issues that affect their lives. Thus, it helps empower people to tell their own stories and raises community solidarity and critical consciousness (Purcell, 2009). This study offers insight into the lives of Asians in America to discuss issues that are important in their lives during COVID-19, as their stories have largely been invisible in society and in research.

4.2 Participants

Participants were recruited using convenience, snowball and purposive sampling techniques. Seven parents (see Appendix 1) were recruited who identify as being Asian and have school-aged children. Participants were recruited through social media (WeChat, Line and other online groups) and local organisations to purposely select Asian parents living in America. All participants in the study live in the United States. Our participants included one father and six mothers. Two parents were born in the United States. Among the five parents who were foreign-born, their length of stay in the United States ranged from 7 to 29 years. The parents in our study are aged between 36 to 50. Five of the participants are of Chinese ethnic descent[4], one is of Vietnamese descent, and one is of Malaysian descent[5].

The participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that their photographs would only be used for research purposes. To protect the identity of our participants, each participant was assigned a pseudonym and a unique ID number. With each participant we reviewed photovoice ethics including each participant's ethical responsibility related to the photographs of other participants. We shared all the photographs[6] to be included in the manuscript with participants after we edited them to obscure a participant's identity and received permission from each participant to include their photographs in this manuscript. The study received ethical approval from the institutional review board at Lehigh University.

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3   In this study, due to the pandemic, participants shared photographs with others, but did not directly dialogue with one another. However, their sharing of photographs prompted further reflection by the participants.

4   Two parents identified as being from Taiwan.

5   The large number of participants from Chinese descent in the study reflect the large Chinese population within the Asian population in the United States. Our study is not representative of all people of Asian descent.

6   Owing to research protocols, participants provided the titles for some of the photographs.

4.3 Data collection

All meeting for this study were virtual meetings, due to safety concerns related to COVID-19. The interviews were conducted in English or Chinese, determined by the participant's language preference. Each meeting was conducted via Zoom software. Each participant participated in semi-structured interviews over a six-month period. Each interview was video-recorded with the participants' permission, transcribed, translated, and analysed for themes related to changes during COVID-19. The protocol for the study includes four virtual individual interviews.

The first interview includes the collection of participant demographic information, an explanation of the photovoice methodology and a discussion of ethical issues and tips for taking photographs. Between the first and second meetings, participants prepared 15 to 20 pictures that reflected the prompt "How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your home, school and community?"

In the second meeting, participants shared their photographs and described the meaning of each photograph. Participants responded to the following questions, "What does this photograph mean to you?" "Which of the photographs do you think are related to your children's education?" "What photograph would you have liked to take, but could not?" and "How has your involvement in your children's education changed during COVID-19?" At the end of the interview, each participant was asked to select five photographs to share with other participants (they did not interact with other participants).

In the third meeting, each participant viewed 15–20 pictures, 5 of their own and 10–15 collected from other participants, to identify themes they found related to the changes during COVID-19 for Asians in America. Participants discussed similarities and differences reflected in the photographs, identified the biggest changes from the photographs in the home, school and community, and identified changes that might be missing from the photographs.

The final interview did or will occur three to six months after the third meeting as a means of member checking as well as an opportunity for parents to articulate anything they experience over the months. Each participant is asked if any of the changes they shared in the previous interview were sustained or if other changes have occurred.

4.4 Researcher positionality

It is important to acknowledge researcher positionality in this interpretive qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Wang, Clark & Scheel, 2016). We assume that realities are socially constructed, that there are multiple realities and multiple interpretations of realities and that power and privilege shape those realities (Merriam, 2009). In this study we attempt to understand meanings of the realities defined by participants themselves, but we also acknowledge that researchers' subjective experience may result in bias and influence interpretation of findings. Thus, we would like to acknowledge our background and experience of the researchers in the study. Among the five researchers, one is a second generation Chinese American, one is first generation Indian American, two are Chinese and one is Georgian. Four of the researchers have experience working with Asians living in Asia and Asians and Asian Americans living in the United States. One researcher provides an outsider view throughout the implementation of the study.

4.5 Data analysis

We used an iterative data coding and analysis process using inductive and deductive processes (Creswell, 2008). First, we examined the interviews from the third interview where participants identified similarities and differences across photographs in the group. The analysis incorporated an inductive approach to allow themes to emerge in order to capture the complexity of participants' experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1999). We established a preliminary coding scheme based on the themes the participants provided and existing literature. Next, two interviewers analysed the photographs and generated codes, patterns and themes from the second interview and met to discuss themes across the interviews. The group discussed differences in codes and themes to ensure a consistent coding and interpretation of themes. Additionally, there was discussion of discrepant data.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Reimagining family space: Boundaries unbounded

Parental involvement in schools has long been confined to measures that focus on the school space. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we found that families adapted to the changing physical home and school community space by reimagining the family space where the boundaries between the home, school and community disappeared. To address our first research question, the family space became a multipurpose site, a place where multiple activities happened simultaneously to include school, workplace, social and extracurricular activities. Families simultaneously accommodated the compression of having school and work activities within their home space and expanded their home boundaries to include the outdoors to accommodate other activities such as physical activities, sports and family time together. Thus, the impact of COVID-19 could be seen in the compression and expansion of the family space. Moreover, families adapted and responded to the needs of their children and strike a balance in work and family life. Compression and expansion of space triggered an unbounding of family space.

Multipurpose home space. Families converted spaces in their homes to accommodate the educational needs of their children and their own professional needs. Luping described her home, "So the study in our house turned into this really multi...interesting place where the two adults have to work, but the kids want to stay with us." Luping shared a photograph (Figure 1) that illustrates how the home space had been compressed to include the school and work. Luping describes how the three of them ended up sitting at the same table, "She [daughter] has a desk in her own room but apparently during the day, she needs company. We also want to know what she's doing, and she needs help, so she chose to sit between us." Luping's picture clearly captures how COVID-19 compressed the work and school spaces into the home and how Luping's family adapted to creating a multipurpose space in her home to meet their school and work needs. Family members now have to negotiate, accommodate and adapt to each other's needs. Luping also captures how her daughter "needs company". With the transition to online schooling, the other members of the family have become each other's classmates and co-workers.

Figure 1. House turned into a multipurpose place

New routines. The blending and balancing of the school and workspace into the home did not happen overnight. Hannah shared that she was concerned in the beginning about how the home becoming a multipurpose space would turnout and part of that new rhythm was concurrent activities occurring in the same physical space. Stephanie shared that her children now attended zoom meetings where any sounds in the home could be distracting to them. Other household members had to respect this by adjusting their noise level in the home. When her children were in Zoom meetings, she had to keep her noise level down, even when she was engaged in cooking. The children made a large "Zoom" sign to let others know they were in a Zoom session (Figure 2). The "Zoom" sign (Figure 3) is on the right side of the picture against the window and the children raise it when they are in a meeting and should not be disturbed. This was a way to negotiate the physical space to facilitate a harmonious working environment and also the accommodation of the new virtual space.

Figure 2. Shh...I'm on Zoom

Figure 3. Zoom sign

Parents also reported other changes to their daily schedules since COVID-19. Qing explained that she changed her daughter's bedtime to 1:00am so that her daughter would sleep later into the early afternoon, 1:00pm. Qing decided this shift in their family schedule opened up space for her to do some of her office work without interruptions every morning between 6:00am and 1:00pm. Luping also explained that since she had to schedule things

around her children's needs in the morning, she had to "pick up a few hours after the kids fall asleep" during the night to "make up for the time that we missed during the day".

Experiencing education in real time schooling in the home. COVID-19 created an opportunity for parents to experience the educational process of their children in real time as schooling activities entered the home space. Hannah observed that her daily interactions related to her children's schoolwork and education changed. Before the pandemic, she felt a need to ask a lot of questions to understand the schoolwork of her children and she was a more "hands-on parent" and daily asked her children about their schoolwork. But now, she explained that she does not need to ask about school and has become more of a "hands off" parent because she can see what is happening at school. This has led to a qualitative change in the parent engagement. Having school enter the home space has given these families the opportunity to see what children are learning and doing in school.

Parents felt that they not only had a better understanding of their children's schooling, but also had more opportunities to participate in their children's learning. Hannah's husband helped his son enact one of the historic pictures as part of his social studies assignment (Figure 4). Because he was working from home, his son shared the school project with him and he had the time to join in. Parents also highlighted how physical exercise that would typically be part of a child's school day is more visible to parents at home. Hannah shared how her husband joined her son in completing physical workouts assigned by his coach.

Figure 4. Father engaged in school project

Expansion of the family space into the community. Although families are "isolated" and practising social distancing from others, they have expanded their home space into the community outdoor space (public spaces). Almost all the families in this study shared experiences of how the pandemic created more family time together including family walks,

bike rides and jogging together in outdoor spaces. Jane shared that due to online instruction, children have had little time or indoor spaces to engage in physical activity. She believes that fresh air and physical activity is an important and integral part of daily living. Hannah shared a photograph (Figure 5) of her and her son getting ready for a bike ride and said it is "indirectly about education" as she is spending time with her son and getting exercise.

Figure 5. Biking

The expansion of family space into the outdoors also enhances family relationships, as outdoors has become a site for families to know, interact and strengthen relationships. Anh described these outdoor activities as a positive outcome of the pandemic. Anh explained that spending more time together outdoors has facilitated a harmonious relationship between her husband and her son as they have "gotten connected with each other". Anh shared the photograph of her husband and son sitting together overlooking a river and explained that prior to this family hike her husband and son had a disagreement. Because of the pandemic, they went for a family hike and as a result her husband and son talked out their disagreement. Prior to the pandemic, Anh shared she and her husband had very little time to communicate with their son. During the pandemic, she and her son jog and hike and have conversations during these physical activities. She considers this as a bright side of the pandemic. She further added,

> That's my son's and my feet when we were jogging together (Figure 6). So when my son was small, we would walk together in our neighbourhood. When he grew older, he didn't want to hang out with me for various reasons. "Mom I don't want to go out with you because you are my mom." But recently he spent a lot of time at home, then I asked him to go out with me. He agreed, because he doesn't have friends. So going out with mom is a good chance for him to share his ideas and tell me stories about his work and his projects. I find this time to be really precious to me because I talk more with him and I spend my spare time with my son.

Figure 6. Jogging together

Families in our study engaged in physical activity with their children and identified how this activity helped them stay physically healthy, but also how these interactions strengthened communication with their children.

Luping touched upon her family's feeling about the monotony of staying at home and shared how her family held backyard picnics to "change" the scenery and have something "special". Families adapted to the constraints of the collapse of the community space where they would normally picnic in a park. Instead, her family decided to picnic in their backyards. Luping shared the photograph of her family having a picnic in the backyard (Figure 7). They used the backyard because public park spaces were not available during the pandemic. In this case, the backyard served as a community space to have a family picnic.

Figure 7. Holding a backyard picnic to have "change"

Connecting with the community virtually. Community spaces have collapsed into the home space, similar to how work and school activities are now in the home space. Families shared how they turned to virtual meetings to not only maintain their participation in community activities, but also to find new communities to join. Figure 8 and Figure 9 capture how families remain connected to their communities without physically gathering. Luping's daughter continued to attend their local Chinese weekend school online during the pandemic. The virtual format allowed her family to remain connected to the school. Luping's photograph of her daughter and her husband singing along with their school's Mid-Autumn celebration captures how connection to community continues during the COVID-19 pandemic.
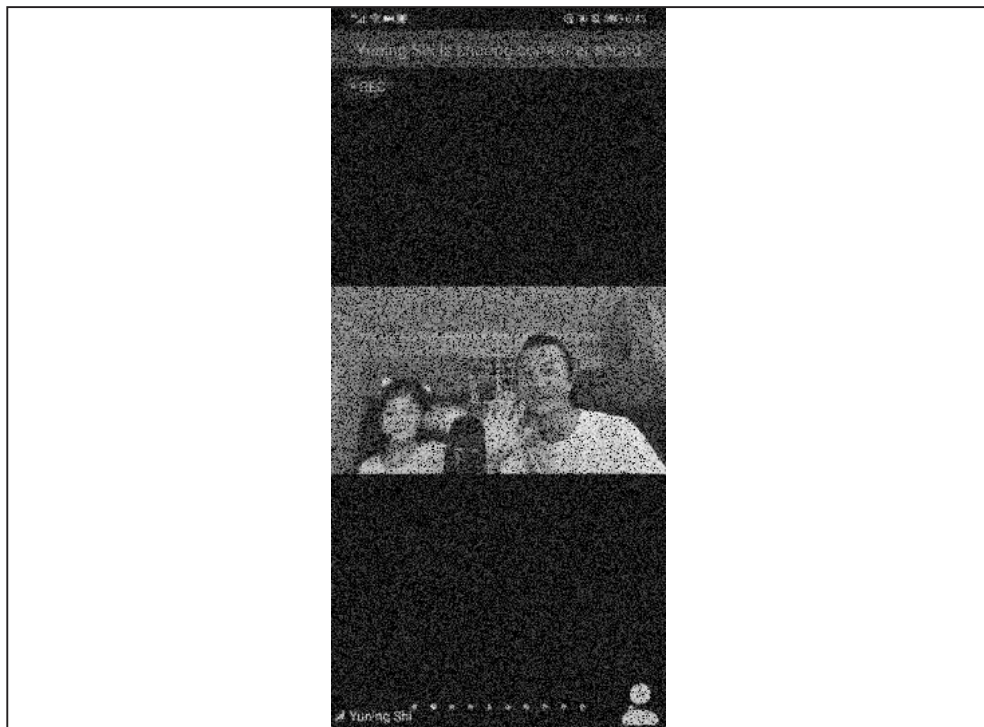
Figure 8. Virtual singing at Chinese school Mid-autumn day celebration

Figure 9. External resource

Luping shared that her daughter's dance studio started virtual classes during the pandemic, but her daughter's schedule conflicted with the dance studio's virtual dance classes. Thus, Luping was unbounded by the physical location of the dance studio and went online to find dance classes offered by a local university and what she called "external resources" to support

her daughter's interest in dance. Her daughter is now connected to a new dance community that did not exist prior to the pandemic.

The Asian families in our study are adapting to the compression of the school, work and community spaces in their homes. Creating and adapting to the new multipurpose home space with new routines and workspaces. The pandemic has also created new opportunities for families to better understand what happens in schools because it is happening right in front of them. Parents are less hands-on about what happens on a daily basis and have more opportunities to learn with their children. Almost all parents engaged in physical activities with their children during the pandemic and expanded the home space to the outdoors. Outdoor family activities also strengthened parent-child relationships.

5.2 Multifaceted parent involvement

The compression of physical spaces offers a rare opportunity to get a glimpse into the homes of Asian parents. Our second research question examines the ways Asian families are involved and support their children's learning and interests during the COVID-19 pandemic. As mentioned above, parents talked about workspace and the academic school learning, but we found that the majority of the pictures parents shared about education pertained to activities that fall within everyday life. Education, in their view, did not begin or end with the formal school day, but extended to supporting their children's social, emotional and learning in everyday interactions. Anh articulated this idea when she replied to our question, "which of the photographs do you think are related to your child's education?" Anh said,

> If you think about education in a narrow way, like schooling, so I've already shared with you the picture of the [school] bus. But, if we think about education like learning, like life-long learning, or informal way in a broader sense, all of these pictures that are related to my sons like going out, jogging, going to the park, playing with me or playing with the piano, working on his projects, are all related to education because in different ways he's learning a lot of things, and not just by learning, but also by playing.

Anh explicitly described a broader vision of education beyond academic activities that is echoed by all the other families in our study. Parents were focused on being responsive and intentional in supporting their children's needs during the COVID-19 pandemic that includes children's social and emotional needs as well as their personal development in everyday activities.

Focusing on social interactions. The COVID-19 pandemic has created an isolating environment for children and families. Parents recognised that the shift to virtual schooling isolated their children from their peers and teachers and understood how important social interactions are for their children's development. Luping shared how many families felt, "another thing we cannot make up for is the peer kind of learning, you know, the socialization that she got from school. And that's really a huge, huge challenge for her and for us as well". Additionally, parents had to attend to the emotional needs of their children and address their children's stress and anxiety during COVID-19.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, parents weighed the need for in-person social interaction with the public health risk of COVID-19. Anh explained that, "We volunteered to agree to get my son to go to school... As parents, we want them to go to school to interact with other people, not simply to learn new things but interact with other people". However, we can see that Anh felt that going to school in-person came with risks and shared that she secretly

followed the school bus to check out the bus situation. She was relieved to see very few students on the bus. Anh's photograph of the school bus demonstrates the concern she felt for her son going to school (Figure 10).

To support social interactions, parents encouraged children to continue after-school sports activities. Jane explained that even though her son opted for online school, she encouraged him to sign-up for an after-school sport in the form of a hybrid model (Figure 11). The children were divided into two groups and each group went two consecutive days during the week to maintain a reasonable social distance. Jane emphasised the importance of social interaction for her son on the cross country team.
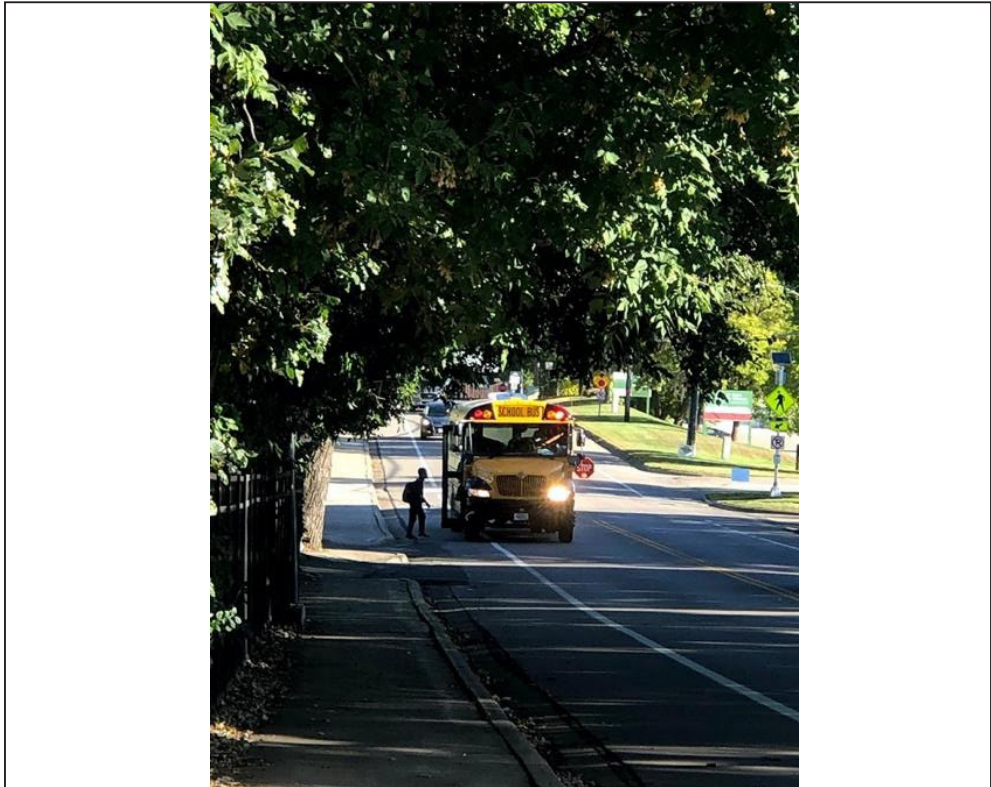
Figure 10. Watch son go to school

Figure 11. After school sports activity

All families refrained from in-person meetings during the pandemic. However, some parents concluded their children needed social interactions and hence held in-person gatherings beyond the immediate family with extended family gatherings or small playdates with close friends. Stephanie explained that she understood the risks of social gatherings beyond the immediate family, but she felt that the benefit of social gathering for her children outweighed the risks. She organised a small gathering to play a game (Figure 12) in order to meet the social needs of her children. Stephanie's concerns were echoed by Qing who also organised small playdates for her child. Qing felt that adults could handle the social isolation, but it was important for her child to interact with her peers.

Figure 12. Family gathering

In addition to in-person meetings, most families shared that virtual social gatherings were a new part of the pandemic. Luping shared that her daughter participated in Zoom parties with her friends. In Luping's photograph (Figure 13), we can see the gallery view of Luping's daughter and her friends interacting through Zoom for her birthday party.

Figure 13. Zoom party

Attending to their children's emotional needs. The COVID-19 pandemic has induced stress and anxiety not only for parents, but also for children. Parents shared their children's stress and anxiety as well as their strategies to support their children during the pandemic. Anh shared, "My son is over stressed because of the pandemic, so he asked me to wear masks, but he worried, so he said we should wear those kinds of swimming helmets to protect ourselves from COVID". Anh's son is very concerned about the spread of COVID-19 and constantly reminds family members to wear personal protective equipment. Anh's photograph (Figure 14) illustrates the level of concern her son feels about the pandemic as he believes the swimming helmet will protect the family from COVID-19.

Figure 14. Helmet for COVID protection

To address their children's anxiety, parents shared the importance of animals in relieving anxiety issues related to COVID-19. Stephanie brought home a rabbit for the children to care for as part of a 4-H club[7] and that "the rabbit has been an important part of our pandemic experience. It allows the children to be productive, and not spend so much time feeling sad or anxious, you know, worried. Actually they feel that way, but it allows them to have an outlet". Stephanie was proactive in finding a distraction to care for rabbits in their local 4H club and as an outlet for her children to relieve their stress and anxiety during the pandemic (Figure 15).

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7   4-H has a long history of over 100 years and is the largest youth development organisation in the United States. The focus of 4-H is supporting young people and their families to cultivate skills in order to develop and grow their local communities.

Figure 15. Pet therapy

During the pandemic, extracurricular activities such as piano lessons also shifted to the online space. Hannah explained the importance of maintaining the continuity of music lessons even though her children could not have face-to-face piano instruction. While many other parents in her social circle suspended piano lessons, she opted to continue even though she was ambivalent of the effectiveness of the online piano lessons. She later reflected sharing the picture that, "we know a lot of families that have just decided to wait because they can't do in person lessons."

Learning opportunities in daily real-life experiences. Parents believed that learning could also happen amidst the day-to-day living activities around them including household chores that provide learning opportunities. Chores that parents described as learning opportunities included taking care of the garden, mowing the lawn, cooking and cleaning after meals.

Anh explained how gardening was an opportunity for her son to learn about life sciences. Anh said,

> I may ask him [my son] to water for me. I think that the important thing is sometimes I have a chance to show him how the seeds are growing, how the leaves are changing, because we have a chance to observe the leaves every day. Children may learn a lot in books, they may learn how the seeds grow and become a tree and something like that, but I want him to look up more closely and see the real thing.

Figure 16. Learning through growing

Anh highlights the differences between theoretical learning that occurs from reading books and the applied learning that occurs with observation of the natural living world. Asking her son to water the garden gives him an opportunity to watch the cycle of plant growth she admitted (Figure 16).

Food and cooking emerged as a recurring theme across all participants. Parents supported and encouraged their children's engagement in cooking or baking experiences. Parents described cooking and baking with their children as being interactive and creative. Qing shared a photograph (Figure 17) of rice with curry and titled the picture "creativity". She explained,

> We wanted to cook something fun, so we cooked this 'little hen curry rice'. We added a piece of carrot so it looks like a bow. We also put two quail eggs behind the rice to resemble the eggs laid by the hen. We came up with this idea together and discussed with each other in terms of how to make it tasty and cute. My daughter loved it.

Figure 17. Creativity

Qing elaborated that before the pandemic cooking was a chore and she did not spend a lot of time thinking about each dish. However, during the pandemic she learnt to appreciate cooking as a creative way to nourish her daughter's mind and body. Luping shared a similar experience cooking with her daughter (Figure 18). Owing to limited groceries during COVID-19, she and her daughter had to be creative in choosing their menu. She also tried to keep her daughter entertained in the process of cooking, so "we make things into animal shapes or we try to come up with stories". Luping considered learning to cook as educational for her daughter as she learnt new things in the process. She explained how she and her daughter discussed what they would make, created a menu and prepared the meal together. Writing the menu worked on her daughter's writing skills and increased vocabulary. Her daughter also learnt to "take care of others, and improve her hand-eye coordination".

Figure 18. Cooking is education

Community engagement. Parents encouraged their children to continue volunteering and supporting their community during the pandemic. They supported the efforts of their children in helping community organisations through their engagement in a variety of activities. Hannah shared that her daughter completed her Girl Scout "gold" project through an online series of workshops for children about the brain (Figure 19). Similarly, Anh shared that her son helped his community by creating a YouTube channel focused on information about COVID-19. Using his math skills to calculate the number of COVID-19 cases and sharing them on his YouTube channel (Figure 20) and thus creating a tool to benefit the community.
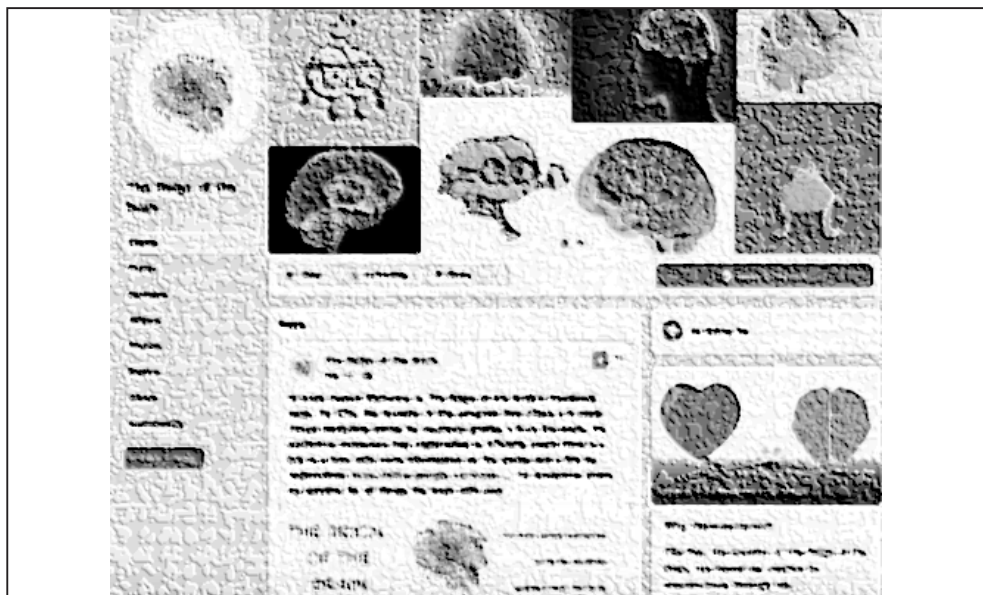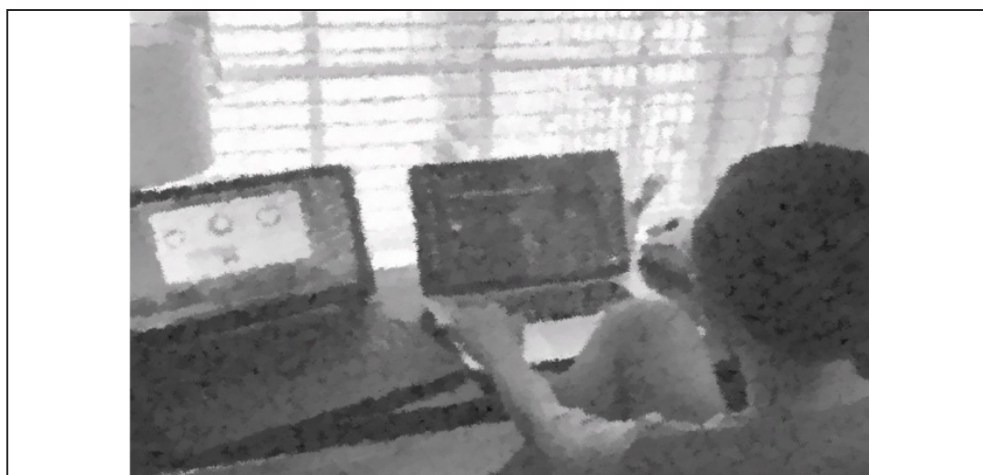
Figure 19. Teaching about brain

Figure 20: Working on a YouTube channel

6. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study asks, "have you eaten?" to understand how Asians families are doing during the COVID-19 pandemic to capture the insider perspective of Asian families during the pandemic and how their daily lives changed. Asian parents in our study shared the ways they intentionally and responsively adapted to the changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. This study moves from the etic ("how are you doing") to the emic ("have you eaten") perspective and shares how Asian families are handling their children's education during the COVID-19

pandemic. Through their own photographs, Asian parents shared the many challenges of COVID-19 and how they engaged in their children's education. The photovoice methodology provided a space for Asians to share their experiences as well as a qualitative in-depth understanding about how Asians in America are experiencing COVID-19 in their homes, schools and communities.

The pandemic altered the well-established boundaries of home, school and community. Physical space compression has changed the home into a multipurpose space that includes the home and school/workspace. With school activities physically located in the home, families have a better understanding of what their children are learning. This compression of school and workspace opened up opportunities for parents to actively engage in some school-related projects. Parents talk about how school in the home space means their children are isolated and miss interactions with their teachers and peers. Parents feel limited, but work to provide in-person and virtual social interactions. Parents also support their children's emotional needs. The outdoors has become an extension of the family home. Virtual spaces have helped families maintain connections to their communities.

The blurring boundaries of home, school and community broadens our understanding of the ways parents are involved in their children's education and to rethink the multiple ways Asian parents support their children's education. While previous studies have highlighted how Asian parents focus on academic achievement (Chao, 2000; Hidalgo, Siu & Epstein, 2004; Sy, 2006; Turney & Kao, 2009), this study shows how Asian parental involvement in their children's schooling is multifaceted beyond academics. Parents in our study hold a more holistic view of education and focus on other sources of learning such as community engagement, physical activity and social engagement as means of personal and academic development. Asian parents in our study do not simply dwell on academic learning during the pandemic but focus on activities that support the child's personal development. They promote real-life and lifelong learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents take advantage of learning opportunities in everyday life. Parents also encourage their children's virtual contributions to their communities. Our findings highlight that Asian parents view their children's education holistically and challenge the stereotype that Asian parents solely stress academic success and neglect other aspects of children's needs and development (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2019; Vuong, 2015).

The pandemic has affected the ecology of the systems that influence social relationships. At the current time, many of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) physical spaces have collapsed where schools and workplaces are now in the same space as the nuclear family. The overlapping ecosystems, as originally proposed by Bronfenbrenner, are changing. The boundaries are blurring and there is a qualitative change in the Asian families and how their environments interact. Spatiality and temporality of the social interactions that propel human growth and development are evolving in this new landscape. In terms of spatiality, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), environments were fixed with physical locations such as a school or home. These physical environments in a child's life have collapsed into one space and contradicts Bronfenbrenner's predetermined framework. This study corroborates Neal and Neal's (2013) framework that the actual networks among people are more important indicators of environments than the predetermined physical boundaries. Our findings "allow ecological systems to emerge from the data rather than to be defined in advance based on a priori assumptions" (Neal & Neal, 2013: 735). In terms of temporality, our study contributed to the literature by underlining the temporal dimension of an ecological framework, as both

Bronfenbrenner's and Neal and Neal's frameworks solely focused on the spatial aspects of environments. We found that different environments in an ecological framework may blur the boundaries and become one as well as synchronous. Due to the shelter-at-home order during the COVID-19 pandemic, parents are connected to work and children are connected to school through virtual space while they both stay in the physical space of home. This offered parents an opportunity to simultaneously work, observe and participate in their children's learning in school.

This study highlights the challenges that Asian families experienced along with how they adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic. While most of the families in this study are from middle class Chinese-Asian backgrounds, their experiences may benefit other Asian families and those from other ethnic groups living in the United States. Findings from this study will be helpful for school leaders, educators and policymakers that these Asian families hold a holistic view of their children's education that goes beyond academics. Asian families used the resources within their homes and communities to best support their children's education. Given the COVID-19 context of social distancing, the multiple responsibilities of parents and the required time commitment for this project, the participants in the study represent a limited socio-economic background. Future studies that include a more diverse Asian sample would expand our understanding of Asian families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Appendix 1.   Demographics of participants

Name	Gender	Age range	State of residency	Level of education	Immigration status	Years in US	Age and gender of children	Annual household income
Stephanie	Female	46-50	Maryland	Master's/ Doctoral degree	First generation immigrant of Chinese descent	41 years	13-year-old son and 11-year-old daughter	More than $100,000
Hannah	Female	46-50	New Jersey	Doctoral degree	First generation immigrant of Malaysian descent	29 years	17-year-old daughter and 13-year-old son	More than $ 100,000
Jane	Female	46-50	Pennsylvania	Doctoral degree	First generation immigrant of Chinese descent	17 years	24-year-old daughter and 12-year-old son	More than 100.000
Qing	Female	36-40	Pennsylvania	Master's/ Doctoral degree	First generation immigrant of Chinese descent	10 years	7-year-old daughter	More than $100,000
Tim	Male	36-40	Pennsylvania	Some college but no degree	Second generation immigrant of Chinese descent	39 years	15-year-old daughter, 11-year-old son, 9-year-old daughter, and 6-year-old daughter	More than $100,000
Anh	Female	41-45	Minnesota	Master's/ Doctoral degree	International scholar of Vietnamese descent	7 years	13-year-old son	$30,001 to 40,000
Luping	Female	36-40	Pennsylvania	Master's/ Doctoral degree	International scholar of Chinese descent	12 years	5-year-old daughter and 1-year-old son	More than $100,000