

# ***“This Asian Guy has Coronavirus”: Racial Discrimination Experienced by Asian International High School Students in the Northeastern United States***

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**Abstract:** As the first case of COVID-19 was detected in Wuhan, China, the Novel Coronavirus pandemic has rapidly swept the world. As COVID-19 proliferated in the United States, the longstanding negative stereotypes of Asian Americans in society were revealed, and xenophobia among whites and non-Asian Americans was activated. During the pandemic, microaggression, negative bias, and violent crime significantly increased all Asian ethnic groups, especially in big cities and the northeastern United States. During this time, most literature focuses on the racial discrimination and mental health of Chinese/Asian college students. However, scant research explores Chinese/Asian high-school students in America, whose total number has risen dramatically in recent years. Therefore, this paper uses the snowball sampling method to conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews with 7 Asian high-school students in the United States and tracked them for around one year, from September 2021 to October 2022. The purpose is to expose their real campus life and true racial discrimination feelings under COVID-19. The study found that Chinese high-school students seldom suffer from severe racism on campus. This is because private international schools in northeastern America are susceptible to racism. Their schools have strict anti-racial discrimination policies, severe punishment measures, and open channels for complaints to protect their students from racism. However, when Chinese high-school students are off-campus, they are more likely to suffer intense hate incidents like weapon threats. Even though interviewees do not recognize that they or their friends have encountered extremely severe anti-Asian hate incidents, we should keep in mind that schools may control the public voice about racism on campus in order to keep their reputation and ranking, and therefore those serious events are not exposed to us.

**Keywords:** Asian international high-school students, Hate incidents, COVID-19, Xenophobia, Asian American.

## **1. Introduction**

Since the enactment of the Immigration and Naturalization Act in 1965, there has been a significant increase in the number of Asian immigrants to the United States [1]. Asian Americans currently make up 5.6 percent of the U.S. population. In cities like California and New York, they are home to more

than 1 million Asian Americans [1]. Between 2019 and 2020, with the outbreak of the pandemic in America, there was an increase in hate crimes against Asian Americans. There was a rise in anti-Asian hate crimes by 149 percent in 2020 among 16 US cities despite a decrease in overall hate crimes by 7 percent [2]. Most scholars focused on hate crimes toward Asian People, Stopping AAPI hate, or the psychological health of Asian Americans. However, there was little concentration on the racial discrimination issue towards Chinese students studying in American high schools during the pandemic, as Chinese students who studied in American high schools were increasing in these years as well [3]. This is a considerably large group, so we commenced our research project based on this topic. Thus, this paper seeks to examine the racial discrimination problem of Chinese students studying in American high schools by doing case studies in Northeastern America. This case study is bounded to nationality, grade, and geographical location, which will reveal the racial discrimination cases faced by Chinese students studying in international high schools during the pandemic. Then, according to our analysis, we will base on the experience of those Chinese students to find possible solutions to related incidents that may happen in the future. Figure 1 shows the anti-asian attacks during the pandemic (2020-2021), made by Tengyi Wang on mapchart. (Data link: <https://theconversation.com/anti-asian-violence-spiked-in-the-us-during-the-pandemic-especially-in-blue-state-cities-176501>)

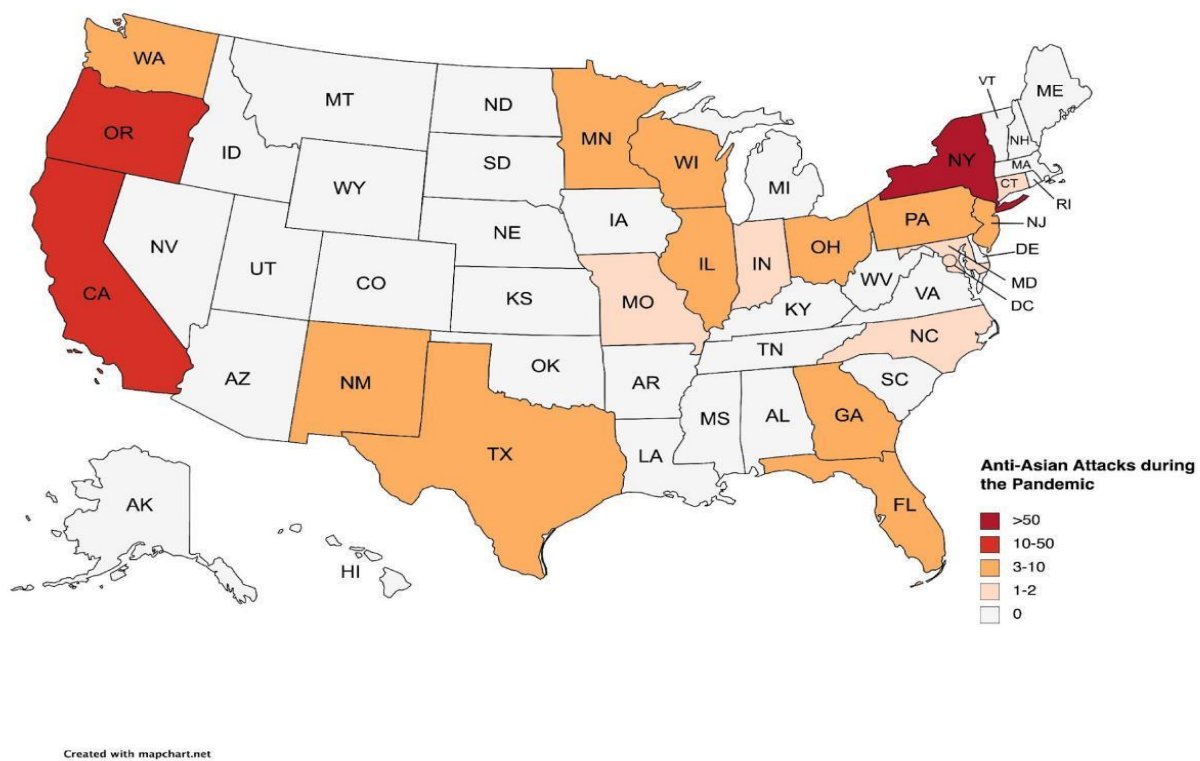


Figure 1: Anti-Asian Attacks during the Pandemic (2020-2021).

## 2. Methodology

Our method uses snowball sampling and doing case studies on six students, from grades 9 to 11, living in northeastern states: Kevin Yu, Jerry Fu, Angle Fu, Sam Liu, Amber Dong, and Jerry Bao [4]. We will analyze the responses given by our interviewees to the questions we designed and learn the details of the experience related to Asian hate they had before and after the occurrence of the pandemic in America. The differences and similarities could be discovered based on the details

illustrated by our interviewees. Then, from those disparities and similarities, we will try to think of the contributors to these points. Whether this phenomenon is incidental or there are specific reasons for it, as political hypes, education level, and population composition are all vital factors.

During our analysis, we will relate several racial events and stereotypes against Chinese people, so we can determine the accurate reasons for the phenomenon base on the case studies we had. At the end of our research project, we will reflect on possible solutions to eliminate the racial problems and stereotypes towards Asian Americans. As a result, there are future cases like the pandemic that happened in these years; our solution may solve the conflicts between Asian Americans and other residents, which is beneficial not only to the Asian Americans who encounter racial problems but also to the local governments who have the duty of solving these problems. Table 1 concludes the basic information of interviewees.

Table 1: Basic information of interviewees.

Name	School	Location	Year of Study Abroad	School Size	Chinese Students' Percentage
Jerry Fu	St. Paul's School	New Hampshire	5	539	6%
Jerry Bao	Suffield Academy	Connecticut	3	415	5%
KYU	Governor's Academy	Massachusetts	1	407	11%
Angel	Berkshire School	Massachusetts	1	400	10%
Amber	Emma Willard School	New York	5	357	9%
Sam	Kimball Union Academy	New Hampshire	4	340	15%
Annie	Thacher School	California	2	259	5%

### 3. Literature Review

Racial discrimination and xenophobia against Asians in the United States is a long-standing and prevalent problem rooted in American history and society. As Ancheta and Tuan suggest, for Asian Americans, regardless of generational status or Asian immigrants, one of their major stereotypes is that they are *perpetual foreigners* [5,6]. When Americans notice Asians' appearance, they would directly associate it with foreignness and strangers. This stereotype, as a factor in anti-Asian racism, has resurfaced in society during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is because when the virus was identified as foreign or even Chinese, for some American individuals, their resentment due to the fear of crisis and the anger of stay-at-home was expressed as violent crimes, bias, and xenophobia against Asian Americans. Besides, from the late 19th to the mid-20th century, Asian Americans are often

rendered yellow peril by society. Kim contends that the yellow peril stereotype describes Asian Americans as “aliens” and “outsiders” in relation to White Americans in whose minds Asian Americans “divert from U.S. dominant cultural norms, are economic competitors, and thereby undermine the White nation” [7,8]. Even though Asian Americans are always perceived as less advantaged than Whites but more advantaged than Blacks in the racial triangulation, the white supremacy’s fear of being dominated by Asian Americans promoted more intense racial discrimination and xenophobia against them. In addition, Asians, as a minority group, are often excluded and alienated by Americans because they are considered dirty and infectious. It is proved that eruptions of xenophobia have a very close relationship with the heels of pandemics [9]. When a pandemic is fatal, fear and worry motivate people in crisis to blame the other, who has a different national, religious, or ethnic identity from them. Hence, sickness results in fear, and fear in turn promotes bias [10]. This is also applicable during COVID-19.

COVID-19 has fueled anti-Asian hate in the United States because it “enabled the spread of racism and created national insecurity, fear of foreigners, and general xenophobia” [11]. Through revealing potential negative stereotypes of Asians, the pandemic has worsened the uneasy relationship between Asians and white Americans, who see themselves as superior, and other non-Asian individuals. In Stop AAPI Hate National Report (2020-2021), the number of hate incidents reported to their center increased significantly from 3,795 to 6,603 in March 2021. These cases comprised verbal harassment (65.2%), shunning (18.1%), physical assaults (12.6%), civil rights violations (10.3%), and online harassment (7.3%). Incredibly, according to the report, Chinese individuals reported more hate incidents (43.7%) than other races or ethnic groups [12]. Therefore, it can be seen that even if the infection does not treat people differently, a great number of people would like to look for someone Asian to blame for their fear, uncertainty, and anger, as an effective scapegoat. Here needs to define a hate crime as “a crime motivated by bias against a race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.” Besides, hate incidents are defined as “acts of prejudice that are not crimes and do not involve violence, threats, or property damage” [13]. This paper mainly focuses on the hate incidents that Chinese international high school students meet since they are rarely exposed to extremely dangerous hate crimes, whether in school or on the street.

Nowadays, most of the literature focuses on the racial discrimination that Chinese international undergraduates and graduate students suffer in America, but little attention is paid to Chinese international high school students in the U.S [14]. They suffer from cultural conflicts and, especially in their teenage years, are sensitive to hate incidents in and out of school. Learning from both Chinese and American cultures, they have their own unique feelings and judgments about anti-Asian racism during the pandemic. Therefore, we focus on the situation, response, and measures of racial discrimination suffered by them during the COVID-19 and how their international high schools protect them.

#### **4. Different Racial Discrimination Faced by Chinese Students**

The whole situation of discrimination is that there are limited numbers of cases of discrimination inside the school, which our seven interviewees had faced. However, when it comes to the local community and the internet, there are relatively more discrimination cases faced by our interviewees. We divided the discrimination cases into six kinds based on our case study and the categorization written by professor David R. Williams: students are treated with less respect by others, others act as if they believe students are not smart, and others act as if they’re better than the students are, students are insulted by other people, students receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores, students are threatened by other people [15].

#### 4.1. Inside the Schools

For the cases of discrimination inside the school, there are cases related to students being treated with less respect by others, others acting as if they believe students are not smart, and students being insulted by other people.

During our interview, Kevin Yu, Jerry Bao, Sam Liu, Annie Wang, and Jerry Fu stated that there are some unserious jokes about racism. For Kevin Yu, only one of his classmates from Ukraine had asked him about "whether Chinese people eat dogs". One of Jerry Bao's friends made jokes about him that he ate dogs, but this is also sportive but not serious. Sam Liu's friends made jokes about eating dog meat as well. Angle Fu, Amber Dong, and Annie Wang said that some students discussed them behind them. One of Angle Fu's classmates, who was Chinese as well, could not figure out a math question; there was a comment that "you supposed to know how to do this question as you were Chinese." When her school was selecting students for a sports team, Chinese students were less likely to be chosen since there was the belief that Chinese people cannot do sports well.

For students who have faced discrimination cases inside schools, most of their classmates and friends are just making fun of it but not being serious. However, for Angle Fu, her school's students held some stereotypical views toward Chinese students.

#### 4.2. In the Society

In the cases of racial discrimination in society, there are cases related to students being insulted by other people, students being threatened by other people, and students receiving poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores.

In society, Jerry Bao faced a limited amount of discrimination since Jerry Bao's school is in Suffield. Suffield has a long history, and people there are mostly highly educated. Most people have similar religious beliefs, so there are limited conflicts in Suffield. Similarly, Jerry Fu faced a countable number of discrimination cases, as his school is in the capital of USA-New York, and the people there are mostly friendly. Angle Fu, Annie Wang, Sam Liu, and Amber Dong faced little discrimination in society as well. For Kevin Yu, he had faced several discrimination cases; for instance, there was a black who told them to "get out of America," which was relatively intense.

#### 4.3. On the Internet

For cases of racial discrimination on the internet, there are cases related to students being insulted by other people; others act as if they're better than the students.

When it comes to the internet, all the students have encountered some cases of discrimination on the internet. Kevin Yu faced comments on TikTok, like "this Asian guy must have coronavirus," towards Chinese people after the outbreak pandemic in America. Jerry Bao found that some people commented that "The Attack on Pearl Harbor was done by Chinese." Jerry Fu, Angle Fu, Annie Wang, Sam Liu, and Amber Dong discovered lots of news about the "Chinese Virus."

### 5. Reactions of Students and Schools

#### 5.1. Reactions of Asian Students

Normally people may act to accept discrimination as a fact of life or try to forget the discriminations they have faced. However, for the students we investigated, they talked to someone about what to do about the situation, sought or found spiritual comfort and support, and tried to do something about it [15].



In the school, Jerry Bao, Jerry Fu, and Kevin Yu joked back when others made stereotypical jokes about them; Sam Liu and Annie Wang changed the topic of discussion, while Angle Fu, Amber Dong, and Annie Wang chose not to comment and walk away when students were arguing with them behind their backs. Jerry Bao, Jerry Fu, Sam Liu, Annie Wang, and Kevin Yu all believed that it was acceptable and felt fun about making those jokes or being made by others. Angle Fu, Annie Wang felt strange about other student's actions, but she believed that her life was not affected. Amber Dong was unsure about the content of the students' discussions behind her, so she could not describe her feeling clearly.

When Jerry Fu, Sam Liu, and Jerry Bao faced discrimination on the internet, they chose to stay calm with no comment. When Angle Fu, Annie Wang faced discrimination on the internet, she decided to transmit related articles to support herself, as she deemed that if the comments were given just because those internet users don't get this information. Kevin Yu chose to argue back with sharp language because he believed that this could help him find his sovereignty, and there was no danger in posing comments on the internet. These two reactions were both possible solutions to resolve the discrimination problem they faced. Amber Dong tried to report the comments she saw on the internet regarding racial discrimination. All the students felt unhappy about the racial comments they saw on the internet, and they believed that there should be some changes toward the racial comments on the internet.

When Kevin Yu faced racial discrimination in society, instead of arguing back, Kevin YU chose to stay calm and walk away because he was afraid of gun shootings. Kevin Yu was sad and awkward about his situation since, in society, he could do nothing but be wordless. It was stated by Kevin Yu that it could not solve the issue of discrimination toward Chinese people living in America at all.

## 5.2. School Actions

### 5.2.1. COIVD-19 Policies

In March 2020, after Gov. Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency in Massachusetts, public and private elementary and secondary schools were ordered to close, and gathering sizes were limited, including Jerry Fu's school. According to Jerry Fu, in the days before the lockdown, he was highly aware of the severe pandemic in China, through the latest news and regular communications with his family and friends back home. Before the outbreak in America, once his teacher took his classmates to watch a movie, he wore a mask in the crowd, especially distinguished from other people. The teacher did not consider this action self-protective behavior but instead joked that Jerry Fu would frighten others. Once, he wore a mask to school and was shouted by a white grandma on the road: "Chinese virus, get out of here!" Jerry Fu felt extremely embarrassed and awkward.

The initial reaction towards wearing masks in American society was a kind of stigma under which there was a certain mechanism. Ma and Zhan suggest that the perceptions of masks are strongly different in U.S. and China. In America, wearing a mask always had a negative connotation before the COVID-19, but it is more reasonable in East Asia [16]. This is because wearing masks in American society always conveys a message about sickness and barriers to social interactions [17]. On the contrary, wearing masks in China and Japan is more acceptable and traditional, which helps people there to alleviate the negative effects of air pollution, prevent the spread of flu, and to hide their identities [18]. Therefore, Jerry Fu, as a Chinese international student in the U.S. who had a Chinese cultural conception but lived in America, was often the only group who wore masks, which would make him feel heterogeneous.

Through the stigma and discrimination Jerry Fu experienced, it can be seen that at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the general awareness of the coronavirus in the society made Chinese students who took masks and disinfection seriously feel distinguished, and awkward.

In the middle of the pandemic, in 2021-2022, Chinese students went out very little because of isolation, lockdown, and self-protection. Jerry Fu said there were not many of his friends exposed to very intense or obvious racism in reality because many cities and streets were blocked. In addition, even after schools reopened, they required students to wear masks and keep social distance. Hence, chances are few that racial discrimination against Chinese high school students would happen. Therefore, the schools' compulsory policy measures treated everyone equally making Chinese high school students special self-preserved behavior no longer a unique attribute, compared to American students. This is because all people need to keep quantitative social distance and abide by wearing masks at specific locations, times, etc. Thus, when the rules are implemented, the Chinese students' self-preserved behavior during the pandemic will not be targeted or stigmatized.

However, there were a lot of anti-Chinese and anti-Asian comments on the Internet [19]. For instance, wearing masks and disinfecting items and hands are given political connotations, and the most direct victims of such derogations and insults are Chinese students in the US. They study in the United States but grow up in China, caught in this crossfire between their host countries and hometown. When they defend measures like wearing masks on social media during the pandemic, they are often seen by Americans as defending China. In the context of worsening US-China relations, these students will undoubtedly be subjected to attacks and discrimination [20].

Till June 8, 2022, more than two years after the first case was reported in the United States, nearly 87 million people have been infected in America [21]. Jerry Fu said that almost everyone in his school, in Boston, had been infected, including himself; even one of his friends had been infected twice with the novel coronavirus. In the context of a quarter of the population being infected, the US paid less and less attention to COVID-19 and took fewer and fewer preventive measures. Jerry Fu said frankly:

This year, due to the general trend, students and faculties on campus are not very concerned about mask prevention. In the first week of school, wearing masks was mandatory, but after that, we were free to choose to wear masks or not. Besides, the school's policies are politically correct, saying "you are not required to wear masks, but you are free to wear masks." As a result, everyone takes off their masks, and students who still wear masks will be seen as weird; that's me. I sometimes wore a mask to protect myself in public, and I was very worried about being discussed and teased. But the professor was very tolerant.

From real experiences, it can be found that the restrictions for novel coronavirus in private high schools in northeastern states changed frequently. The restrictions were very strict and detailed in 2020 and 2021, but they appeared to be only words shown in school rules in 2022. When policy measures are strict to everyone on campus, Chinese students would not stand out due to their self-preservation. On the contrary, when orders are loose or only formalism, Chinese high school students' self-preserved behaviors are distinguished from others, so they are more likely to be discussed, blamed, and rejected.

### 5.2.2. Anti-racism Policies

According to our research, most international private high schools in the U.S. are very sensitive to racial discrimination. In the private high schools of the interviewees, almost all have a handbook with detailed school rules. In terms of racial discrimination, the handbook has written very detailed and specific punishments for racial discrimination, such as detention or suspension. Jerry Fu said, "when the school encounters a report of racial discrimination, it will organize a disciplinary committee, which includes eight teachers and four senior student representatives, to discuss and decide. After everyone has signed a confidentiality agreement and made their suggestions according to the seriousness of the event, the principal makes the final decision on whether to discipline students who commit racial discrimination. But most policies and attention are focused on white and black, instead

of the discrimination against Asians.” Jerry Bao also describes his school's sensitivity and punishment of racism: Racism is a red line in our school.

Can students who suffered racial discrimination complain directly to school officers? Kevin Yu answered that there is a google form through which students can complain. If a student fills out the form, a teacher will immediately come to ask for details. After discussion with other school officials, the decision is made to warn, discipline, or suspend students who engage in racial discrimination. So, nobody on campus dares to say the N-word. Besides, according to Angel's response, there are mechanisms for anonymous complaints so that students can report discrimination without stress.

Because of these detailed rules, strict punishments, and well anti-racial-discriminated atmosphere interviewees all say that students in the school rarely suffer racial discrimination, except for subtle bias.

From the answers above, it can be concluded that international private high schools have strict anti-racial discrimination policies, severe punishment measures, and open channels for complaints; therefore, serious racial discrimination incidents rarely occur on campus, including anti-Asian discrimination.

### 5.2.3. Control the Public Voice

Although many private high schools attach great importance to the issue of racial discrimination, when serious incidents do occur, schools, in some cases, will choose to suppress the spread of incidents through the media for the sake of their reputation and interests. Jerry Fu said, “My school had a notorious case of sexual assault. It was so bad that it harmed the school's ranking for several years, and during this time, you can see fewer Chinese parents sent their children to this school. Since then, the school has been afraid and always chooses to suppress adverse reports on sensitive topics. Jerry Fu's response is the only one we heard in the interviews, so it only reflects a part of schools. Future studies still need to examine the generalization of the situation of voice control situation.

Therefore, on the one hand, some schools will oppose racial discrimination, but on the other hand, when racial discrimination does occur, they will control the spread of the incident. Hence, it is reasonable to speculate that some cases of discrimination against Chinese high school students during the pandemic were suppressed after being known by the school official, so they were not widely spread or known by us.

## 6. General Climate of Discrimination Against Asian Students

### 6.1. Classroom Academic Climate

Incidents of bullying and incidents of racial discrimination and prejudice in schools have caused much embarrassment and provoked anger among Chinese students, who are often perceived as model minorities, symbolizing the xenophobia of white Americans against the Chinese, in their studies and their lives. However, such disparities in treatment aren't always hostile or purposeful, some of which are caused by cultural misunderstandings or inadvertent "implicit biases" that influence our ideas and acts without realizing it [22]. Local students are less sensitive to words that discriminate against Chinese than words that discriminate against African Americans due to students' limited awareness of China's history, culture, and ethnic origins. According to Angel Fu, a Chinese international student in Sheffield, when local Chinese and Korean students joked with one another and gave each other nicknames, the Korean students teased the Chinese students with "Chink," while the Chinese students teased the Korean students with "Stick." These nicknames may pique the interest of white people around them, but the white folks are unaware of the racial undertones of these terms. White students do not understand how to use these terms properly and use them in class on occasion, resulting in harsh punishment for assaulting Chinese people. When Chinese classmates tease each other or give



each other slightly racial nicknames, they do not feel very strange; on the contrary, they think these nicknames highlight their distinctive characteristics and feel very novel and interesting. However, if a white classmate called these Chinese classmates using racist slurs, the Chinese students would be offended because of their racial differences. This phenomenon happened frequently in school due to the unawareness of local students. Disparaging humor emerges from the racial distinctions between Chinese and Whiteness, like the jokes above, appears harmless and inconsequential by cloaking racist language that emerges from a history of white racism in a cloak of fun and frivolity. Disparaging humor, on the other hand, is linked to discrimination towards specific groups, according to a growing body of psychology research [23]. In these instances, the school should attach greater importance to the teaching of various ethnic histories and cultures.

Most American teachers are scared to bring up the matter in class, fearing that it will mold a negative picture of Asian Americans or African Americans. Teachers should grasp opportunities to handle race constructively and productively as class leaders. However, these opportunities must be carefully controlled. One option is to maintain racism unconsciously and quietly, while the other is to promote racial fairness actively [24].

For some classes about history or politics, discussing the topic of “alien” racial groups is inevitable. To achieve a better effect of class discussion, the professors are more willing to collect and analyze students' different perspectives on racial issues and give every student the right to freedom of speech in class. According to Kevin Yu, one of the interviewees who attended Governor's Academy in Massachusetts, during his history class, his teacher spent barely 10 percent of his class time discussing American culture and history, such as the Civil War and the Constitution. Ninety percent of the time during the course, on the other hand, was spent on racial issues. *Warriors Don't Cry* and *Farewell to Manzanar* were recommended by his history teacher as books to read about the various races. During class, the students openly aired their thoughts from diverse perspectives. The discussion about racial topics was given priority in Kevin Yu's school, which is in Massachusetts, a state with high rates of hate crimes against Asian Americans. Because of the flared racial tensions on the East coast of the United States, his teacher encourages discussions about race, especially about Asian Americans and African Americans, instead of avoiding such risky discussions. Hoping to reform students' perception of various races, the professor recounted the historical origins of racism and xenophobia against Asian Americans by white Americans in the classroom and allowed students from various countries to express distinctive views through class discussions to undermine local American students' prejudices and stereotypes about Asian and Chinese students. Hence, the class climate plays a pivotal role in shaping the perception of local students and undermining the racial discrimination and prejudice that occurs in school.

## 6.2. Racial Atmosphere and Diversity in School

The general racial climate within American high schools is relatively mild but permeates every bit of school life. As a minority group, Chinese students integrate well into the local school community but face challenges. Some Chinese students are dissatisfied with their range of friendships and find it more difficult than other students to socialize with students from various countries. They identify several impediments to integration, with cultural distance playing a key role [25]. According to Angel Fu, one of the interviewees who learned at Emma Willard School in New York, she struggled to fit in with the school's predominantly white student body, particularly during lunch. Many white folks were laughing at something they felt was amusing. She couldn't understand why these individuals were laughing at Chinese students. Furthermore, local students in the United States would occasionally talk behind her back about her, such as new high school transfer students from California, who would often sneak around and make comments about her due to their prejudice against Chinese

students. But these white students could only whisper behind her back that "this Chinese person has the coronavirus" due to the school's strict rules.

Many Chinese students have a hard time integrating into American society and community, which is related to the stereotypes and the "perpetual foreigner" that Americans have had about China for many years. Regardless of where they were born or how long they have lived in the United States, the Chinese are stereotyped as outsiders and aliens. Undocumented immigrants and some immigrant groups with limited English language ability are examples of issues that affect specific portions of the AAPI population. Chinese people are frequently perceived as exotic and unrepresentative of American culture. As a result, despite China's alleged economic strength, attributions of foreignness serve as a foundation for Asian Americans' subjugation and devaluation [26]. Facing the challenges of integrating into local communities, many Chinese students have formed Asian American affinity groups within their schools to bring all Chinese people together to interact and help one other in response to the difficulty of Chinese students integrating into the white American community and the fierce racial atmosphere. Most Chinese students are relieved after sharing their experiences with others in the group. They host parties to celebrate and promote Chinese culture in the school around traditional Chinese Festivals, such as the Chinese New Year, to improve white people's awareness of traditional Chinese culture and the white stereotype of Chinese people.

In addition to the Affinity groups, the school's diverse racial atmosphere and diverse racial makeup serve to reduce racial discrimination and prejudice by the majority towards minorities, particularly xenophobic attitudes of white Americans toward Chinese international students. Based on the previous section's discussion, racial events on campus are mostly affected by prejudices about Chinese people, which are stoked by American news media coverage of the Chinese news hype and popular opinion on social media. However, in schools with a diverse racial composition, racial prejudice is less likely to occur. Some studies look at how racially diverse educational settings can help to reduce prejudice by encouraging greater contact between students of different races—both informally and in the classroom—and developing cross-group partnerships and friendships. Isolation, subordination, and negative stereotyping are all too typical in places where minority numbers are particularly low and majority norms and behaviors predominate [27]. According to Jerry Bao, a tenth-grade student at Suffield Academy, he was surrounded by students from various countries such as Korea, China, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, etc. Chinese international students make up nearly ten percent of students in the school. Local white Americans are subjected to media allegations about the Chinese epidemic, including claims that the new coronavirus was developed by the Wuhan Institute of Virus Research and other China-related fabrications. However, because Chinese students make up about 10% of the population, American students have more contact with them, and American students inquire with Chinese students about whether the information is accurate and what the latest situation in China is since they are the most knowledgeable about the true source of the outbreak in China, which helps to lessen prejudice among local students about the virus and China. Chinese International students could provide the most up-to-date and accurate information about the epidemic, reducing the negative impact of American media hype and public opinion against the epidemic in China and allowing local white Americans and people from other countries to assess the epidemic's progression in China more rationally and objectively.

### 6.3. Community Climate

The general climate and racial atmosphere in which region Chinese students reside can have a considerable impact on the level of racial discrimination they face. For example, students in urban areas face more racial discrimination than students in rural areas in Eastern America. Adults who live in cities, regardless of race, are far more likely than those who live in rural areas to see racial inequality in each of the seven institutions, with differences ranging from 8% (in stores or restaurants)

to 20% (in schools) in dealing with the police. People who live in the suburbs fall somewhere in the middle of these two groupings [28]. This distinction may be related to the predominant demographic composition and political influences on urban and rural areas.

Because of the rising economy and numerous work prospects, metropolitan cities in the Northeastern United States, such as New York, have a higher proportion of young people. These young people come from various countries and races and congregate in large cities. Africans, Caribbeans, and African Americans make up 25.1 percent of the population of New York City. However, Native Americans make up approximately 0.4 percent of the population of New York City. Asian Americans make up approximately 11.8 percent of the population of New York City. According to the survey, New York City had 976,807 Asian Americans living there. 445,145 Asian Americans, or 5.4 percent of the city's population, were of Chinese descent out of 976,807 Asian Americans. Because of the large proportion of immigrants in New York, the racial composition of the population is confusing and complex, and race relations are not harmonious, leading to serious incidents of racial discrimination. Furthermore, the news media and public opinion guides have a greater influence on young people who are more radical in their views, and racism occurs more frequently. The youngsters most susceptible to radical messages were those who felt politically or economically disadvantaged, resulting in a widespread sense of purposelessness and a lack of hope for the future. Feelings of alienation and vulnerability to radicalization increased when people believed their ethnic group or sect was being watched more closely by the government than other groups [29]. Young people living in large cities like New York frequently heard President Trump's calling about the "Chinese Virus" and other misinformation that denigrates China during presidential elections to draw the hate and anger from the audience to win the political support of the election campaign, which radicalized them and stirred up their xenophobia and hatred for the Chinese. In contrast, Because of the rural economy's underdevelopment and limited employment possibilities, more local young people migrate to the big cities, leaving the rural population in the eastern United States to be dominated by the elderly or small children. During the interview, Angel Fu's school is in Sheffield, Massachusetts, a small rural community in the northeastern United States. The school's students, as well as the town's elderly, make up the majority of the population. Because elders make up a large percentage of the population and all take their health seriously, they all wear face masks throughout the outbreak. However, regarding rumors and hype in the media about the outbreak in China, elders are more susceptible, and they will propagate more rumors. According to a new study released by Princeton University and New York University, those 65 and more are seven times more likely to post fake news than those aged 18 to 29, and conservative users are more likely to distribute fake news [24]. These elders in the countryside are more concerned about their health and are more sensitive to sudden and dangerous viruses and propagate exaggerated statements in the media about the dangers of the epidemic. They also wear masks in their daily lives but do not act as aggressively and radically as young adults. Moreover, Chinese people make up a very tiny percentage of the entire population of the community in rural areas like Sheffield, and locals have less contact with Chinese people, resulting in a more peaceful racial climate in the community. Rarely had local Chinese students who lived in the rural area experienced racial discrimination and suffered from hate crimes during the pandemic. Therefore, the influence of media's misinformation and the population composition in the rural area plays a pivotal role in undermining the racial discrimination against Chinese International students in the rural country in Northeastern America.

## 7. Discussion and Limitation

### 7.1. Significance

Frequently encountering news media reports and propaganda about serious Anti-Asian violence in the Northeastern United States, such as the frequent Anti-Asian crimes against Asian Americans in New York and Boston during the epidemic, like shootings and school bullying, the Chinese international student community is in a state of panic and entanglement about their future study abroad. Based on the experiences of representatives of Chinese students attending high schools in the northeastern United States, this study investigates the severity of racial incidents experienced by Chinese students attending the areas with the most severe Anti-Asian crime in the context of the COVID-19 at different stages of the epidemic, and whether the epidemic exacerbates xenophobia and nativism among local peers. From the perspective of Chinese students in high school, this research describes their genuine and realistic feelings and reactions after encountering racial discrimination situations in school, analyzes in-depth the reasons why racial discrimination incidents are controlled from the perspectives of school policies and racial atmosphere, and proposes corresponding solutions to the unconscious offenses currently suffered by Chinese students to improve racial relations and promote racial integration between Chinese students and the local student body.

### 7.2. Limitation

In the research, only seven Chinese high school students from the northeastern United States were interviewed in-depth, and the sample was drawn from 400 Chinese high school students by snowball sampling, but it was not a simple random sample, and the sample size was small. In addition, the snowball sampling method is not very representative because some individuals may be left out by the provider for some reason and many individuals may not be selected, thus creating bias, and not ensuring representativeness. The seven students interviewed did not cover all regions and schools in the northeastern United States, which has obvious limitations and biases for extrapolating to the racial discrimination experienced by a large sample of Chinese high school students in the eastern United States as a whole, especially those who attend schools with lower overall rankings or come from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds, which reflects the influence of the interviewees' identity background on the study results. Furthermore, during the in-depth interviews, although we used semi-structured interviews, some interviewees may conceal serious and unspeakable incidents of racial discrimination they have suffered for fear of revealing their privacy, resulting in an underestimation of the racial discrimination suffered by Chinese students in Northeastern America during the pandemic.

## 8. Conclusion

Far from our initial assumptions about the racial relationship in Northeastern America, the overall racial discrimination experienced by Chinese high school students in the northeastern U.S. within the school was moderate and less frequent, and the frequency and severity of racial discrimination didn't change significantly before and after the outbreak. Most Chinese students hardly experienced extremely serious racial discrimination or violence on campus, such as physical confrontation and verbal abuse, but were mostly offended by their classmates unconsciously, and the offense stemmed from stereotypes of Chinese people rather than intentional discrimination. Most Chinese students accepted the stereotypical and slightly discriminatory jokes without strong anger, ignored them, and walked away. However, off-campus, especially in cities such as Boston and New York, racial discrimination was more severe than that in the school during the outbreak, and Chinese students were subjected to serious verbal abuse. Compared to the racial discrimination situation in the society,

there were fewer incidents of racial discrimination in schools during the pandemic due to the strict management of school policies, such as severe punishment measures and open channels for complaints, as well as the general climate of the school, such as teachers' class academic climate, which eliminates stereotypes by recounting the culture and history of minority ethnic groups, racial diversity in the school to weaken and control the negative and radical emotions provoked by media hype and misinformation from a political campaign, and the general climate of the school community. In addition, the most unexpected finding is that schools controlled public opinion about racial incidents on campus to protect their reputation and the economic benefits of enrollment in the future.

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