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Parental Involvement to Promote the Social-Emotional Well-being of Asian Immigrant Youth: A Cultural Mismatch Analysis of Teachers and Parents' Perspectives

Introduction

Despite the increasing number of Asian immigrant families, there is a lack of diversity in the American teacher and school psychologist workforce. About 79% of public-school teachers and 86% of school psychologists were White in the United States (Goforth et al., 2021; National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2022). The mismatch of racial profiles between immigrant students and dominant White teachers and school psychologists in public schools has given rise to a cultural mismatch between immigrant families and schools, creating challenges for both immigrant families and schools in their partnerships with each other in support of immigrant students' academic and social-emotional well-being.

The family-school cultural mismatch can directly and indirectly influence immigrant youth's educational experience and their social-emotional well-being. While youths of color directly experience racial microaggressions at school (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012), their immigrant parents were reported to experience cultural barriers in their school partnerships as they were caught between inadequate and excessive involvement (Antony-Newman, 2019), which indirectly affects youth's self-esteem (Yin, 2019; Ying & Han, 2008) and increases their social-emotional concerns (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014). On the other hand, schools encounter challenges in collaborating with immigrant families (Housel, 2020), especially during and after the pandemic era when family-school partnerships have become critical to corroborate students' positive educational outcomes (Jones & Forster, 2021). Despite the effort to establish family-school partnerships, both schools and immigrant families have been experiencing difficulties that likely affect the quality of their partnerships.

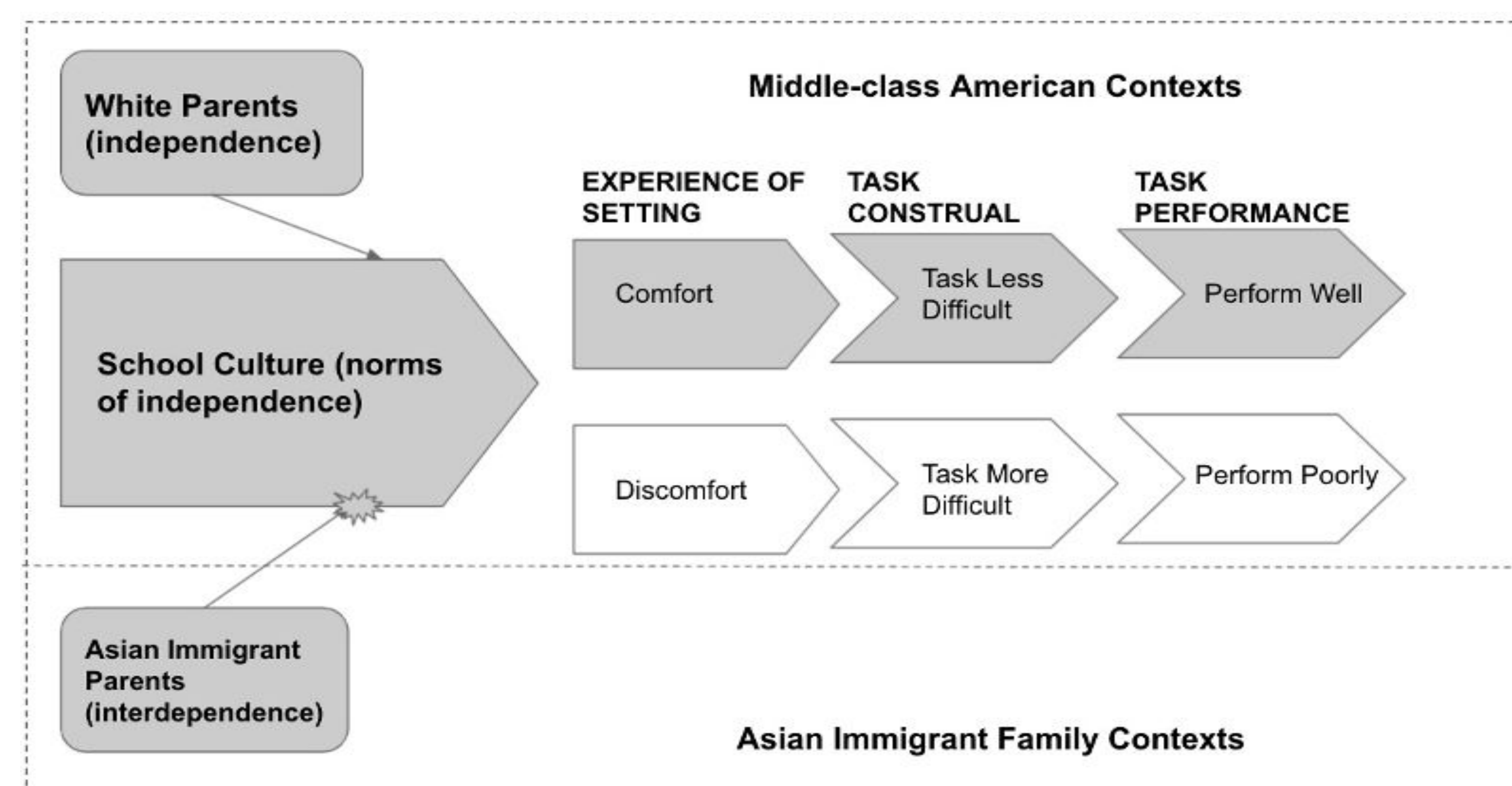


Figure 1. The Cultural Mismatch of Inequality Among Asian Immigrant Families

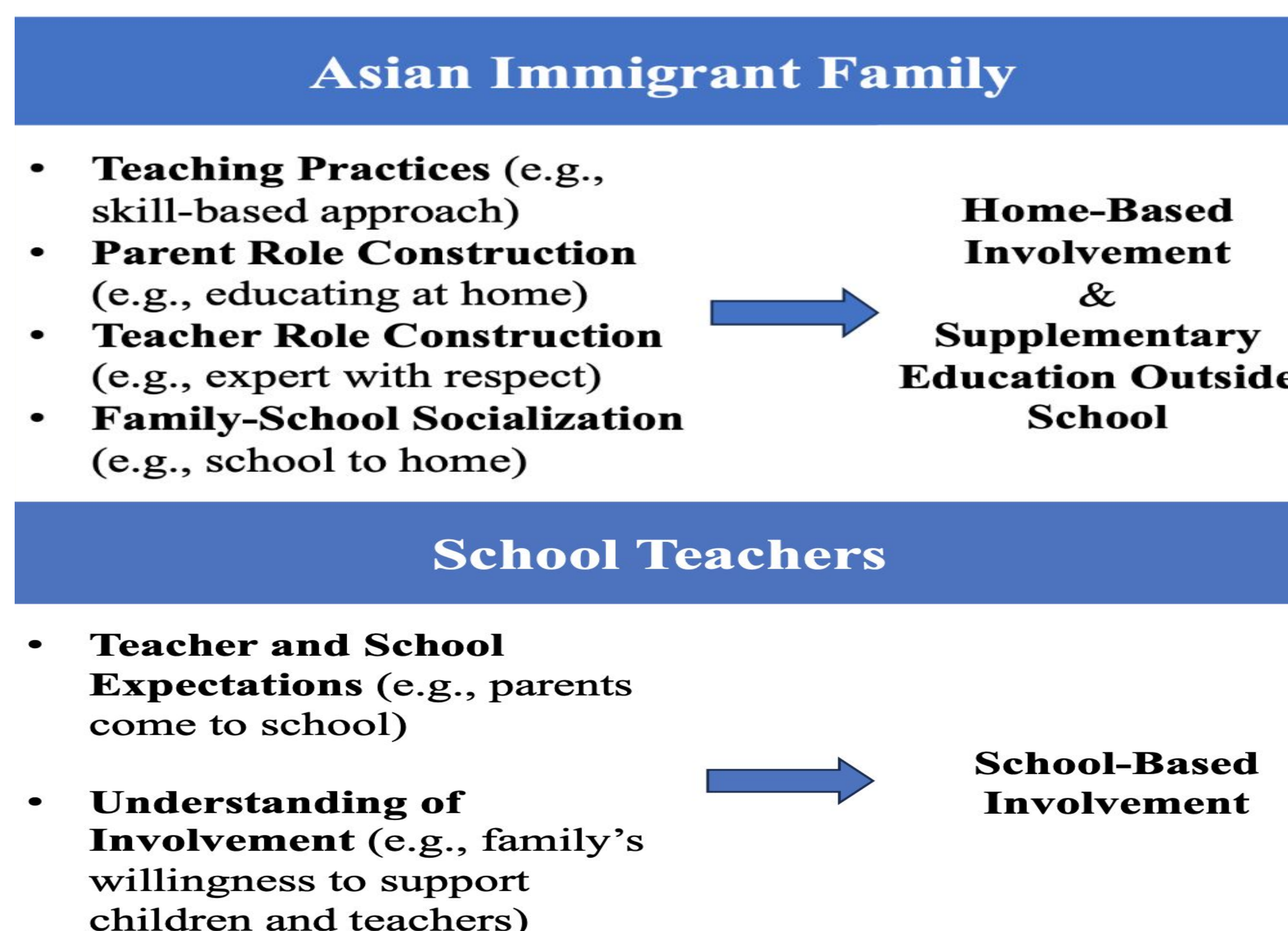
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to conceptualize Asian immigrant family involvement and its barriers through the cultural mismatch lens. This conceptual study offers a synthesis of the theoretical and empirical literature concerning barriers to parental involvement in education, with a specific focus on comparative analysis of perspectives from Asian immigrant families and their teachers in the United States.

The Cultural Mismatch Theory of Inequality

Grounded in the cultural capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986), the cultural mismatch theory of inequality asserts that education inequality is a product of the mismatch between institutions' cultural norms and norms among underrepresented social groups in the institutions (Stephens & Townsend, 2015). When a person's new cultural context attributed to their practices, traditions, and values is different from that of their culture of origin, they may perceive higher levels of cultural mismatch compared to the context where two cultures are more aligned (Stephens et al., 2012). The inequality and barriers are created for the underrepresented groups if the institutions promote mainstream independent cultural norms and exclude the interdependent cultural practices of underrepresented groups (Stephens & Townsend, 2015). As a result, compared to the dominant group, the underrepresented groups likely experience discomfort in the school setting, finding tasks more difficult, and performing poorly in comparison to the dominant group (Stephens & Townsend, 2015).

Perceived Parental Involvement



Perceived Barriers of Parental Involvement

	Asian Immigrant Family	School Teachers
Individual Level Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-work hours and inflexible work schedule Limited financial resources Language and cultural barriers A lack of knowledge of educational systems A lack of external support system Psychological factors (e.g., self-efficacy, beliefs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers' perceived efficacy and capacity of minority parents Teachers' beliefs in effectiveness of parental involvement Teachers' self-efficacy and teaching effectiveness
School Level Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher and principal professional and businesslike manner Opportunities for child growth (e.g., racial socialization) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whiteness School environment Diversity of parental involvement programs School policies and leadership

Research Implications

- Testifying applications of frameworks in immigrant populations and modify or propose frameworks that capture the nuance and uniqueness of parental involvement among immigrant families.
- Further understanding the impact of home-school dissonance on families' involvement which in turn affects students' academic and social-emotional well-being.
- Investigating both the direct and indirect impact of the cultural mismatch on youth's social-emotional outcomes.
- Identifying profiles of cultural mismatch and its relationship with different types of involvement among immigrant families.

Practical Implications for School Psychologists

- Adopting strength-oriented and culturally responsive strategies and approaches to engage Asian immigrant families.
- Collaborating with the families to make joint decisions about immigrant youth's education, making sure families experience trust and respect for their autonomy and culture.
- Understanding barriers to immigrant families' involvement through the collection of qualitative and quantitative data and use data to guide their development of family partnership interventions.
- Supporting school leaders to facilitate space for parents and teachers to openly share their perceptions and needs to form the partnership.
- Consulting with teachers and leaders to reflect on their internalized bias toward immigrant families before suggesting interventions to enhance collaboration between teachers and families.
- Designing and selecting professional development opportunities for themselves and their school team to learn about immigrant families' culture.