Chinese-American Young Adult Children's Perception of Parental Psychological and Behavioral Control And its Impact on Their Emotional And Social Well-being

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CHINESE-AMERICAN YOUNG ADULT CHILDREN’S PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BEHAVIORAL CONTROL AND ITS IMPACT ON THEIR EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING

by

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Abstract

CHINESE-AMERICAN YOUNG ADULT CHILDREN’S PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BEHAVIORAL CONTROL AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THEIR EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING

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The primary aim of this qualitative study was to describe the ways in which Chinese-American young adult children perceive their parent(s) and/or primary caregiver(s)’ expressions of psychological and behavioral control. It also explored how they believed these types of control affected their emotional and social well-being over time. Given that it is documented that their parents are demanding, and that this may be the reason their mental health outcomes are poorer than non-Asians, this exploration was needed. This research sought to provide a better understanding of the emotional and social development of Chinese-American young adult children as it relates to parental psychological and behavioral control.

A non-probability sample of twenty Chinese-American young adult children between the ages of 18 and 25 were recruited from a large public college to participate in an in-depth, structured interview. Findings from this study showed respondents characterizing their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s)’ expressions of psychological control in the following ways: High expectations of school grades, negative evaluations of their academic performance, indifference in response to their academic achievement, limited conversations to school-related issues, desire for them to become a doctor or lawyer, withholding love, obedience, negative evaluation of their
character, nagging, instilling guilt, disappointment and physical punishment. Respondents also described parental behavioral control— and this type of control included, but was not limited to: the strict use of grandparents/babysitters in the absence of parents, matriculation in extra academic or tutoring classes, participation in structured afterschool activities, maintaining their family’s reputation, filial piety, finding a companion/life partner and living at home as a young adult.

Findings suggest that parental psychological control had a negative impact on respondents’ emotional well-being. Respondents felt stressed about their parent’s expectation to excel in school and annoyed about conversations limited to their academics. Respondents also indicated feeling annoyed because their parents told them what to do. Moreover, they mentioned feeling unhappy about not being able to have open conversations with them and their demanding expectations in general, especially those involving school. In addition to these feelings, respondents felt scared of failing to uphold their parent’s high expectations and described feeling as if they were not good enough because of their high expectations, especially those related to school. Respondents appeared tearful or holding back tears mostly while talking about their parent’s lack of effort to find out what they wanted. A longing for their attention in this respect was also evident when they spoke about feeling lonely. While parental psychological control had a negative effect on respondent’s emotional well-being, it did not have the same influence on their social well-being. This finding was evident when respondents did not disclose engaging in delinquent or sexually promiscuous behaviors while characterizing their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) psychological control.

This study found that parental behavioral control had a positive impact on respondents’ social well-being and a negative influence on their emotional well-being. Respondents were
living productive lives, especially as young adults and they illustrated this by describing how they socialized with friends, attended or graduated from college, moved away or planned to move away from home and/or visited family once they became young adults. At the same time, however, respondents reported feeling angry, particularly during adolescence because their parent(s) made them stay home.

This study found respondents’ discussing their caregiver(s) experiences with oppression and poverty. For this reason, even if findings from respondents’ interviews appear to display features of parental psychological and/or behavioral control, clinical practitioners and educators need to be cautious about labeling Chinese and Chinese immigrant parent(s) and/or caregiver(s)’ behaviors in these terms because it does not account for how their behaviors may be influenced by political oppression, harsh economic circumstances, family upbringing and individual personalities.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM FORMULATION

Introduction

One of the predictors of children’s healthy psychosocial development is how parents raise them (Chase-Lansdale, D’Angelo, & Palacios, 2007). Studies show that Chinese immigrant children view their parents as controlling and imply this is why their psychosocial outcomes are poorer than non-Asians are (Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinherz, 2000; Qin, 2006; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1990; Schneider & Lee, 1990; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008). However, researchers have largely ignored specific ways parental control shapes the emotional and social development of Chinese immigrant children. This study explored how Chinese-American young adult children perceived their parent(s) and/or primary caregiver(s)’ expressions of psychological and behavioral control, and how they believed these types of control affected their emotional and social well-being over time.

Approximately 1.6 million foreign-born Chinese in 2006 resided in the United States, making them the third largest immigrant group after Mexicans and Filipinos. About 8% were minors, 61% were of working age and 30% were seniors, of which 54.3% were female and 45.7% were male. Foreign-born Chinese were the third largest group of students and exchange visitors admitted to the U.S. in 2006. Family members sponsored over half of all Chinese immigrants identified as lawful permanent residents in 2007 (Matteo & Devani, 2008).

In 2006, slightly over half of those born in China were naturalized U.S. citizens. The majority spoke limited English with 69.5% of those who reported speaking English less than very well. In regards to education, 43.7% of the 1.2 million adults age 25 and older achieved a
university degree. Less than one-quarter of Chinese men and women in the U.S. were employed in management, finance, business or information technology occupations (Matteo & Devani, 2008).

The number of foreign born Chinese has expanded across the U.S. Most live in California followed by New York, Massachusetts and New Jersey. However, an increasing number are settling in states that previously attracted few immigrants (Matteo & Devani, 2008). Jones-Correa (2008) along with other researchers pointed out that an influx of immigrants and immigrant families are moving to the suburbs of North Carolina, Minnesota, Virginia and Maryland in search of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs (Donato & Bankston, 2008). The increasing Asian population across the U.S. prompted social work researchers and mental health practitioners to develop an interest in studying their children’s psychosocial well-being.

The Psychosocial Well-Being of Asian Immigrant Children and
Utilization of Mental Health Services

Studies that examined the psychosocial well-being of Asian immigrant children found that despite the high educational achievement of these children, their psychological and social adjustment scores were poor (Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinerz, 2000; Qin, 2006; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008). Researchers since the 1960s documented that Asian-Americans out-perform students from other ethnic groups, including Whites in standard test scores and high school grade point averages. They also have lower drop-out rates and enroll in elite universities at disproportionately high rates. In this respect teachers, mental health professionals and the public at large frequently depict Asian immigrants as well-behaved and adjusted. They are in short, seen as the model minority. However, recent national data uncover that Asian immigrant adolescents
reported the highest scores in anxiety and depression in addition to the lowest scores on self-esteem compared with their non-Asian peers (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008).

Asian-American adolescent girls in particular, exhibited the highest rate of depressive symptoms compared to all racial groups. They also displayed the highest suicide rate among all women between 15 and 24 years of age. Research on Asian-American boys suggests they tend to be more withdrawn and depressed than African, Caucasian and Latino boys. According to the Center for Disease and Control (CDC), suicide in 2001 was the third leading cause of death among young people between 15 to 25 years of age, but the second among young Asian and Pacific Islanders. While these statistics illustrate that Asian immigrants experience poor mental health outcomes, few seek help (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008).

Low utilization of mental health services by Asian-Americans is persistent and well documented (The Lancet, 2001; Spencer & Chen, 2004; Yeh, Takeuchi, & Sue, 1994). Data from the Chinese American Epidemiology Study (CAPES) for example, found that less than 6% of Chinese-Americans who suffered from emotional problems sought care from a mental health professional (Spencer & Chen, 2004). The literature indicates that one major reason for this is the lack of bilingual and bicultural psychotherapists available to treat them (Spencer & Chen, 2004; The Lancet, 2001; Yeh, Eastman, & Cheung, 1994). Yeh, Eastman, and Cheung (1994) revealed that Asian immigrant adolescents who received care from such therapists were less likely to drop out after one session and had higher functioning scores at discharge. However, it is unclear what theories of child development and socialization these mental health counselors draw on to create treatment plans for this population.
Little is known about Chinese and Chinese immigrant children’s psychosocial development. A growing number of scholars in China and the United States are beginning to investigate this area of study, but it remains relatively scarce (Camras, Sun, Li, & Wright, 2012; Cheah, Leung, & Zhou, 2012; Choi, Kim, Kim, & Park, 2013; Chua, 2011; Guo, 2013; Lau & Fung, 2013; Yu, 2011; Yang, 2011; Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Qin, 2006; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003; Yuwen & Chen, 2012; Wang, Orozco-Lapray, Shen, & Murtuza, 2012; Rudy, Awong, & Lambert, 2008; Shek, 2007a; 2007b; 2008; Way et al., 2013). Compounding this gap in knowledge is the fact that Western-based assessment tools related to development and socialization are well accepted, but they may not always be appropriate in constructing treatment plans for Chinese or Chinese immigrants (Shrier, Hsu, & Yang, 1996). Shrier, Hsu, and Yang (1996) wrote that there might not be a universal way to evaluate normal development because it may depend on a specific culture and subculture of a society.

Scholars who make efforts to promote culturally sensitive mental health services for Asian-Americans often advise clinical practitioners to read about Confucian philosophy to direct their model of treatment (Chen, 1998; Chung & Chou, 1999; Hong, 1989; Hong & Ham, 1994; Hong & Ham, 1992; Huang & Charter, 1996; Lee, 1982; Lee & Mock, 2005; Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinherz, 2000; Sandhu, Leung, & Tang, 2003; Sato, 1979; Soo-Hoo, 1999; Sue, 1997; Tinloy, 1978; Uba, 1982; Wang, 2000). However, this indigenous philosophy focuses on human development with almost no attention on the social and emotional well-being of youngsters. As a result, Confucianism is an inadequate guide for practitioners’ assessments to determine the specific types of parental control that actually produces good and/or poor emotional and social
outcomes for Chinese immigrant children. Despite this, Confucian philosophy remains important in the evaluation of parental control because it can inform practitioners what certain parenting behaviors mean in Chinese and Chinese immigrant families.

**Parental Psychological and Behavioral Control**

Psychological control occurs when parents instill guilt, anxiety, shame, disappointment or withhold love. Behavioral control involves monitoring and supervising a child’s social and physical environment (Barber, 1996; Barber & Harmon, 2002; Baxter, Bylund, Imes, & Routson, 2009). Scholars’ suggest that parental psychological control influences children’s internal and external problems. Behavioral control, however, exclusively influences their external problems (Barber & Harmon, 2002).

Studies on Caucasian-Americans consistently show that children of parents who asserted psychological control suffered from internal problems such as depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. They also displayed external problems like substance abuse and delinquent behaviors (Barber & Harmon, 2002; Litovsk & Dusek, 1985; Barber & Olsen, 1997; Garber, Robinson, & Valentiner, 1997; Conger, Conger, & Scaramell, 1997; Barber & Harmon, 2002). Children of parents who inadequately exercised behavioral control demonstrated external problems. They for instance, exhibited aggressive and sexually promiscuous behaviors (Barber & Harmon, 2002; Patterson, Capaldi, & Bank, 1991; Loeber & Dishion, 1984; McCord, 1998; Miller, McCoy, Olson, & Wallace, 1986). Drawing from these findings, this study recognized internal problems as an indication of emotional well-being and external problems as a signal of social well-being.

Barber and Harmon (2002) noted that parental psychological control influences children’s ego or sense of self. It intrudes opportunities for self-discovery, distinction from
parents, individuation, self-direction, identity development and self-worth. In the absence of psychological control, Barber, Olsen, and Shagle (1994) suggested children can learn through social interactions that they are effective and competent individuals with a clear sense of identity. Adequate amount of parental behavioral control makes children aware that social interactions are governed by rules and that they must adhere to them in order to become acceptable members of society (Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994; Barber, 1996; Barber & Harmon, 2002).

Most studies that explore parental psychological and behavioral control fail to distinguish and examine the ways in which it shapes the emotional or social well-being of Chinese and Chinese immigrant children. The few studies that attempted to do this to some degree were mostly performed in China with one study conducted in Canada. Findings from these studies were consistent with studies performed in the United States on Caucasian children. Parental psychological control influenced children’s emotional well-being. However, these studies failed to explore how parental behavioral control impacted children’s social well-being (Olsen et al., 2002; Rudy, et al., 2008; Shek, 2007a; 2007b; 2008). Given this gap in knowledge, more needs to be known about how parental psychological and behavioral control effect the emotional and social development of Chinese-American children.

**Mainstream Medias’ Portrayal of Chinese Immigrant Parents**

Scholars continue to be interested in evaluating the strict socialization practices of Chinese and Chinese immigrants and how this impacts their children’s mental health (Camras, et al., 2012; Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Guo, 2013; Kim, 2013; Qin, 2006; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003; Yuwen & Chen, 2012). Following this trend in inquiry, the mainstream media has also become more curious about this topic mostly in response

In her (2008) article, “Why Chinese Mothers are Superior” published in *The Wall Street Journal*, Chua offered readers a preview of her book by summarizing some of the socialization strategies she used to turn her two daughters into musical prodigies. These included not allowing them to attend sleepovers, be in school plays, watch television and receive any grade less than an A. She contrasts this type of harsh parenting to Western parenting in which she generally characterized as more lax (Chua, 2011).

About 8,805 comments were posted in *The Wall Street Journal* website in response to Chua’s article. Many of these were negative statements about her strict child-rearing practices and some were unfavorable remarks about Chinese parenting in general (Chua, 2011). Verna Yu (2011) wrote an opinion piece in *The New York Times* to shed some light into Chua’s thoughts about parenting. In her article, “I was a Tiger Daughter,” Yu explained that most Chinese parents toughen up their children to prepare them for a harsh and competitive environment. She went on to describe how her mother, similar to Ms. Chua, called her garbage, made her practice piano for at least an hour a day and did not allow her to watch television except for news. At the end of her article, Yu concluded that it is more important for her as a mother, to have a child with a healthy and balanced personality rather than one who is a math and music prodigy (Yu, 2011).

Although the popular media and majority of scholars continue to suggest that Chinese-American children perceive their parents as controlling, they fail to look at the specific types of parental control, particularly psychological and behavioral control, that impacts their emotional and social well-being (Camras et al., 2012; Chua, 2011; Yu, 2011; Yang, 2011; Fuligni, Tseng,
This dissertation study aimed to examine the perspectives of Chinese-American young adult children regarding how parental psychological and behavioral control was characterized, the meanings that underlie it, the context in which it occurred and the psychosocial consequences of it because most studies report their parents are strict and that this may be the reason their mental health outcomes are poorer than non-Asians (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008).

**Statement of Research**

This study examined how Chinese-American young adult children perceived their parent(s) and/or primary caregiver(s)' expressions of psychological and behavioral control and how they believed these types of control have affected their emotional and social well-being over time because studies indicate that their parents are strict and that this may be the reason their mental health outcomes are poorer than non-Asians (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008).

**Research Aims**

Drawing from the above research statement, this dissertation study was guided by the following research aims:

1. To examine how Chinese-American young adult children perceive their parent(s) and/or primary caregiver(s)' psychological and behavioral control across different points of their lives.

2. To analyze how these perceptions have affected their emotional and social well-being over time.
Research Questions

The following two overarching research questions directed this dissertation study:

1. How do Chinese-American young adult children describe their perceptions of parental psychological and behavioral control?

2. In what ways do Chinese-American young adult children believe parental psychological and behavioral control have impacted their emotional and social well-being?

Relevance of Study

This dissertation study sought to answer the above overarching research questions because studies indicate that Chinese-American parents are strict and that this may be the reason their children’s mental health outcomes are poorer than non-Asians (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008).
CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The following discussion describes the socialization and developmental theoretical framework that informed this study and its findings. The framework included the person-environment fit model (Juang, Lerner, Mckinney, & Eye, 1999), Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development (1950; 1994), Baumrind’s (1967a; 1967b; 1978; 1991) typology of parenting styles and Confucianism (Slote & De Vos, 1998).

Relevant Theories

Person-Environment Fit Model

According to the person-environment fit model, adolescents’ positive and negative psychosocial well-being is determined by the extent to which parents’ control matches their child’s desire for autonomy. If a child develops a greater need for independence as they mature, then living in an environment characterized by constant parental control produces an increasing mismatch between parent and child overtime. This mismatch or poor fit may cause children to abandon healthy relations with parents and create poor psychosocial consequences for them (Juang, Lerner, Mckinney, & Eye, 1999; Eccles, Buchanan, Flanagan, Fuligni, Midgley, & Yee, 1991).

Copeland, Hwang and Brody (1996) for example, discovered that Asian-American, Asian-international and European-American adolescents who struggled with asserting their independence with parents were more depressed, lonely and reported lower self-esteem. Similarly, Juang and Lerner (1999) cited Eccles and colleagues’ study, which found that a
greater mismatch between parents’ control and adolescents’ desire for autonomy was associated with adolescents’ lower self-esteem and misbehavior.

The person-environment fit model derived from earlier writings of several scholars. One of these scholars was Kurt Lewin (1935) who emphasized the need for innovative research strategies that recognize human behavior as a product of the environment. Another is Henry Murray (1938) who presented a needs-press model, which refers to the notion that the environment or an environment press, supports or interferes with an individual’s need or motivation to move their goal in certain directions. Drawing from Murray’s ideas, George Stern’s (1970) person-environment congruence model stressed that a complimentary combination of personal need and environmental press improves student outcomes (Fraser & Rentoul, 1980). Stern’s thoughts in this respect subsequently supported David Hunt’s (1975) perspective of students’ development because he argued the match between levels of classroom control and students’ level of maturity consequently moved youngster along a developmental path of independence and maturity (Eccles, Buchanan, Flanagan, Fuligni, Midgley, & Yee, 1991).

The balance between parental control and children’s autonomy is especially salient during the developmental period of adolescence (Juang, Lerner, Mckinney, & Eye, 1999). The person-environment fit model, however, stresses that children demand different degrees and timetables of autonomy that are developmentally appropriate because each child differs cognitively, socially and biologically. Furthermore, each child is cared for by a parent(s) with unique expectations that inform what is appropriate in the parent-child relationship. Researchers
who adopt this model take into consideration these individual differences when conceptualizing healthy psychosocial development (Juang, Lerner, Mckinney, & Eye, 1999).

**Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development**

Erik Erikson (1950; 1994) introduced eight stages of psychosocial development across the lifespan and argued that each one can be applied to all cultures. His stages include: Trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation and integrity versus despair (Crain, 2000). Only the first six of the eight stages will be discussed since this research study focused on childhood through early adulthood development.

The stage of *trust versus mistrust* occurs between birth and 18 months. Babies begin to find consistency, predictability, and reliability in their caretakers’ actions. When they get a sense that a parent is dependable, they develop basic trust in them. The alternative is a sense of mistrust in which the child feels the parent is unpredictable and unreliable when needed (Crain, 2000; Erikson, 1950; 1994).

*Autonomy versus shame* is the next stage of development in which children between 18 months to 3 years of age exercise their ability to do things on their own as they mature biologically. Children learn to use their hand, stand on their feet and control their sphincter muscles. If a child expresses a type of autonomy that is socially unacceptable, they may be shamed, resulting in feelings of doubt. *Initiative versus guilt* is the following stage in which children from the age of 3 to 5 make plans and efforts to attain goals. If children are punished for this, Erikson believed they are likely to develop a sense of guilt (Crain, 2000; Erikson, 1950; 1994).
Children between 6 to 12 years old enter school and fall into the period of industry versus inferiority. They learn new skills and accomplish different tasks that raise their self-esteem. Erikson wrote that the school and community at large can hinder a child’s confidence or industry. A Black American boy for instance, may learn in school that the color of his skin counts more than his wish and will to learn. The child in this case, may develop a sense of inferiority because a teacher did not discover and encourage his special talent (Crain, 2000; Erikson, 1950; 1994).

Identity versus role confusion is the stage in which children from the age of 12 to 18 reach adolescence and exercises their independence in an attempt to develop an identity separate from their parents and family. Children during adolescence are concerned with who they are, how they are perceived by others and what they will become. They socialize with their peers to gain a sense of identity. Some associate with political, national or religious ideologies to provide them a group identity and a clear-cut image of what is good and bad in the world. Others may develop a sense of who they are through accomplishments (Crain, 2000; Erikson, 1950; 1994).

Following the developmental period of adolescence, individuals between 18 to 35 years old encounter the stage of intimacy versus isolation. Erikson argued that real intimacy can only occur when one establishes a reasonable identity. He explained for example, that marriages in which people have not come up with an identity often do not work because one will soon complain that their partner is not giving them the opportunity to develop themselves. Isolation and distance from others may arise when one does not have successful and satisfying intimate relationships (Crain, 2000; Erikson, 1950; 1994).
Consistent with Erikson’s theory, Barber (1996) noted that healthy identity development involves engaging in positive peer relations. She explained that parental psychological control interferes and discourages children from doing this (Barber, 1996). For immigrant children, identity formation includes exploring an ethnic identity in addition to other aspects of identity, making the course of getting to know who they are more challenging (Lung & Sue, 1997).

Identity development for Chinese-American youth is complex, as it is bounded by two cultures polarized by issues of group affiliation and independence. In traditional Chinese culture, one’s sense of identity and belonging is defined within the boundaries of the family. A person’s accomplishments, aspirations and roles are informed by the family. European-American culture in contrast, typically encourages adolescents to gain a sense of who they are by exploring outside the family. As Chinese-American youth are placed in two cultural contexts, they must figure out and shape an identity that they feel is manageable (Lung & Sue, 1997).

Su and Costigan (2009) wrote that immigrant parents play a key role in helping their children develop an ethnic identity. Studies yielded results pointing that a stable ethnic identity was associated with positive psychosocial outcomes (Eccles, Wong, & Peck, 2006; Phinney, 1992; Supple, Ghazarian, Frabutt, Plunkett, & Sands, 2006; Umana-Taylor, Diversi, & Fine, 2002; Way, Santos, Niwa, & Kim-Gervey, 2008). A few researchers found that Chinese-American and other ethnic immigrant children of parents who were warm, supportive and open to discussions developed a satisfying ethnic identity (Cheng, & Kuo, 2000; Davey, Fish, Askew & Robila, 2005; Su & Costigan, 2009). However, not enough is known about how parenting practices, particularly psychological and behavioral control, influences Chinese immigrant
children to construct an ethnic or general identity that supports their emotional and social well-being.

**Baumrind’s Typology of Parenting Styles**


Authoritative parents direct the activities of their children in a loving, supportive, firm and rational manner. They emphasize open communication and reason with their children. Unlike authoritative parents, permissive parents make few demands on their children, allowing them to regulate their own activities as much as possible. These parents behave in a non-punitive, loving and affirmative manner. By contrast, authoritarian parents control, shape and evaluate the behaviors and attitudes of their children through strict standards. They expect absolute obedience and respect from their children. In addition, authoritarian parents often favor punitive and forceful measures to curb their children’s inappropriate behaviors. These parents tend to assert power arbitrarily with little explanation or loving support. (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Lim & Lim, 2003).

Most studies indicate or imply that Asian or Chinese immigrant parents are authoritarian (Camras et al., 2012; Herz & Gullone, 1999; Lorenzo, Frost & Reinherz, 2000; Pyke, 2000; Qin,
Gorman (1998) asserted that using Baumrind’s typology to identify these parents as either authoritarian or authoritative ignores the parenting philosophies that underlie their actions. *Guan* for example, is a Chinese parenting concept that refers to care, concern and involvement whereby, parents express a firm control and governance over their child (Lim & Lim, 2003, pg. 27). Consistent with Gorman (1998), Chao and Sue (1996) wrote that the Western understanding of authoritarian parenting might be misleading because it does not capture the essence of Chinese parenting. Yet, Baumrind’s typology overlaps with features of parental psychological control in which Shek (2009) argued is in line with aspects of traditional Chinese socialization practices. The Chinese saying *fu yao zi zi bun eng bu si* (if a father wants the child to die, the child cannot have the option of not dying) for instance, promotes children’s absolute obedience toward parents (Shek, 2006).

Lam (2003) reported that Chinese parents believe they are responsible for educating their children to become appropriate members of society. *Chiao Shun* is a Chinese parenting concept that refers to teaching children culturally appropriate behaviors while restricting them from undesirable behaviors (Choa & Sue, 1996). The emphasis of teaching in this respect resonates with Confucian philosophy.

**Confucianism**

Confucius promoted the concept that education and the process of learning can transform an individual into a proper human being (Slote & DeVos, 1998). Confucius was born in 551 B.C and was the first private teacher in China who devoted his life to learning and teaching to transform and improve society. He was actively involved in politics for decades hoping to put his
humanist ideas into government practice (Slote & DeVos, 1998). His virtues were rooted from the sage-kings Yao and Shun who created a peaceful and moral community during the Shang dynasty. Confucius’s hero was the Duke of Zhou who helped refine the feudal system that allowed the Chou dynasty to survive relative peace and prosperity for more than five centuries.

Confucius’s lifelong ambition was to be in a position where he was able to emulate the Duke, but his political dream was never realized. Despite this, his oral and written sayings found in *The Analects* (Lun-Yu) made a huge impact on the moral characters of people in certain Asian societies (Slote & DeVos, 1998).

The Analects is a sacred scripture compiled by Confucius’s disciples. It captured Confucius’s ambition, fears, joy, commitment and self-image. Modern readers often describe The Analects as a collection of unrelated conversations randomly put together by his followers. Shortly after Confucius’s death, his disciples split into eight schools all claiming to be the legitimate heir of Confucian legacy. Consequently, scholars and political authorities became the carriers of Confucian teachings (Stole & DeVos, 1998).

Confucian philosophy has considerable influences on family interactions and parenting practices in parts of Asia such as China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan. Confucian scholars put forward the meaning of parenting, childhood and family functioning in essays such as *Di zhi zhi* (Duties of children) and *Ji jiu pian* (Crash essay of guidance) written as early as the first century B.C. Wu (1996) reported that the term *Dongshi* (understanding things) refers to the developmental stage in which children begin to possess the capacity to comprehend moral reasoning. It is generally believed that children below the age of 5 or 6 years old are too young to understand, and as a result, Guo (2006) explained that Chinese parents tend to be highly lenient
or even indulgent in their attitudes toward children. Babies for example, are frequently held and taken everywhere parents went (Guo, 2006). Approximately at the age of 6 years old, children reach the developmental period of understanding (dongshi) and parents start to teach them (Wu, 1996; Guo, 2006). As early as a thousand years ago, Confucian scholar Lin Pu cautioned parents from showing too much affection to children because it interfered with their responsibilities to teach and discipline them. Parents who drowned children with love became spoiled (ni’ai) and misbehaved (Wu, 1996).

Confucian text advised parents to train their children not to leap, argue, joke, slouch or use vulgar language (Wu, 1996). Olsen (1975) cited Diamond who noted that Chinese parents rarely played, joked or had open conversations with their children because they feared it would weaken their parental authority. A mother living in rural Taiwan interviewed in Wolf’s (1972) study stated that it was easier to teach children when parents did not show that they liked them. This informant explained further that if children knew someone in the family liked them, they would do whatever they wanted because they could always turn to that person for protection. Wolf (1972) concluded that Taiwanese parents wanted to socialize their children to act appropriately and being friendly with them threatened their efforts. In the absence of direct physical and verbal affection, Chung (2006) explained that love between parents and children in traditional Chinese families were communicated implicitly by practical and instrumental caretaking behaviors.

Confucian teachings stress filial piety and emphasize children’s care and devotion to their parents (Lang, 1968). When the oldest son became an adult, he was expected to physically and financially support his parents. Meeting these expectations showed appreciation for his parents’
sacrifice. Under the ethics of filial piety, aggressive feelings such as hostility and anger toward parents and elders were forbidden (Chung, 2006; Lang, 1968). Chung (2006) wrote that children’s aggressive feelings and behaviors should be internalized to acceptable cultural norms such as conformity to authority, self-criticism, hard work and self-sacrifice for the family.

A common approach parents use to teach children filial piety is through stories that illustrate moral and social standards in which children were expected to model. Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Piety is a classic text written by Guo Jujin during the Yang dynasty (1260-1368). It is a collection of stories showing how children exercised filial piety in the past. In one story, Wu Mang let himself be eaten by mosquitoes in order to divert them from his parents. In another story, Kuo Chu attempted to bury his only child because he was too poor to feed his wife and mother. He reasoned with his wife by telling her that they can always have another child, but they can never replace his mother. When Kuo Chu began to dig his child’s grave, he discovered a vase full of gold, which was a gift for being a filial son (Lang, 1968). Lang (1968) wrote that while this story was cruel, the moral of it was that parents always came first. Throughout Chinese literature what children did for their parents was emphasized much more than what parents did for their children. Children were expected to honor and obey their parents by placing their wishes and preferences above their own (Lang, 1968). Chung (2006) and Guo (2006) stated that when children met the moral expectations of their parents, it symbolized maturity and appreciation for their parents’ sacrifice for them. However, in the event children failed to live up to their social standards, it brought shame to the entire family (Slote & DeVos, 1998).

Guo (2006) cited Huntsinger (2000) who noted that Chinese children learned about shame by taking criticism. They were socialized to be aware of what others thought of them and
trained to act in ways that maximized others approval while avoiding behaviors that would yield their disapproval. Wolf (1972) witnessed Taiwanese mothers scolding their children when they misbehaved. She explained that these mothers were afraid their children’s bad behaviors would endanger their relationships with other women in the village who they relied on for support. Guo (2006) explained that Chinese parents believed that making children aware of shame and getting them to accept criticism prepared them to enter the adult world.

Parents and elders, particularly males in Confucian teachings, are recognized as authority figures responsible for providing proper care and instilling moral and social values to younger generations (Chung, 2006). Kim and Wong (2002) mentioned that fathers were regarded as the provider, the sole decision-maker and the primary disciplinarian. According to Confucian text, the father-son relationship was the most important. Fathers made sure sons were obedient and cared for their parents when they grew old. For this reason, the eldest son was generally considered the most valuable child in the family who later carried on the family name (Kim & Wong, 2002; Lang 1968). Lang (1968) reported that Confucius did not mention the mother-son relationship or the father-daughter relationship. However, Kim and Wong (2002) wrote that the mother-son relationship was usually more affectionate than that of the father-son. They also mentioned that the father-daughter relationship was generally more tender and loving than the mother-daughter one (Kim & Wong, 2002).

As Confucius stressed the importance of education, peasant class parents in China often historically suppressed their own interests to support their children’s studies so that their youngsters could better prepare for competitive civil examinations that lifted them out of the lower ranks of society’s socioeconomic hierarchy (Chung, 2006; Stole & DeVos, 1998). Chung
(2006) explained a common cultural practice for Chinese parents is to view scholastic achievement by their children as a family goal that brings honor and status.

Scholars emphasized that Confucian virtues in relation to the socialization of children continue to have force in Chinese-American families. The majority of studies conclude that parents in these families draw on parenting practices informed by Confucian principles while children adopt mainstream Western values from their peers or mainstream media (Fuligni, Yip, & Tseng, 2002; Lee & Liu, 2001; Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinherz, 2000; Qin, 2006; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003; Wu & Chao, 2005).
CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The problem addressed in the literature review chapter is the lack of understanding about how Chinese and Chinese immigrant parents’ assert control over their children and how this impacts their youngsters’ emotional and social well-being. Because concepts about parental control and its influence on children’s psychosocial development stem from Western developmental psychology and studies that focus on mostly Caucasian-Americans, it is unclear to mental health practitioners how parental psychological and behavioral control in particular is expressed in Chinese immigrant families and what negative and/or positive psychosocial consequences it has on children and adolescents in these families.

Parental Psychological and Behavioral Control

Baumrind’s (1967a; 1967b; 1978; 1991) Western-based typology dominated the parent-child research literature since the 1960s. However, Barber and Harmon (2002) argued that this typology fails to distinguish the actual types of parental control that effects children’s development. They suggested further that because Baumrind’s framework remains well accepted in developmental psychology, it might have made most scholars pay little attention on the ways in which psychological and behavioral control impacted children’s emotional and social development (Barber, Olsen & Shagle, 1994). However, there has been a relatively minor and consistent focus in this inquiry during recent decades (Barber & Harmon, 2002; Rudy et al., 2008; Shek, 2007a; 2007b; 2008).

Explicit attention on psychological control in the parenting literature first emerged during the 1960s, particularly in Becker (1964) and Schaefer’s (1965a, 1965b) writings. Descriptions of
psychological control, according to Becker, included disappointment, withdrawing love, shaming and isolating children. Parental control in this case, was defined as negative love-oriented techniques, which involved parental manipulation of the love relationship with their child as a means of controlling them. Contrary to this approach were positive love-oriented strategies in which parents expressed praise and reasoning (see Barber, 1996).

Schaefer’s (1959, 1965a, 1965b) Child Report and Parent Behavior Inventory (CRPBI) overlapped with some of Becker’s characteristics of negative love-oriented approaches. Items on the CRPBI were possessiveness, protectiveness, nagging, negative evaluation, strictness, punishment, intrusiveness, parental direction and control through guilt (Barber, 1996). Influenced by Becker (1964) and Schaefer’s (1965a; 1965b) writings along with other scholars, Barber and Harmon (2002) used the terms manipulative, constraining and miscellaneous to describe dimensions of psychological control in the parent-child relationship. The authors stressed that socialization strategies within these dimensions sought to shape children’s behavior or adjust the emotional balance in the parent-child relationship (Barber & Harmon, 2002).

Inducing guilt, instilling anxiety and withdrawing love were three ways in which parents manipulated their children. Constraining tactics referred to the act in which parents limited children’s verbal expressions. Parents who engaged in this form of control inhibited their child’s discovery and expression of self. Barber and Harmon (2002) cited Stierlin (1974) and Hauser (1991) who both noted that parental constraining and binding behaviors made children believe parents were indifferent to them. Such expressions of psychological control by parents discouraged children’s participation in family interactions (Barber & Harmon, 2002).
Excessive expectations and personal attacks on a child fell under Barber and Harmon’s (2002) miscellaneous category of psychological control. The authors mentioned Siegelman (1965) who used the term achievement demand to characterize parents who insisted their child made special efforts in anything they did or that they get particularly good grades in school. Parents who expressed personal attacks questioned their child’s loyalty to the family or blamed them for other family members’ problems. This consequently undermined a child’s worth and place in the family (Barber & Harmon, 2002).

Understanding psychological control in the parent-child relationship has historically been a difficult concept to grasp because scholars have different, yet similar ways of explaining what it entails. The same complexity is seen in the construct of parental behavioral control. Baxter, Bylund, Imes, and Routsong (2009) cited Shek (2006) who noted that behavioral control comprised of four components: knowledge of a child’s behavior, clarity in the expectations of a child’s behavior, disciplining a youngster with respect to family rules and monitoring their actions. Unlike Shek (2006), Clark, Kirisci, Mezzich, and Chung (2008) explained that the parental task of supervising adolescents and younger children differed. For younger children, supervision involved direct observations, whereas for adolescents, it included less direct forms of monitoring characterized by ongoing communication between parent and child in regards to a son or daughter’s whereabouts, peers, schedule to return home and contact information.

Even if there is not much consensus in describing parental behavioral and psychological control, scholars consistently report that psychological control impacts children’s psyche or ego while behavioral control alters their social well-being. (Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994; Barber, 1996; Barber & Harmon, 2002). The distinction between psychological and behavioral control
was made clear by Steinberg (1990). According to Barber and Harmon (2002), Steinberg wrote that too much psychological control may diminish children’s ability to develop competence and self-direction as they grow excessively dependent. Too little behavioral control may leave youngsters without adequate supervision, consequently exposing them to variety of environmental dangers (Barber & Harmon, 2002).

Much of the studies that explore the influence of psychological and behavioral control on children’s development examine samples of either all or mostly White American children. Research findings on psychological control demonstrate it intruded children’s sense of self and as a result, was associated with their internalizing problems. Children in this case suffered from depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. Some studies indicate that this form of control was also correlated with children’s externalizing problems defined by delinquent and hostile behaviors (Barber & Olsen, 1997; Barber & Harmon, 2002; Garber, Robinson, & Valentiner, 1997; Litovsk & Dusek, 1985).

Congner, Conger, and Scaramell’s (1997) study for instance, examined how psychological control influenced the internal and external problems of 388, seventh grade, White American children during the course of three years. They found that psychological control was associated with lack of confidence and depression in addition to anti-social feelings and behaviors. The authors noted that these findings should be interpreted with caution because their sample was limited to White, low to middle-class families from small towns and rural areas. To strengthen the validity of their outcomes, the researchers encouraged subsequent scholars to replicate their study with a more diverse sample in terms of race, ethnicity, social class, family structure and community setting (Congner, Conger, & Scaramell, 1997).
Results from studies on behavioral control illustrated that an inadequate amount of such control yielded external problems for children, which included alcoholism, aggressive and sexually promiscuous behaviors (Barber & Harmon, 2002; Loeber & Dishion, 1984; McCord, 1998; Miller, McCoy, Olson, & Wallace, 1986; Patterson, Capaldi, & Bank, 1991). In one study for example, Miller, Olson, and Wallace (1986) analyzed that parents’ rules were correlated with children’s sexually permissive thoughts and behaviors. The authors’ sample included 836 students in 1983 and 1,587 students in 1984 residing in Utah and New Mexico. Of these students, 76% were White and the largest ethnic minority group were made up of only 15% Hispanics. Outcomes uncovered that students’ perceptions of parents’ lack of rules and strictness were associated with their sexually permissive attitudes and intercourse experiences.

Studies that specifically explore the ways in which psychological and behavioral control impact children’s psychosocial development largely ignore Chinese immigrants. Shek (2007) found that a review of the literature showed that the number of studies concerning parental control in the Western cultures was comparatively much higher than those conducted in the Chinese culture. After using the search terms parental control and Chinese in PsychInfo, results pointed that there were only 16 citations.

The problem with exploring parental control, particularly psychological and behavioral control in the Chinese or Chinese immigrant families is the fact that there are few culturally appropriate measures for either one of these populations, probably because most well accepted instruments stem from research on White American families (Shek, 2006). Scholars who adopt a more culturally relativistic position in research methodology, however, tend to argue that parenting concepts differ across cultures and it is important to look at the emic rather than the
etic parenting concepts (Shek, 2006). Chao (1994) for instance, asserted that the Western characterizations of Chinese parenting practices “have been rather ethnocentric and misleading” (p. 1111). He suggested that indigenous concepts such as jiao xun (training) and guan (to love and govern) are important in understanding Chinese parenting.

To yield findings that may be more culturally relevant and valid, Shek (2007) incorporated indigenous Chinese parenting constructs in his research scales to evaluate the degree to which children in Hong Kong perceived their parents as controlling. His findings demonstrated that most children believed their fathers had high expectations with regards to maturity, obedience, virtues, good behavior for family reasons, respect for parents and elders. However, Shek (2007) noted that children did not view these expectations by their fathers as overwhelming. In line with these findings, about one-fourth of children did not identify their father’s role as teacher and a significant proportion were not requested by their fathers to self-reflect. Moreover, less than half of children characterized discipline by their parents as harsh (Shek, 2007). Shek (2007) concluded that these results suggest that although traditional expectations of children remain present in contemporary Chinese families in Hong Kong, ones based on family name and honor were weakening and parents’ expectations of their children were not coupled with severe punishment (Shek, 2007). Such outcomes may mean that traditional, Chinese child rearing norms are changing in Hong Kong because parents are becoming less strict. Yet, most studies report that Asian or Chinese immigrant parents maintain their traditional parenting practices because they are more controlling than White American parents (see Herz & Gullone, 1999; Kelley & Tseng, 1992; Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinerz, 2000; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003).
Kelley and Tseng (1992) discovered that compared with White American mothers, Chinese mothers controlled their children more and were less nurturing toward them. The authors cited that these findings provide evidence that Chinese immigrant mothers continue to be influenced by traditional Chinese parenting practices regardless of the length of time they spent in the U.S.

A total of 38 Chinese immigrant mothers and 38 Caucasian-American mothers with children between the ages 3 to 8 years old were recruited. Research measures included in the questionnaire were the Parenting Dimension Inventory (PDI) and the Parenting Goals Questionnaire (PGQ). Results pointed that, compared with White American mothers, Chinese-American mothers scored lower on sensitivity, consistency, non-restrictiveness, responsiveness to child input and nurturance. Furthermore, Chinese mothers yelled and physically controlled their children more compared with Caucasian mothers.

Regarding their Chinese sample, Kelley and Tseng (1992) noted that yelling at a child was translated to harshly scolding a child on the PDI. The researchers stressed that scolding a child should be interpreted with caution as it may have different meanings for Chinese mothers than Caucasian mothers. While this was worth mentioning, the researchers fell short of explaining what it meant in the Chinese family context for a mother to harshly scold her child. This lack of clarification and understanding may have influenced them to misinterpret their study’s findings. Yet, Shek (2006) found that features of traditional Chinese socialization practices overlapped with characteristics of parental psychological control defined in the Western literature.
The Chinese saying, *bai xing xiao wei xian* (among all acts of a person, filial piety is the most important one) for example, reflects children’s unconditional loyalty in caring for parents. Another concept that may signal the expression of psychological control is *tian xia u bus hi zhi fu mu* (there is no faulty parent in this world), which puts parents’ wishes above their children (see Shek, 2006).

Shek (2006) observed further that parents’ strict expectations of children and children’s dependency on parents were reflected in the following traditional Chinese parenting beliefs: *wang zi cheng* (wishing the son to be a dragon high above other people), *hu fu wu quan zi* (a strong father does not have a weak son) and *yang er yi bai sui, chang you jiu shi nian* (if one raises a child for 100 years, one has to worry about the child for 90 years). While Shek (2006) uncovered that these indigenous parenting constructs may parallel with some elements of psychological control in the West, he stressed that it would be meaningful to understand beliefs about parental control from the perspectives of Chinese mothers and fathers. Shek’s recommendation in this regard may imply that while Western-based instruments on psychological control were reliable when applied to Chinese families, findings from them may not always be valid. For this reason, capturing how parents define and characterize control in socializing children may be a step toward coming up with culturally relevant concepts that can produce more valid assessment tools and better treatment models for this population in psychotherapeutic settings. Yet, few studies focus on this inquiry given that only two were found that looked into it to some extent (Gorman, 1998; Lam, 2003).

In Lam’s (2003) research for instance, Chinese-Canadian families were recruited to analyze how parents and their adolescent children described control in child rearing. Outcomes
revealed that parents were aware they had to be less overbearing with regards to raising their children because they were living in a new cultural environment where it was less socially accepted. Although parents had high expectations of their children, they used subtle means to make it known to them. Parents for example, encouraged their sons and daughters to realize the consequences of their decisions. They reported approaching matters rationally using logic. One way this was conveyed was by explaining to youngsters that a university education was necessary in a foreign country (2003).

Children’s narratives in Lam’s sample were partially in line with parents. The author wrote that although adolescents were somewhat unhappy when describing their parent’s firm guidance, they often justified and accepted it. Adolescents reported curfews imposed by their parents prevented them from heading toward the wrong path and turning out badly. They also reported trusting their parents’ guidance. They mentioned their mother and father had reasons to point them in certain directions in life. Some youngsters stated they respected their parents’ wishes and authority when making decisions. Chinese youth were overall loyal to their family and wanted to maintain its honor.

Lam (2003) analyzed and concluded that the narratives of parents and youth meant that parental control and guidance were expressions of love. Parents controlled and guided their children because they loved them. Children reciprocated parents’ love by listening to them and acted according to their wishes. Lam (2003) used the term “convert control” to describe this context in which parental control signaled guidance, family teaching, coaching and monitoring. Such descriptions of control resonate with the Chinese parenting concept of guan that stress
learning is a way to become human and refers to care, concern and involvement in which parents express by instilling a firm authority over their children (see Lim & Lim, 2007).

**Asian and Chinese Immigrant Children’s Perception of Parental Control**

Contrary to Lam’s (2003) findings and analyses, the majority of studies illustrate that Asian and Chinese immigrant youngsters do not see eye to eye with their parents’ approaches to child-rearing and suggest that this difference may be associated with their anxiety, depression and low self-esteem (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Herz & Gullone, 1999; Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinerz, 2000; Pyke, 2007; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003; Schneider & Lee, 1990). It is however, unclear to readers in these studies which particular types of control parents express that might be related to their children’s negative psychosocial outcomes.

High expectations of school grades, obedience toward elders, future obligation to support the family, lack of expressive warmth and open communication are some of the family issues scholars explore to illustrate the ways in which Asian immigrant children view their parents as controlling. Schneider and Lee’s (1990) study found that Chinese, Japanese and Korean immigrant students thought of their parents as demanding because they expected excellent grades from them. One respondent stated that their parents told them to do better even after showing a report card with seven A’s and two B’s. Another respondent reported that their parents became angry if they received B’s because they wanted all A’s. Narratives such as these generally point that Asian immigrant children think of their parents as strict and unable to express positive feedback about their academics.

In another study, Rhee, Chang, and Rhee (2003) realized that Asian-American youth had difficulties communicating with their parents because they did not have open conversations with
them. In their research, a stratified sample of 99 Asian-American and 90 Caucasian-American students were recruited from a public high school in Los Angeles. Foreign-born Asians were from Taiwan, Hong Kong, mainland China, Japan, Korea, and India. Approximately 80% of Asians in the study’s sample were Chinese.

Outcomes demonstrated that Asian youth encountered more communication problems with their parents and had lower self-esteem than Caucasians. Asians tended to express that their fathers nagged, bothered, and insulted them. They were also more careful about what they said to their fathers and afraid to ask them what they really wanted. Furthermore, these adolescents disagreed to a greater extent with the statement that their fathers were good listeners (Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003). Rhee, Chang, and Rhee (2003) stated that their findings suggest Asian youngsters typically had more difficulties communicating with their fathers than mothers.

Similar to Rhee, Chang, and Rhee’s (2003) study, Herz and Gullone (1999) found that Asian immigrant students identified their parents as unaffectionate and controlling. A total of 238 students between the ages of 11 to 18 years old were selected from nine secondary state schools in different regions of Melbourne, Australia. Of these participants, 118 were Vietnamese-Australian and 120 were Anglo-Australian. The researchers discovered that Vietnamese-Australian adolescents’ reports about their parents revealed higher scores on affectionless-control and lower scores on optimal-bonding than their Anglo-Australian counterparts. Moreover, compared to Anglo-Australians, Vietnamese youth had lower self-esteem.

Consistent with Herz and Gullone’s (1999) results, Fuligni, Tseng, and Lam’s (1999) study discovered that Asian-American students felt their parents were excessively controlling. A
total of 820 tenth and twelfth grade students from different ethnic backgrounds participated in the study. One hundred and three were Chinese, 120 were Mexican, 312 were Filipino, 190 were European and 95 were central and South American. The authors concluded that Asian and Latin American students held significantly stronger values related to respect for elders, following parents’ advice and future obligations to family than those of European backgrounds. At the same time, however, Asians and Latin Americans were more likely to become frustrated with their parents’ assertion of authority compared with youth in the remaining ethnic groups. But, students who scored high on family obligation typically reported more positive relationships with family members. They felt more emotionally close to their parents and were likely to seek advice from them. In reference to Asian-Americans, these outcomes partially contradict Pyke’s (2007) subsequent study that yielded findings indicating that although Asian immigrant youth embraced the value of family obligation or filial piety, they complained about their parents’ lack of expressive warmth toward them.

In Pyke’s (2000) study, Vietnamese and Korean-American adult children overwhelmingly wished that their parents were less strict, more receptive to open communication and affection. Of the respondents, 24 were female and 10 were male undergraduate students or college graduates living in California. Participants were between the ages of 18 to 26 and were either born in the U.S. or immigrated there prior to the age of 15 with the exception of one who immigrated at the age of 17.

Pyke (2000) noticed that respondents generally described their parents as emotionally distant, strict and not open to communication. Adult children complained that their parents were only concerned about their day-to-day activities, such as whether they had enough to eat and
their performance in school. Conversations between parents and children consisted of lectures and directions. Some respondents stated that their parents never asked about their emotional well-being. One for instance, explained that when she was sad her mother never questioned why, because she did not want to hear it. Another reported that he just wanted his father to listen and talk with him when he had problems in school. This respondent explained further that he once squeezed his father’s shoulder to show him love, but then he could tell his father became irritated by it. Another reported that he once told his father I love you and his father responded by telling him that he does not love him and that he could only show love when he supports him.

Pyke (2007) wrote that respondents perceived Asian families as abnormal because they contrasted their family to images they saw on television or their non-Asian friends’ families. One commented that he always knew his family was not normal like the Brady Bunch. Another began to cry and said that she did not have a normal childhood because to be normal was to be American. Pyke also mentioned that respondents depicted their parents as deficient and their construction of American families ignored the problems in non-Asian families such as high divorce rates. She explained that being part of a normal American family for respondents meant that one was a member who enjoyed family relationships that were warm and close. Being in an Asian family then meant living outside this normalcy.

Similar to Pyke’s (2007) study, Lorenzo, Frost, and Reinerz (2000) discovered that Asian-American adolescents mostly from China, Hong Kong, and Vietnam, felt dissatisfied with the lack of available confidants and positive feedback they received in their lives compared with their Caucasian peers. Asians youth reported getting less advice and assistance, but they had fewer expulsions, suspensions, failing grades and expressed less delinquent behaviors than their
Caucasian counterparts. At the same time, Asians were more likely to report being teased, rejected by peers and too dependent on others compared to Caucasian youth. The researchers found that Asian adolescents had lower self-esteem, higher symptoms of anxiety and depression compared with Caucasians (Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinerz, 2000). Such outcomes mean that although Asian immigrant youngsters function well in school, they suffered from psychological and social problems and this might be due to their parents’ assertion of control.

**Baumrind’s Typology of Parenting Styles and Asian Immigrant Families**

As scholars suggest that Asian immigrant children view their parents as demanding, those who draw on Baumrind’s three categories of parenting styles often imply or directly report that their parents exhibit an authoritarian approach to child-rearing characterized by a lack of expressive affection and excessive control (Dornbusch, Ritter, Herbert, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Herz & Gullone, 1999; Kelley & Tseng, 1992; Leung, Lau, & Lam, 1998; Pearson & Rao; 2003; 1999). Much of the existing research on parenting focuses on White American families using Baumrind’s typology. These studies consistently show that children cared for by an authoritative parent were more likely to yield better psychosocial outcomes compared with children raised by an authoritarian or permissive parent. Youngsters of authoritative parents exhibited better school grades, social maturity, responsibility, self-esteem, and overall mental health (Lim & Lim, 2003).

When Baumrind’s (1967a; 1967b; 1978; 1991) typology became widely used in Western developmental psychology, scholars began applying it to Asian and Asian immigrant families around the 1980s. The majority focused their research on the ways in which authoritative and authoritarian parenting impacted children’s academic performance (Chao, 2001; Dornbusch,

Chao’s (2001) study for example, revealed that while authoritative parenting was associated with the academic achievement of European-American youth, it was not related to the academic performance of Chinese-American adolescents. By contrast to Chao’s findings, Steingberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling (1992) found that authoritative parenting had a positive effect on the school performance of both European-American and Asian-American adolescents. In this respect, Steingberg and colleagues’ findings contradict Chao’s results.

Given the inconsistent results that emerged from studies that tested whether authoritative or authoritarian parenting had a positive influence on the academic performance of Asian immigrant children, a growing number of scholars around the 1990s began to question if Baumrind’s Western understanding of authoritarian parenting carries over the same meaning and salience for Asian immigrant families as it does for White American families (Chao and Sue, 1996; Gorman, 1998; Kim and Rohner, 2002; McBride-Chang & Chang, 1998).

Gorman (1998) wrote that using Baumrind’s typology to identify Chinese immigrant parents as either authoritarian or authoritative fail to convey the parenting philosophies that underlie parents’ actions. Her study found that Chinese-American mothers kept an eye on their children’s daily activities because they were motivated by love and concern. She believed that these mother’s actions represented parental warmth and involvement.
Chao and Sue (1996) argued that it would be an error to assume that Chinese parents are authoritarian in the Western sense. They mentioned that the essence in the Chinese parenting term *Chiao Shun* was to teach and ultimately influence children to perform well in school. Chiao Shun represented a mother’s sacrifice, devotion and drive for her child to succeed in school. Teaching took place in the context of a supportive and highly involved mother-child relationship.

Consistent with Chao and Sue (1996) and Gorman’s (1998) arguments, McBride-Chang and Chang (1998) found that half of their study’s sample of Chinese parents in Hong Kong did not fit into Baumrind’s parenting categories. They concluded that while there may be a purpose in conceptualizing parenting practices according to Baumrind’s Western constructs, it was probably less relevant for Chinese families compared to Western ones. Similar to McBride-Chang and Chang (1998) outcomes, Kim and Rohner (2002) found that their sample of Korean-American youth did not identify their parents as authoritarian because they thought of them as loving. Because the majority of adolescents’ reports about their parents were unclassifiable, Kim and Rohner (2002) suggested that Baumrind’s typology may only be marginally applicable to Korean-Americans and other ethnic groups in the U.S.

Studies similar to the one conducted by Kim and Rohner (2002) continue to yield findings illustrating how Baumrind’s typology may not be a culturally sensitive and valid framework in understanding child-rearing practices in Asian families, researchers began steering away from it in cross-cultural parenting studies. Consequently, literature on the socialization practices of Asian or Chinese immigrant families began to explore parent-child conflict. But, research on parent-child conflict do not investigate the ways in which parental control, particularly psychological and behavioral control, influences the emotional and social well-being
of children. They instead, only look at the degree to which conflict occurs and the extent to which it is associated with the poor psychosocial outcomes of children (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Fuligni, Yip, & Tseng, 2002; Lee, Su, & Yoshida, 2005; Qin, 2006; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee; Sung, 1985; Wu & Chao, 2005).

**Parent-Child Conflict in Chinese-American Families**

Studies on parent-child conflict in Chinese immigrant families indicate that conflict generally evolves around culturally relevant parenting issues such as academic achievement, appropriate social behavior and respect for elders (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Fuligni, Yip, & Tseng, 2002; Lee, Su, & Yoshida, 2005; Qin, 2006; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee; Sung, 1985; Wu & Chao, 2005). Most studies compare Chinese-American with Caucasian-American youth and often uncover that Chinese adolescents experienced more conflict with their parents and exhibited poorer mental health outcomes than Caucasian-Americans (Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003; Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinherz, 2000; Wu & Chao, 2005; Lee & Liu, 2001). However, the few existing studies conducted exclusively on Chinese immigrant youngsters pointed that they experienced low or low-to-moderate levels of conflict with their parents and few psychological problems (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Lee, Su, & Yoshida, 2005).

Wu and Chao’s (2005) study’s outcomes found that compared with European-American students, Chinese-Americans experienced more conflict with their parents and adjustment problems. The researchers selected 184 Chinese-American and 80 European-American students in the ninth through twelfth grades at four different high schools in the greater Los Angeles area. They noticed that compared with European-Americans, Chinese-American students had higher levels of discrepancies regarding parental warmth. Wu and Chao also reported that while
Chinese students may view this discrepancy as an indication of cultural conflict with their parents, European-American students might be more likely to think of it as a typical generational gap. As a result, the researchers noticed that Chinese-American students suffered more adjustment problems compared with European-American students.

Wu and Chao (2005) attempted to explain why Chinese immigrant students in their sample yielded more adjustment problems. They reported that Asian parents express love for their children by what they do for them rather than what they say to them because according to Confucian doctrine, one’s good intention is conveyed through actions more than words. Unlike Confucian norms, mainstream American culture often encourages direct or expressive communication and therefore, parental love and affection is generally demonstrated through hugging, kissing and praising children.

Wu and Chao (2005) suggested that while discrepancies in parental warmth in American families is likely to be perceived by adolescents as a normal generational gap, such discrepancies in Chinese immigrant families is likely to be recognized by youth as an indication of cultural conflict because it deviates from cultural norms. The researchers wrote that this may be the reason Chinese-American students displayed more adjustment problems than European-American students in their sample. Although this rational was noteworthy, it was not based on in-depth interviews with Chinese and European-American students. In the absence of interviews with students, the logic Wu and Chao presented to make sense of their results may not have accurately captured the perspectives of participants in their study.

Contrary to Wu and Chao (2005) study’s results, Costigan and Dokis (2006) found that Chinese-Canadian children who were more engaged in Canadian culture compared with their
parents reported relatively low conflict with them, few depressive feelings and did not exhibit poor adjustment. The researchers explained that although different levels of acculturation between parents and children present challenges in immigrant families, it appeared that Chinese-Canadian families in their sample might have managed these challenges effectively (Costigan & Dokis, 2006).

There is little consensus about the intensity of parent-child conflict in Chinese immigrant families and the degree to which it impacts the psychosocial well-being of children. Thus, findings are inconclusive and may depend on the scope of the study. Compounding this ambiguity is the lack of understanding about how parent-child conflict is expressed in such families because no studies were located that focused on how it actually plays out. Despite this gap in information, Yau and Smetana (1996) suggested that Chinese immigrant youth may be subtler and indirect when expressing disagreements with parents than European-American adolescents. They explained that this was probably because Chinese children were taught not to display anger toward their mothers and fathers.

The present literature on child-rearing among Asian or Chinese immigrant families often imply that parents are moving away from traditional Confucian based parenting practices (Cheah et al., 2013; Choi et al., 2013; Guo, 2013; Kim, 2013; Kim et al., 2012; Way et al., 2013). Cheah et al. (2013), for instance, suggest findings suggest that Chinese immigrant mothers attempted to balance parenting goals and practices that reflected U.S. and Chinese cultures. In their study, 50 mothers who immigrated to the U.S. with children between the ages of 3 and 6 years old were recruited from churches, community centers, preschools and daycare centers in Maryland. Announcement of the study was made in these organizations and interested parents provided
their contact information to a research assistant. Trained research assistants subsequently scheduled a home visit to perform a 15 to 30-minute structured interview with carefully worded questions and probes in Mandarin, Cantonese or English depending on the parent's preference.

Findings from Cheah et al. (2013) revealed that Chinese immigrant mothers embraced U.S. parenting. Mothers promoted that their children make good judgments, be independent and assertive when making decisions. At the same time, they favored Chinese parents' emphasis on children's academic performance in contrast to U.S. parents' focus on their children's overall development. Although many of these mothers stressed the importance of their children's education, they disapproved of how education is overemphasized in Chinese societies. But, rather than minimizing their emphasis on education, these mothers talked about allowing their children to choose their future academic paths.

Similar to Cheah et al.'s (2013) findings, Way and colleagues (2013) found Chinese mothers in their study wanted their children to make decisions. Mothers reported a desire for their children to choose future careers that peak their interests. The authors suggest this signaled a move away from traditional parenting practices in contemporary China. In their longitudinal, mixed method study, seven hundred and ten families with children in the 7th grade were recruited from three different middle schools in Nanjing, China. The same families were followed when children entered the 8th grade and again in the 9th grade. Among them, 60 families were purposively sampled by gender and recruited for the in-depth interview portion of the study. A random sample of 24 out of the 60 mothers were selected for the study's analysis.

Findings from the Way et al. (2013) study showed that mothers were more concerned about their children's happiness and health. They placed equal or more emphasis on social and
emotional goals than academic ones. Mothers spoke about being lenient, lowering their expectations and providing their children opportunities for autonomy to promote their health and happiness. These findings, along with Cheah and colleagues (2013) research contrast with the majority of earlier studies that suggest Asian or Chinese immigrant parents expect excellent grades and absolute obedience from their children (see Camras et al., 2012; Herz & Gullone, 1999; Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinherz, 2000; Pyke, 2000; Qin, 2006; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1990; Schneider & Lee, 1990; Yuwen & Chen, 2012).

Research on Child Development among Chinese and Chinese Immigrants

There is little understanding about the ways in which Asian and Asian immigrant youngsters interact with their parents and the techniques parents use to socialize them given the contradicting results that emerge from studies that explore these topics. Part of the reason for this lack of knowledge and confusion is probably because not enough is known about childhood development in Chinese families (Shrier, Hsu, & Yang, 1996).

Scholars prior to 1949 in China had almost no interest in studying childhood development. Shrier, Hsu and Yang (1996) wrote that this developmental period received little attention because the Chinese were traditionally concerned with what children did for parents rather than what parents did for children. When diplomatic relations between China and the U.S. resumed in 1972, the Chinese proposed they would welcome scientific delegations from the U.S. on issues that focused on child development and education. A group of 13 experts in 1973 spent three weeks in China observing children in homes, schools, communes and factories. They talked to parents, teachers and education officials. From this time on, cross-cultural studies have
continued between mainland China and the U.S., mostly in the areas of academic achievement and education in general. (Shrier, Hsu, & Yang, 1996).

Studies on child development and socialization remain scarce in China despite the growing number of scholars interested in these inquiries (Shrier, Hsu, & Yang, 1996). Shrier, Hsu and Yang (1996) noted that there is still little scientific research about what children think and desire. Widening this gap in knowledge is the fact that instruments used in China to examine children’s psychosocial well-being are largely based on White Americans and this approach in research methodology may not be a culturally valid way to accurately assess them.

Child and adolescent development has been more intensively studied in the U.S. than anywhere else in the world, to the point that American assessment tools in relations to parenting, along with child developmental theories are often thought of as standard (Shrier, Hsu, & Yang, 1996). One of which is Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development. Erikson believed the period of adolescence occurs between 12 to 18 years old. Children during this time assert their autonomy in an effort to come up with an identity separate from their parents and family. They socialize with peers or learn about political, national and religious ideologies to get a sense of their identity (Crain, 2000). Contrary to Erikson’s theory, a few scholars suggest that Chinese and Chinese immigrant youngsters reach adolescence at a later age and one study showed that Chinese-American adolescents spoke about independence in a manner that respected their parents’ authority and wishes (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Feldman & Rosenthal, 1990; Russell, Chu, Crockett, & Lee, 2010; Su & Costigan, 2009). Recommendations and research outcomes such as these cautions mental health therapists that Western developmental theories might not always be appropriate and effective models to evaluate Chinese youngsters.
Russell, Chu, Crockett, and Lee’s (2010) study found that Chinese-American adolescents’ perceptions of independence were overall closely tied to the notion of guan in which parents set and taught family standards children were expected to follow. Boys and girls however, spoke differently about the influence parents had in shaping their autonomy. Girls talked about their independence in a way that made it seem like parents knew best while boys discussed it in a manner that signaled parents played an advising role.

Girls felt they were independent and made their own choices, but it was driven by a desire to respect their parents and family. One girl explained that her autonomy came from her status as an older, first-born child responsible for taking care of siblings and family chores. Another girl expressed that she was free to stay out late in the evenings, but it was her responsibility as an independent person to call her parents. While talking about independence, one girl reported that she hated her parents for making her go to a private high school. But, she later realized that it was probably good that they made this decision for her because she was young and would have easily fell for a lot of negative pressure from peers.

Unlike girls, boys did not imply that parents knew best, rather they saw them as important teachers. One explained that it was necessary to ask parents for advice because sometimes they knew more. Similar to this informant, another stated that you could always ask your parents for advice and permission to do something, but in the end, it was ultimately your choice and that choice symbolized independence. The authors wrote that Chinese-American boys’ perception of independence was also contingent upon parents’ approval. One boy reported that being able to make decisions meant your parents trusted you in making choices (Russell, Chu, Crockett, & Lee, 2010).
In sum, Russell, Chu, Crockett and Lee’s (2010) study’s findings stress that while Chinese-American youth believed they were independent, they articulated it in a way that honored family obligations and parents’ preferences. The researchers, however, did not look at how adolescents’ acceptance of their parents’ expectations and teachings shaped their emotional and social well-being (Russell, Chu, Crockett, & Lee, 2010). Specifically, how did Chinese immigrant youngsters actually feel about following their parents’ wishes? What kind of psychological and behavioral control did these youth’s parents instill to encourage or make them adhere to their expectations and wishes? The absence of such information prevents clinical practitioners and researchers from knowing the actual types of parental control that yields good and poor emotional and social outcomes for Chinese immigrants.

Barber (1996) argued that parental psychological control in particular, inhibits children from developing a healthy identity known to produce positive psychosocial outcomes. Su and Costigan (2009) wrote that racial and ethnic minority parents play an important role in encouraging their children to develop a strong ethnic identity. A few existing studies report that parents’ warmth, reasoning, monitoring and autonomy-promoting practices were associated with children’s reports of a stable ethnic identity (Cheng & Kuo, 2000; Davey, Fish, Askew, & Robila, 2005; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992; Su & Costigan, 2009). Within these studies, three investigated Chinese immigrant families, but none separated and looked at the ways in which psychological and behavioral control influenced children’s ethnic identity development and their psychosocial well-being as a result (Cheng & Kuo, 2000; Davey, Fish, Askew, & Robila, 2003). Su and Costigan’s (2009) research for example, found that high levels of positive parenting practice and family obligation expectations promoted Chinese-Canadian children’s
ethnic identity development. But, the authors did not report how such an identity, shaped by the family, altered the psychological and social well-being of children. Although this analysis was missing, the researchers explained why their findings might have emerged. They reported that family obligation expectations, rooted from Confucian teachings, was one way parents socialized youngsters to understand what it meant to be Chinese. Parents who emphasized family obligations passed on cultural knowledge to children by requesting that they engage in activities related to helping the family. The researchers suggested that consequently, youngsters identified and connected with their parents and this enhanced their feelings of ethnic belonging. Feelings of ethnic belonging were strengthened by positive parenting practices characterized by warmth and willingness to explain decisions. In line with this logic, results showed that the combination of positive child rearing approaches and family obligation expectations were correlated with children’s development of a strong ethnic identity.

Riveras-Drake, Hughes, and Way (2008) noted that positive feelings about one’s ethnic group might protect youth from the negative psychological consequences of discrimination. Spencer, Dornbusch, and Mont-Reynaud (1990) emphasized that parents can shield minority youngsters from racist and destructive messages that contribute to their poor mental health. They can provide children with emotional support by offering a positive depiction of their ethnic culture than those presented by the majority.

The rationale, stating that a stable ethnic identity yields better psychosocial outcomes, has been largely supported in studies conducted with Mexican and African-Americans. However, research with Asian-Americans produce mixed results (Riveras-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2008). Given these contradictory findings, more remains to be known about the ways in which a strong
ethnic identity results in positive social and emotional outcomes for Chinese immigrant children and what parents do to support it.

Discrimination among Chinese immigrant children has been well documented (Grossman & Liang, 2008; Lung & Sue, 1997; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2008; Way, Santos, Niwa, & Kim-Gervey, 2008). Yet, it is unclear how parents socialize these youngsters to overcome this kind of adversity that impacts their ethnic and overall identity. In Way, Santos, Niwa, and Kim-Gervey’s (2008) study for instance, Chinese high school students in New York City were identified by their ethnic minority counterparts as “dirty,” “smelly” and “not cool” in their personal style, food habits, language and general attitudes. One student stated that being Chinese meant being disliked and harassed because of their immigrant status, accent, small size and preferences teachers had for most Asians students (Way, Santos, Niwa, & Kim-Gervey, 2008).

Victimization among Chinese students ranged from being called names such as “Chink,” “nerd” and “Chino” to being physically assaulted. One informant explained that the Chinese get slapped in the face by non-Chinese students because they do not understand them when they speak their native tongue. The researchers observed that Chinese students were at the bottom of the school’s social hierarchy. They also found that many expressed a desire to not be Chinese. One respondent wished he was not Chinese because people made fun of him. Similar to this respondent, another reported not liking their Chinese identity because they were small and this made them an easy target to get picked on by others (Way, Santos, Niwa, & Kim-Gervey, 2008). Although these findings captured the ways in which Chinese-American youth perceived their peers negative portrayal of them, Way, Santos, Niwa, and Kim-Gervey (2008) did not explore how their parents buffered against the adverse psychosocial effects of discrimination.
Summary

Studies that investigate the socialization and development of Chinese and Chinese immigrant children have yielded confusing and contradictory results (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Chao, 2001; Fuligni, Yip, & Tseng, 2002; Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Kim & Rohner, 2002; Lee & Liu, 2001; Lee, Su, & Yoshida, 2005; Leung, Lau, & Lam, 1998; Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinnerz, 2000; McBride-Chang, & Chang, 1998; Qin, 2006; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee; Quoss & Zhao, 1995; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003; Steingberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch & Darling, 1992; Sung, 1985; Wu & Chao, 2005). This indicates that not enough is known about what supports and diminishes these children’s psychosocial outcomes. Complicating and widening this gap in knowledge is the fact that Western-based assessment instruments related to children’s psychosocial development and socialization are widely used, but they may not always be appropriate in assessing Chinese or Chinese immigrants (Shrier, Hsu, & Yang, 1996).

Research shows that despite the high educational achievement of Chinese-American children, their psychological and social adjustment scores were poor (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008). The literature suggests that this may be a result of the problems they encounter at home (Herz & Gullone, 1999; Wu & Chao, 2005; Lee & Liu, 2001; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003; Lorenzo, Frost & Reinherz, 2000). Scholars indicate or imply that Chinese immigrant parents are authoritarian and thus controlling (Herz & Gullone, 1999; Pearson & Rao, 2003; 1999; Kelley & Tseng, 1992; Leung, Lau, & Lam, 1987; Dornbusch, Ritter, Herbert, Roberts & Fraleigh, 1987; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992).

Parental control has been studied more often in Caucasian-American families than any other ethnic group (Shek, 2007). Research with this population consistently reveal that parental
psychological control was associated with children’s internal and external problems while behavioral control was exclusively linked to their external problems. Children of parents who asserted psychological control suffered from internal problems like depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. These children also displayed external problems such as delinquent behaviors and substance abuse (Barber & Olsen, 1997; Barber & Harmon, 2002; Conger, Conger, & Scaramell, 1997; Garber, Robinson, & Valentiner, 1997; Litovsk & Dusek, 1985). Parents who inadequately instilled behavioral control, however, had children who developed only external problems such as aggressive and sexually promiscuous behaviors (Barber & Harmon, 2002; Loeber & Dishion, 1984; McCord, 1998; Patterson, Capaldi, & Bank, 1991; Miller, McCoy, Olson, & Wallace, 1986).

Most scholars fail to distinguish and look at how parental control, specifically psychological and behavioral control, impacts the emotional and social well-being of Chinese and Chinese immigrant children (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Fuligni, Yip & Tseng, 2002; Lee, Su, & Yoshida, 2005; Lee & Liu, 2001; Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinerz, 2000; Qin, 2006; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee; Sung, 1985; Rhee, Chang & Rhee, 2003; Wu & Chao, 2005). One study performed in China that examined this inquiry to some extent yielded inconsistent results from studies on Caucasian-Americans. Psychological control was associated with internalizing problems for girls and externalizing problems for boys (see Olsen, Yang, Hart, Robinson, Wu, Nelson, Nelson, Jin, & Wo, 2002). Such ambiguous findings call for more research to be performed on these two dimensions of parental control in Chinese immigrant families in order to come up with more culturally relevant and effective assessment tools, along with treatment plans in psychotherapeutic practice with this population.
CHAPTER VI: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Dissertation

This study examined the perspectives of Chinese-American young adult children with respect to how parental psychological and behavioral control is characterized, and how these types of control impacted their emotional and social well-being over time. Guided by a grounded theory tradition consistent with qualitative methods, this study’s inquiry utilized in-depth structured interviews with Chinese-Americans between the ages of 18 to 25. The purpose of this was to explore how they characterized parental psychological and behavioral control during different points of their lives, in addition to how they felt these types of control may have impacted their emotional and social well-being over time. This study also sought to find out the context in which these young adult children report parental control, along with the situations in which their parent(s) and/or primary caregiver(s)’ express more or less psychological and behavioral control.

For this study, the definitions of parental psychological and behavioral control for this study stemmed from previous research (Barber, 1996; Barber & Harmon. 2002; Baxter, Bylund, Imes, & Routsong, 2009). While keeping in mind the existing definitions of these two dimensions of control, I remained open to how a community sample of Chinese-American young adult children interpreted parental psychological and behavioral control, and what they believed were the emotional and social consequences of them. Using this approach to inquiry, this study was able to advance knowledge in the study of child development and socialization in Chinese-American families.
Given that research indicates parents in Chinese immigrant families are controlling and this may be why children develop poor psychosocial outcomes, this study looked at the emotional and social consequences of parental psychological and behavioral control from the viewpoints of Chinese-American young adult children. Existing studies suggest that parental control impacts children’s internal and external problems. Specifically, psychological control was found to be associated with children’s internal problems because it influenced their depression, anxiety and self-esteem. Parental psychological control was also related to their external problems, as it impacted their substance abuse and delinquent behaviors (Barber & Olsen, 1997; Barber & Harmon, 2002; Conger, Conger, & Scaramell, 1997; Garber, Robinson, & Valentiner, 1997; Litovsk & Dusek, 1985). Behavioral control, however, was exclusively correlated with their external problems (Barber & Harmon, 2002; Loeber & Dishion, 1984; McCord, 1998; Miller, McCoy, Olson, & Wallace, 1986; Patterson, Capaldi, & Bank, 1991). Although these findings are consistent for Caucasian-Americans, studies that focus on the consequences of parental psychological and behavioral control in Chinese and Asian immigrant families are lacking.

Rhee, Chang and Rhee’s (2003) study found that Asian-American male and female youth had lower self-estees and greater difficulties communicating with their fathers compared to their Caucasian counterparts. Asian adolescents tended to express that their fathers nagged, bothered and ridiculed them. They were more likely to disagree with the statement that their fathers were good listeners and were also more cautious about what they said to them (Rhee, Chang, and Rhee, 2003). Although the authors’ findings were worth mentioning, they did not identify the specific types of parental control, particularly psychological and behavioral control.
that impacted the self-esteem of Asian immigrant youth. As a result, the following questions remain unanswered. How did Asian-American adolescents in Rhee, Chang and Rhee’s (2003) sample describe their fathers’ complaints, insults and intrusiveness? How were their descriptions a reflection of psychological and/or behavioral control? What kind of emotional and social consequences did these youngsters believe their perceptions of parental control had on them?

Unfamiliar with the way in which Chinese-American children perceive parental psychological and behavioral control makes it difficult for mental health practitioners in general to identity the actual types of control that influences their emotional and social well-being. This gap in knowledge creates barriers for clinicians to develop more effective and culturally sound psychotherapeutic treatment plans for this population. This study explored the ways in which Chinese-American young adult children viewed these two types of control, and how their viewpoints impacted their emotional and social well-being over time. Such an inquiry called for qualitative research methods because existing studies on parental control in Chinese and Chinese immigrant families are mostly quantitative and findings from these studies have yielded mixed and confusing results (Chao, 2001; Chen, Dong, & Zhou, 1997; Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Lee & Liu, 2001; Lee, Su, & Yoshida, 2005; Lorenzo, Frost & Reinherz, 2000; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003; Wu & Chao, 2005).

**Rational for Qualitative Methodology**

Guided by a constructivist epistemological position, qualitative methods seek to develop knowledge based on a researcher’s interactions with respondents. The investigator conducts interviews with respondents in the form of conversations intended to build a rapport with them.
This strategy allows the investigator to delve deeper into their lived experiences and understand it as a dynamic and complex phenomenon (Guba & Lincoln, 2002; Patton, 2002).

The expressions and meanings of parental control in Chinese immigrant families is complex given that studies on child development and socialization in these families have produced contradictory and ambiguous results (Chao, 2001; Chen, Dong, & Zhou, 1997; Kim & Rohner, 2002; Leung, Lau, & Lam, 1998; McBride-Chang & Chang, 1998; Quoss & Zhao, 1995; Steingberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). This is probably because assessment tools used to examine such constructs rests on Caucasian-Americans and these instruments may not capture the meanings informed by Confucian philosophy that underlies elements of parental control in Chinese immigrant families (Chao & Sue, 1996; Gorman, 1998; McBride-Chang & Chang, 1998; Kim & Rohner, 2002; Shrier, Hsu, & Yang, 1996). Qualitative methods in this case are essential because it can bring a detailed explanation of the context in which Chinese-American young adult children observe, describe and make sense of their parents’ expressions of control often revealed in complex, subtle and/or unique ways.

**Grounded Theory**

This study examined respondents lived experiences regarding the emotional and social consequences of parental psychological and behavioral control using methods of grounded theory traditions in line with qualitative research. It explored how respondents described, felt, perceived, judged and remembered their parent(s) and/or primary caregiver(s) control over them. Learning from the experiences of subjects in this manner unraveled the essence or common experiences that resonate with the phenomena of parental psychological and behavioral control in Chinese-American families (Bodgan & Biklen, 1983; Patton, 2002).
Grounded theory requires the researcher to remain open to respondents lived experiences while withholding preconceived criterions about it. This demands the investigator to be open to changing the course of their inquiry, as they gain a better understanding of the phenomena under study. I developed a preconceived line of inquiry based on existing theories and empirical findings regarding parental psychological and behavioral control. This was, however, challenged during an interview or between interviews with respondents. In an effort to discover new knowledge, I was flexible by allowing research questions to depend on what evolved as interviews progressed. If a particular respondent, for example, mentioned an important element of their experience, I noted it and tested its relevance in subsequent interviews with other respondents.

Grounded theory focuses on the ways in which subjects perceive their lived experiences and attends to how their experiences can yield theoretical statements and potential relationships among important concepts. Grounded theory is used to create a theoretical explanation of a phenomena by demonstrating how it is expressed, the variations that characterizes it, the contexts in which it occurs and the consequences of it (Suddaby, 2006). After uncovering different features of a phenomena, grounded theory methods seek to identity themes, patterns and categories for analysis (Patton, 2002). Categories or concepts emerge directly from the qualitative data by constantly comparing between and among interviews with participants. The purpose of this process is to make clear the theoretical underpinnings of the phenomena under study until the researcher cannot identity anymore conceptual material from the data gathered (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
Credibility, Transferability and Dependability

Internal validity in quantitative research refers to the extent to which findings accurately describe a cause and effect relationship between two variables by testing them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While the quantitative research is concerned with threats to internal validity, the qualitative one is interested in credibility. Credibility refers to qualitative findings that sufficiently represent the perspectives of respondents. It is contingent upon the richness of information gathered from subjects and the researcher’s ability to adequately analyze it. One barrier to credibility is the suspicion that the research’s analysis is shaped according to their pre-disposition and biases. To limit this from happening, one needs to remain aware of them and look at alternative ways of analyzing the qualitative data (Patton, 2002).

I faced challenges as a Chinese-American with pre-dispositions and biases regarding the emotional and social consequences of parental control. Allowing my colleagues and dissertation committee to review emerging themes from the qualitative dataset I collected for this study helped me maintain as objective a stance as possible. Patton mentioned (2002) that this strategy can improve the credibility of a study’s findings by minimizing problems related to research biases. He also suggests that a systematic search for alternative themes, divergent patterns and rival explanations enhances the credibility of research findings. The goal of this process is to assess if the majority of the qualitative data gathered supports the researcher’s analysis. This can be achieved using a logical or inductive approach. A logical approach requires one to think about other possible analysis and determine if it reflects the data collected. An inductive approach involves looking for alternative ways of organizing the data that might lead to different findings.
Applying these research strategies can strengthen the credibility of the proposed study’s results.

External validity in quantitative research refers to the extent to which findings can be applied across different populations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study, however, was not concerned with producing findings that could be applied to a larger population of Chinese-American young adult children who experienced parental psychological and behavioral control. Instead, it aimed to illuminate the unique and under-explored lived experiences of a selected sample (Holroyd, 2001).

The purpose of inquiry for the naturalistic investigator is transferability as opposed to external validity. Transferability refers to the degree to which qualitative findings can be transferred to other contexts or settings. The researcher can improve transferability by describing in detail the research context and the assumptions central to the inquiry. The researcher who wishes to apply results to a different context is responsible for judging if the transfer fits (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Reliability in quantitative researcher means the degree to which a measure given repeatedly yields the same results (Rubin & Babbie, 2005). Dependability in qualitative research is an alternative concept to reliability. Dependability is enhanced when a complete and accessible record of the research process and analysis is available for a committee to examine (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure dependability for this study, I have available clear and detailed descriptions of the purpose of research, selection of participants, use of tradition, data collection and analytic strategies for committee members to review for consistency.
**Sampling**

I recruited undergraduate and graduate Chinese-American students from a local college for this study. With approval from the assistant director of student activities at the college, flyers were posted at this college’s main campus. Flyers were also posted at the college’s graduate school of social worker with approval from the school’s assistant dean of student services.

Non-probability sampling methods carefully select a few information rich cases to illuminate the issues central to a study’s inquiry. The reason for this is to capture information that characterizes the complexity and dynamism of the phenomena being investigated. (Patton, 2002; Schatzman & Strass, 1973). This study aimed to highlight respondents’ complex perspectives regarding parental psychological and behavioral control across the lifespan. Thus, gathering qualitative data for this study using a non-probability sampling method was appropriate.

Twenty respondents were included in this study’s sample. This is because saturation was achieved with such a sample size. Informed by non-probability sampling methods, criterion sampling strategies were used to increase the chances of including information rich cases relevant to this study’s central inquiry. The first sampling criterion for this study required respondents to self-identify as Chinese-American between the ages of 18 to 25 years old. Parental control is most salient during the development period of adolescence. Erickson believed adolescence occurs between 12 to 18 years old (Crain, 2000; Erikson, 1994). Contrary to Erikson’s model, however, a few scholars suggest that Chinese immigrant youngsters reach adolescence at a later age (Costigan & Dokis; 2006; Russell, Chu, Crockett, & Lee, 2010; Su &
Costigan, 2009). Keeping this in mind, the first criterion was developed to capture how Chinese-American young adult children experienced or continue to experience parental control.

The second criterion required that adult children were either born or arrived in the U.S. prior to the age of five years old. The third criterion asked that their parents immigrated to the U.S. after the age of 18 years old. These criterions were used to investigate how Chinese-American young adult children, raised in the U.S., may have emotionally and socially responded to their parents’ control possibly informed by Confucian philosophy.

Using the first, second and third criterions, this study sought to illustrate the interplay between Chinese-American young adult children’s psychosocial outcomes and parental control, as it shifted in salience depending on context and time. Furthermore, these criterions were used to uncover how variations in their perceptions of parental control shaped their psychosocial well-being.

**Development of the Research Instrument**

The construction of the interview guide (see appendix D) for this study stem from Atkinson’s book *The Life Story Interview* (1998). It is also based on the conceptual framework that served to theoretically guide this dissertation study. The person-environment fit model (Juang, Lerner, Mckinney, & Eye, 1999; Eccles, Buchanan, Flanagan, Fuligni, Midgley, & Yee, 1991), Baumrind’s (1967a; 1967b; 1978; 1991) typology of parenting styles and Erikson’s (1950; 1994) stages of psychosocial development. Concepts from existing studies related to parental psychological and behavioral control also informed the development of this study’s interview guide (Barber, 1996; Barber & Harmon. 2002; Baxter, Bylund, Imes, & Routsong,
The meanings that underlie the expressions of these two types of parental control drew on Confucian philosophy (Slote & DeVos, 1998).

An interview guide with pre-determined, open-ended questions and associated probes to anchor this study’s line of inquiry was developed and used to investigate the senses, opinions and feelings of respondents’ perceptions of parental psychological and behavioral control, as well as its emotional and social consequences. Patton (2002) wrote that sensory questions aim to capture respondents’ characterizations of what they see, hear, touch and smell during a given experience. When a respondent reported their mother wanted to know of their whereabouts or made them feel guilty, the following probing questions was used. What did your mother do to know where you were as a child? What did she say to make you feel guilty? What did she do? Sensory questions included in the interview guide uncovered what respondents’ parents actually said and did that signaled parental psychological and behavioral control (Patton, 2002).

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) notes that questions that attempt to elicit feelings are evaluative because the researcher asks how respondents feel about what happened. Patton (2002) characterizes these questions as reactive responses to an experience or thought. How did you feel about your mother’s expectation(s) of you as a child? What feelings did you have about your father’s expectation(s)? These were questions included in the interview guide that attempted to tap into the feelings of respondents when their parents asserted psychological and/or behavioral parental control.

Answers to opinion questions tell us what people think about an experience or topic. It also informs us of people’s goals, intentions, desires and expectations (see Patton, 2002). When a respondent reported that their father expected them to get excellent grades as a child, the
following probing question was used to examine their opinion about it. Why do you think your father expected this of you? An interview guide that incorporates this inquiry might reveal some of the Confucian based principles that resonate in the explanation of informants’ judgments about their parents’ expectations. Readers in this respect can gain a deeper understanding of the indigenous meanings that underlie elements of parental control in the Chinese-American families.

Analysis

Respondents’ narratives for this study was documented with an audio recorder and transcribed for analysis. Generating new knowledge about common patterns and themes within human experiences are typical analytic goals in qualitative research. This study explored the common ways Chinese-American young adult children perceived parental psychological and behavioral control, along with how their perceptions of these two dimensions of control impacted their emotional and social well-being during different developmental stages of their lives. The theoretical framework consisting of the person-environment fit model (Juang, Lerner, Mckinney, & Eye, 1999; Eccles, Buchanan, Flanagan, Fuligni, Midgley, & Yee, 1991), Erikson’s (1950; 1994) theory of psychosocial development, Baumrind’s (1967a; 1967b; 1978; 1991) typology of parenting styles and Confucianism was used to inform and examine this study’s findings. To facilitate and achieve these analytic goals, I engaged in an ongoing comparative data analysis during the course of the research project by examining one raw field note, contact summary sheet, descriptive, inferential or axial code of an interview and comparing it to all others to identify patterns and themes among and between them. The process of comparing new pieces of
data with others challenged and validated pre-existing theories or models about the phenomena of parental control in Chinese immigrant families (Thorne, 2000).

Raw field notes are quick scribbles documenting what an investigator thinks, feels and/or observes during interviews with informants. Miles and Huberman (1984) explained that these notes clarify respondents’ answers to interview questions and should be written legibly so that anyone can read them. The raw field notes for this study paid close attention to subjects’ affect and behavior as they discussed their parent’s control over them. This particular focus made it apparent in the transcribed data of the ways in which parental psychological and behavioral control impacted their emotional and social well-being.

Miles and Huberman (1984) suggested that after reading an interview, it is a good idea for the investigator to stop and think about their initial observation, impression and reflection of it. The authors recommend developing a contact summary sheet as a practical way to do this because it entails answering questions summarizing the main points of an interview (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The following are examples of questions included in this study’s contact summary sheet. What were the main issues and patterns in the contact? What were the situation(s) or incident(s) discussed? Who were the people involved? What information should be sought in the next contact? These questions were answered immediately after reading each interview and prior to coding them. Miles and Huberman (1984) further observed that filling out a contact summary sheet should be done before coding begins to avoid distorting or losing the basic information laid out in the raw qualitative data.

Codes capture a particular idea informed by key research questions or concepts (Miles & Huberman, 1984). They are written next to a sentence, group of sentences or paragraphs. The
investigator engages in the process of re-reading a transcribed interview to come up with names of codes that reflect the text it is describing. This inductive process is informed by ground theory and it seeks to uncover themes and patterns that emerge out of the data rather than imposing ones prior to data collection and analysis (Bowen, 2006; Mathew & Huberman, 1984; Strauss, 1987).

Descriptive, inferential and axial coding techniques were applied to analyze this study’s interview data. Descriptive codes point to a particular concept that resonates in a segment of a text. This coding strategy typically occurs during the first few times one reads an interview and it requires no interpretation. By contrast, the purpose of inferential coding is to make inferences about the text it is describing and this usually happens later during the course of data collection when patterns become clearer to the investigator. (Mathew & Huberman, 1984). Strauss (1987) calls this type of analysis open coding in which the investigator re-reads a sentence from an interview to identify reoccurring patterns or themes that are coded with a particular name reflecting it. Rather than looking for all kinds of relationships among and between codes, grounded theorists direct their focus on relationships relevant to the research questions under study. Axial coding is used to achieve this because it seeks to connect codes to each other in a coherent and meaningful way that fits the study’s conceptual structure (Strauss, 1987).

I began coding before interviewing each new contact. Miles and Huberman (1984) explained that this can uncover potential sources of biases that threaten the credibility of the data collected. It also tells the researcher what kind of data needs to be sought after in the next contact. Using this approach allows respondents to drive the study’s line of inquiry because the data gathered is determined by how they experience a certain phenomenon instead of the researcher’s preconceived notion of how it is experienced (Miles & Huberman 1984).
Codes were revised as the course of this study developed. Some codes did not fit a sentence or the study’s conceptual structure. Miles and Humberman (1984) suggested that these codes need to be eliminated. Codes that survive elimination are ones that end up informing the conceptualization of the phenomena under study. Codes that reoccur too often have to be broken down into sub-codes that can be saved for later use if necessary.

Memoing contributes to the revision, as well as the development of codes. They organize and keep track of what one thinks about particular codes and how they relate to each other (Miles & Huberman 1984). Strauss (1987) described memos as “ongoing record of insight, hunches, hypothesis and discussion about the implications of codes” (pg.110). He stated further that a series of memos eventually adds up to the final conceptualization of the phenomena under study.

I wrote memos while coding each interview data. Memos were written separately from the actual interview data and each statement from a memo referenced the text related to it in order to avoid confusion. As in the case with this study’s interview guide and coding strategies, memos modified as the study developed to maintain an inductive approach to inquiry.

**Limitations of Study**

There were limitations in this study. First, the sample included mostly female respondents and this made it difficult to determine if there were differences among male and female respondents with regards to the ways in which they characterized parental psychological and behavioral control and how these kinds of control may have impacted their emotional and social well-being over time. Second, this study’s findings cannot be applied to a larger population of Chinese-American young adults because its sample size was small and respondents were only recruited from one urban college and its school of social work. Third, respondents’
recollection of events during their childhood and adolescence may not be accurate and as a result, this study’s findings may not be dependable. Finally, as the principle investigator who collected and analyzed the data for this research project and one who identifies as Chinese-American, this study’s results may carry some biases even if strategies were put in place to prevent this from happening.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

I completed and submitted a human subject application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the college (study site) before implementing this study. Prior to interviewing each respondent, an informed consent form (see appendix B) and audio consent form (see appendix C) was handed to them to review and sign. The informed consent explained the purpose of this study, along with the procedures used to ensure respondents’ confidentiality. The audio consent document explained how audio-tape recordings of interviews with respondents might be used by the investigator. Transcribed qualitative data from interviews with respondents was kept in a locked cabinet, to which I only had access. In addition to this, names of respondents were replaced by “pseudo names” on the transcribed document. To ensure that respondents’ participation in this study was voluntary, they were made aware on the consent form that they have the option to terminate the research process at any time and this will not prevent them from receiving a $25 gift certificate for their participation in the study.

**Summary**

This study attempted to capture how Chinese-American young adult children perceived their parent(s) and primary caregiver(s)’ expressions of psychological and behavioral control, and the ways in which they believed these types of control impacted their emotional and social
well-being. It used qualitative research methods because existing studies on parental control in Chinese and Chinese immigrant families are mostly quantitative and findings from these studies have produced contradictory and ambiguous results.

Qualitative research methods were employed to delve deeper into the phenomena of parental control in Chinese-American families. This method was used to discover new knowledge from interactions with respondents in the form of interviews similar to conversations. The flexible and interactive features of this approach allowed this study’s inquiry to evolve as the interview process progressed. It also served to encourage Chinese-American young adult children to express the unique and subtle ways they judged, perceived and remembered their parent’s control. Comparing their narratives among and between interviews in line with grounded theory served to uncover the common experiences that resonate with the phenomena of parental control in Chinese-American families. Capturing and understanding the common experiences of respondents informed the theoretical explanation of this study.

This study employed qualitative research methods in an effort to sufficiently yield findings that represented the perspectives of respondents. Interactions between respondent and investigator enhanced the credibility of this study. Descriptive, inferential and axial coding techniques used to test, compare and make sense of respondents’ narrative also improved the study’s credibility, along with transferability and dependability.
CHAPTER V: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter examines findings from semi-structured interviews with 20 Chinese-American young adults. It begins with a brief discussion about the personal characteristics of these young adult respondents. It subsequently captures how they describe their primary caregiver(s) expressions of psychological and behavioral control. Finally, it shows how they saw these types of parental control affecting their emotional and social well-being during their childhood, adolescence and early adult years. Before moving forward into this discussion, it is important to note that the majority of respondents did not perceive their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s)’s behaviors as controlling even though the existing literature identifies it as indications of control. Respondents generally understood that their primary caregiver(s) wanted them to excel in school, go to college and obtain a job afterward that can afford them the ability to financially support them when they get old. This finding suggests respondents’ perception of their primary caregiver(s) mostly reflected Confucian ideals instead of control.

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Seventeen out of the 20 respondents identified their mothers and fathers as their primary caregivers when they were children and teenagers. Three of them had a father who was not consistently involved in their lives and as a result, they indicated that their mother and/or an extended family member were their primary caregiver at the time. Half reported that a babysitter and/or extended family member(s) was responsible for them as children because their parent(s) worked long hours. Extended family members moved in and out of their lives for various reasons. Some respondents, for example, stated that their grandparents moved back and forth
from China to the United States while others mentioned that their aunts and uncles no longer lived with or near them as teenagers.

All respondent identified as Chinese-American. Six were male while 14 were female. Nineteen of them were born in the United States. One was born in China and immigrated to the U.S. with their families prior to the age of 5 years old. Their parent(s), except for four, grew up in China or Taiwan. Parents who were raised outside of China and Taiwan were ethnic Chinese. One respondent reported that her mother grew up in Brazil while another stated that her father lived in Cambodia before leaving to the U.S. Furthermore, another mentioned that his mother and father spent their childhood to early adult years living in Indonesia. Only one respondent had a parent who was not ethnic Chinese, but Cuban-American.

This study’s sampling criteria required respondents to be between the ages of 18 to 25 years old. Three respondents turned 26 years old at the time this study was actively recruiting. These respondents were included in this study’s sample because they expressed an interest in participating in the study prior to the age of 26. Most respondents came from a low socioeconomic background. Fourteen of them reported that their parent(s) did not have at least an undergraduate college education and worked in low paying jobs. Unlike these respondents, six indicated their parent(s) had at least an undergraduate degree and was employed in a white-collar profession. All respondents pursued a college education as young adults. Four were studying for their graduate degree while 10 were studying for their undergraduate degree. Six respondents either completed their undergraduate and/or graduate degree.

Four out of 20 respondents appeared to have parents who were emotionally troubled judging from their descriptions of them. The first respondent, Paul was raised primarily by his
mother who divorced his Cuban-American father. Paul recalled his father growing his hair long and identifying as Japanese. His father also drove him to a Native-American reservation as a child where they stayed for a week without his mother’s permission. The second respondent, Q (respondent chose this pseudo name) identified her grandmother as her primary caregiver. Her grandmother threatened to poison her food, accused her of being a prostitute and forced her to lie still as they slept in the same bed until she was a young adult. The third respondent, Angelina had a disabled sister. She was cared for by her mother and father who eventually divorced. Angelina remembered as a young adult running into her father every Friday night after he came home from drinking. He “lectured” her for about an hour to an hour and a half about how he “hated” her aunt and how “stupid” her mother was for listening to her. The fourth respondent, Megan, was brought up by her mother and father. Her parents had problems with gambling and her father, who lost his entire family in Cambodia’s genocide, did not talk much.

**Research Questions**

This study’s analysis aimed to answer the following overarching research questions using respondents’ narratives.

1. How do Chinese-American young adult children describe their perceptions of parental psychological and behavioral control?

2. In what ways do Chinese-American young adult children believe parental psychological and behavioral control have impacted their emotional and social well-being?
Parental Psychological and Behavioral Control and its Relationship to Emotional and Social Well-Being

Instilling guilt, anxiety, shame, disappointment, limiting conversations, excessive expectations, withholding love, indifference, protectiveness, nagging, negative evaluation, personal attacks, strictness, punishment, intrusiveness and parental direction are characteristics of parental psychological control (Barber, 1996; Barber & Harmon, 2002). Parental behavioral control involves monitoring and supervising a child’s social and physical environment (Barber, 1996; Barber & Harmon, 2002; Baxter, Bylund, Imes, & Routson, 2009).

Scholars found that parental psychological control impacts children’s internal and external problems. Behavioral control, however, exclusively influences children’s external problems (Barber & Harmon, 2002). Studies on Caucasian-Americans consistently show that children of parents who asserted psychological control experienced internal problems such as depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. They also exhibited external problems such as substance abuse and delinquent behaviors (Barber & Harmon, 2002; Litovsk & Dusek, 1985; Barber & Olsen, 1997; Garber, Robinson, & Valentiner, 1997; Conger, Conger, & Scaramell, 1997; Barber & Harmon, 2002). Children of parents who inadequately exercised behavioral control demonstrated external problems. They, for example, expressed aggressive and sexually promiscuous behaviors (Barber & Harmon, 2002; Patterson, Capaldi, & Bank, 1991; Loeber & Dishion, 1984; McCord, 1998; Miller, McCoy, Olson, & Wallace, 1986). Drawing from these findings, this study recognized internal problems as indications of emotional well-being and external problems as indications of social well-being.
Characteristics of Parental Psychological Control

Expectation to do Well in School

All respondents mentioned that their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) expected them to excel in school and this expectation was an assertion of parental psychological control. Findings from this study showed that parental psychological control and behavioral control were closely linked when it came to high expectations of school grades. Psychological and behavioral control was used to teach and motivate respondents to do well in school during their childhood and adolescence regardless of their demographic characteristics. Involvement with homework and enrolling them in extra classes were expressions of behavioral control used to ensure they were kept safe from harm or deterred them from getting into trouble in order to focus on school. Comparing their academic performance with their peers, limiting conversations to school related issues, negative evaluations of their academic performance and an indifferent attitude in response to their academic achievements were forms of psychological control used to promote their academic performance. Parental psychological and behavioral control in this case, resonated with the Chinese parenting term *Chao Shun*, which promotes teaching and ultimately influences children to succeed in school (Chao & Sue, 1996).

Help with Homework

Nine out of 20 respondents mentioned their mother’s involvement with their homework as children. Brenda, for example, explained receiving an assignment as a child to read a book and her mother, who did not speak English well, sat with her while she read it out loud:

I remember the first homework I had. I had to do reading so my mom sat with me the whole time as I read the book out loud to her even though she didn’t understand some parts of it because her English is like so so…but she sat through the whole thing.
Q, similar to Brenda, spoke about receiving support from her mother when it came to her homework. Q said her mother would stop what she was doing if she asked for help with a difficult math problem as a child:

If I needed something from her, she would stop what she was doing. I’ll be like hey can you help me with this? Because I wouldn’t get some math problem…like I don’t know what I am doing like you know what you are doing. She would stop and help me out.

Both Q and Brenda demonstrated their mothers’ commitment to their education. Q experienced her mother leaving what she was doing to help her with a math problem while Brenda recalled her mother sitting next to her while she read a book out loud. Observing their mothers’ devotion to their education in these supportive contexts served to push Q and Brenda, along with other respondents, to perform well in school.

**Extra Classes**

Eight out of 20 respondents spent most of their time in the classroom as children and/or teenagers and this was another source of parental behavioral control that kept them safe from harm in order to focus on school. Their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) registered them in classes to learn Chinese and/or to prepare for standardized exams to get into a specialized high school and/or college. Tom mentioned that while his parents were not always around, they kept a close eye on his education by enrolling him in Chinese school and expensive preparatory classes to improve his chances of getting into prestigious high schools and colleges:

I mean I guess I can say umm…my parents weren’t always around me all the time but they really watched me closely for school. That was a big thing that they watched over. Umm…they would send me to a Saturday school to learn Chinese. I think by high school it was more of a SAT kind of focus kind of a deal I suppose. And even before I got into Stuyvesant like in middle school I took a prep course for the high school exam. To get into the high schools and I remember I
went to this expensive kind of shitty academy….not shitty it’s a world renown if you …have you ever heard of Mega Academy? It’s in Flushing. It’s like pretty big and they charge a lot of money.

Similar to Tom’s experience, John mentioned his parents paying for him to take extra classes to improve his performance in school and prepare for the upcoming school year. He took classes in Math and English on Saturdays and the summers. John asserted that it felt as if school never ended for him:

They would send me to a lot of Saturday schools and summer schools that were run by Chinese organizations…they would pay for it and it would be never ending school. It was like math or English. Usually both. It was kind of like ummm…..it wasn’t even really a class….all I they did was just buy workbooks, print out pages and they would give it to you and then they would say do all of these questions and then they would tell you if the answers are right or wrong and you would just go back next week and do the same exact thing. Umm….but it was work …..it was additional work that made me practice skills. For summer school actually I used to try to get into classes that were a grade above me so I can learn what I actually have to do when I did get back in school.

Tom and John’s narratives showed that school occupied much of their time and thus it became the center of their life. For them and other respondents, taking classes outside their regular school schedules, arranged by their primary caregiver(s), was used to ensure they remained focused on their education.

Comparing Academic Performance

Personal attacks on a child fell under Barber and Harmon’s (2002) miscellaneous category of psychological control. Listening to their primary caregiver(s) comparing their academic performances with their peers was a personal attack on their character, which acted as an expression of psychological control used to influence them to strive for good grades. Nine out of 20 respondents mentioned that this occurred. Angelina, for example, often listened to her grandmother comparing her to a cousin who was an accomplished pianist, attended the best
public high school and a prestigious university. Hearing her grandmother speak highly of her cousin during the course of her life made Angelina feel annoyed because she was made to believe that she did everything better than her:

I was constantly compared to my cousin who went to MIT. So it’s like I went to a Catholic all girl’s high school that we all had to pay tuition for and my cousin went to the best public high school so my grandmother would always nag and complain and say “my cousin she went to public school and it’s the best one”. She doesn’t have to pay for it and you’re wasting money paying for your education and she would always say something nasty like that and it was always that constant comparison. I was always really annoyed that she did everything better. Umm….she had …I think also a big thing is that her piano skills ummm….because she aced everything so her piano skills…she made it as a teacher. She could teach to that level. And that’s the highest level you can have and also with swimming …I think she is also a life guard. I am not too sure about that. I was constantly like…my whole life I was compared to her. If I did something, she did it better.

Paul, identical to Angelina, was compared to his peers. He described his mother comparing his academic performance with his friends as a teenager. His mother wanted to know why he could not do as well in English like one of his friends. Paul responded by telling her that it was because he was better at math:

One of my friends did really good in some of her classes and she would be like why don’t you do better in English like one of your friends? And I would be like I am not that great in English. I am better at math.

Paul and Angelina learned they had to do their best in school from hearing their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) comparing their academic performances with their peers. Angelina listened to her grandmother comparing her to a cousin who went to the best public high school and Paul heard his mother ask why he could not do as well in English as his friends. Hearing these comparisons acted to motivate Angelina and Paul to do better in school than the person they were being compared to.
Negative Evaluation of Academic Performance

Personal attacks reflected characteristics of parental psychological control and it was used to influence respondents to excel in school. Nine out of 20 respondents demonstrated how their primary caregiver(s) criticized their academic performance. Cindy, for instance, said that her parents would want to know why she did so badly if she received a test score of 80:

They drilled it in my head. They were like 93 is alright you know it wasn’t like really good. Maybe a 95 and above is like their expectation. But if it was anything other than like a 90 like an 80 it was like why did you do so bad? It was almost like failing.

Comparable to Cindy’s narrative, John described his parent’s negative evaluation of his school grades:

They would always ask to see my tests or if not my tests they would definitely always ask to see my report card and so when I got a report card and I gave it to them they would say why did you only get a 90? Why didn’t you get a 95 or a 100?

John and Cindy’s narratives illustrated their parents’ negative evaluations of their school grades and this acted to push them to strive for near perfect grades. Not only did respondents demonstrate their parent’s critical comments in response to their academic performance, but they also exhibited their indifferent attitudes about it, which Barber (1996) identifies as a display of parental psychological control.

Indifferent Attitude in Response to Academic Achievement

Five out of 20 respondents described their primary caregiver(s) indifferent attitudes in response to their academic achievements. Brian said if he received a perfect score on an exam,
his parent’s attitude implied that it was a score he should get. He stated, “If I get 100. Their attitude was just like that’s expected. So that’s what you should be getting.” In another example, Angelina illustrated her mother’s indifferent attitude when she graduated from college. Her mother did not attend her college graduation after all those years of pushing her to achieve a college degree:

She didn’t go and I yelled at her for that (laughing). It was like my whole life you shaped me and you drilled it in my mind that you want me to graduate from college and you didn’t show up to the most important day.

An indifferent attitude in response to their academic performance served to motivate Brian and Angelina to strive for academic excellence as they yearned for their primary caregiver(s) approval.

**Conversations Limited to School Issues**

Seventeen out of 20 respondent reported conversations with their primary caregiver were limited to school related issues. Barber and Harmon (2002) noted that limited conversations were expressions of psychological control by parents and that it discouraged children’s participation in family interactions (Barber & Harmon, 2002). While Barber and Harmon (2002) have a point in this regard, this study found that this form of psychological control was mostly used to teach and influence respondents to stay on track in their academics. Ken, for example, explained having few conversations with his parents and the ones he did have with them were mostly about school. He said, “We really didn’t talk much and my father still doesn’t talk to me much. He’s kind of like a quiet person. All they asked about were my grades and that’s just all of it.”
Tom mentioned a similar experience conversing with his parents. When asked to describe conversations with his parents as teenager, Tom said they would ask him how he was doing in school and did the same thing with his brother:

I guess it was about how I was doing in school. That was probably one of the big things. It’s interesting because I see that with my brother now where they ask him how he’s doing in school and he tells them and that’s what usually they talk about.

Following their primary caregiver(s)’ wishes, Ken and Tom, along with other respondents, showed a determination to excel in school and understood as children and teenagers that their education was a priority because they were told by their parents, in particular, to become a doctor or lawyer. The expectation to become a doctor or lawyer was an assertion of psychological control. Excessive expectations fell under Barber and Harmon’s (2002) miscellaneous category of psychological control. The authors mentioned Siegelman (1965) who used the term achievement demand to characterize parents who insisted that their child made special efforts in anything they did.

**Be a Doctor or Lawyer**

Seven out of 20 respondents indicated that their parents wanted them to become a doctor or lawyer. When asked what her parent’s expectations were for her as a child, Jane said they wanted her to be a doctor or lawyer. They expressed the same to her younger sister who was applying for college at the time:

Be a doctor or lawyer (laughing). They always say doctor or lawyer. And then I have a younger sister right now who is just applying for college and they tell her doctor or lawyer (laughing).
John, identical to Jane, indicated that his parents preferred if he became a doctor or lawyer. When asked what his biggest challenge was as a teenager and how did his parents respond to it, John said that one of them was deciding what to do with his life after graduating from high school. He explained that his parents were not aware of this challenge because they always told him to be a doctor, lawyer or businessman. John asserted to his parents that he will not pursue any of those professions they wanted:

They never knew about those challenges. I never spoke to them about it. My parents were just saying you have to be a doctor. You have to be a lawyer. You have to be in business. And I would always say I am not going to be any of those three you want me to be.

Respondents’ parents genuinely cared about their well-being. They conveyed this by telling their children to go to college and get a job afterward because they believed this would prevent them from experiencing the financial hardships they faced and maintain their family’s good reputation. While their primary caregiver(s) did all they could to ensure that they will have a good life or a life that will be better than theirs, respondents did not feel loved by them.

Feeling Unloved

Seven out 20 respondents admitted that they felt their parents did not love them and this feeling occurred during different points in their lives regardless of their demographic backgrounds. Expressions of parental psychological control that made them feel unloved included not getting enough attention from their parents and intense arguments with them.

Not Getting Enough Attention

Joan appeared to be holding back tears when she discussed feeling her mother did not love her as a teenager because she did not provide her with emotional support:
She would say you know that I love you. I was like okay. It was just like okay. Because when you say something and then you do it and they are not the same. Just because someone says they love you but they don’t show it you don’t really believe it. She wasn’t there for me. I feel like there wasn’t emotional support. Like when she said I love you. It’s just a statement. Just something to be said (appeared to be holding back tears). Umm…..at first I really wanted to talk about stuff, but she was not interested.

Ken felt unloved as a child because his parents were too busy with work to spend quality time with him. His parents did not take him places to have fun. Although Ken felt his parents did not love him, he believed they cared for him. He described his mother’s overprotective nature as an expression of her love, but subsequently asserted that this was not the way he wanted to be loved:

I never had much fun being with them. I know they worked and everything, but I am not sure how other children are. But I really ….parents should spend time with their children and it’s just not that. I never really felt loved. I know they cared and everything. They had to work. Even to this day I really don’t think my father loves me. My mother is overprotective so I know she loves me but not in a way that I wanted to be loved. It was mainly because I didn’t see them much and they never took me places like other parents probably do. No vacation. Umm… we went to Puerto Rico once but that’s for some other stuff. It wasn’t for leisure and fun.

Besides the lack of attention they received from their parent(s) that made them feel unloved, respondents also mentioned feeling this way when they experienced arguments with them. Three out of 20 respondents reported this prior to their early adult years.

**Arguments**

Brian, for instance, did not feel his father loved him. When asked what was it that made him feel this way, Brian pointed to all the argument he had with his father and his lack of effort to change:
All those arguments and like most of the time when my mom said he was making an attempt to change like I couldn’t really see it so that lead me to think he’s not changing. He’s not trying.

Mary said her mother loved her, but her father did not. She illustrated an incident in which her father was screaming at her while driving her to a friend’s house:

I thought my mom loved me. I thought my dad didn’t. Anytime he did something for me like when he drove me to a friend’s house or something I would get yelled at the whole way there. Like you shouldn’t be hanging out. You’re wasting time. Like I can get into a car crash right now. What if I died?

**Getting Children to be Obedient**

Respondents were expected to do what their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) said to exhibit their obedience and this was an indication of parental psychological control. Ten out of 20 respondents mentioned this. Grace, for instance, said her mother’s wish for her as a child was to grow up to become a “very nice, polite and pleasant, Asian obedient girl.” Besides obedience, she wanted Grace to have clean hands, talk in a subtle tone and avoid making a harsh face. Grace said she had to listen to what her mother said without talking back because that would be a sign of disrespect:

I think my mom definitely expected me to grow up to be like a very nice, polite, pleasant, Asian obedient girl. I guess like any other Chinese mother would want. Well it’s not necessarily only to be obedient um….its more like having that face of ….it was always like your hands are dirty. Wipe it here. Don’t talk so loud. Don’t make that face. Don’t make such an intense face. She always had issues with frowning eyebrows. You listen to them. There is no talking back because if you talk back it was disrespectful.

In another example, Tom spoke about his father demanding him to stay in the library for a couple hours before coming home as a teenager. When he failed to do this, Tom said his father became angry:
He tried to order me to stay in school like after school. Like stick around in the library for a couple of hours and I didn’t do it and I went home and he asked if I did what he asked me to do and I said no and he got really mad at me.

Tom went on to describe the hierarchical structure of their relationship. His parents were at the top while he was at the bottom and this meant he had to listen and do what they said without disagreeing. Tom mentioned the Chinese saying “Ting Wa” to explain this relationship further. He said that “Ting means to listen” while Wa means my words.” Ting Wa” or its literal translation means “listen to my words” and was an order to obey:

My parents are above and they kind of speak down to me. I am not allowed to disagree. If you say anything it has to be okay. If they think it’s not okay then they get mad. They will tell you. He has this thing where since I am his son I should do what he says. Like listen to him. The Chinese word is Ting Wa. Ting means listen and Wa mean my words and it really means obey me. It doesn’t mean listen to what I am saying. It’s an order. Be obedient.

Tom and Grace understood that they had to listen and do what their parents wanted because their expectations were explicitly communicated to them. Hearing his father say “Ting Wa” after demanding that he stay in the library after school made it clear to Tom that he had to follow his orders. Understanding that her mother found it disrespectful if she questioned her demands made it apparent to Grace that she had to have clean hands, speak in a subtle tone and avoid making a stern face like she wanted. While respondents learned about their primary caregiver(s)’ wishes through their explicit orders, they were also informed of them in more implicit ways that overlapped with characteristics of parental psychological control.

Implicit approaches included negative evaluation of personal character, nagging, instilling guilt, disappointment and physical punishment. Not only were these approaches used to communicate to respondents what their primary caregiver(s)’ expected of them, but it was also used as a consequence of what happened if they failed to follow their wishes. Such forms of
psychological control occurred during different developmental stages of respondents’ lives no matter what their demographic backgrounds were.

Negative Evaluation of Personal Character

Seven out of 20 respondents demonstrated how their parent(s) and/or primary caregiver(s) attacked their personal character. Megan, for example, mentioned that her mother called her a “disgrace” if she did not obey her:

If I didn’t obey, she would say you’re a disgrace. I should have never had you. I should have given birth to a dog or something and that would be more loyal. She would say really hurtful things and then afterwards she would just forget about it or pretend she never said it.

Megan’s narrative showed that negative evaluation was used as a consequence if she failed to obey and a means to inform her to obey. As a consequence, Megan had to listen to her mother say a dog was more loyal than she. Hearing her mother say this was an implicit way to communicate to Megan that she needed to do what her mother wanted in order to demonstrate her loyalty to her.

Identical to Megan’s experience, Paul described listening to his mother’s negative evaluation of his personal character. He mentioned an incident in which he told his mother about his friends rejecting him. His mother responded by saying that while he was a “good kid,” he was not the “brightest” and could be “clumsy” sometimes. Although his mother later expressed again that he was a good kid and that she loved him, the fact that she characterized him as clumsy bothered Paul and subsequently discouraged him from wanting to reach out to her for support at times:

Sometimes I would complain about you know why are my friends not accepting me. And then she would say it is alright. You are still a good kid. You do some things that are clumsy, you are probably not the brightest kid, but you know you
are still a good kid. She did tell me she loves me and that I am a good kid, but at
the same time even though she was available, she still said like I was clumsy or
something like that and I didn’t always want to go to her for support.

Negative evaluation in this scenario served to inform Paul to be smarter and less clumsy when
his mother described him in a way that was opposite of what he wanted to be. Negative
evaluation also acted as a consequence. Paul had hear his mother point out that he was not the
smartest kid and could be clumsy at times because he did not exactly display to her the
characteristics of a person she wanted him to be.

**Nagging**

Along with listening to attacks on their personal characters, respondents also had to hear
their primary caregiver(s) nagging at them as children and/or teenagers. Four out of 20 respondents described or reported their primary caregiver(s) nagging. These findings were
partially in line with Rhee, Chang and Rhee (2003) study’s outcomes that demonstrated Asian-
American youth complaining that their fathers nagged at them. Unlike their findings, however,
this study found respondents reporting not only their father’s nagging at them, but also their
mothers and one mentioned her grandmother. These results suggest respondents were nagged at
by a family member(s) besides their father.

Brenda described her mother nagging at her as a teenager. She illustrated a list of chores
her mother wanted done before she came home from work and described her complaining if she
did not do them. She understood her mother felt stressed about chores all falling into her hands
now that they no longer had a babysitter:

I am coming home late you should wash the rice or you should help your brother
with his homework or how come you never vacuum? I always have to tell you to
vacuum and then you vacuum because at that time mom was getting more
stressed because we didn’t have the nanny anymore so she had more of the
housework to do so I guess a lot of it ends up being her responsibility so she was really stressed about that.

Nagging in this case, acted to convey to Brenda that she had to finish the chores her mother wanted done. It was also used as a consequence of what happened when Brenda failed to do her chores. She had to listen to her mother nag by saying, “How come you never vacuum? I always tell you to vacuum and then you vacuum.”

Angelina, similar to Brenda’s experience, revealed being nagged at as a teenager. Her grandmother would “nag”, “constantly complain” and “whine” about her having a job while in school:

Grandmother would be the one to nag and repeat herself a million times. I got a working permit when I was 15. I started working and I’ve been working since I was 15. But my grandmother would constantly complain and whine and nag about me working. I felt like I was important because I was getting paid and someone needed me to do something for them. It was a job. And she was just like why are you wasting your time over there? She would be like why are you working? Why do you need to be working? Well, because I have a job. I need to be there and I need to do this and I want to learn more and she would say learn in school. You need to continue to learn in school. There is no need for you to deviate from that. Just keep on track.

In this case, nagging was used to communicate to Angelina to make school instead of her job a priority like her grandmother wanted. Nagging also acted as a consequence when Angelina continued to work despite her grandmother’s demand to quit. She had to listen to her repeatedly say she was wasting her time and ask why she was working.

**Instill Guilt**

Besides having to hear their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) nag at them, respondents also had to listen to questions and/or statements intended to make them feel in debt or a burden. Six out of 20 respondents described their parents instilling guilt. While talking about his life as a
young adult, John described his parents telling him to give them money once he got a job or reminding him to take care of them each time he asked them for money to pay for school:

Whenever I would ask them for money for school, they would say again? I have to give you money for school again? You know you’re going to have to take care of us right? Or just randomly they would say when are you going to get a job? When you get a job make sure you give us money and so on and so forth.

Instilling guilt in this scenario served to inform John to take care of his parents once he finishes school and obtains a job. John understood he had to financially support his parents as he heard them ask, “I have to give you money for school again?” followed by “you know you have to take care of us right?” These questions were intended to make John feel guilty and were used as an outcome for what happened when he still had not financially supported his parents like they wished.

In another example, Megan illustrated how her mother instilled guilt. She said her mother often reminded her and her sister that she gave them food, clothes and shelter. Megan saw this as “kind of a guilt trip:”

She constantly reminds me and my sister who gives you food, who gives you clothes, who gives you the roof over your head. I feel like no matter what we do there’s always those push strings that kept pulling us back in. It’s kind of a guilt trip.

When asked what she meant by a guilt trip, Megan described her mother wanting her home studying instead of going out to socialize with her friends:

She doesn’t understand the concept of a social life so she’s always at home. She’s been working at a clinic so ether she’s working or at home and she barely goes out. Barely hangs out with her co-workers or anything like that. So when I go out, I am gone all day all night. Sometimes I don’t come home, but I tell her. She doesn’t get it. Why I am going out. What I am doing. I should be home studying.
Instilling guilt was used to express to Megan and her sister that they had to stay home close to their mother instead of going out with their friends. Listening to their mother ask who provided them with food, clothes and shelter felt like a guilt trip that pulled them back home to their mother. Instilling guilt also acted as a consequence when Megan did not do what her mother wanted by going out with friends.

**Disappointment**

Along with instilling guilt, six out of 20 respondents reported that their primary caregiver(s) expressed disappointment in them. Tom, for instance, got caught by the police drinking alcohol with his friends outside of his home. When his mother was informed about it, he apologized to her because she was disappointed in him and he felt terrible about it:

> I guess one time I was in high school and I was drunk. I wasn’t at school drunk. I was near my house and drunk with a couple of my friends and then some cops came by and they knew we were drunk and then called my mom and my mom was really upset and disappointed. I felt really bad because I disappointed her and I apologized and that was it.

Disappointment in this scenario was used to let Tom know that he did not behave according to what his mother found appropriate. His mother expressed disappointment in him when she found out he was drunk with his friends. Disappointment also acted as a result of what happened when Tom did not meet his mother’s standards of behavior. He felt her disappointment in him when she found out he was drunk.

Megan, similar to Tom, admitted to disappointing her mother. She did not become a doctor like her mother wanted her to be. Seeing this as an expression of her disobedience, her mother expressed to Megan that she was her biggest disappointment after attending her graduation:
When I graduated last month, I wanted them to come to my graduation and I paid for their tickets and everything and afterwards my mom said her greatest disappointment is that she didn’t teach me better …..is that I am too stubborn and that she should have broken me in so that I would be obedient. She said that was her biggest disappointment after my graduation. I cannot believe she said that but you know I already come this far so I am just going to keep moving on. I feel like I really do think that she wanted to live through me. My achievements if I followed her path I would of made her somehow happier if I was to become a doctor. That’s what she always wanted to do and that would have made her happy, but the fact that I kind of broke off from it from the very beginning and refused to come to her desires, I think she felt she could have done better. She could have forced me to be more obedient and listen to everything that she says so I think that’s why she said I was her biggest disappointment because I ended up doing everything I wanted to do.

In this case, disappointment served to inform Megan to be obedient by becoming a doctor.

Hearing her mother say she was her biggest disappointment made Megan realize she did not follow through with the career path she wanted for her. Disappointment also acted as an outcome of what happened when Megan did not do what her mother wanted. Megan had to listen to her mother say she was her biggest disappointment after graduating without a degree in medicine.

Consistent with personal attacks, nagging, instilling guilt and disappointment, physical punishment was used to communicate to respondents their primary caregiver(s)’ wishes and acted as a consequence when they failed to follow them. Five out 20 respondents admitted that their parents physically punished them.

**Physical Punishment**

Mary, for example, stated that her father often hit her as a child and this made her frequently cry. When asked what made her father do this, Mary described an incident in which her father witnessed her and her sister speaking English instead of Chinese. This made her father angry because he wanted them to maintain their culture by speaking only Chinese at home:
I was born here and growing up from like kindergarten up to like first grade I lived in Westchester. I really didn't need to speak Chinese and both my parents speak Chinese, but they also speak English very well. So I always communicated with them in English. And then the huge thing was speaking Chinese at home just not to lose the culture. But I never did that. So anytime he would hear me speaking English with my sister, he would get really pissed off. And anytime I wasn't doing something I was supposed to do, he would just get really pissed off. I would get hit a lot. I got hit for like everything. I cried a lot as a kid, but it was mostly because of my dad because of the whole physical thing.

Physical punishment, in this case, served to let Mary know that she could only speak Chinese at home like her father wanted. It was also a result of what happened when Mary spoke English instead of Chinese.

In another example, John explained an incident in which his father pushed him off a chair as a child. His father asked him to write a letter because his English was limited. Unsatisfied with how the letter was written, his father kept telling John to rewrite it. Feeling frustrated with his dissatisfaction, John refused to write the letter and his father responded by pushing him off the chair he was sitting on:

I remember there was this one time when my dad wanted me to write a letter for him and so he told me what he wanted me to write in Chinese so I would have to obviously translate what he was saying in English. And so I wrote it out for him and he was not pleased with the way it read. He can’t really speak English, but he can read and understand it a little bit of it. He had to kind of learn as a waiter. And so he told me he is not happy with this and you have to write this you have to write that and so I got annoyed as he kept on telling me to do it so I eventually told him you know what! I am not writing this anymore. You can just write it yourself and then he got very mad at me and we actually got into a physical altercation. He just pushed me off my chair.

Physical punishment, in this scenario, was used to communicate to John to rewrite the letter his father wanted. It also acted as a consequence when John refused to do what his father demanded. He got pushed off the chair when he refused to rewrite the letter for his father.
Physical punishment, personal attacks, nagging, instilling guilt and disappointment were types of psychological control to get respondents to strictly adhere to their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s)’ wishes. Their wishes generally involved keeping their children out of trouble. Their goal was that they stay on track in school in order to eventually afford a living that could financially support them and maintain their family’s reputation.

**Characteristics of Parental Behavioral Control**

Eighteen out 20 respondents stayed out of trouble during the childhood, adolescence and early adult years. Respondents steered away from trouble because their primary caregiver(s) consistently asserted behavioral control, especially during their adolescent years and their demographic backgrounds did not play a factor in this. Grandparents/babysitter, extra classes, structured activities, questioning, electronic devices, staying home, maintaining their family’s reputation, filial piety, finding a companion/life partner and living at home as a young adult were types of behavioral controls that deterred and/or discouraged respondents from heading toward the wrong path. The following discussions illustrate the ways in which this occurred.

**Grandparents/Babysitters**

Ten out of 20 respondents indicated that their grandparents/babysitter looked after them as children. Kate was kept safe as a child because her grandparents watched over her while her parents were busy with their studies at the time. Kate explained her grandparents normally lived in China, but they traveled back and forth from there to the U.S. to essentially raise her:

I think when we were little my parents were both pretty busy with school. Our grandparents would sort of come. The rest of my extended family were all in China, but my grandparents would come over to the states sort of like on a rotating basis to help take care of us. To raise us. I spent a lot of time with them when I was younger.
In another example, A.C. talked about being cared for by her grandmother while living in Taiwan and Malaysia as an infant. Once A.C. and her family moved to the U.S., however, she and her brother were cared for by a babysitter because their parents were often working:

Growing up my parents worked a lot so I always had a babysitter. It was just me and my younger brother. Growing up I guess we were trouble makers because we were bored all the time. We liked to run around and go to the parks and stuff. The babysitter was like 10 minutes and we have to go home and we would just cause trouble around the house. I was born here but I lived in Taiwan as an infant for a little bit and then lived in Malaysia a little bit. My grandmother took care of me. But then when we came back here because my parents worked so much it would be one of our babysitter who was hired.

A.C. and Kate’s narratives showed that their grandparent(s) and/or babysitter acted to protect them from harm when their parents were not available to watch over them. Questioning was also used for the same purpose. Eight out of 20 respondents were asked by the person(s) responsible for them who they were hanging out with, where they were going, how they were doing in school, and/or general questions involving their physical well-being.

**Questioning**

Paul, for instance, described his mother asking why he kept leaving the house and would not tell her where he was going. She wanted answers to these questions when she observed Paul coming home and heading straight to bed as a teenager. He explained, “I came home umm…..sometimes and I would just go to bed and my mom was like why do you do this? Why do you keep leaving the house? Why don’t you tell me where you are?”

In another example, Ken demonstrated his parents asking him many questions when he first moved to Buffalo for college. They called him every week to find out if he was alright, warm enough, how he was doing in school and if he was studying hard. Ken did not like
answering questions about school because his parents always asked him the same ones and this drove him to want to get off the phone with them:

During the beginning of college every week they would call me. I was at Buffalo before this. I transferred. They would call me and you know the first few questions were how are you doing? Are you okay? Are you warm? Because it’s really cold in Buffalo. Eventually it will lead to the same questions. Oh how are you doing in school? Are you doing good in school? Are you studying hard? Once they start asking me that question, I really want to hang up. I would say oh I got to go bye.

Both Paul and Ken’s narratives exhibited their parent’s concerns for their physical safety when they asked questions about it. Paul mother’s wanted to know his whereabouts while Ken’s parents were interested to know if he was warm in Buffalo and doing well in school. For Ken’s parents, school functioned to keep their son safe and this was why they asked him about it. Hearing their son do well in school, for instance, meant that he was staying out of trouble because his time was likely occupied in class, studying or engaging in other school related activities.

Extra Classes

Eight out of 20 respondents reported that their primary caregiver(s) enrolled them in classes outside of their regular school schedule or hired a tutor to assist them with school work and this acted to keep them on the right path away from harm. Angelina talked about attending Chinese school on Sundays as a child. She spoke favorably about learning how to write and read Chinese and mentioned her cousins doing the same:

Sundays was Chinese school. It was actually a really good structured Chinese school compared to others that my cousins went to. So we actually had a Chinese book we went by so each lesson would be one chapter. The whole purpose was to learn the language and how to write and read. The class knew how to speak so we were all learning how to write and read. The school was divided in two parts. One part was in Mandarin and Cantonese. It was all traditional. They rent out a public
school so from there we would go to it. Class from about nine to twelve and then about like ten thirtyish we would go outside for a break.

Cindy mentioned her mother sending her to a tutor as a teenager with the intentions that she would do well on a standardized exam that would get her accepted to a specialized high school:

For high school you know how there is that exam to get into those specialized high schools? That was a major concern for them. So back then it was only three high schools. So their expectation for me was to not really to get into Sty. Mainly because my brother got into Tech so they were just really praying that I would get into Tech. They sent me to tutoring and they made me study a lot basically the whole summer was studying for that exam.

As respondent like Cindy and Angelina did extra school work, it consumed their time and this consequently, kept them safe from harm because they were most likely too busy studying to get into trouble. Along with doing extra school work, 12 out of 20 respondents engaged in structured activities that moved them further away from harm.

Activities

Q, for example, practiced the piano for two hours as a child while her grandmother watched. Her grandmother would yell at her when she did not play well and forced her to stand in the corner if she refused to practice:

She used to tell me to practice the piano because I was learning piano at the time. She’ll set the timer for two hours so she would sit next to the piano reading the newspaper and she would be watching me play and if I messed up she would yell at me” (laughing). Like how can you mess up? This is such an easy piece. Then if I didn’t want to go practice she would make me stand in the corner and she would yell at me.

In this scenario, Q was kept safe at home while her grandmother watched her practice piano for two hours. Similar to Q’s experience, Grace kept busy with activities that deterred her from danger. She was involved in her high school volleyball and track team and was successful in both sports:
I made the volleyball team. I played volleyball for three years. I made the volleyball team my first year. The second year I was captain. Third year was whatever, but we were always a good team. Our high school was known for having a good team. I also made the track team and then my freshman year in track I went to CIF, which is the best of the best in California.

While Grace, along with other respondents was allowed to go outside their homes to participate in recreational activities, nine out of 20 respondents described being made to stay home, especially during adolescence.

**Staying Home**

Joan discussed often staying home as a teenager. Her parents called to make sure she was there when they were away at work. Joan did not do much with her time at home and felt a “lack of guidance” as she yearned for something to do:

> In general I was home a lot. I mean why would I be home? You guys (parents) were working all day and I’ll be home. Then they would call me to make sure I was home and I feel like do you not trust me that I am home. I felt I had so much free time on my hands. I felt a lack of guidance. I could have been doing so many things with my time but I couldn’t because they were like no. Stay home.

Q, identical to Joan, was forced to stay home as a teenager. Her grandmother locked in her closet when tried to attend a sleepover:

> I think one time we had a swim team sleepover...like Oh I am going to this girl’s house and we’re going to have a sleepover and have fun. She was like what? You can’t go there. If I am not going there. You are not going there. It’s not proper for you to sleep over at someone’s house. And then I am like we are just having fun. She was like you can stay for just one hour and then you are coming home with me. I am like where are you going to come from? I am going to the party with you. I am going to make sure you’re not stupid. She locked me in the closet so I couldn’t go.

Staying home functioned to prevent respondents from getting into trouble. Q’s grandmother wanted her home because it was a place where she could keep a close eye on her safety. Joan’s
parents who were away at work, made certain she remained home because it shielded her from harm when they were unable to look after her.

Respondents were kept home to maximize their safety. But, they expressed a desire to go out. Four out of 20 respondents wanted to work part-time, especially as teenagers. Their primary caregiver(s), however, did not approve of this because it threatened their security and interfered with their ability to perform well in school.

**Discouraged to Work as a Teenager**

Cindy’s father attempted to discourage her from working during high school because he was concerned for her safety. He told Cindy that it was not worth it to wake up early in the morning to go to a job that paid minimum wage and requested that she quit. Wanting to work to be independent, Cindy refused to quit even through her father offered to give her spending money and expressed concerns for her safety while riding the train early in the morning to get to work. Unlike her father, Cindy said her mother thought it was “good” that she was working:

> I worked in Dunkin Donuts for my first job and then I worked at Home Depot. So those were just like retail summer jobs and that was probably the hardest thing just because I had to wake up really early because I worked the whole day on a Saturday during the school year when I was a freshman in high school and they opened at six and it was right by the Stuyvesant area so it took a long time for me to get to work. My mom was like that’s good that you’re working. But my dad was like this is so not worth it for what you’re making. I can just give some spending money you know. But I was like no. I want to do this myself because I am old enough to look for a job. I am going to be independent. I don’t need your money. That kind of thing. My dad was like you’re making minimum wage and you’re killing yourself for this and for what? It was just a little more frustrating with my dad because my dad kept saying you should just quit. It was just frustrating. I was just like shut up. This is just what I want to do you know and ummm….but then he has always been like that. Like he is very, very protective and he gets very parenty.
Angelina, identical to Cindy’s experience, was deterred from working as a teenager. She began working at the age of 15 and described feeling important at work because people relied on her and she got paid. Her grandmother, however, did not like that she worked. Angelina described her often complaining about it because she wanted her to focus on school instead:

I got a working permit when I was 15 and I started working and I’ve been working since I was 15. But my grandmother would constantly complain and whine and nag about me working. I actually don’t really know to this day, but she would...I felt like I was important because I was getting paid and someone needed me to do something for them. It was a job. And she was just like why are you wasting your time over there. She would be like why are you working. Why do you need to be working? Well....because I have a job. I need to be there and I need to do this and I want to learn more and she would say learn in school. You need to continue to learn in school. There is no need for you to deviate from that. Just keep on track.

Angelina and Cindy enjoyed their jobs as teenagers, but their primary caregiver(s) did not want them working because it exposed them to danger and they wanted to protect them from this.

Cindy’s father demanded that she quit her job because he was afraid for her safety when she rode the train to work early in the mornings. Angelina’s grandmother complained about her working because she wanted her to concentrate on school instead. She saw school as a safe place that prevented Angelina from heading toward the wrong path similar to how extra classes and questions involving school acted to keep respondents away from trouble.

**Electronic Devices**

Seven out of 20 respondents indicated that their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) used electronic devices to monitor them to ensure they were staying out of trouble. Wireless phones and e-mails were used to keep track of where they were, what they were doing and/or to simply stay in contact with them. Q spoke about her grandmother calling her many times while she was at swim practice as a teenager. Unable to answer her phone during practice, Q would end up with
about 12 voicemail messages from her grandmother asking where she was, if she was coming home, along with accusations that she was not actually in swim practice because she was likely out prostituting:

   I joined the swim team and she would always call me…always during practice I’ll hear my phone ringing and my coach would be like what’s that? Turn off your phone. But you still hear vibrations. I get around 12 voicemails a day. Where are you? Are you coming home? I know you’re not swimming because you are such a bad person. You are probably prostituting yourself.

In another example, Brian illustrated how his father used e-mail to check up on his safety and give him advice while he was away in college. He got e-mails from him about the dangers of using headphones, along with ones regarding leadership and character. Brian thought of these e-mails as “really strange” because his father had never brought up these topics for discussion before:

   My dad writes e-mails. Really strange e-mails to me. It’s e-mails about the most recent study on headphones and how they are bad for your ears. Like it’s just completely out of the blue stuff. Umm…like this one about leadership and character. Just completely out of the blue because I’ve never seen my dad do any of that. Especially with the head phone stuff I know he’s against ear buds especially but I never told him anything about ear buds and then all of a sudden in my e-mail it popped up shared a link about that. I am completely confused what spurred him to send me such a link.

Brian and Q’s primary caregivers relied on electronic devices to ensure they stayed on the right track when they were away from home. Brian’s father sent him e-mails about leadership, character and the negative consequence of using headphones to prevent him from getting into trouble while he was away in college. Similarly, Q’s grandmother called her many times and left her voicemail messages to make sure she was safe while in swim practice.

   Besides electronic devices, an obligation to maintain their family’s reputation drove respondents away from trouble. Guo (2006) asserted that Chinese children were brought up to be
aware of what others thought of them and taught to behave in ways that maximized others' approval while avoiding behaviors that would result in their disapproval. Guo’s assertion was consistent with studies that revealed Asian immigrant children and adolescents catered to their parent’s wishes because they had to maintain their family’s honor (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Pyke, 2007; Su & Costigan, 2009; Wolf, 1972). Five out of 20 respondents in this study described an obligation to uphold their family’s reputation.

Maintain Family’s Reputation

Angelina demonstrated her grandmother’s demands to stay away from drugs and avoid hanging out with the wrong people to preserve their family’s honor. Acting against her grandmother’s wishes would mean that other family members would hear about it and this would ruin their family’s good name, and particularly, her grandmother’s reputation:

As a teenager….not to hang out with the wrong crowd. She expressed that. Don’t do drugs. Because I think to please our family line that we are good and we’re the best. She is kind of really snobby (laughing). She’s like the O family has to be better (laughing). It has a lot to do with that because we also have….we have a really big family. My great grandmother had eight kids so they are all mostly here and they reproduced a lot of family so anything happens, word gets around and so my grandmother wants to look good so it’s all about her looking good and presenting herself better in a sense.

Tom, comparable to Angelina, also exhibited an obligation to preserve his family’s reputation. When asked how his parents learned the expectation to do well in school, Tom explained that his parents did well in school in China and wanted him to do the same. They also had the desire to look good in front of their friends. Tom used the phrase “saving face” to describe his parents talking among their friends to compare each other’s children in an effort to determine which one was more successful in school. Tom felt embarrassed that his parents continued to tell their friends that he was in college when he was actually taking time off to do other things. He wished
that they could tell their friends the truth, but he knew it was really important for his parents to look good in front of them:

I think it was the way they are in that they were very good students. They were like valedictorian kind of students like when they were in high school and they went to a really good university in China so I think for them it’s like important to them and they want their child to do well also in the same way and I think another part of it was saving face for them. There is a whole thing about they’ll talk about their friends like oh what is your kid doing? Or what is he up to? What school does he go to? They seem to have this competition going on to see whose child is doing the best and they measure that by school. What university do they go to? That’s like one thing. I used to go to USC but now I’ve taken like two years off from school now to do other things and my parents haven’t told their friends that I’ve done these things. They tell them I am still in school or something because they don’t want them to know. I kind of feel embarrassed about that right now but I think they should tell them the truth that I took some time off but for them it’s very important to tell them that.

Angelina and Tom’s narratives illustrated that they had to stay on the right path otherwise, they would dishonor their families. Engaging in drugs and hanging out with the wrong crowd would tarnish Angelina’s family and grandmother’s reputation. Disclosing that their son Tom took time off would have made his parents look bad in front of their friends.

A duty to maintain one’s family reputation was used to deter respondents from heading toward the wrong path, but it did not always work out this way. Tom, for example, dropped out of college to pursue other interests even though he understood that this would threaten his parent’s good reputation among their friends. However, Tom’s experience was an exception because every respondent in this study’s sample, besides him, enrolled in college without taking any time off. These findings suggest that an obligation to honor one’s family may be a factor that kept most respondents focused on their studies, which was in line with what their primary caregiver(s) considered to be the right path.
Honoring one’s family also included a responsibility to financially support the person(s) who raised them. Ten out of 20 respondents mentioned learning that they will eventually have to take care of their primary caregiver(s) and this served to discourage them from getting into trouble by promoting their obligation to do well in school to eventually come out with a job to financially support the person(s) who raised them. While some respondents did not have second thoughts about taking care of their primary caregiver(s), others were reluctant to do it or simply mentioned knowing about it.

Filial Piety

Mary agreed to take care of her parents. When asked what her parents wanted to see happen from their expectation for her to excel in school as a young adult, Mary answered that they wanted her become an outstanding doctor who made a lot of money so that she could take care for them. She said they wanted her to, “be a very rich and successful doctor and to take care of them in the future. They’re like when you’re a doctor you’re going to take care of us. I am like okay.”

Like Mary, Jennifer agreed to take care of her parents. She wanted a good job in order to pay them back for all they had done for her and this was why she was still deciding which career to pursue. She stated, “I want to repay my parents for all they’ve done for me. So, I mean I do want to find like a good job. So, I am just trying to see what I like to do.”

Unlike Jennifer and Mary, however, John demonstrated feeling reluctant about financially supporting his parents. He disliked the idea of giving his parents money because it would mean he had to stay living with them, which would make him less independent. John would ideally like to live alone or with a roommate. He would also like to go on vacations, save
for his retirement, as well as for his potential children’s futures, but doing this would be impossible to pay for if he had to financially support his parents at the same time. Despite his reluctance, John understood that he had to take care of his parents because they did not have savings and thus would rely on him to financially support them:

I know they don’t have that money and that I have to give them this money because if I don’t then they don’t have anything else. I know that I have to do it. But also I dislike it because it feels that means I am stuck. I feel like it narrows my choices for what I can do so like when I graduate and if and when I start working, I am not going to be making enough to just move out and to give money to my parents and then still be able to put money away for my own retirement and for a savings account, for a college fund for my own children or whatever. I can’t just save money because I would never make enough money out of social work school. And that means I have to stay at home. I do have to live at home if I want to support my parents. You know because that is the only way I can save enough money and then pay off my student loans, put money away, still go out and enjoy myself with friends, go on vacations once in a while. If I didn’t have to support them though, I could graduate and just move out immediately and the money that I would have given them I could have used it on my own rent. Right? I could move out with a friend or something. You know split the rent in a couple of ways. Be more independent that way, but because I know that they don’t have savings, they depend on me.

Brenda, identical to John, expressed feeling uncertain about financially supporting her parents. Her mother expected Brenda to earn money to support her. Brenda, however, described feeling stressed about this because she did not know if she would be able to find a job to support both her and her parents, especially “since the economy is the way it is now:”

She’s like I get old you have to earn money and take care of me. I feel a little pressured about it. Am I going to earn enough money to take care of me and my parents because since they are letter carriers they have a relatively high salary compared to my aunts and uncles but I am wondering since the economy is the way it is now will I be able to find a job to be able to take care of all of us (Brenda).

While Brenda and other respondents expressed opinions involving plans to financially support their primary caregiver(s), some only described knowing about this obligation. Megan, for
instance, explained that Asian children were expected to take care of their parents when they get older because it was a way to give back the care they received from their parents when they were younger. She went on to say that perhaps her mother wanted her to be successful because it would mean she would be taken care of in the future:

I think you know Asian children are supposed to give back to their parents later. Like take care of them. Reciprocate the care they received as a child. They are supposed to give back when their parents are older in retirement. Maybe she wants me to do well...maybe because she worries about her future so she wants to make sure I am set so that she can be set.

Angelina, as in the case with Megan, acknowledged being aware of the expectation to take care of her mother. Angelina reported hearing her mother say many times to give her money because she did not want to be put in a nursing home. She explained with a laugh, “My mom dreads that, she tells me a million times. ‘Don’t put me in a nursing home. Just give me some money so I can live by myself.’” An awareness to financially support their parents discouraged Angelina, Brenda, Megan, John and Mary from getting into trouble because it made them realize that they would have to focus on their studies to get a good job that will pay them enough money to fulfill this obligation.

Besides having an awareness to financially support their primary caregiver(s), respondents were also informed to find a companion or life partner and this was especially prevalent among female respondents who either completed or were about to complete their undergraduate degree. For these five respondents, a companion or life partner served to protect them from harm when their primary caregiver(s) were no longer able to do this as they aged.
Finding a Companion or Life Partner

Cindy mentioned her parent’s desire for her to get married as a young adult. Her mother tried to set her up with potential life partners when she was in her early twenties. Cindy, however, disliked this idea and got into minor arguments with her parents about it. Her parents believed if Cindy was not married by then, it would be difficult for her to find someone to marry later in life:

When I was twenty-two…. twenty-four my mom tried to set me up. She get me on that track to be married by now, but there was a lot of push back from me because I am like mom I don’t need you to set me up with someone. But both my parents thought that was a really critical age for me to meet someone because I guess like that was my peak and they are very nervous that after that if I didn’t find anyone, I won’t be married like forever or something. So, I think during that time I said I don’t want to be setup up. You know there were times where there would be minor arguments and stuff like that.

Cindy subsequently explained that her brother was employed and planned to get married within the next two years and that her parents saw this as an indication that he was moving in the right direction. They believed that once Cindy did the same or got a job, their job as parents would be complete:

Once I get a job or I get married. For them it’s like their job is complete. I am the younger one. I am the last stretch because my brother already got the job. He is on track. He already told our parents that he is going to propose and get married soon. Yeah within the next two years so they are finally set with that. So now I am the only one and they are like you just have to finish school and get married and get a job and they are set. Like for them, they feel like that is the end of their parental responsibilities.

In another example, Jane said her father hoped she would find a boyfriend as young adult because he could no longer escort her to the park or library like he did when she was a child. Without a boyfriend, Jane had to go to these places on her own and frequently stayed home because she had no one to go out with:
I think there is always some little hope in him that I would find a boyfriend. I think because I am getting older. When I was young I can be daddy’s little girl. Take me to the park and I’ll be fine. Now it’s…..they can’t take me to the park or they can’t bring me to the library so if I want to go somewhere I have to go myself and if I don’t have anyone to go with I am just at home so they see me at home often.

As Jane and Cindy grew up to become young adults, a companion or life partner served to replace the care and protection their parents gave them when they were younger. Cindy reported her parent’s duty to care for her would end once she got married. Jane implied that a boyfriend should take her out to places instead of her father because she was no longer a child. Drawing from these narratives, these findings suggest a companion or life partner was used to protect older, female respondents.

**Living at Home as a Young Adult**

Another way respondents were shield from harm was by living at home with their parents during their early adult life. Thirteen out of 20 respondents reported that they lived with their parents as young adults. These respondents were discouraged from heading toward the wrong path because their parents were still able to keep a close eye on them.

Patrick lived at home as a young adult and described his father reminding him to drive carefully each time he used the car. Being reminded of this made him feel as if his father was treating him like a child. Yet, his father pointed out that he was an adult after seeing his new tattoo:

It’s unique now because they see me more as an adult. I came home with a giant tattoo on my chest and I thought they would be really pissed but I guess my dad accepted it. He actually made fun of it. But then we had a little father and son talk. He said I see you as an adult now so yeah. I am more independent but at the same time they still baby me in a way. I tell my dad …I call Ba. I’ll say Ba, I am taking the car out. He’ll give me a little lecture. Drive safe. Make sure you turn the lights on. I mean I’ve been driving for four years now. I don’t need this you know
(laughing). He always does this. He’s like just in case, just in case. Make sure. I am like yeah…I understand but I don’t need to hear it every time I take the car.

Ken described his mother making efforts to keep him on the right track while living at home as a young adult. She continued to tell him to graduate from college, get a job and buy a house. Ken hated hearing this all the time and felt “kind of depressed” because of it. He asserted a desire to eventually move far away from his parents once he got a job:

Yeah they are home all the time and my classes are huge gaps. Three to four hour breaks so sometimes I go home and sleep. They are there now. They cook for me and everything. I am still kind of depressed. She’s still saying the same thing. Graduate. Get a job. Get a job. Buy a house. I just hate it. I hate having to hear it every time. Especially now that she’s home all the time so I hear it all the time. And it’s just ….I want to get out but I would need a better job. Hopefully and eventually I’ll get far, far away.

Both Patrick and Ken kept away from trouble because their parents exercised their behavioral control. Their parents closely monitored them as they continued to live at home as young adults.

**Parental Psychological Control and its Impact on Ego Functioning**

According to Barber and Harmon (2002), Steinberg (1990) wrote that too much psychological control may diminish children’s ability to develop competence and self-direction as they grow excessively dependent. But, this study’s findings suggest different results from Steinberg’s (1989) line of thinking because respondents, who experienced psychological control, were independent during different developmental stages of their lives irrespective of demographic characteristics. Independence was expressed through their ability to navigate through life successfully without much guidance from their primary caregiver(s). Respondents figured out ways to obtain jobs, internships, enroll in college and/or move away from home. These findings suggest that respondents developed into self-sufficient individuals even if their primary caregiver(s) instilled psychological control.
Independence

Cindy identified herself as “kind of like self-disciplined” when emphasizing that she, instead of her mother, was ultimately responsible for making sure her homework was done as a child. This was because her mother, who did not read or write English, was unable to check if she actually did it:

They can’t really check if we did our homework so umm……it was kind of like self-discipline because we would have to do our homework. Like she would say this is homework time, but she wouldn’t really know if we did our homework you know she doesn’t know how to read or like or write English.

Comparable to Cindy, John described managing his school work without his parent’s assistance. He would either figure it out on his own or ask his friends for help. Besides homework, John said he also could not ask his parents for help with directions to get somewhere. He did not know how to ask this in Chinese and concluded that his parents never guided him and that he generally guided himself:

A lot of the times I had to deal with things myself. So with homework I knew I couldn’t ask them so I would just have to figure it out on my own or ask friends. If I needed to know how to get somewhere I couldn’t ask them how to get to so and so place because I wouldn’t be able to communicate that in Chinese so I would have to figure it out myself. If I think about it now, I would say that I never had my parent’s guide me and that I generally guided myself.

John and Cindy’s narratives demonstrated that respondents were pushed to become more self-sufficient when their parents did not have the language skills needed to assist them. Driving them to be even more self-sufficient was their parent’s physical absence at home. Respondents described developing into independent individuals because their parents often worked and therefore, were not always around to attend to them.
Angelina, for example, disclosed feeling that her parents did not pay much attention to her because they worked a lot. She, however, asserted that this experience made her the person she was today. Angelina did not rely on others to financially support her because she worked to support herself:

I think I felt ignored by both parents because they were busy working all the time affect me. It made me the person I am today. I am not dependent on others for money. I know I need to work and stand on my ground and be able to support myself.

When asked how he felt about his parent’s availability as a child, Patrick said that it did not bother him growing up since he understood his parents had to work to pay bills and that this influenced him to “grow up a little more independently:”

I didn’t have a problem with it because I knew they had to go to work and growing up. I understood bills needed to be paid and what not and I guess that’s how I grew up a little more independently.

While some respondents indicated that their parent’s busy work schedules and limited English language skills drove them to become more independent, others simply described their self-sufficient personalities. Brian, for instance, said he preferred not to be taken care of by others He described telling his parents that he rather take care of his own meals at college after they offered to bring him food:

I don’t like people taking care of me. Ummm….well it’s just like in relations to now. Just like when my parents are trying to ….there were a couple of times my parents were like we have the car. We are going to be around the city. I know that you still have a lot of food and stuff. Let me bring some food over. I am like no it’s seriously fine. Just let me do it myself. Sooner or later I have to know so mine as well know now so later on I don’t have to be burdened with it when I have other stuff to do.
Grace was another respondent who exhibited an independent nature. She spoke about feeling independent during her freshman year of high school because she prepared her own lunch, managed her volleyball games, track meets and school assignments:

I felt I was very independent. Like it’s at that point since you know freshman year taking care of myself anyway. Always made my own lunch. Made sure I had to do whatever I had to do for my volleyball games, for my track meets, for like I kept up in school. Like I didn’t have a problem keeping up in school. Money wise I drove their car when I could drive. Yeah. All extra circular activities I took care of myself.

As Grace and other respondents demonstrated their independence, they also did what their primary caregiver(s) expected and that was to go to college. All respondents indicated enrolling in at least an undergraduate college program and some had jobs while studying for this degree and/or before starting a graduate degree program. They were determined to reach their career goals and worked independently and diligently to achieve them.

**Parental Psychological Control and its Relationship to Emotional and Social Well-Being**

Research findings on parental psychological control demonstrate that this form of control intruded children’s sense of self and as a result, was associated with internalizing problems or, what this study recognized as, emotional well-being. Children with internalized problems suffered from depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. Some studies showed that psychological control is also correlated with children’s externalizing problems or what this study identified as social well-being. Externalizing problems include delinquent, aggressive, hostile and sexually promiscuous behaviors (Barber & Olsen, 1997; Barber & Harmon, 2002; Garber, Robinson, & Valentiner, 1997; Litovsk & Dusek, 1985; Loeber & Dishion, 1984; McCord, 1998; Miller, McCoy, Olson, & Wallace, 1986; Patterson, Capaldi, & Bank, 1991).
Similar to research findings from this study’s literature review, respondents expressed internalizing problems or described problems with their emotional well-being, as they illustrated their parent(s)’ assertion of psychological control. However, unlike earlier studies from the literature review presented, findings from this study suggest parental psychological control did not have an influence on respondents’ social well-being. This was evident when respondents did not disclose engaging in delinquent or sexually promiscuous behaviors, as they described their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) assertion of psychological control. The demographic characteristics of respondents did not appear to play a factor in these findings.

Respondents felt stressed about their parent’s expectation to perform well in school and annoyed about conversations focusing on school. Respondents also indicated feeling annoyed because their parents told them what to do. Moreover, they disclosed feeling unhappy about the inability to have open conversations with them and their demanding expectations in general, especially ones involving school. Along with these feelings, they felt scared of failing to meet their parent’s high expectations and described feeling as if they were not good enough because of their high expectations, especially ones related to their academics. Furthermore, respondents appeared tearful or holding back tears mostly while speaking about their parent’s lack of efforts to find out what they desired. A longing for their attention in this respect was also apparent when they spoke about feeling lonely.

Feeling Stressed

Ten out of 20 respondents indicated that they felt stressed about high expectations of school grades. Jennifer was one respondent who disclosed feeling stressed about the expectation to perform well in school. She stated that while her parents pushed her to do well in school, they
were unable to help her with this. In the absence of their involvement, Jennifer had to manage school on her own and this caused her to feel stressed:

I felt like they were pushing me a lot because I really didn’t know that much and they really didn’t have the opportunity to help me if I needed help. So like I am doing it all on my own so it was kind of stressful at the time.

In another example, Ken reported feeling pressured and sometimes suicidal because his parents were only concerned about his grades. Trying to meet their academic expectation was “never any fun” for Ken and as a result, he asserted hating school:

Feeling pressured and like even suicidal at times. With them it was always about expectations, expectations. No fun. Never any fun. Just never felt like it was fun having to live with the expectation. That’s all they care about. Nothing else. Grades, grades, grades. I just hated school.

As Ken and Jennifer felt stressed about their parents’ expectations to excel in school, other respondents stated feeling annoyed about conversations with their parents because it often involved their performance in school.

**Feeling Annoyed**

Eight out of 20 respondents expressed feeling annoyed with their primary caregiver(s). Four out of eight of these respondents felt annoyed that conversations with them often involved school. John mentioned his parents always wanted to know why his grades were not better and hearing this annoyed him:

I never really wanted to talk about my grades with my parents because they would just always ask me why I didn’t do better and that’s also a really annoying conversation to have because well you know I didn’t do better because I just didn’t do better like their or some things that I didn’t know and I just couldn’t answer every single question 100% correctly and that’s just kind of that. Umm……it’s not like I ever had a good rebuttal.
Angelina, comparable to John, felt annoyed about conversations focusing on school. When asked how she felt about talking with her mother as a child, Angelina mentioned feeling annoyed because “it was only about school:”

Annoyed because that’s what she wanted to talk to me about. The only thing. It wasn’t like what did you want for dinner today? It was only about school. That was her focus. That was it. That was the main concern.

Along with feeling annoyed about conversations regarding school, four respondents felt annoyed because their parents told them what to do. Q, for instance, described her grandmother commanding her to get up for school and walk to the bus stop earlier than she needed as a teenager. While Q felt grateful that her grandmother tried to get her to school on time, she did not think it was not necessary and thought of it as annoying:

As a teenager my grandmother would make sure I’ll wake up at 6 in the morning. My bus left at seven and it was a block away so it took me approximately six minutes to walk there so I am like okay I’ll get up at six thirty and leave. That’s reasonable. But at six she would already be up so she will come back to the room and start waking me up and she would say it’s seven o’clock already so you have to get out of the house and then I’ll be like stop lying it’s six because my alarm didn’t even go off and she would just start hitting me like you get up this instant! You are supposed to be up. I was like, I’ll get up once you stop hitting me. This is not cool. I want my sleep. But she would never stop and she would roll me off the bed …I don’t know how she did it because she was like seventy something. But she would roll me off the bed and I’ll be on the floor and I would be like this is so comfortable. I am going to stay here and for that half an hour she was constantly just picking a fight with me and when I finally get up …I am like I don’t want to deal with this anymore, I’ll go to school…whatever….I’ll be up. Eat my cereal, pack up and go. So I’ll be ready at 6:30 and she would be like go to the bus stop. I am like it comes at 7 (laughing). No go there and wait. Just because they might come early. No…there’s other students…they aren’t going to leave. No you have to go there. I am going to walk you there and so she would walk me there and I would be like ugh. In the morning she would be my alarm…my human alarm and at night also telling me when to sleep. An alarm clock. Well, I appreciated the thought (laughing) like thank you for caring to try to get me to school on time, but really your help is not needed. Yeah. I would always wake up annoyed (laughing). Like this is going to be a craptastic day because this happened in the morning and then I’ll always be like okay…I will resettle on the bus.
Megan, similar to Q, felt annoyed about being expected as a teenager to do what she was told. Megan demonstrated her mother demanding that she help her without considering what she was doing at the moment:

It’s just so annoying because we’re just trying to do our own thing and every like five or ten minutes it would be like come here help me. Do this with no regard with what we are doing so she expects us to drop everything for her.

In addition to feeling annoyed and stressed, respondents spoke about feeling unhappy. They admitted feeling this way about their parent’s expectations, which often involved succeeding in school.

Feeling Unhappy

Nine out of 20 respondents indicated that they were unhappy about interactions with their parents. Four out of nine of these respondents felt unhappy about not being able to engage in conversations with them. Q, for instance, disclosed feeling “really sad” as a child because she was unable to engage her mother in conversations:

I tried to be with her because she’s my mom. I was like oh yeah! Let’s do mom and daughter stuff. But she would either be too tired or umm…she would be heavily influenced by her mom. I felt like I am missing something because umm….we were supposed to be close and stuff but that didn’t happen. I felt really sad because I kept trying to talk to her, but she wouldn’t have time for me. Umm…like if I come home from school ….like, if I needed her to sign a permission slip or something I am like oh…good! I get to talk to her. Okay mom can you sign this for me? Field trip tomorrow or something and then she would sign it and she would give it to me and be like go away… I am tired. But I was like mom …… I want to know stuff….how are you? Tell me a story. Something.

Like Q, Tom felt unhappy because he was unable to talk with his parents. Tom said it was a “little depressing” to think about the relationship he had with them because they were not like his
friends or psychotherapist who he could “talk to about a lot of things.” Unlike these people in his life, his parents became easily angry when Tom said anything to them:

It’s a little depressing to think about that this is our relationship. I feel like if I have a friend…I have a friend who I can talk to about a lot of things. If I say anything to my parents it’s very easy for my father to get mad or my mother….she gets upset too at times. It’s a little depressing. I wish I can speak to them about some things. Like I can speak with some of my friends or a psychoanalyst that I’ve seen in Los Angeles.

Besides feeling unhappy about limited conversations that focused on school, five respondent felt this way about their parent’s demanding expectations, especially ones related to school.

Mary, for example, felt unhappy as a result of her parent’s expectation to succeed in school. When asked how she felt about her parent’s expectation to do well in school as a teenager, Mary responded by saying that their expectation was unrealistic because the students enrolled in her high school were very bright and hardworking and therefore, it was difficult for her to stand out like they wanted. In spite of how smart her peers were, Mary said she was eventually able to “stand out like they wanted” because of her hard work:

A lot of the time I felt they were very unrealistic or irrational mostly because I was surrounded by such smart people. Everybody was smart. Everyone was hard working and it was really hard to stand out like they wanted to, but eventually like I put into enough hard work where I did stand out.

When asked if her parent’s expectation to succeed in school affected her at the time, Mary said it had an impact on her “mental state” because she “wasn’t happy at all.” Mary believed that although she was unhappy at that moment, her hard work at the time would pay off because it will make her happy in the future:

It probably affected my mental stability. Now I just sound crazy but just like my mental state how ….like I wasn’t happy at all. I definitely wasn’t happy but I knew in my mind it wasn’t about being happy then cause I knew if I worked hard then I would be happy in the future.
Helen, similar to Mary, also expressed feeling unhappy as she described her parent’s expectations. When asked what was her parent’s expectation of her as a young adult, Helen responded by saying they wanted her to finish graduate school, get a job, be in a relationship, get a driver’s license and buy them a house. While her parents wanted Helen to have a family of her own, they were more concerned about her ability to provide them with “concrete needs.” Mary illustrated this concern when she described her mother occasionally asking when she will be graduating and stating that she would have been working if she had not enrolled in graduate school:

I think for me is just hurry up and graduate at this point. Graduating is one thing because I am graduating in May. Ummm…..buying a house. Be in a relationship, buy a house and a car. Recently they pushed me to get my driver’s license and I finally did. So I got my driver’s license. Just getting the concrete needs first and then in terms of getting a family is one thing but meeting the concrete needs for them is important. My mom is always saying that every now and then (laughing). Gay see butt yeep, Gay see butt yeep (when are you going to graduate, when are you going to graduate?). In a way I think she is waiting for me to graduate. She emphasized that I would have been working if I wouldn’t have gone to grad school.

When asked if her parent’s expectation had an effect on her as a young adult, Helen appeared tearful and said she was “not happy” with her life. She believed her life would have been more pleasurable if her parents had expected less of her:

Not happy with my life. I don’t know. Well at least I don’t want to talk about it. A lot of Chinese-Americans are not happy with their life. Just their expectations. For me it’s just the support I guess. I feel like I couldn’t enjoy my life much better had they been less expectations of me you know.

Feeling Scared

Three out of 20 respondents disclosed feeling scared about failing to meet their parents’ expectations that often involved their academics. Tom stopped attending classes at the University
of Southern California (USC) and told his mother instead of his father about it because he was “afraid of him.” Tom said he “felt kind of bad” about not going to classes because he was wasting his parent’s money, but at the same time, enrolling at USC felt like a burden his father placed on him and he no longer wanted to carry it out:

I stopped going to class and this might be bad on my part but um….I felt kind of bad doing it because I was wasting a lot of money. But I felt I can’t take this anymore. I am not going to be bitched around and doing your things because USC to me at that point was my father’s burden on me. I suppose the image of me is carrying a lot of my father’s dishes and doing his work for him. And when I said I am done it’s like I dropped it on the floor and they all crashed. And then at that point this was interesting too….I didn’t want to talk to my father. I was more afraid of him. I told my mother I wasn’t going to class anymore and she was really upset.

Ken, similar to Tom, explained feeling afraid of telling his parents news that they would not like. When asked if his parent’s expectation to get good grades had an impact on him as a child, Ken said he was scared that they would yell and punish him each time test results or report cards came out for them to review:

I was scared of being punished and having them yelling whenever report cards come out or test grades come out.

Ken and Tom were concerned that they did not adhere to their parent’s academic standards and for this reason, they were afraid of them. Tom was afraid of his father because he stopped going to classes at USC while Ken was scared of his parents because his test scores or report card may not meet their expectations.

**Feeling Not Good Enough**

Six out of 20 respondents described feeling as if they were not good enough. John’s narrative uncovered his poor self-esteem. When asked what his biggest accomplishment was as a teenager, John said he did not know and could not identify something he was proud of. He
mentioned that most people would say getting into college was an achievement. But for him, this was not an achievement because he was accepted to Vassar College instead of Columbia University. While John thought Vassar was a good school, he told people his acceptance to this school was based on his minority status and for this reason, it was not an accomplishment. Besides mentioning his minority status, John said his good grades also got him into Vassar. He asserted that they were not the best grades and went on to discuss that he was the first one to attend college in his immediate family, but this was not a big deal since he always knew he would go to college and did not win any awards or were involved in any competitions:

I don’t really know of any accomplishments I had or I can’t think of anything I was super proud of. Umm…..you know a lot of people in my position might have said college. I got into college! I got into a pretty good college! I applied to Columbia College. Columbia University. I guess if I got into that one it would have been a huge accomplishment and maybe I would have felt really proud of myself for it, but I got into Vassar College instead, which is a school that I ended up going to. And you know it is not a school that many people have heard of but people have said it is a good school. Umm….but I never thought of it as an accomplishment. Instead I would always tell friends I got in because I am a triple minority. So…Vassar College is a…..it used to be a all women school and they became co-ed, but they are still generally…more heavily slated towards women…aha……it is predominately White school and so I am Chinese. I am Asian….I mean….I am male and I am also poor. And whereas Vassar College is fairly a you know….quite a lot of wealthy people attend and so diversity check boxes I fit three of them, which is great for any college and that’s just the way I kind of spoke about it when I got in. I mean my grades had to be good enough to get in as well…but I think those three factors helped me so I didn’t think of it as a huge accomplishment. It was just kind of like …I was going to get into a college regardless …it’s great that I got into this one, but I guess it was because I was these three things in addition to doing fairly well in school. I mean I wasn’t a poor student by any stretch of the imagination. I definitely was not the best, somebody…for being one of the first people in his immediate family to get into college… I mean my relatives have other kids who have been in college already …but for my own family I was the first one. I was just like that’s not a big deal because I was expecting to anyway. It was just something that would have happened. And I never really won any awards…..I never really participated in any competitions.
John’s narrative showcased some of his triumphs as a teenager. He was accepted to a prestigious college and became the first one in his immediate family to attend college. But after describing what others would consider to be accomplishments, John immediately minimized the significance of his successes or denied his involvement in making them happen and this signaled his lack of confidence. For instance, he said it was not a big deal to be the first one in his immediate family to go to college and stated that it was his minority status instead of his good grades that actually got him accepted into Vassar College.

Similar to John, Mary demonstrated a lack of confidence as a teenager. She explained that her father always criticized her without expressing any sort of praise and that experiencing this made her “hate” who she was because she started to believe what he said. She stated, “Him always chastising or just criticizing me. Never being like wow! Like good job. I hated him and I started to hate myself once I started believing the stuff he said.”

Mary displayed a diminished sense of confidence when she stated hating herself while John exhibited this by saying he could not think of anything he was proud of. These findings were in line with studies that suggest Asian immigrant children and adolescents had low self-esteem (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Herz & Gullone, 1999; Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinerz, 2000; Pyke, 2007; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003; Schneider & Lee, 1990). However, authors of these studies did not explain exactly what made them develop a lack of confidence. Filling in this gap in knowledge, this study discovered respondents felt they were not good enough mostly because their primary caregiver(s) criticized them without praise or made them believe they did not meet their expectations, especially ones involving school. Mary, for example, admitted to hating who she was because her father often criticized her without expressing any kind of approval. In
another example, when asked what made him believe he did not achieve anything, John explained that the high academic expectations his parents placed on him while growing up pushed him to think nothing he did was ever good enough to be proud of because he could always do better:

Because honestly….I couldn’t tell you but maybe it just has to do with the fact that you know….growing up with the expectations that were placed upon me you know….always made me think you can do better, you can do better and so now it is always like you can do better, you can do more, there’s more you could have done, there’s more you can do and that’s not really saying that is something you should be proud of because you can do more than that.

As respondents’ narratives uncovered their sunken self-esteem, they also appeared either tearful or holding back tears when describing how their parent(s) treated them with most showing a lack of concern for their needs and desires.

**Tearful**

Five out of 20 respondents appeared tearful or holding back tears while discussing their parents’ lack of attention and interest in their desires. A.C. appeared tearful while speaking about her parent’s disinterest in her emotional needs as a teenager. She had trouble finding her identity and believed she might have been “depressed for a year” as a result. Her parents, however, never asked if she was alright or showed concerns for her emotional well-being. A.C. expressed feeling alone because she realized there was no one to talk to about her struggles:

As you go through your teenager years you go through a lot of internal struggles and I don’t think they realized that I went through all of that (tearful). Just like finding yourself and I think I was depressed for a year. They never asked if I was okay. I felt alone I guess (tearful) because I didn’t really have anyone to talk to about it.

In another example, Helen appeared tearful while describing her parent’s indifferent attitude toward her desires. Her parents never asked what she wanted and she did not tell them. She
illustrated an incident in which her parents did not make any efforts to figure what she wanted for her birthday. Instead of trying to find out, they gave her a traditional, Chinese red envelope. Along with describing this incident, Helen stated her parents did not even know what she liked to eat because they never asked and that her mother only knew when she told her recently, but her father was still unaware:

They never ask me what I want (tearful). I felt like I don’t.....I always like to compare myself with other friends’ families and I see that they care about them….their needs. What they want. For me I want…I couldn’t even tell them what I want so to the point that they don’t know what I want. So in birthdays and everything….they just gave me a red envelope and that was it. They don’t know what I really want and the food dishes they don’t know what I like to eat. Well….my mom does now because I voice myself a lot but my dad still don’t have that perception of me you know oh I still like this, I don’t like this.

Both Helen and A.C.’s tearful appearances indicated a yearning for their parents to elicit what they needed and desired. Helen longed for her parents to make efforts to figure out what she liked to eat and wanted for her birthday while A.C. wished her parents paid attention to her emotional needs by asking if she was alright at a time when might have been depressed.

Feeling Lonely

Four out of 20 respondents wanted their parents to attend to their desires as opposed to only their physical care and this was evident when they spoke about feeling lonely. Brian thought of his childhood as lonely. When asked if he felt his parents were available to him as a child, Brian answered not really because they were busy performing household chores:

Not really. They were always busy around the house. My dad was always working on the house. Physically on the house. Either he was mowing the lawn, taking care of the grass ummm….you know fixing up the door deciding trying to find stuff for the siding, roofing, electricity….the electrical line stuff like that. She was cooking or doing laundry.
When asked how he felt about his parent’s unavailability at the time, Brian stated that it was “mostly lonely” and went on to explain how he often waited for his parents to come over to play with him. Brian partially blamed himself for not playing with his parents because they were not used to children yet since he was their first child:

When I was really young I guess it was mostly lonely I guess. I was never like the person to go up to my parents and like oh…do you want to play? It was I guess I waited for them to come over and if they did, they did. If they didn’t, they didn’t and it’s maybe because I was the first child and maybe they didn’t know how to manage that yet. So it’s partially my fault.

While Brian waited for his parents to play with him, Tom waited for his parents to give him emotional support. He explained that “it would have been nice to have some kind of parental support” when he moved away to California for college. Living in a new place was difficult and lonely for Tom. He only spoke to his parents perhaps once a month because they did not want to interfere with his studies. Besides their financial support, Tom said his parents would have also given him other kinds of support like talking with him about what was going on in school, but he did not feel comfortable turning to them for comfort given the history of their relationship:

I went to California for school and I think what we tried to do was they would try to kind of leave me alone and let me by myself during college. They didn’t want to interfere too much. Ummm….so I talked to them once a month maybe, which probably was the wrong way to go about it. I was in a new state on my own. It’s kind of hard at first. Where I came from my mother would do a lot of the house work and stuff so I had to learn that for one and it’s lonely. Umm…I didn’t really have friends at first and I guess it would have been nice to have some kind of parental support. Umm…I think some people might have that going into college and I think that would have been nice to have. And I think if I asked them for some support beyond money…… talk to them what’s going at school a little bit more I think that …like if I reached out to them I think they would have offered some of that but at the same time it’s kind of hard for me to do that with my parents just because the way things have been.
Tom and Brian did not express to their parents what they needed and wanted from them. At the same time, their parents did not attempt to figure out what they longed for. Brian waited for his parents to play with him, but they were more concerned about his physical care, which was expressed through household chores. Brian described his father making repairs around the house and mentioned his mother doing laundry and cooking. Tom, similar to Brian, wanted his parents to respond to his desires rather than his physical needs. Besides their financial support, Tom yearned to talk to them about difficulties adjusting to college. He, however, did not reach out to them for emotional support and his parents did not go above and beyond to inquire about what he needed, as they limited the amount of times they checked up on him to avoid interfering with his studies.

**Parental Behavioral Control and its Relationship to Social and Emotional Well-Being**

Results from previous studies on behavioral control illustrate that an adequate amount of this type of control kept children away from harm and consequently promoted their social well-being (Barber & Harmon, 2002; Patterson, Capaldi & Bank, 1991; Loeber & Dishion, 1984; McCord, 1998; Miller, McCoy, Olson & Wallace, 1986) Consistent with research from this study’s literature, this study discovered parental behavioral control kept respondents away from harm. Eighteen out of 20 respondents steered away from trouble and all of them ended up living productive lives, especially as young adults irrespective of their demographic characteristics and primary caregiver(s) varying degrees of behavioral control. Respondents exhibited their productive lives by explaining how they socialized with friends, attended or graduated from college, moved away or planned to move away from home and/or visited family once they
became young adults. Unlike previous studies that suggest parental behavioral control only influence children’s social well-being, this study found that behavioral control impacted both social and emotional well-being.

The majority of respondents consistently stayed out of trouble. However, two disclosed engaging in risky behaviors or externalizing problems as teenagers. Both of these respondents were male and came from different demographic backgrounds. Paul stayed out late at nights drinking with friends. He was raised by a single mother who completed two years of college and worked full-time as a bookkeeper at a local produce store. The other respondent, Tom was caught by the police drinking alcohol with his friends. Unlike Paul, Tom was raised by his mother and father who had college degrees. His mother was a full-time accountant and his father was an information technology specialist. While Tom’s parents enrolled him in preparatory classes to get into specialized high schools and prestigious colleges, Paul’s mother did not do the same. These findings suggest that although behavioral control or taking classes outside their regular school schedule drove the majority of respondents away from trouble, it did not always work out that way as in the case with Tom. At the same time, the absence of taking extra classes did not propel respondents into trouble as this was evident with the 10 respondents from diverse demographic backgrounds who did not mention enrolling in extra classes and risky behaviors. Similar to respondents who kept away from trouble, Paul and Tom described having productive lives as young adults. Such findings point out that their parents’ assertion of behavioral control, within varying degrees, ultimately moved them toward the right track away from harm as it did with the majority of respondents.
The effects of behavioral control on emotional well-being was evident when three out of 20 respondents in this study mentioned that their parent(s) made them stay home and that this made them feel angry. It is important to note that all these respondents were female. This particular finding may suggest parental behavioral control expressed through demands to stay home is stricter for Chinese-American females than males and this might be why it had an impact on their emotional well-being.

**Feeling Angry**

Respondents reported that their parent(s) made them stay home and that this made them feel angry. A.C. appeared tearful when she disclosed feeling resentment followed by anger because her parents refused to let her make decisions for herself as a teenager. She wanted to participate in activities after school, but her parents did not allow her to do this. As a young adult, A.C. realized her mother did not want her to go out, because she was afraid that she would get pregnant:

I was really resentful for I guess the things they didn’t want me to do and how they wanted to control everything. I think the resentment just made me really angry. They didn’t let me make my own choices (tearful). I wanted to do extra activities after school and they were like you can’t do this. You can’t do. In hindsight now she was the main problem. I didn’t really know at the time but the reason why my dad always said you can’t do this is because she was always telling him oh she is going out, she is probably going to get pregnant.

Joan felt angry because her parents wanted her home while she saw her friends go out:

I felt that I was in those years I was really restricted and just angry at them for keeping me home all the time, whereas I saw that my friends were going out. I felt like they were going out a lot more than I was going out. So then when I would go out I would have like a lot of fun and then the rest of week I’ll be home and I am like why am I home right now.
Joan and A.C. were ordered to stay home as teenagers because their parents wanted to shield them from danger. Yet, they, along with other respondents did not interpret it this way and consequently felt angry about not being able to go out. These findings were partially consistent with Lam’s (2003) study’s results. Lam (2003) concluded that although Chinese-Canadian adolescents were dissatisfied with their parent’s imposed curfews, they thought of it as necessary because it prevented them from turning out badly. Comparable to these outcomes, this study discovered respondents were displeased with their parent’s demands to stay home when they mentioned feeling angry about it. Unlike Lam’s (2002) findings, however, respondents in this study did not justify their parents’ commands to stay home.

Socializing with Friends

All respondents reported socializing with friends as children, adolescents and/or young adults. However, spending time with friends when they were children and adolescents were especially limited because their parent(s)/and caregiver(s) often wanted them home.

Q talked about having a lot of male friends as a teenager because she enjoyed playing basketball with them:

I would always meet up with my guy friends and I had a lot of guy friends because they were the only ones who played sports with me (laughing) and so we meet up to play basketball or something and then my mom would see us in the corner and she was like I know you are meeting up with a group of guys and I don’t like that. You are hanging out with males. That’s not good for you. They are just friends. What’s wrong with that?

John, similar to Q, talked about hanging out with friends as a teenager and how his parents tried to limit this from happening:

I started to go out with my friends and so they started saying what happened when you used to read all the time? You’re always out with your friends now. You stay out too late. Why don’t you stay home and read some books more often these
days? And I never listened to them. So back in high school they would also say the same things like why are you going out with your friends so much? Why are you never home? Why don’t you just eat dinner sometimes? You’re spending too much money eating out. Or are you paying for your friends meals? Ummmm…...and then of course are you doing your homework? Are you finished with your homework? Why aren’t you sleeping? Why are you staying up so late? Are you done with your homework? Those are really the main things. As respondents made friends during the course of their lives, they also developed into independent individuals because their parents spoke limited English and were unable to manage their school assignments or were too busy at work to attend to them. Unlike these respondents, some simply described having an independent nature because they rather not receive help or guidance from their parents.

**College and Work**

All respondents talked about either attending college and/or working. Joan, for example, was a sophomore in college and worked part-time at a non-profit organization while studying for her undergraduate degree:

So this year now I am so busy. I get up early in the morning as opposed to early afternoons. I go to class early then I go to work after at a non-profit organization. It’s really like last year my job was less than 15 hours per weeks so it was really relaxed and the pay was nice because I can shop and hang out. But now even though I am doing more hours and the pay is kind of less the job is better. It’s making me more responsible and things that I care about. I feel there can be a future in this.

Angelina, who received a Bachelor’s degree in Women Studies, discussed working full-time while applying for graduate school with the goal to become a physician assistant or nurse practitioner:

I have a B.A. in women studies from Stony Brook so I am trying to take all my science courses right now and eventually apply to physician assistant school or nurse practitioner so that is my end goal. That’s what I want to really achieve. But it is going to take some time because I am working full-time and going to school part-time.
Consistent with their determined and self-sufficient nature, respondents reported moving away or were eager to move away from home as young adults to either pursue their studies and/or to get away from their primary caregiver(s).

**Moving Away from Home**

Nine out of 20 respondents either moved out or talked about having the desire to move out during their early adult years. Q moved out to live with friends. She wanted to get away from her family, particularly her grandmother who interfered with her studies. Q said she did poorly during her first semester in college. As result, she left home without telling her family because her grandmother would have physically prevented her from stepping out of the house:

I moved out so. At the end of January. I am like I am good. After last semester. The first semester of college everything was so bad they were just constantly on my case. My GPA suffered. It was a 2.43. I never gotten a 2.43 ever and I am like this is enough. I can’t deal with you anymore. So I moved out with a couple of friends. I couldn’t tell them I was moving out. It was more like sneaking out because I knew if I told them anything like that I knew they would just go and break all my stuff and like physically block me from getting out because like I told you that time with the sleep over she locked me in a closet. Like she would do those things just to get me to stay in the house and so I just played it casually. Keep it in the down low. When I get a place, sign the lease and I am out. I had a car downstairs waiting for me so umm…yeah…I had to sneak my stuff. They were packed in duffle bags …and I was like yes! I am going to do this.

Q was motivated to do better in school and believed moving away from her family would make it possible to achieve this. Unlike Q who moved primarily to detach from her family, Grace left home to pursue her graduate studies. She discussed paying for college on her own and pointed out that once she turned 18 years old, her parents said she had to care for herself:

I ended up going to Berkley for undergrad. That was good. I paid my way through school. Basically when I turned 18 my parents were like take care of yourself. Yeah and now I go to NYU and take out a lot of loans for it. They were like now you are all grown up and you can make your own decision. It’s good. It’s good. Well right now I am looking for full-time employment and working on a research
paper with one my professors so I am pretty much on my own out here. Have an apartment in Chinatown. Have two cats.

Respondents remained loyal to their primary caregiver(s) despite expressing negative feelings about how they treated them. This was apparent when Q spoke about visiting her family after moving away from home.

**Visiting My Family**

Five out of 20 respondents talked about how they visited their parent(s)/caregiver(s) after moving out. Q visited them every week despite having to hear her grandmother’s outlandish attacks against her. While their relationship remained strained, the one she had with her mother “was getting closer” after she left home:

I am still in the area in Queens. Just away. They live in Flushing and I live in Elmherst. Not too far. I still visit them every week or so just because I just want to see what they’re doing and how they are. I feel like she (mother)…although we are apart …..we are getting closer because I am removed from the whole crazy scene and if she (mother) wants ….she knows if she wants to meet with me she’s going to have to leave that too. It’s just going to be us because I told her I am not going back if she’s (grandmother) there. Every time I go over either once a week…she (grandmother) would be like so how are you doing now? I know you married a Mexican. That’s why you’re not here (laughing). I am like if this wasn’t happening to me it would be hilarious (laughing). Where do you get these ideas from? And so she would still say all these bad things. I know you’re working for a pimp. Who is he? That’s why you have enough money to move out. I was like no I worked for a year. That’s how I saved up.

Kate also visited her family after moving away from home and reported having a better relationship with her parents afterward. She was able to talk to them more now compared to when she was a high school and an undergraduate student. Kate spoke to them about decisions such as which medical school to attend and her day to day activities. But, she was still unable to talk to them about her personal life:
I am able to go back a little more often because I am closer than when I was in college. I think I talk to them more. Maybe not exactly about personal stuff but what I am doing on a day to day basis. Like talk to them about that. Yeah….or like big decisions. Like where I am going to med school and that kind of thing. I would talk to them about that. I think I feel I can actually talk to them more.

This study discovered that parental behavioral control had an impact on respondents’ emotional well-being. Three out of 20 respondents felt angry when they described their parent(s) making them stay home.

Summary

Respondents characterized their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s)’ expressions of psychological control in the following ways: High expectations of school grades, negative evaluations of their academic performance, indifference in response to their academic achievement, limited conversations to school related issues, desire for them to become a doctor or lawyer, withholding love, obedience, negative evaluation of their character, nagging, instilling guilt, disappointment and physical punishment. Respondents also described the ways in which parental behavioral control kept them from heading toward the wrong path and this included grandparents/babysitter, extra classes, structured activities, questioning, electronic devices, staying home, maintaining their family’s reputation, filial piety, finding a companion/life partner and living at home as a young adult.

Consistent with findings from this study’s literature review, parental psychological control had a negative impact on respondents’ emotional well-being. Respondents felt stressed about their parent’s expectation to excel in school and annoyed about conversations limited to their academics. Respondents also indicated feeling annoyed because their parents told them what to do. Moreover, they mentioned feeling unhappy about not being able to have open
conversations with them and their demanding expectations in general, especially ones involving school. In addition to these feelings, they felt scared of failing to uphold their parent’s high expectations and described feeling as if they were not good enough because of their high expectations, especially ones related to school. Respondents appeared tearful or holding back tears mostly while talking about their parent’s lack of effort to find out what they wanted. A longing for their attention in this respect was also evident when they spoke about feeling lonely.

Unlike previous studies, this study discovered that parental psychological control did not have an effect on respondents’ social well-being. This finding was apparent when respondents did not disclose engaging in delinquent or sexually promiscuous behaviors while characterizing their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) psychological control. However, consistent with research from this study’s literature review, this study found that parental behavioral control generally kept respondents away from harm and consequently promoted their social well-being. Respondents were living productive lives, especially as young adults and they illustrated this by describing how they socialized with friends, attended or graduated from college, moved away or planned to move away from home and/or visited family once they became young adults. But unlike research findings that were noted in the literature review chapter (see Chapter IV), this study found that parental behavioral control had an impact on respondents’ emotional well-being and this was evident when they reported feeling angry because their parent(s) made them stay home.
CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The previous chapter captured how Chinese-American young adult children characterized their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s)’ expressions of psychological and behavioral control, along with how these types of control influenced their emotional and social well-being during their childhood, adolescence and early adult years. It specifically investigated how these young adult children perceived, judged and made sense of their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) control and it aimed to find out the exact kind of control that affected their emotional and social well-being. Furthermore, it sought to examine the status of respondents’ emotional and social well-being as their primary caregiver(s)’ control shifted during the course of their lives. An unexpected finding was discovered as interviews with respondents progressed. Respondents remained loyal to their primary caregiver(s) and asked them for advice often as adults despite disclosing the emotional pain they experienced during the course of their lives as a result of interacting with them. This finding uncovers the complexity in the way Chinese-American young adults saw their primary caregiver(s) and the impact it has on their emotional and social development that was not found in studies reviewed for this study.

This concluding chapter will first discuss how findings from this study support and veer away from previous research reviewed in Chapter II. It will then look at how findings from this study are consistent and differ from the theoretical framework that guided this dissertation. It
will next look at a proposed theoretical lens to inform future research and clinical practice with Chinese-American young adults. Finally, implications for practice and research will be discussed.

**Discussion of Findings in Relations to Existing Studies**

Research findings included in this study’s literature review consistently showed that Chinese-American children perceive their parents as controlling, especially in their academic performance. Schneider and Lee’s (1990) study, for example, found that Asian immigrant students reported their parents expected excellent grades from them. In line with their research outcomes, this study found that all respondents stated their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) expected them to do well in school. They mentioned this especially while talking about their adolescence. Respondents asserted that they wanted to do well in school even though some admit that this desire may be influenced by their primary caregiver(s)’ expectation of them. Previous studies did not note this finding (Herz & Gullone, 1999; Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinerz, 2000; Pyke, 2000; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003; Schneider & Lee, 1990).

Respondents understood that their primary caregiver(s) wanted them to have a better life and they knew that getting an education and having a career afterward was a means to achieving this. They learned about this from listening to their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) talk about the lack of opportunities in their home countries and from observing the low paying and often physically demanding jobs they held once they immigrated to the United States. But, respondents who were raised by parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) without a college degree often described receiving limited guidance when it came to figuring out how to succeed in school. As a result, they were left to manage school related matters on their own. Their parent(s)
and/caregiver(s), who were unfamiliar with the school system in their host country and spoke limited English, were unable to help them with school assignments and could not assist them with applying for colleges when they got older. This particular finding is consistent with Lorenzo, Frost and Reinerz (2000) study that found that Asian-American adolescents reported a lack of available confidants who were able to offer them advice and assistant.

Earlier studies included in this study’s literature review imply that Asian and Asian immigrant children believe their parents do not love them because they saw them as unaffectionate (Herz & Gullone, 1999; Kelley & Tseng, 1992; Pyke, 2000). This study discovered only one respondent feeling unloved because her parents showed a lack of expressive affections toward her. Unlike this respondent, the majority of respondents from this study described feeling unloved because they had restrictive conversations, limited quality time and intense arguments with their parents. These results suggest that expressive affection was not the primary reason respondents felt unloved like most previous studies imply. Although respondents indicated that they felt unloved, they also mentioned feeling loved by their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) and this finding was not noted in previous studies. Respondents felt loved when their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) provided them with food, bought them things, physically took care of them, were outwardly affection and had open conversations with them, especially when conversations with them improved during young adulthood.

Respondents described a lack of emotional support from their primary caregiver(s) mostly when they were children and teenagers. They could not imagine talking with their primary caregiver(s) about their feelings or personal challenges at the time because they normally had restrictive conversations with them involving school related issues and practical
daily chores and/or activities. This study’s findings support previous research that found Asian-American children reporting problems communicating with their parents (Herz & Gullone, 1999; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003). Pyke (2000) discovered, for example, that Vietnamese and Korean-American adult children complained that their parents were only concerned about their day-to-day activities, such as whether they had enough to eat and their performance in school. Despite trouble communicating with their parents, respondents described how they accepted advice from them as teenagers and young adults. These findings resonated with Russell, Chu, Crockett and Lee’s (2010) study that found Chinese-American adolescents were receptive to their parent’s advice.

Russell, Chu, Crockett and Lee (2010) illustrated differences in the way Chinese-American adolescent boys and girls thought of their parent’s advice. Adolescent boys saw their parents as teachers who gave them advice while girls felt they made their own choices, but it was motivated by a desire to respect their parents and family. This study’s respondents did not exhibit the same contrast as Chu, Crockett and Lee’s (2010) sample of boys and girls. Instead, respondents in this study simply spoke about their parent’s advice and agreement to it. But, research studies appear to suggest that Asian immigrant youngsters often do not see eye to eye with their parents’ approaches to child-rearing and suggest that this difference may be associated with their anxiety, depression and low self-esteem (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Herz & Gullone, 1999; Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinerz, 2000; Pyke, 2007; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003; Schneider & Lee, 1990). Similar to these findings, respondents in this study expressed negative feelings about their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) treatment toward them. Yet, they also reported positive feelings about it and this finding is often not mentioned in previous studies (Fuligni,
Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Herz & Gullone, 1999; Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinerz, 2000; Pyke, 2007; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003; Schneider & Lee, 1990). Respondents disclosed having a satisfying childhood and mentioned feeling happy, good or comforted because they were able to talk with and rely on their parents mostly as young adults. They also indicated feeling good that their primary caregiver(s) were proud of them, often for succeeding in school. Such findings illustrate how complex respondents perceptions were of their parent(s) and caregiver(s) because while they disclosed positives feelings about the way they were raised, they also described negative feelings about it.

**Theoretical framework revisited.**

The following discussion explains how research findings from this study differ and support the person-environment fit model, Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development, Baumrind’s typology of parenting styles and Confucianism.

**Person-environment fit model.**

The person-environment fit model suggests that adolescents’ positive and negative psychosocial well-being is determined by the extent to which parents’ control matches their child’s desire for autonomy. If a child develops a greater need for independence as they mature, then living in an environment characterized by constant parental control produces an increasing mismatch between parent and child overtime. This mismatch or poor fit may cause children to abandon healthy relations with parents and create poor psychosocial consequences for them (Juang, Lerner, Mckinney, & Eye, 1999; Eccles, Buchanan, Flanagan, Fuligni, Midgley, & Yee, 1991). This study’s findings support and are consistent with the person-environment fit model. Respondents who continued to describe characteristics of parental psychological and behavioral
control as they grew older appeared more likely to report negative feelings and a disconnected relationship with their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) compared to those who mentioned these types of control less often as they became young adults.

**Erickson’s stages of psychosocial development.**

Erik Erikson (1950; 1994) presented eight stages of psychosocial development across the lifespan and pointed out that each one can be applied to all cultures. The stages include: Trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation and integrity versus despair (Crain, 2000). Only the first six of the eight stages were analyzed since this study focused on childhood through early adulthood development.

Characteristics of Erikson’s (1950; 1994) stages of psychosocial development did not appear to emerge in this study’s findings, except for the stage identity versus role confusion. In this stage of development, children from the age of 12 to 18 reach adolescence and assert their independence in an effort to adopt an identity separate from their parents and family. Erickson wrote that children during adolescence are concerned with who they are, how they are seen by others and what they will become. They socialize with their peers to gain a sense of identity. Some affiliate with political, national or religious ideologies to provide them a group identity and a clearer image of what is good and bad in the world. Others may develop a sense of who they are through their achievements (Crain, 2000; Erikson, 1950; 1994). Partially in line with Erickson’s description of this stage of development, findings from this study discovered that respondents yearned to develop an identity separate from their parents and family during their adolescence or early adult years. Developing an identity meant choosing a career path and
figuring out how to achieve it. It also meant moving away from their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) or having thoughts of moving away from them.

**Baumrind’s typology of parenting styles.**

Baumrind’s typology of parenting styles examines and explains how parental control and warmth affects the developmental outcome of children using three parenting styles: authoritative, permissive and authoritarian (Baumrind, 1967a; 1967b; 1978; 1991; Lim & Lim, 2003). Authoritative parents direct the activities of their children in a loving, supportive, firm and rational manner. They emphasize open communication and reason with their children. Unlike authoritative parents, permissive parents make few demands on their children, allowing them to regulate their own activities as much as possible. These parents behave in a non-punitive, loving and affirmative manner. By contrast, authoritarian parents control, shape and evaluate the behaviors and attitudes of their children through strict standards. They expect absolute obedience and respect from their children. In addition, authoritarian parents often favor punitive and forceful measures to curb their children’s inappropriate behaviors. These parents tend to assert power arbitrarily with little explanation or loving support. (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Lim & Lim, 2003).

Scholars who use Baumrind’s model often imply that Chinese and Chinese immigrant parents are authoritarian because they are demanding and express a lack of warmth toward their children (Herz & Gullone, 1999; Pearson & Rao; 2003; 1999; Kelley & Tseng, 1992; Leung, Lau & Lam, 1998; Dornbusch, Ritter, Herbert, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987). Unlike this simplistic descriptions of authoritarian parenting, this study uncovered details of how respondents’ primary caregiver(s) style of parenting may mirror an authoritarian one. Respondents were expected to
strictly follow their primary caregiver(s) wishes without being asked what they wanted. They did what was demanded after being physically punished by them, hearing them nag, expressing disappointment, guilt inducing remarks and negative evaluations of their personal character. Although these descriptions point to an authoritarian style of parenting, respondents’ characterization of their primary caregiver(s) also supported an authoritative one.

Displaying expressive affections and engaging in open communication were ways in which respondents may have characterized their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) as authoritative. Their descriptions of authoritative parenting, however, may go beyond what Braumind’s model includes. Gorman (1998) wrote that using Baumrind’s typology fails to convey the parenting philosophies that underlie parents’ actions in Chinese-American families. Her study discovered that Chinese-American mothers kept an eye on their children’s daily activities because they were motivated by love and concern. She implied that these mothers exhibited features of authoritative parenting because their actions represented parental warmth and involvement. Consistent with Gorman’s (1998) findings, respondents in this study described how their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) looked after their safety that may signal characteristics of authoritative parenting in Chinese-American families. Grandparents/babysitter, extra classes, structured activities, questioning, electronic devices, staying home, maintaining their family’s reputation, filial piety, finding a companion/life partner and living at home as a young adult were ways in which authoritative parenting may have been expressed among respondents’ primary caregivers. Features of authoritative parenting may have also been practiced when respondents noted that their primary caregiver(s) expected them to succeed in school and promoted this by helping them with homework as children. These behaviors resonated with the Chinese parenting term “Chiao
Shun.” Chao and Sue (1996) mentioned that the essence of Chiao Shun was to teach and ultimately influence children to perform well in school. Chiao Shun represented a mother’s sacrifice, devotion and drive for her child to succeed in school. Teaching took place in the context of a supportive and highly involved mother-child relationship in line with an authoritative style of parenting.

Scholars who used Baumrind’s theoretical model to examine the development of Asian and Asian immigrant children often focus on the outcomes of their academic performance over their psychological and social well-being (Chao, 2001; Chen, Dong, & Zhou, 1997; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Kim & Rohner, 2002; Leung, Lau, & Lam, 1998; McBride-Chang & Chang, 1998; Quoss & Zhao, 1995; Steingberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). Unlike limitations in these cited studies, this dissertation revealed the status of respondents’ emotional and social well-being in light of their primary caregiver(s) treatment toward them during their childhood, adolescence and early adult years. Stress, annoyed, unhappy, scared, appearing tearful or holding back tears were feelings and facial expressions respondents presented as they discussed interactions with their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s).

Confucianism.

Wu (1996) reported that the term Dongshi (understanding things) refers to the developmental stage in which children begin to possess the capacity to comprehend moral reasoning. It is generally believed that children below the age of five or six years old are too young to understand, and as a result, Guo (2006) explained that Chinese parents tend to be highly lenient or even indulgent in their attitudes toward children. In support of Guo’s (2006) explanation, respondents reported that they generally felt happy as children. At the same time,
however, they mentioned feeling unloved as children and adolescence because their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) did not give them the attention they wanted. Some respondents, for example, complained that their parents did not have open conversations with them while others spoke about how they did not play with them as children. These findings appear to be in line with Confucian ideals. Confucian scholar Lin Pu cautioned parents, as long as a thousand years ago, from showing too much affection to children because it interfered with their responsibilities to teach and discipline them. Parents who drowned children with love became spoiled (ni’ai) and misbehaved (Wu, 1996). Confucian writings advised parents to train their children not to leap, argue, joke, slouch or use vulgar language (Wu, 1996). Olsen (1975) mentioned Diamond who noted that Chinese parents rarely played, joked or had open conversations with their children because they feared it would weaken their parental authority.

Although respondents felt unloved by their parent(s) and caregiver(s), they also indicated feeling loved by them. They mentioned feeling loved when their primary caregiver(s) provided them with food, bought them things, physically took care of them, had open conversations and were outwardly affectionate toward them. Some of this study’s results were consistent with Chung’s (2006) idea of instrumental caretaking behaviors in Chinese families when expressive affection is not present. Chung (2006) explained that love between parents and children were communicated implicitly by practical and instrumental caretaking behaviors in the absence of direct physical and verbal affections.

Education and the process of learning can turn individuals into proper human beings according to Confucian teachings (Lang, 1998; Slote & DeVos, 1998). His teachings also stressed filial piety in that children should be devoted and care for their parents (Lang, 1998).
Confucius emphasis on education and filial piety were in line with findings from this study. Respondents understood they had to excel in school because their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) expected it in the hopes that they will go to college and get a job afterward that will financially support them and maintain their family’s reputation. Chung (2006) wrote that it is common for Chinese parents to view scholastic achievement by their children as a family goal that brings honor and status.

Confucius stated that once the oldest son became an adult, he was the one who physically and financially supported his parents and that doing this demonstrated his appreciation for his parents’ sacrifice (Chung, 2006; Lang, 1968). Confucius identified the father and son relationship as the most important one in the family because fathers were responsible for making sure that their eldest son was obedient and cared for their parents when they grew old. Fathers are also recognized as authority figures responsible for conveying moral and social values to children (Kim & Wong, 2002; Lang 1968). Partially in line with Confucian teachings, findings from this study showed that both female and male respondents learned from their mothers and fathers that they had to financially support them when they grew old. These findings suggest that sons were not viewed as the most valuable child in the family and that fathers were not the only authority figures responsible for teaching moral standards to youngsters as Confucian teachings promoted. It also points out that while Confucian philosophy remains strong in Chinese immigrant families, it may be changing or modified depending on the context in which these families find themselves.

Under the etic of filial piety, aggressive feelings such as hostility and anger toward parents and elders are forbidden according to Confucian ideals (Chung, 2006; Lang, 1968). Yet,
respondents in this study disclosed having arguments with their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) for various reasons. Despite arguments with them, they eventually did what their primary caregiver(s) wanted. Chung (2006) notes why this may have occurred. She underscores that children’s aggressive feelings and behaviors are internalized to acceptable cultural norms such as conformity to authority, self-criticism, hard work and self-sacrifice for the family. Similarly, Guo (2006) asserted that when children met the moral expectations of their parents, it symbolized maturity and appreciation for their parents’ sacrifice for them. In the event children failed to live up to their social standards, however, it brought shame to the entire family (Slote & DeVos, 1998). Consistent with Chung (2006) and Guo’s (2006) observation, respondents in this study did what their primary caregiver(s) wanted because they sought to maintain their family’s reputation and show appreciation for their sacrifice, which supports Confucian ideals.

Respondents also followed their primary caregiver(s)’ wishes because they were shamed. They described being physically punished by their primary caregiver(s) and spoke about hearing their disappointment, nagging, guilt inducing remarks and negative evaluations of their personal character. Guo (2006) cited Huntsinger (2000) who noted that Chinese children learned about shame by taking criticism. They were socialized to be aware of what others thought of them and trained to act in ways that maximized others approval while avoiding behaviors that would yield their disapproval. Guo (2006) explained that Chinese parents believed that making children aware of shame and getting them to accept criticism prepared them to enter the adult world. Drawing from Guo (2006) and Huntsinger’s (2000) line of thinking, respondents learned to behave in ways that were socially acceptable by taking criticism from their primary caregiver(s) who tried to prepare them for the adult world.
Proposed Theoretical Lens

The findings of this study suggest a new theoretical lens that offers the mental health community a better understanding of how trauma can impact the ways in which parents raise their children. Trauma experienced through the Chinese Cultural Revolution, for instance, may influence the parenting practices of Chinese and Chinese immigrant parents. The Chinese Cultural Revolution was initiated by Mao Zedong in 1966 and continued until his death in 1976. Mao wanted China to become a classless society by attacking the four “olds”: old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits. He organized and encouraged the “Red Guard,” made up of mostly adolescents from rural areas, to criticize government officials, bureaucrats and teachers. The Red Guard first wrote essays, then made posters and gradually resorted to violence to promote Mao’s ideas. Professors, for instance, were displayed to the public with shields of accusations around their neck and tapered shame hats on their heads. They were beaten, tortured and then murdered. Many of them committed suicide. As a result of these atrocities, an entire national class of intellectuals was largely eliminated. From 1966 to 1969, the Cultural Revolution flourished into violence. Looting and arbitrary arrests occurred. The Red Guard took over government offices and called in all those who opposed Mao’s ideas for debates and public trials, after which they were imprisoned, tortured, killed and/or exiled to other regions of China. (Lester, 2005; Plankers, 2011).

Respondents in this study reported that their parent(s) had limited opportunities in China and this appeared to be a result of the injustices they faced during and/or after the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Trauma brought about by the Cultural Revolution may have made it difficult for their parent(s) to give them the attention they wanted. Many ended up working long
hours in low paying jobs once they immigrated to United States. This was done to ensure that their children will have a better life than theirs. Findings from this study suggest that respondents parent(s)’ efforts to improve the quality of their lives often did not match with the attention they wanted from them and this was revealed when respondents described a yearning for emotional support and conversations beyond school related issues with their parent(s).

Research on intergenerational transmission of trauma suggests that traumatized parents are less emotionally or functionally available to their children and that the emotional consequences of trauma cause their children to become more susceptible to developing poor psychosocial outcomes (Field, Muong, & Sochanimean, 2013; Katz, Levy, Ebstein, Faraone & Mankuta, 2009; Plankers, 2011; Schwerdtfeger, Larzelere, Werner, Peters & Oliver, 2013; Walker, 1999). Field, Muong and Sochanimean (2013) noted that one consequence of exposure to trauma on later parenting is overprotective parenting and that this style of parenting is correlated with negative psychosocial outcomes in children. Overprotective parenting occurs when parents, who were exposed to past trauma, view the world as an unsafe place and therefore, feel an excessive need to protect their family from danger. A parenting style such as this consequently interferes with their child’s autonomy. Previous studies show that higher levels of parents’ trauma symptoms are associated with a higher degree of overprotective parenting that, in turn, were linked to greater anxiety and depression in children ((Field, Muong, & Sochanimean, 2013).

Findings from this study suggest that overprotective parenting, possibly stemming from trauma through the Chinese Cultural Revolution, was present and that it had a negative impact on respondents’ emotional well-being. Overprotective parenting in this study appeared to be
expressed through the expectation to excel in school. While the focus on school drove the majority of respondents away from trouble, it made them feel as if they were not good enough, stressed, scared and/or unhappy. Such findings calls for research that examines at how trauma, generated by political oppression, may influence the parenting practices Chinese immigrants and how this affects their children’s emotional well-being.

**Implications for Practice and Research**

As Confucian philosophy seem to remain in the fabrics of Chinese immigrant families, scholars who promote culturally sensitive mental health service for Asian-Americans recommend clinical practitioners to become familiar with it and it might inform their model(s) of treatment (Chen, 1998; Chung & Chou, 1999; Hong, 1989; Hong & Ham, 1994; Hong & Ham, 1992; Huang & Charter, 1996; Lee, 1982; Lee & Mock, 2005; Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinherz, 2000; Sandhu, Leung & Tang, 2003; Sato, 1979; Soo-Hoo, 1999; Sue, 1997; Tinloy, 1978; Uba, 1982; Wang, 2000). However, this indigenous philosophy has limitations because it focuses on human development while ignoring the social and especially emotional well-being of youngsters.

Clinical practitioners and educators need to recognize limitations in Confucian philosophy to avoid exclusively drawing on it to guide their practice. Relying solely on Confucian philosophy can inadvertently simplify the lived experiences of Chinese-American young adult children. While keeping this philosophy in mind, clinical practitioners should remain open to the contradictions and complexity that come with how Chinese-American young adults perceive their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) and how their perceptions may influence their emotional and social development overtime because findings from this study illustrated respondents negative and positive feelings in response to the way they were raised. Respondents,
for example, disclosed feeling stressed about their primary caregiver(s)’ expectation to perform well in school and annoyed when conversations focused on this topic. At the same time, however, they expressed feeling good that their primary caregiver(s) were proud of them for succeeding in school and reported feeling happy, good or comforted because they were able to talk with and rely on them mostly as young adults.

Even if findings from respondents’ interviews appear to display features of Confucian ideals that mirror an authoritarian style of parenting and parental psychological and/or behavioral control, clinical practitioners and educators need to be cautious about labeling Chinese and Chinese immigrant parent(s) and/or caregiver(s)’ behaviors in these terms because it ignores how their behaviors may be shaped by political oppression, their economic circumstances, family upbringing and individual personalities. Respondents for instance, mentioned that they did not feel loved by their parents because they were not attentive to them. While their perception in this regard may reflect Confucianism, authoritarian parenting and/or parental psychological control, it is important to note that their parents’ experiences with political oppression and/or poverty may have influenced the way they responded to them. Respondents’ parent(s) left Communist China and immigrated to the U.S. where they often ended up working long hours in low paying and physically demanding jobs. Their oppressive political background and stressful economic circumstances might have made it hard for these parents to engage in open conversations with their children and/or to provide them with emotional support like they wanted. Clinical practitioners and educators need to keep these issues in mind when treating and developing mental health treatment models for Chinese-American young adults.
Community agencies serving Chinese-American youth should consider mentoring programs that aim to assist them with educational and career goals since respondents in this study reported difficulties managing school related issues and struggled with identifying what they wanted to do with their lives because their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) were unable to guide them given their limited English language skills and unfamiliarity with entering a white collar profession.

Besides mentoring programs, mental health agencies servicing the Chinese-American community should make efforts to recruit and employ clinical practitioners who are bilingual and bicultural or practitioners who are at least familiar with Chinese culture. The literature indicates that one major reason Chinese immigrants are not receptive to mental health services is due to the lack of bilingual and bicultural psychotherapists available to treat them (Spencer & Chen, 2004; The Lancet, 2001; Yeh, Eastman & Cheung, 1994). Low utilization of mental health services by Asian-Americans is persistent and well documented (The Lancet, 2001; Spencer & Chen, 2004; Yeh, Takeuchi & Sue, 1994). Data from the Chinese American Epidemiology Study (CAPES) for example, found that less than 6% of Chinese-Americans who struggled with emotional problems sought care from a mental health professional (Spencer & Chen, 2004). This data is consistent with findings from this study. Seven of 20 respondents indicated that they were not interested in receiving mental health counseling despite demonstrating low self-esteem and appearing tearful or holding back tears during the course of their interview. Only one respondent was receptive to mental health counseling after I offered to refer her to a few counseling agencies while another had a history of talking with a psychotherapist.
It is interesting to note that even though respondents expressed a disinterest in mental health counseling, they appeared candid and comfortable disclosing to me the painful feelings they experienced as they talked about their lives. Noticing my bilingual and bicultural presence may have engaged them in conversation and made them feel more at ease disclosing their experiences.

**Future Research**

Research results from this study discovered how Chinese-American young adults characterized their parent(s) and/or primary caregiver(s) psychological and behavioral controls across different points of their lives. It also discovered how their perceptions of these specific kinds of controls impacted their emotional and social well-being over time. Subsequent research should examine the political oppression of Chinese-American parents and how this may influence the way they raise their children. Future research should also focus on replicating this study to strengthen its findings, especially because results from this study differed from findings of previous studies.

Research outcomes from this study were partially similar to earlier findings from studies on Caucasian-Americans (Barber & Harmon, 2002; Litovsk & Dusek, 1985; Barber & Olsen, 1997; Garber, Robinson & Valentiner, 1997; Conger, Conger & Scaramell, 1997; Barber & Harmon, 2002). Identical to studies on Caucasian-Americans, respondents in this study expressed internalizing problems or described problems with their emotional well-being, as they characterized their parents’ assertion of psychological control. Unlike findings from studies on Caucasian-Americans, however, parental psychological control did not appear to have an impact on external problems or social well-being.
Respondents in this study described living productive lives, as they talked about their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) varying degrees of behavioral control. These findings were consistent with studies on behavioral control with samples of Caucasian-Americans that suggest an adequate amount of this control kept children from getting into trouble or experiencing external problems (Barber & Harmon, 2002; Patterson, Capaldi & Bank, 1991; Loeber & Dishion, 1984; McCord, 1998; Miller, McCoy, Olson & Wallace, 1986). Yet, inconsistent with previous studies, this study uncovered that parental behavioral control had an effect on the emotional well-being of respondents.
Appendices

Appendix A .................Recruitment Flyer
Appendix B..................Informed Consent Form
Appendix C...............Audio Consent Form
Appendix D................Interview Guide
Appendix E...............Treatment Resources
Appendix F...............Demographic Characteristic Graph
Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

In Search of Chinese-American Young Adults……

DO YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT PARENTAL CONTROL DURING YOUR CHILHOOD, TEEN AND EARLY ADULT YEARS?

- Have your mom and/or dad criticized you?
- Have your mom and/or dad failed to show you affection?
- Have conversations with one or both of your parents been limited?
- Have one or both of your parents’ expressed strict expectations of you?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, please contact Wan Tseng at (718) 288-2024 or wtseng@gc.cuny.edu

Participants must meet the following criteria:

- 18 to 25 years old.
- Born or immigrated to the United States prior to the age of five.
- Parents immigrated to the U.S. after the age of 18.

You will receive a $25 gift card to participate in this study.
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

My name is Wan-Hai Tseng and I am a student in the Social Welfare Ph.D. Program at the City University of New York Graduate School and University Center, and a Principle Investigator of this project entitled “Chinese-American Young Adult Children’s Perceptions of Psychological and Behavioral Control and its Relationship to their Emotional and Social Well-being”. This study aims to examine how Chinese-American young adult children perceive parental psychological and behavioral control, and in what ways they believe these two types of control have impacted their emotional and social well-being over time.

With your permission, I would like to audio-tape this interview so I can record the details accurately (please see reverse side of this consent document). The tapes will only be heard by me. If you prefer, I will take notes during the interview. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked cabinet, to which only I have access. At any time you can refuse to answer any questions or end this interview. If you would like to strike any part of the interview from the record upon its completion, you may exercise this right at the end of the interview. If you decide to terminate the interview at any point or strike from the record any part of it, there will be no consequences and I will hold no judgment.

At the end of the interview, you will receive a $25.00 gift certificate for your time. If you withdraw from the study at any time, you will still receive the $25.00 gift certificate.

The risk involved in this study is that you may feel upset or saddened by your experiences. If this study causes painful memories or feelings for you and you wish to stop the interview and receive further assistance, you will be given information about where you can receive counseling.

Your participation in this study may help produce new knowledge about the phenomena of parental psychological and behavioral control in the Chinese-American context. This knowledge may inform and improve psychotherapeutic treatment models for Chinese-Americans since not enough is known about their psychosocial development. There will be approximately 25 participants taking part in this study.

Information from the interview will be used to produce a paper for a graduate research project and I may present and/or publish results of the study in the future. Names of participants or their identifiable characteristics will not be used in presentations or any of the publications. All participants will be disguised through the use of “pretend” names and no identifying information will be used to protect their confidentiality. If you are interested, I will provide you with the final report produced from this study.

If you have any questions regarding this research, you can contact me at (718) 288-2024 or wtseng@gc.cuny.edu. You can also contact my advisor, Manny Gonzalez, Ph.D. at (212) 396-7554 or manny.gonzalez@hunter.cuny.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator at the City University of New York Graduate School and University Center, (212) 817-7525 or kpowell@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in this study.
I have read the content of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form for my records and future reference.

_________________              ____________              _____________________          ________
Participant’s Signature                   Date                        Investigator’s signature                 Date
Appendix C: Audio Consent Form

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
GRADUATE SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY CENTER

AUDIO-TAPE RECORDING RELEASE CONSENT FORM

Protocol # ______________________________

Researcher: Wan-Hai Tseng

Title: Chinese-American Young Adult Children’s Perception of Parental Psychological and Behavioral Control

With your permission, an audio-tape recording will be made of you during your participation in this project. Please indicate below the uses of these audio-tapes to which you are willing to consent. This is voluntary and in any use of the audio-tapes, your name will not be identified.

1. The audio-tapes can be studied by the researcher for use in this research project ______  
   Initials

2. The audio-tapes can be studied by the researcher and used for future presentation of findings.
   ______  
   Initials

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of audio-tapes as indicated above.

Print Name: ____________________________

Signature: ____________________________

Date: _________________________________
Appendix D: Interview Guide

Childhood

1. Let’s start off with talking about your childhood. What was life like as a child?

2. 
   a) Home?
   b) School?

2. What were your parents’ expectations of you as a child?
   a) Your mother? Your father?
   b) How old were you when they expressed these expectations?
   c) What did your parents do to make their expectations known to you?
   d) What did your parents hope to achieve with these expectations at the time?
   e) How did you feel about their expectations at the time?
   f) What impact did their expectations have on you as a child?

3. As a child, how did you know your parents loved you?
   a) Your mother? Your father?
   b) How did you feel about the way they expressed love at the time?
   c) What did your parents hope would happen by expressing love in this way?
   d) What kind of an impact did their expressions of love have on you as a child?

4. What were conversations with your parents often like as a child?
   a) Your mother? Father?
   b) What were your feelings about these conversations at the time?
   c) What did your parents hope to achieve with these conversations at the time?
   d) In what ways did these conversations impact you as a child?

5. In what ways did your parents monitor your whereabouts as a child?
   a) Your mother? Your father?
   b) What made them monitor you in this way?
   c) What were your feelings at the time about the way they monitored you?
   d) How did their monitoring impact you as a child?
Adolescence

6. Now I would like to talk about your teenage years. What was life like as a teenager?
   a) Home?
   b) School?

7. What was your greatest accomplishment as a teenager?
   a) How did your parents react to this accomplishment? Mother? Father?
   b) How did you feel about their reaction at the time?
   c) Why do you think they reacted to your accomplishment in this way?
   d) How did their reactions impact you as teenager?

8. What was your biggest challenge as a teenager?
   a) How did your parents react to this challenge you faced at the time? Mother? Father?
   b) Why do you think they reacted in this way?
   c) How did their reactions impact you as a teenager?

9. What were conversations usually like with your parents as a teenager?
   a) Your mother? Father?
   b) What were your feelings about these conversations as a teenager?
   c) What did your parents hoped to achieve with these conversations at the time?
   d) In what ways did these conversations impact you at the time?

10. What were your parents’ expectations of you as a teenager?
   a) Your mother? Your father?
   b) What did your parents do to make their expectations known to you?
   c) How did you feel about their expectations at the time?
   d) What did your parents hoped to achieve with these expectations at the time?
   e) What impact did their expectations have on you as a teenager?

9. In what ways did your parents communicate love toward you as a teenager?
   a) Your mother? Your father?
   b) How did you feel about the way they expressed love at the time?
   c) What made them communicate love in this way at the time?
   d) What did they hope to achieve by communicating love in this manner?
   e) How did their expressions of love impact you as a teenager?
10. How did your parents make sure you were safe as a teenager?
   
a) Your mother? Your father?
b) What made them attempt to ensure your safety in this way?
c) What were your feelings at the time about their efforts to promote your safety?
d) How did their efforts to promote your safety impact you as a teenager?

**Early Adulthood**

11. You have shared a lot about your life. Now I would like to talk about your life as an adult. How would you describe it?

12. What is your biggest accomplishment as an adult?

   a) What were your parents’ reactions to this accomplishment? Mother? Father?
b) What made them react in this way?
c) How did their reactions make you feel?
d) What impact did your parents’ reactions to this accomplishment have on you now?

13. What has been your biggest challenge as an adult?

   a) What were your parents’ reactions to this challenge you face? Your mother? Father?
b) What made them respond in this way?
c) In what ways have their reactions to your biggest challenge impact you now?

14. What are conversations usually like with your parents now?

   a) You mother? Father?
b) What are your feelings about these discussions as an adult?
c) What do your parents hope to achieve with these discussions?
d) In what ways do these conversations impact you now?

15. What are your parents’ expectations of you as an adult?

   a) Your mother? Your father?
b) How do they make their expectations known to you?
c) What are your feelings about this?
d) What do they hope to achieve by setting up these standards?
e) In what ways do your parents’ expectations impact you now?
16. How do your parents’ express love toward your now?

   a) You mother? Father?
   b) How do you feel about the way they express love?
   c) What do they hope to achieve by expressing love in this way?
   d) How has your parents’ expression of love impact you now?

17. Is there anything that we have left out about your life story?
**Demographic Information**

Age _________

Sex ________________

Place of Birth _________________

College Major _________________

Graduate or Undergraduate Student____________

Composition of family at home (brother, sisters, aunts etc.) ______________

**Feedback**

Thoughts/suggestions ________________

Willingness for further contact if necessary ________________

Selection of pseudonym ________________
Appendix E: List of Counseling Referrals

Blanton-Peale Institute
3 West 29th Street
New York, NY 10001
(212) 725-7850, Ext. 119

Fifth Avenue Counseling Center
50 West 23rd Street
New York, NY 10010
(212) 989-2990

Ackerman Family Institute
149 East 78th Street
New York, NY 10075
(212) 879-4900 Ext. 122
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Retrieved from http://online.wsj.com/home-page


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