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**Chinese Immigrant Parents' Involvement in the Education of Their Elementary School
Children in Windsor, Ontario: Perceptions and Practices**

By

Lan Zhong

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2011

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ABSTRACT

In the past two decades, there has been an increasing number of Chinese immigrants to Canada. Consequently, children of those immigrants are becoming a large component of the school age population.

The purpose of this study was to examine the behaviors and perspectives of Chinese immigrant parents getting involved in the education of their elementary school age children in Canada; and to gain a better understanding of how those parents' behaviors and perspectives of parenting are influenced by their personal experiences and the culture they live with.

Based on a sociocultural theory, this qualitative study employed interviews to explore parental practices and perspectives of 12 couples of Chinese immigrant parents in Windsor, Canada. Field notes were used as supplementary source for data collection.

The findings of the study revealed that all participants got involved in their children's educational activities both in and out of school. They maintained their original cultural values and adapted to the host cultural values. Participating parents held high educational expectation of their children and provided assistance with their children's academic development; they also wanted their children to have a well-rounded development; they respected their children's interests and provided necessary control. The study also indicated that participating parents had limited involvement in school-based activities. The factors that contributed to the lack of in-school involvement included language barrier, low socio-economic status, and inadequate knowledge about the host culture. The length of stay in Canada was found to be a factor that contributes to immigrants' acculturation in term of parental involvement.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Over the past two decades, there has been a rapid increase in the number of Chinese immigrants to Canada. Between 1980 and 2000, nearly 800,000 Chinese immigrants arrived in Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2001) and it is expected that in the near future most new Chinese immigrants to Canada will continue to come from Mainland China (Wang & Lo, 2004).

The relatively mild winter, the opportunities to commute to the United States and the existence of a large Chinese community attract an increasing number of Chinese immigrants to settle in Windsor, Ontario, the fourth most ethno-culturally diverse city in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006). Consequently, the number of school age children of Chinese immigrants in Windsor is on the rise. Thus, the involvement of Chinese parents in their children's educational development in the Canadian sociocultural context has become an important educational issue.

It is widely recognized that parents and families are the primary educators of children and are responsible for laying down the social and intellectual foundations for their learning and development. In the past three decades, a number of researchers have conducted studies on how parental involvement impacts children's learning. These studies have generally shown multiple benefits of parental involvement for students' educational outcomes (Brough & Irvin, 2001; Epstein, 1995; Lareau, 1987; Taylor & Lopez, 2005; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). For instance, effective parental involvement leads to students earning higher grades and test scores (Dwayer & Hecht, 1992; Fan & Chen, 2001), reducing the achievement gap between high and low performing students (Lee & Bowen, 2006), and promoting positive behavior and emotional development of children (Sheldon & Epstein, 2001; Taub, 2008). Previous studies focused on parental involvement in schools and have shown a positive

relationship between parents' frequent and active involvement in school activities (e.g., working as a school volunteer, attending school events) and students' academic achievement (Epstein & Sanders, 2002; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Recently, some researchers (e.g., Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002) have called for extending research to parents' involvement outside of school, in extracurricular activities such as at home and/or in the community. Epstein (2001), for instance, suggests that parents who help children with their homework, limit the time spent watching television at home, and engage in their children's education in the community (e.g., taking their children to a library, visiting the museum) have a significant and positive impact on their child's future and contribute to their children's educational development. Parental involvement, therefore, refers to involvement in different contexts and types of activities.

Immigrant parents face various challenges due to the discontinuity they experience in multiple areas, including language, cultural values, job availability, and the social system. Consequently, immigrant parents lose the affordances previously experienced in their home countries and undergo stress and frustration in the process of adaptation to a new country. As immigrant parents, their original cultural values, their personal backgrounds (e.g., financial resources, educational background, working status and personality, and ability to deal with challenges in the process of transitioning to a new land) predict the ways immigrant parents educate and support their children (Downey & Coyne, 1990; Jeynes, 2003; Li, 2005b; Siu, 1994; Sputa & Paulson, 1995). For instance, some studies (Jeynes, 2003; Li, 2005b; Siu, 1994) found that, unlike European immigrant parents who get involved in school activities, their Asian counterparts tend to be more involved in their children's education outside school, such as at home or in the community.

In spite of the challenges that immigrant parents face, studies have documented that Asian-American students, in general, score higher than other students, particularly in the

areas of mathematics and science (Fehrman, Keith, & Reimers, 1987; Frome & Eccles, 1998; Peng & Wright, 1994). Parents' specific cultural values and higher level of involvement in their children's education are explained as the major reasons (Chao, 2001; Chao & Tseng, 2002; Fuligni, 2001). Cultural values include parents' holding high expectations for their children's education, expecting their children to obey and respecting them, and willingly spending time and money helping children with homework, as well as supervising children's learning and playing time (Chao, 2001).

Although a rich body of research has documented the positive relationship between parental involvement and their children's educational development, the majority of previous studies have focused on parental involvement in school. There is a lack of research on whether and how parents get involved in their children's education outside of school (Suizzo & Stapleton, 2007). Moreover, with the increasing number of immigrants to Canada, there is a need to explore how parents who are recent immigrants exercise parenting responsibilities. Therefore, this study examines how Chinese immigrant parents get involved in their children's education in and outside of school contexts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is: (1) to describe how Chinese immigrant parents get involved in the education of their elementary school children in Canada; (2) to learn how Chinese immigrant parents perceive the differences between Canadian and Chinese cultures in the context of their children's education; and (3) to gain a better understanding of how the sociocultural beliefs and life experiences of parents influence ways they become involved in their children's education.

The key research questions are as follows:

- 1) In what ways do Chinese immigrant parents become involved in their children's elementary school education?
- 2) How do Chinese immigrant parents perceive their parenting and the Canadian school system as they are adapting to living in Canada?
- 3) How do Chinese immigrant parents' sociocultural beliefs and life experiences influence the ways they become involved in their children's education?

Rationale

The reason for conducting this study is personal. I grew up in China and had my school and university education there. Education is highly valued in Chinese culture. When I was a child, my parents always encouraged me to study hard in order to go to a better school. Regardless of how busy my parents were with their work, they always checked my homework and asked about my school activities; they told me to respect teachers and the elderly and to be a good person. Like most Chinese parents, my parents did not often go to my school because they respected and trusted teachers and believed that it was the teachers' responsibility to take care of children while they were in school.

Since 1977, following the Cultural Revolution, Chinese high school students have been facing a fierce competition to pass the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) in order to attend a college or university. Beginning in elementary school, students have to pass different examinations in order to attend a better school at higher levels. I remember that when my son attended elementary school, he and his classmates had to do homework until midnight almost every day. Consequently, school children in China have little time for

out-of-school activities, such as sports and music.

Since I began my studies at the University of Windsor, I have wondered how Chinese immigrant parents, who grew up in China, provide support for their children's education in Canada. Since that time, I have had casual conversations with some Chinese immigrant parents whose children are in elementary school. I have learned that there are many Chinese parents who came to Canada for the purpose of reducing their children's academic burden, because they have heard from others that elementary school children in Canada have much less homework to do than those in China. Yet I have noticed that these Chinese immigrant parents hold high educational expectations of their children and pay attention to their schooling. For instance, they select and provide supplementary homework and limit the amount of time that the children watch TV. They also accompany their children to activities such as drawing and music lessons. It appears to me that although Canadian elementary schools do not require much homework, Chinese immigrant parents continue to arrange a full schedule for their children at home and in the community.

I also talked with some Canadian parents of European descent and found that, unlike many parents in China who do not often visit the school, European-Canadian parents often go to school. They participate in school activities as volunteers and get involved in school management. They pay attention to their children's school experiences and practices, but they do not view academic achievement as the only goal for their children. These parents led me to recognize the different approaches to parenting, which may be a result of differing cultural values. As a result, I began to question how Chinese immigrant parents in Windsor educate their elementary school age children, and how they adjust their parenting styles in the process

of adapting to the Canadian cultural context.

Keeping these questions in mind, I read the literature extensively in relation to parental involvement. There is a rich body of research focused on parental involvement in their children's educational development by attending school activities (Ho & Willms, 1996; Juang & Silbereisen, 2002; Parcel & Dufur, 2001). Research reveals that parental involvement in children's education has a positive impact on their children's development, as discussed previously (Brough & Irvin, 2001; Epstein, 1995; Taylor & Lopez, 2005).

Research has also suggested that parents from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds may view and interpret the meaning of parental involvement differently and there may be different types of parental involvement, which may in turn influence students' outcomes (Jeynes, 2005; Juang & Silbereisen, 2002; Mau, 1997). For instance, in some cultures, it is viewed as rude for parents to intrude into the life of the school; therefore, parents prefer to be involved in their children's education at home (Balli, Demo & Wedman, 1998), while others may spend much time in their children's school because their culture encourages establishing a closer parent-school relationship (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Canada is becoming one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse countries in the world. From 2001 to 2006, there were over 466,940 Chinese immigrants to Canada, and Chinese immigrants have become the second largest immigrant population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006). It is therefore very meaningful to explore Chinese immigrant parents' perceptions of and practices in getting involved in their children's education in Canada and how these parents develop their ways of parenting after they move from the Chinese sociocultural context to the Canadian one.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, sociocultural theory was used as the foundation for the research undertaken. Sociocultural theorists argue that human development is essentially social-based, which is derived from human social relations and situated in interpersonal, socio-historical as well as sociocultural contexts (Forman, Minick, & Stone, 1993; Rogoff, 2003; Rogoff & Angelillo, 2002; Wertsch & Kanner, 1992). A key aspect of the sociocultural approach is that it examines human development, not only based on qualities that reside within an individual, but on social interaction in broader social and cultural contexts as well.

The sociocultural theory is derived from Vygotsky's (1962, 1978) work and that of Wertsch (1985). According to Vygotsky, a person's development cannot be understood merely by a study of the individual without examining the external social context in which that individual's life has developed. Vygotsky (1962, 1978) describes human development as "being embedded within social events and occurring as one interacts with other people, objects, and events in the environment" (cited in Kublin, Wetherby, Crais, & Prizant, 1989, p. 287). According to Wertsch (1985), the goal of sociocultural theory is to explicate relationships between the individual's development and the cultural, institutional, and historical context in which the individual is situated.

Sociocultural contexts affect human development at an interpersonal level through face-to-face interactions and, at a broader level, through participation in cultural activities. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) state that human activities take place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbol systems, and can be best understood when

investigated within their historical context. Furthermore, different social and cultural contexts create and reflect different outcomes in terms of human behavior (Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Vygotsky, 1987; Wertsch & Kanner, 1992).

The present study explores the modes and perspectives of Chinese immigrant parental involvement in their children's education in Canada. Although the focus of the study is not on human development from a young age to adulthood, the process of immigrants' adaption from one culture to another is assumed to share similar processes of growth. From a sociocultural perspective, the present study involves examining the parents' mode of parenting in their immediate environment as well as their interaction with the broader community (Berk, 2000).

Immigrant parents with different socio-demographics, cultural values and personal experiences guide their children in different ways. For instance, studies (Coleman, 1998; Entwisle & Alexander, 1995; Perna, 2004) have documented that some specific socio-demographic factors such as family income, occupational status, educational level of parents, and family relationships influence the ways in which parents become involved in their children's education. Further, different cultural values influence parenting. Regardless of socioeconomic level, Chinese American parents are more likely than European parents to spend time helping their children with schoolwork in their homes, but they participate less in school activities than European parents (Kao, 1998). When immigrant parents come to Canada, they encounter many barriers, such as socio-economic status, language, cultural values, and beliefs. The discrepancies between the original and host cultural values inevitably influence the ways that immigrant parents raise their children.

Sociocultural theorists examine what kinds of social practices provide the proper context for the human mind and action and how human beings construct contexts (Li, 2002). This approach is helpful to better understand how Chinese immigrant parents construct their parental practices based on their previous experiences, original cultural values, and a new cultural context, as well as how they pass on their cultural values through parenting.

To better understand Chinese immigrant parents' parenting practices, one must examine Chinese parental involvement in the sociocultural contexts in which they are situated. In Chapter Two, I review the conception of parental involvement first. Then, guided by sociocultural theory, I examine three aspects of parenting related to socio-demographics, cultural values, and acculturation experiences.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section I review literature related to parental involvement in their children's education. This review not only provides a context for this study, but also helps me frame and interpret my research findings. This section consists of four parts. First, I define parental involvement, including contexts and specific types of parental involvement. Second, I examine literature that links family demographic characteristics with parental involvement. Third, I review literature that addresses Chinese culture and Chinese immigrant parents' involvement. Finally, I examine literature about the acculturation of Chinese immigrant families.

Parental Involvement

Over thirty years of research has demonstrated that parental involvement can have a positive effect on students' well-being (Chavkin, 1993; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997). Parental involvement reportedly enhances learning and leads to higher test scores; benefits students' social and emotional development; develops motivation and social competence; and enhances student-teacher and peer relationships (Adams & Christenson, 2000; Sanders, 1998).

The concept of parental involvement is broad and dynamic (Fehrmann, Keith, Reimers, 1987). Parental involvement can be classified into two broad contexts: parents' participation in school-based activities and their involvement in activities outside of school, such as at home and/or in the community (Anderson, Funk, Elliott, & Smith, 2003; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Epstein, 1995, 1996; Pomerantz & Eaton, 2001). Traditionally, *parental involvement* is defined as parents who participate in school-based activities only. These activities include communicating with teachers, participating in school events, volunteering in the classroom, participating in governing the school, and joining parents' advisory committees (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Epstein, 1995).

Previous research demonstrates that parental involvement in school activities positively influences student outcomes (Dwyer & Hecht, 1992; Romo & Falbo, 1996; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). For instance, Stevenson and Baker (1987) conducted a study examining the relationship between parental involvement and children's school performance. One hundred seventy children (aged 5-17 years), parents, and teachers were examined. The researchers found that children of parents who were more involved in school activities (e.g., attending parent-teacher organizations and parent-teacher conferences) performed better in school than children whose parents were less involved. The researchers suggest that parents' participation in school activities may increase parent-teacher communication.

While parental involvement in school has a positive effect on children's educational outcomes, minority parents reportedly have lower rates of participation in school activities than white parents (Desimone, 1999; Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988; Portes & MacLeod, 1996). For instance, in a cross-racial study including Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White parents, Desimone (1999) examined the relationship between 12 forms of parent involvement and 8th-grade mathematics and reading scores. Desimone (1999) found that Asian, African, and Hispanic American parents exhibited lower levels of contact with school than White parents.

The low participation rates of minority parents in school activities have often led educators to conclude that they are uninterested in their children's academic performance (Chavkin, 1993). However, it has been noted that many minority parents have expressed a desire to be involved or are actively involved in their children's education. Although these parents may not get involved in school activities, they have other ways of contributing to their children's educational development (Huang & Gibbs, 1992).

Recently, researchers have advocated taking a broader view of parental involvement that extends beyond the classroom walls to involvement in their children's education outside of

school, such as at home and in communities (Epstein, 1996; Pomerantz & Eaton, 2001; Reaney, Denton, & West, 2002).

Parents' participation in activities at home includes reinforcing parental educational expectations of their children, providing help with their academic skills, and maintaining discipline to support them through encouragement. In addition, parents also utilize community resources such as libraries, museums, concerts, and plays to enhance their children's educational experiences (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Sun, 1999).

Parental involvement is also operationally defined via its types and forms (Fuligni, 1995; Georgiou, 1999, 2007; McNeal, 1999). Epstein (1987) suggests a widely recognized typology to account for different levels of parental involvement in their children's education. In 1987, Epstein identified four types of parental involvement: (a) basic obligations, (b) school-to-home communications, (c) parent involvement at school, and (d) parent involvement in learning activities at home. Later, Epstein (1995) expanded the typology and defined six levels (types) of school-related opportunities for parental involvement: (a) assisting parents in child-rearing skills, (b) school-parent communication, (c) involving parents in school volunteer opportunities, (d) involving parents in home-based learning, (e) involving parents in school decision-making, and (f) parents' access to community resources that increase students' learning opportunities. The details of Epstein's six types of parental involvement are discussed below.

The first type is basic obligations. For example, the families provide a safe, healthy, and nurturing home environment to prepare the children for school. The second type of parental involvement in learning activities at home includes parents' monitoring homework, serving as tutors, teaching their children the grade-appropriate skills, and talking about school life. The third type is school-to-home communication. For instance, the school informs parents about school programs and their children's progress through report cards or

teacher-parents conferences. Parents are expected to act on the information received from school. The fourth type is parental involvement in school activities as volunteers or tutors, by organizing learning materials; or attending school functions, such as assisting during school sports and cultural events. The fifth type is parent involvement in school decision-making, governance, and advocacy. The sixth type is parental access to community resources that increase students' learning opportunities. This includes collaboration with community organizations through visiting local libraries, attending cultural events, receiving services from health agencies, or benefiting from after-school care programs. Epstein (1995) considers these six types of involvement as necessary components of comprehensive parental involvement.

Epstein's (1987, 1995, 1996) work on parental involvement has been widely referenced in the literature (e.g., Lee & Bowen, 2006; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1997). Her contribution to the literature on parental involvement is that she not only highlights parents' participation in school activities, but also stresses the importance of parents helping their children at home and taking part in the community activities. Epstein outlines varying formats of parental involvement both in and outside school.

More recently, researchers have conducted further investigations into specific types of parental involvement (Fuligni, 1995; Georgiou, 1997, 1999; McNeal, 1999; Singh, Bickley, Trivette, Keith, Patricia, & Anderson, 1995). In a study addressing the effects of parental involvement and family contexts on academic achievement, Fuligni (1995) describes three contexts: parental beliefs, at-home behaviors, and at-school involvement. Parental belief is further classified into three conceptual groups: mothers' ratings of the value that school will have for their children's future, their expectations for their children's educational attainment, and the importance they place on their children's current school performance.

Similar to Fuligni's (1995) study, Singh and his colleagues (1995) also identified parental academic expectations of their children. In addition, in a longitudinal study, Singh and his colleagues (1995) examined the relationship between children's externalizing behavior problems and mothers' discipline. This study found that mothers stress the importance of disciplining children's behaviors. Singh and his colleagues identified four categories regarding parental involvement: parental academic expectations of their children, parental participation in school activities, structure of the home environment, and parent-children communication about school. The home environment entails parents' behaviors such as monitoring homework, controlling television watching and encouraging reading behaviors. Georgiou (1999) specifies parental involvement at home as including activities related to the child's interests or hobbies. Examples of these are sending children to private lessons in art, music and sports and encouraging children to read for pleasure.

Similar to Singh and his colleagues' (1995) work on parental involvement, McNeal (1999) emphasizes monitoring children's behaviors. McNeal divides parental involvement into four dimensions: (a) parent-child discussion of school matters, (b) the parent-teacher organization (PTO), (c) monitoring children's behaviors, and (d) direct involvement in the educational process.

Researchers found similar types of parental involvement in children's education (Epstein, 1987; Fuligni, 1995; Georgiou, 1999; McNeal, 1999; Singh et al., 1995). In terms of home-based activities, researchers identified parents helping children with homework, parent-children communication/discussion about school activities, and monitoring homework and television watching (Epstein, 1987, 1995; Fuligni, 1995; Georgiou, 1999; McNeal, 1999;

Singh et al., 1995). Researchers have also found that the discussion between parents and children about their children's school experiences, the selection of courses , and future education plans have a sizable effect on school achievement (Lee, 1994; Otto & Atkinson, 1997).

For school-based activities, researchers approached some similar types of parental involvement: parents' participation in children's school activities (e.g., attending parent-teacher conferences), volunteering, and participation in the process of school decision-making (Epstein, 1987, 1996; Fuligni, 1995; Georgiou, 1999; McNeal, 1999; Singh et al., 1995).

While there are many commonalities among types of parental involvement, there are also some distinctions. For instance, Singh and his colleagues (1995) emphasize parents' beliefs, whereas Georgiou (1999) focuses more on parents' fostering their children's interests. Fuligni (1995) broadened the definition of parental involvement to encompass their attitudes and beliefs and also discusses parental encouragement of children's reading. McNeal (1999) discusses parental monitoring of children's behavior in relation to their well-being and educational performance. McNeal emphasizes parental monitoring of children's behavior as an outward expression of concern for children's well-roundedness and educational performance.

In addition, research has documented that Asian parents tend to get more involved in their children's education at home than Euro-American parents do. In a cross-cultural study, Schneider and Lee (1990) found that approximately 60% of Asian parents, compared to only 16% of Euro-American parents taught their children basic math, reading, and writing skills

before the children entered kindergarten. Asian parents tend to get involved in different ways of parenting, such as assigning the children extra homework, monitoring their children's after-school activities, and taking their children to music lessons (Ho & Willms, 1996; Wu, 2001; Yao, 1985).

The literature suggests that parental involvement is context-based and includes multiple types of activities (Epstein, 1992; Lareau, 1989; Muller, 1993). For example, parents may participate in school activities such as fundraising, volunteering in classrooms, or participating on school leadership teams. They may also engage in their children's cognitive development activities at home (Bake, Kessler-Sklar, Piotrkowski, & Parker, 1999; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1997). For example, parents help children with their homework and read aloud to their young children. They may also get involved in their children's education by accessing community resources such as the library, museums, and concerts (Epstein, 1994; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000). Thus, traditional views on parental involvement in the education of their children through involvement in school may limit the ways that parents can be involved. This narrow definition overlooks the ways that parents with diverse cultural backgrounds are involved in their children's education.

As Fehrmann, Keith, and Reimers (1987) state, parental involvement is by no means "a unitary construct" (p.131), but a dynamic process. Parental involvement has been defined as representing many different types of behaviors and practices in and outside of school, including parental aspirations, expectations, attitudes and beliefs regarding their children's education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002), regardless of the difficulty in operationally defining the term (e.g., Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Fan & Chen, 2001; Georgiou,

1997; Hong & Ho, 2005).

With the rapid growth of the Chinese immigrant population in Canada, research has consistently reported that, in general, Chinese students outperform their counterparts in school performance (Huntsinger, Jose, Larson, Krieg, & Shaligram, 2000; Wang, 2005). Parental involvement is cited as a major reason for their children's achievement. While there is rich research on contexts and types of parental involvement, few studies systematically and comprehensively explore Chinese immigrant parental involvement in their children's education in and outside of school. A study on the methods of Chinese immigrant parental involvement is necessary. Such an exploration will undoubtedly expand our understanding of parental involvement in their children's education.

This study explores how Chinese immigrant parents get involved in their children's education and how these parents perceive their involvement in the process of adapting to a Canadian cultural context. Thus, in this study, I define *parental involvement* as parental participation in their children's academic and nonacademic activities that may influence their children's educational development in and outside school activities.

In summary, I have examined the conception of parental involvement from perspectives of general contexts and specific types. There is relatively little research on Chinese immigrant parental involvement in Canada. Due to the different family demographic characteristics, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and immigrant status in a new land, Chinese Canadian parents may have specific types of involvement in their children's education that may facilitate or impede their children's educational outcomes.

Family Demographic Characteristics and Parental Involvement

Guided by sociocultural theory, there is recognition of the need to examine human perceptions and behaviors within multiple environments. In the family environment, family demographic characteristics are interrelated and mostly measured in related research to represent social status (Bornstein, Hahn, Suwalsky, & Haynes, 2003; Carlson & Corcoran, 2001; Hanson, McLanahan, & Thomson, 1997; Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999).

In the literature, family demographic characteristics that influence parental involvement include family income and educational background. More recently, researchers have expanded family demographic characteristics to cover parents' gender (Flouri, 2005; Lamb, 2004; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001).

Family Income

Family income influences parental involvement in the education of their children (Hanson, McLanahan, & Thomson, 1997; Kao & Tienda, 1998; Mandell & Sweet, 2005). Higher income parents can invest more financial support in the education of their children than can low income parents (Kao & Tienda, 1998). This financial support may include provision of a quiet place to study, the necessary books, relevant reference materials, a computer, and the necessary Internet connection (Mandell & Sweet, 2005). Students who come from high-income families often have resources, or access to resources, to promote their educational success (Fernandez & Paulsen, 1989). In contrast, low-income families have limited financial resources for their children (Thomson, Hanson, & McLanahan, 1994). Children from low-income families are less likely to maintain higher educational aspirations over time than those from families with a higher socio-economic status (Kao &

Tienda, 1998).

Family income also influences parents' collaboration with teachers and school personnel (Hill & Craft, 2003; Horvat, Weiningerk, & Lareau, 2003; Lareau, 1987, 2003). Studies of the role of socioeconomic status (SES) in parental involvement suggest that parents of lower SES are typically less involved in their children's schools than parents of middle or high SES (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988). Parents with higher income backgrounds are more likely to see themselves as collaborators with their children's teachers. They tend to presume that they have more rights that entitle them to involvement in school (Lareau, 1996, 2003; Yonezawa, 2000). Low-income parents often have less confidence in communicating with the school (Benson & Martin, 2003; McLoyd, 1998).

In addition, compared to higher income parents, lower income parents do not have adequate time, energy, educational resources and environment to nurture their children's education (Greenberger, O'Neil, & Nagel, 1994; Hoff, Laursen, & Tardiff, 2002; Shumow & Harris, 2000).

Although family income influences parental involvement, which may in turn influence students' achievement, some researchers suggest that family income alone does not significantly influence children's educational outcomes (Garg, Kauppi, Lewko, & Urajnik, 2002; Harris & Marmer, 1996). Other factors, such as parents' educational background and gender, may also predict the level of parental involvement (Anguiano, 2004; Hossler et al., 1999).

Educational Background

Some research suggests that the parents' level of education makes a unique, positive contribution to parenting, which in turn influences children's educational outcomes (DeGarmo, Forgatch, & Martinez, 1999; Turner & Johnson, 2003). Parents with higher levels of education have been found to be more involved in their children's learning than parents with lower levels of education (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childers, 2000). Nevertheless, for parents with low education, despite the strong value that parents may place on education, the lack of educational experience and familiarity with the educational system needed to foster their children's educational attainment on a day-to-day basis may hinder their involvement (Entwisle & Hayduk, 1982; Seginer, 1986).

In a study investigating the effect of parental involvement on high school completion, Anguiano (2004) found that parents' educational background was salient in student's high school completion rates. Potvin, Pierre, Deslandes, Rollande, Leclerc, and Danielle (1999) used a sample of 525 adolescents in the Quebec-Appalachian region to examine the relation between family characteristics, school achievement, parenting style and parental involvement in schooling. The findings show that parents' education level is associated with school achievement. This finding is in accordance with earlier findings (Dornbusch et al., 1990) that parents' educational level predicts children's educational development.

There could be several reasons to explain the connection between parental educational background and parental involvement. One explanation could be that parents with more education are more likely to transmit the value of higher education to their children. As a result, their children could view their parents' educational success as a model in setting goals

for their own education (Anguiano, 2004; Edelman, 1987; Teachman, Day, & Price-Carver, 1995). Another reason could be that these parents are more familiar with educational systems based on their own experience and are able to provide their children with knowledge-based resources, such as guidance with the SAT and college applications (Fallon, 1997; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). For instance, better educated mothers benefit from increased knowledge as well as from more highly developed cognitive skills such as problem solving and language skills, which they can apply in parenting (Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Hoff, 2003; Pan, Rowe, Singer, & Snow, 2005). As a result, the children of better educated parents generally have greater academic success.

Gender of Parents

Research suggests that gender is a fundamental factor that shapes patterns of parental involvement (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2003; Presser, 1995; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). In a traditional two-parent family, mothers are more involved in their children's education than fathers. Mothers are expected to exercise the role of the primary caregiver, staying at home and engaging in children's academic activities, while fathers assume the role of working outside home.

In a study with a sample of 63 fathers and mothers of children in the 7th grade from seven junior high schools, Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, and Melby (1990) used telephone interviews to examine whether gender is a predictor of parental involvement with their children's education. This study found that highly educated mothers were better prepared for parenthood, while fathers' involvement was not affected by their education levels. This study

shows that gender has influences on parental involvement in general.

Hung (2005) conducted a study in Taiwan to examine the relationships between family background, parental involvement, environmental influences, and children's school-related outcomes. Hung found that mothers were more involved in their children's education than fathers. The findings are consistent with an earlier study by Nord, Brimhall, and West (1997), which indicates that in two-biological-parent families mothers are more likely to be involved in their children's education than fathers.

The nature of interaction with children differs by parent gender: fathers are more involved in play activities with children, whereas mothers are caretakers and get involved in children's educational issues, even with older children (9–12 years old) (Hofferth, 2003; Lamb & Lewis, 2004; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001; Zick & Bryant, 1996). West and Noden (1998) found that mothers generally assume overriding responsibility for their children's education. Furthermore, mothers with higher levels of education are more likely to use workbooks and employ private tutors to support their children's academic learning and to have informal discussions with teachers.

With an increase in mothers' employment rates, fathers' engagement with children has increased in recent decades. Fathers and mothers now tend to equally get involved in their children's care and education (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001), although mothers continue to provide more care (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2003).

In a study exploring maternal and paternal involvement with school-age children in a sample of 34 Navajo Indian mother and father dyads, it was found that mothers and fathers in this study tend to have equal involvement in children's routine care (e.g., daily hygiene,

playing, doing household chores with the child, and going to events and places with the child). Fathers used to spend more time in providing care than in helping children with their academic activities. This study suggests that Navajo Indian fathers were relatively more involved with their school-age children than were fathers in families across other cultural groups.

This study echoes previous studies on fathers' involvement with their children, which indicate the variation in the levels of father's involvement across cultures. The higher level of fathers' involvement with their children per day in a U.S. representative sample is 73% of the time mothers spent (Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001). In Canadian families, it is 74% (Zuzanek, 2000). Lower levels of fathers' involvement are found in Latino families, at 7% (Roopnarine & Ahmeduzzaman, 1993), and Thai families, at 36% (Tulananda & Roopnarine, 2001).

Although a body of research over the past decades has indicated the relationship between family demographic characteristics and parental involvement, more studies need to be conducted to examine Chinese immigrant parents in this area. In addition, while family demographic characteristics play an important role, they cannot be the only explanation determining the level of parental involvement in their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). For instance, researchers found that some groups of immigrant children outperform others even when these children are from disadvantaged family backgrounds and immigrant communities (Zhou & Logan, 2003). Research in this area has suggested that different cultural values may make some difference in the views, interpretations, and types of

parental involvement (Hidalgo, Sui, Bright, Swap, & Epstein, 1995; Ladky & Peterson, 2008; Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993).

Chinese Culture and Parental Involvement

In this section, I review Chinese culture and its influence on parenting using historical, political, and social perspectives. This review provides important information for understanding parent-children interaction in Chinese immigrant families in the Canadian context (Chao, 2002; Li, 2001; Wong, 1995).

“Culture has been defined in a number of ways, but most simply, as the learned and shared behavior of a community of interacting human beings” (Useem & Useem, 1963, p. 169). For the purpose of this study, *culture* is defined as the shared patterns of values, perspectives, behaviors and interactions that are learned through a process of socialization. These shared patterns identify the members of a cultural group while they also distinguish them from another group. Culture is dynamic and changes with the development of the society (Earley & Ang, 2003; Lloyd & Trompenaars, 1993).

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) maintain that the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values. Kluckhohn and Kelly (1945) state, “by culture we mean all those historically created designs for living, explicit and implicit, rational, irrational, and nonrational, which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behavior of men” (pp. 78-105).

Nieto (1999) states that “cultures are always changing as a result of political, social, and other modifications in the immediate environment” (p. 49). Culture is constantly changing. It is not the product of a single individual. Rather, culture is created and

transmitted to others in a society and is continuously evolving as a product of people's interacting interactions with each other.

Exam-Oriented Education System and Parents' Educational Expectations

Chinese culture has been deeply shaped by Confucianism, which promotes proper behavior for all people in order to establish an ideal, harmonious society (Tu, 1998). Confucianism promotes that social harmony can be achieved by self-discipline. Fundamental to Confucianism are proper patterns of obedience and the loyalty of inferior to superior. For example, husband-wife, parents-children, and ruler-subjects involve sets of obligations which, if met, lead to a just and harmonious society (Tu, 1998).

Confucianism holds that family harmony and ultimately social harmony can be achieved through education. Consequently, school education has been strongly emphasized since ancient times. The values of Confucianism have been embodied in the ancient educational examination system, known as the *Civil Service Examination* (科举考试). This system, which started in the Han Dynasty (206 BC to AD 220) and lasted until 1905, aimed to maintain cultural unity and consensus on Confucian values. Since the government intended to recruit "ruling elites and [mold] the characters of its citizens" (Ho, 1962, p. 3), people across the nation, regardless of family background, were encouraged to take part in this examination. This examination system contributed to the continuity of political centralism for the ruling class, and also provided ordinary people a relatively equal chance at social mobility. In addition, it paved the way for 光宗耀祖 *guang zong yao zu* ("glorify the ancestors") and gaining "face" (meaning "dignity" in Yu, 2001, p.15) for family and ancestors. The families of those who passed the examination would share the joy and the future power as stated in a

Chinese phrase 一人得道, 鸡犬升天 *yi ren de dao, ji quan shen tian*, which means when one gets the power, all his/her family, relatives and friends benefit from it. Therefore, most Chinese families view success in examinations as a primary goal for their children's education.

For over 2000 years, this educational examination system in China served as the basic tool for social mobility (Tu, 1998). As a consequence of the status and social mobility which came with education, it remains highly valued by the Chinese today.

In 1977, the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping proposed that China must catch up with the advanced countries of the world and stated that science and education were the first steps toward achieving that goal. Reorganizing higher education and restoring formal education were believed to be vital to achieving this goal. Following Deng's proposal, the well-known Chinese newspaper, the People's Daily, published the headline "Important reforms on higher education enrolment" and a commentary "Doing well [in] the work of college enrolment is the hope of the whole nation" (Oct. 12, 1977). This news signaled the official resumption of the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) system after more than 10 years of Cultural Revolution chaos.

NCEE serves nearly the same function as the traditional Chinese Civil Service Examination. That is, anyone can achieve upward mobility through university education no matter his or her family background and social status (Ho, 1994). Students are selected mainly based on their academic aptitude, thereby restoring the quality of post-secondary students.

Since 1978, NCEE has been designed by the China Ministry of Education. All participants across the nation take the exactly same examination (Rai, 1991). In school, all students in the same grade level have the same course requirements and learn from the same prescribed textbooks. The teaching materials are less connected with students' lives; the teaching methods are traditional teacher lecture; the principal activities of students are listening in class, taking notes and reading textbooks (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; McCarty & Perez, 2004;); class activities, such as exploring, problem-solving, collecting evidence and experimentation are less emphasized. School teaching tends to focus on subjects that NCEE covers, including math, science, and language arts, and overlooks other subjects such as music, art, and sports (Hayhoe, 1984; Watkins & Biggs, 2005). In a similar way, Chinese parents pay more attention to students' academic achievements and ignore other non-academic activities which are not covered by NCEE (Li & Nirmala, 2000). In order to ensure children concentrate on academic studies, many Chinese parents do not expect children to do housework (Huntsinger, Huntsinger, Ching, & Lee, 2000).

Since success on the NCEE is closely associated with better life opportunities for Chinese families, the high expectation of education inherited from ancient times still provides a foundation for the values of the contemporary Chinese families. Most Chinese believe that receiving formal education is more important than anything else (Li & Nirmala, 2000). They believe that success in school achievement is directly associated with attainment of a high level of education, which in turn leads to high social, occupational, and economic status. Children's bright future will honour their family names and realize their parents' dreams (Sue & Okazaki, 1990).

Chinese cultural attitudes towards education play an important role in shaping immigrant parental expectations. Chinese immigrant parents place an exceptionally high value on education and are actively engaged in their children's education at home, regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds and proficiency in English (Li, 2001; Louie, 2001; Peng & Wright, 1994; Siu, 1994). Louie (2001) examined how the expectations and involvement of parents influence the educational experiences of second-generation Chinese-American students. Sixty-eight Chinese-American undergraduates from Columbia University and Hunter College of the City University of New York were interviewed. Louie (2001) found that all the students perceived their parents as having high educational expectations for them. This finding is consistent with other literature detailing the high educational expectations of Asian Americans. Coleman (1988) found that some Chinese immigrant parents bought two textbooks: one for the child and one for themselves so that they could help their children in academics.

In Chao's (1996) study, she compared the cultural differences between immigrant Chinese and European American mothers concerning their roles in promoting school success for their children. She found that Chinese immigrant mothers had generally started teaching their children before they entered school and placed a much higher priority on rigorous academics than their European American participants, while European American mothers emphasized both the cognitive and affective development of children (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998).

Parents' Obligation and Children's Filial Piety

As discussed previously, Confucianism emphasized proper order and filial piety to strengthen family harmony and eventually social stability (Ting, 2003; Tu, 1998). The word "family" in the Confucian tradition generally contains two facets: the collectivist tradition, which stresses the need to be interdependent in a group, and the ethic of obligation and filial piety, which stresses the importance of parents' obligations towards children and children in turn obeying parents and honoring parents and family (Ho, 1994; Huntstinger et al., 2000).

The crucial feature in terms of parental obligation in the Chinese family is "training," which means "a more stricter (sic) or more rigorous teaching, educating, or inculcating" (Chao, 1994, p. 117). In her comparative study of Chinese and European American parenting styles, Chao (1994) suggests that the concept of "training" involves two central aspects of parental involvement: "chao shun" and "guan." The concept of "chao shun," according to Chao, means teaching and education. "Chao" refers to nurturing proper character, and "shun" refers to disciplining and teaching (Chen & Luster, 2002). The concept of "guan" means "govern" in English, but in the Chinese language it means that teaching and disciplining their children is the parents' responsibility.

According to Lin (1999), one-way strategies (e.g., demanding, punishing) and two-way strategies (e.g., discussing) may both be adopted by Chinese parents and share the same meaning in Chinese culture. Rules, restrictions, and explanations are all put into practice. However, in response to children's rebellious behaviors, parents can also impose verbal and physical punishment. To manage children's inappropriate behavior, consistent approaches are adopted by mothers and fathers. They can either be aligned with each other or they can divide

their roles so that one is disciplinary and another benign (Fung, 1999).

Western researchers view such Chinese parental styles as authoritarian (Baumrind, 1971; Lamborn et al., 1991; Lin & Fu, 1990; Park & Bauer, 2002). Authoritarian parents tend to use power-assertive, restrictive, and punitive strategies and emphasize absolute obedience of the child (Chang, 1973; Chao, 1994, 2001). They also discourage verbal give-and-take with their children (Chang, 1973; Chao, 1994, 2001).

However, authoritarian parenting does not necessarily mean no love. Its meaning is beyond the concept of controlling in the hierarchical, collective Chinese social context (e.g., Chao, 1994, 2001; Chao & Tseng, 2002; Lau & Cheung, 1987). Authoritarian parenting in the Chinese context has a connotation of parental care, supervision, and encouragement of achievement (e.g., Ho, 1996; Rohner & Pettengill, 1985). In Chao's (1994) words, "parental care, concern and involvement are synonymous with firm control and governance of the child" (p.112). "Guan" makes Chinese parents not simply control but pass on to their children their love and care. This authoritarian parenting style is also believed to help Chinese children develop self-regulated learning by encouraging them to exert control over their own learning, and is often transmitted to their children through family socializations (Huang & Prochner, 2004).

Filial piety is one of the foundations of Confucian values to strengthen King-officials, Father-son, Brother-brother, Friend-friend and Husband-wife hierarchical relations in society (Chan & Lim, 2004). The familial hierarchy followed the status of one's generation, age, and gender. Those who were older in generation and in age were superior to those younger in generation and in age. Males were superior to females. In patriarchal families, the father held

the most power and authority in the household (Lang, 1946).

Filial piety is defined as children respecting and caring for the parents, as well as total and unconditional obedience, an unquestioning compliance with parents' wishes (Harrell, 1982). Filial piety has different meanings and forms in different times and contexts (Sung, 1995). Mainland China has experienced changes from a traditional agricultural society to a modern commercial society, resulting in some changes to the traditional concept of filial piety due to industrialization, urbanization, changing family structures and demographics, and government policies (Chan & Lim, 2004; Gu, Zhu, Chen, & Liang, 1995). In the process of economic development and modernization, the traditional norms of filial piety are weakened, although adult children are still the primary caregivers for their elderly parents (Chen & Silverstein, 2000). Raiten (1989) states that the modern concept of filial piety shares several important attributes with classical filial piety in that they both emphasize respect and care for older parents. It also requires children to bring honor to their families through high achievements.

Sung (1995) found that in Korea filial piety is two-dimensional, containing both behavioral and emotional components. Yue and Ng (1999) examined students and old people in Beijing and showed that young people endorsed strongly filial obligations for old people, who in turn had higher expectations of them. Ng, Loong, He, Liu, and Weatherall (2000) conducted a study among Chinese and European families in New Zealand that showed that Chinese scored higher than predicted on obedience, financial support, and most other obligations.

With a history of five thousand years, Chinese traditional cultural values not only have

deeply shaped the involvement of Chinese parents in mainland China, but have significant influences on how Chinese immigrant parents are involved in education all over the world (Chao, 1994, 2001). When Chinese immigrant parents arrive in new cultural settings, they face discontinuity in various aspects, including linguistic, cultural, social, and ethnic identity. They have to adapt themselves to the new cultures. In the next section, I review the issues of acculturation and Chinese immigrant parental involvement.

Acculturation and Chinese Immigrant Parental Involvement

Acculturation

Acculturation is defined as an adaptation process of one's cultural patterns from the culture of origin to the dominant culture (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). This acculturation process can result in changes both on a group level and on an individual level, including cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, behavioral patterns and language skills (Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991; Uba, 1994). This course of change is complex and dynamic, shaped by immigrants' socioeconomic conditions in both the host country and home country, as well as by their personal characteristics, such as coping skills, personality, interpersonal relationships, and intellectual capacity (Berry & Kim, 1988; Oetting & Beauvais, 1991; Sayegh & Lasry, 1993).

In the process of acculturation, immigrants usually suffer from stress and depression due to the loss of privileges in their homeland as well as challenges from different cultural values and language difficulty (Adelman, 1988; Li, 2000). Examples of acculturative stresses include difficulties in acquiring English proficiency, changed roles and relationships among family members due to immigration, and disconnection in inter-generational relations

because of different paces of acculturation between parents and children (Lee, 1996; Sodowsky & Lai, 1997; Yeh et al., 2005). These acculturative stresses are often considered traumatic and can lead to depression and suicidal thoughts (Lee, 1996; Sue & Sue, 2003).

It is quite common for immigrant parents face to challenges due to different levels or degrees of acculturation between them and their children. For instance, parent-child conflicts occur over different views on culturally relevant issues such as academic achievement, appropriate social behaviors, parental respect, and family obligations (Sung, 1985). This is because immigrant parents were born in their native country and raised with different societal norms and expectations. In contrast, children usually are much less influenced by their native culture. In addition, children, through schooling, are generally exposed to greater acculturation opportunities and demands than their parents (Colleran, Gurak, & Kritz, 1984).

Ward (1994, 1999) and Berry (1997) conceptualize two aspects related to adaptation: psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1993). The outcome of psychological adaptation is measured in terms of psychological distress or mental health. The outcome of sociocultural adaptation is measured in terms of the ability to deal with everyday life situations.

Berry (1990a, 1990b) outlines two acculturation attitudes: maintenance of one's original culture and interaction with the dominant culture. Berry suggests four possible acculturation strategies for immigrants moving to a new culture: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. Assimilation refers to daily interaction with mainstream society and no desire to maintain his or her own cultural identity; integration involves a strong interest in maintaining one's original culture in daily interactions with mainstream

culture; separation entails an exclusive involvement in one's home cultural traditions, coupled with little or no interaction with mainstream culture; marginalization is characterized by rejection or lack of involvement in both one's original culture and the mainstream culture.

Current research shows that the process of adaptation is gradual, often taking several generations, and immigrants can and often do adjust to their new cultural environment by integrating both their original and their new cultures' norms and values (Berry, 1997; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Ward et al., 2001).

Chinese Immigrant Family and Parental Involvement

In 1967, Canada adopted an immigration policy to admit immigrants on the basis of their educational qualifications and professional preparation. This policy brought waves of immigration (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2001). In the late 1970s, mainland China adopted an open door policy aimed at reforming the national economy and lifting the restrictions on foreign commercial relations, which enabled mainland Chinese who had moved to Canada to reunite with their long-separated families or relatives.

The number of immigrants from mainland China has been on the rise since the late 1980s, when the Canadian government allowed Chinese students studying in Canada to obtain landed immigrant status (Liu & Norcliff, 1996). In the early 1990s, the first sharp increase occurred, as a consequence of the 1989 student movement in China. The second significant increase began in 1997, and has continued until the present. As a result, a steady flow of mainland Chinese, mainly professionals and skilled workers, has been arriving in Canada (Li, 2001).

Chinese immigrants contribute to Canada's economic growth by bringing potential opportunities, including business and employment. "Chinese immigrants brought with them increased human capital, and Canada is gaining higher-quality workers by admitting the Chinese immigrants into the country" (Wang & Lo, 2004, p.18). However, Chinese immigrants still experience very different economic outcomes in the Canadian labour market compared to members of the general population of Canada. In general, the economic performance of the Chinese immigrants increases with their length of residence in Canada. Early immigrants who arrived in Canada during late 1980s and middle 1990s display higher total and employment income than do the more recent immigrants (Wang & Lo, 2004).

The new Chinese immigrants face difficulties searching for jobs that match their education (Tian, 2000). The majority of recent Chinese immigrants are highly educated and skilled workers and professionals (Li, 2000), but their educational credentials and work experiences obtained in China have not been recognized or at least have been discounted (Li, 2000a; Pendakur & Pendakur, 1998). What Canadian employers are looking for is country-specific skills and work experience obtained in Canada. As a result, Chinese immigrants experience downward occupational mobility (Li, 2000; Zong, 2004). Many of them have to work as laborers for basic survival (Li, 2001). Consequently, many new Chinese immigrants are disappointed and even frustrated (Tian, 2000; Yu, 2002).

Chinese immigrant parents also face challenges in making direct contact with schools and in monitoring their children's schoolwork due to the language barrier (Constantino, Cui, & Faltis, 1995; Ma, 1998). In Ma's (1998) study of acculturation and parental involvement of Chinese immigrant mothers, she found that Chinese mothers had problems communicating

with their children's school teachers and helping their children with their homework. In the study by Constantino, Cui, and Faltis (1995), both parents and teachers reported that language barriers caused Chinese parents' lack of communication with their children's schools.

Another challenge that Chinese immigrants encounter is the gap between their original culture and that of host North America. This gap may influence parental involvement in school activities and lead to conflict between parents and children. For instance, Chinese culture emphasizes education (Ho, 1981). Grounded in cultural beliefs that education is a means of social advancement, Chinese parents often set high education expectations for their children (Ho, 1981; Lin & Fu, 1990; Stevenson, Lee, & Chen, 1994). Such emphasis on education conflicts with the child-centered approach generally practiced in Canada (Holmes, 1998). Dyson (2001) investigated the nature of communication between home and school among Chinese immigrants. He employed an open-ended questionnaire in interviews with 21 Chinese immigrant families and 19 non-immigrant European-Canadian families. Dyson found that immigrant parents' patterns of communication differed from those of nonimmigrant parents. The study shows that Chinese immigrant parents strongly emphasized the importance of their children's academic progress and were concerned with the quality of teaching. These parents were also unhappy with the content of communication from the school. They reported that they were given unrealistically positive reports of their children's academic progress without identifying children's weaknesses.

Parent-child conflicts occur over different views on culturally relevant issues such as academic achievement, appropriate social behaviors, parental respect, and familial obligations (Sung, 1985). Chinese immigrant parents' positive attitudes toward Chinese

culture were often met with resistance by Chinese children at home. This has proven to be highly related to mental health problems of parents. As school age children become more acculturated, their sense of familial obligation diminishes, parental authority diminishes, and parental disciplinary actions become less effective (Sue & Sue, 1990).

In spite of various challenges, Chinese immigrants try to adjust themselves to a new sociocultural system. As Li (2000) pointed out, the recent Chinese immigrants are voluntary minorities who have come to Canada with dreams of material and educational success and a better future. The immigrants tend to interpret the difficulty in finding better jobs as being because they are foreigners, do not speak English very well, or are educated outside of Canada (Basran & Zong, 1998; Couton, 2002; Gibson & Ogbu, 1991). They believe that the challenges they encounter are temporary and they would like to overcome the barriers in order to achieve that long-range goal of obtaining good school credentials for the future (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991; Ogbu, 1992). With this positive view of challenges, the families regard this adjustment process as non-threatening to their own culture, language, and identity. In order to deal with the disadvantages and barriers they encounter, on the one hand, they maintain some of their original country's cultural values; on the other hand, they adjust to the new society, too. Chinese immigrant parents believe that education is the best way to overcome the barriers that they face in the new country. Kao (1995) indicated that Asian parents promoted high levels of educational attainment for their children to compensate for the anticipated discrimination in the job market. They tend to hold higher educational expectations for their children than European-American parents do (Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Gibson & Ogbu, 1991). Researchers propose that Chinese parents are more likely to

guide their children to seek technical and business degrees that have a clear link to future “safe” jobs in the workplace, as compared to degrees in the social sciences and humanities (Kao, 1995; Li, 2001). They also do not rely as much on sports, politics, and entertainment due to their perceptions of limited career choices in these fields (Chao, 2001). Therefore, Chinese immigrants have developed among themselves the notion of “education [especially a science education] as the single significant avenue to status mobility in the new land” (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991, p.11).

In addition to regular schooling, many Chinese-American parents expect their children to maintain Chinese culture by learning the Chinese language. For instance, many Chinese immigrant parents enroll their children in weekend Chinese community schools (Park & Chi, 1999; Zhang, 2009). Li (2005) examines the role parents of the students played in Chinese heritage language schools in the metropolitan Phoenix area and in the schools. Based on semi-structured interviews, class observations and publications by the local Chinese schools, Li found that many Chinese parents not only enrolled their children in a heritage-language school, but also assisted in the school in multiple ways, including administration, teaching, community service, and providing financial support.

Although Chinese immigrant parents maintain their cultural heritage, they also adopt the host culture (Berry, 2003; Costigan & Su, 2004). Immigrant parents typically want their children to acquire the skills necessary to be successful in the new country, such as English fluency and a familiarity with Canadian culture that is required for academic and occupational success (Knafo & Schwartz, 2001). As a result, they view their children’s ability to participate fully in the Canadian culture as meeting these goals, even if they are not

personally highly involved in Canadian culture. This may facilitate positive adjustment despite different levels of involvement in Canadian society.

Traditionally, Chinese parents have been exemplified by the motto “strict father, kind mother” (Ho, 1987). The phrase “严父慈母” “strict father, kind mother,” (mothers indulge and fathers control their children) shows the parenting roles of father and mother in traditional culture (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Through interviews with five fathers from mainland China, Alan Klein (2008) explored how a Chinese immigrant father with the traditional cultural parenting values learned to adjust to a new worldview concerning the parenting and education of his children. Klein’s finding shows that through interacting with their children as well as the American K-12 educational system, the fathers demonstrate concern for their children’s education and display high levels of parental involvement with their children. Direct parent involvement, as manifested by the fathers, often included spending time helping their children complete their homework, providing extra assistance in subjects like math and science, and taking them to Chinese language school.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides background information on the methodology employed and outlines the specific data collection procedures that were used in this study. Specifically, I describe the interview processes, selection of participants, and data collection and analytical procedures. This section concludes with a discussion of the verification method for credibility.

Research Design

This was a qualitative study using interviews to collect data. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define qualitative research as “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (p. 17). Qualitative research is interested in the process and meaning of experience rather than outcomes (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative research attends to the rich descriptions that emerge from a participant’s cultural context. It is designed to study human behavior in a particular context. It helps researchers understand people and the sociocultural contexts within which they live (Creswell, 2005). It also benefits researchers in gathering in-depth data by asking questions and listening to participants’ descriptions in their own language and on their own terms in an authentic world (Patton, 2002).

In this study, I employed open-ended interviews to get information on a topic of interest and allow interviewees to express opinions and ideas in their own words (Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Rubin and Rubin (1995) state that qualitative interviewing is an “intentional way of learning about people’s feelings, thoughts, and experiences” (p. 2). Mishler (1986) states that the purpose of using qualitative interviewing is “to understand what respondents mean by what they say in response to our queries and thereby to arrive at a description of

respondents' worlds of meaning that is adequate to the tasks of systemic analysis and theoretical interpretation" (p. 7). Qualitative interviewing allows participants to describe detailed personal information and provide rich data and descriptions of the event in their own words (Patton, 2002). It allows ideas to emerge that have not been predetermined by the researcher (Mishler, 1986) and "capture[s]the multitude of subjects' views of a theme and ... picture[s] a manifold and controversial human world" (Kvale, 1996, p. 7). Furthermore, a qualitative interview attends to the rich descriptions that emerge from a participant's cultural context (Berg, 2007; Cresswell, 2003; Mishler, 1986).

Rubin and Rubin (1995) state that researchers using qualitative interviews are "not looking for principles that are true all the time and in all conditions, like laws of physics; rather, the goal is understanding of specific circumstances, how and why things actually happen in a complex world" (p. 38). Typically, researchers develop a research question or set of related research questions geared toward discovering how people behave, think and feel; how they account for their experiences and actions; and what opportunities and obstacles they face (Berg, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The purpose of this study was to find out how Chinese immigrant parents became involved in their children's education and how they interpreted their parenting behaviours in a Canadian sociocultural context. Qualitative research methodology allowed me to obtain comprehensive descriptions from participants in relation to their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and the sense they made regarding their parenting in their own words and to achieve an understanding of their various experiences. Using an open-ended interview method of data collection resulted in obtaining the in-depth descriptions, understanding, and interpretation of

Chinese immigrant methods of parenting during adaptation and transition into the Canadian sociocultural context.

In this study, I recruited twelve couples of Chinese immigrant parents with their elementary school children in Canada. Through open-ended interviews, I was able to elicit deep descriptions of participants' experiences. From these rich narratives, I was able to develop an understanding of the essence of participants' parenting practices and perspectives.

Participants

Selection of Participants

The participants in this qualitative study were twelve couples of Chinese immigrant parents who were professional immigrants from mainland China and had children in Windsor elementary schools. That is, 24 parents (12 fathers and 12 mothers from 12 families) participated in my study. Grandparents were not included.

The rationale for selecting the 12 Chinese immigrant couples from mainland China was that Chinese immigrants from mainland China have overtaken those from Hong Kong and Taiwan as the largest single source of Chinese immigrants to Canada since 1997, and this trend has continued to the present (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2002). In addition, the mainland Chinese immigrants were mainly professionals and skilled workers between the 1990s and 2000s. They usually receive higher education in China before moving to Canada, which meets the entry immigrant conditions. These highly educated parents have had a successful academic experience and care deeply about their children's education. They might be willing and able to share their children's education experiences and perspectives, and thereby contribute to my study purpose. Besides, compared with the other two classes of

permanent immigrant in Canada--the family sponsor and business immigrant class (which comprises three sub-categories including Investors, Entrepreneurs and the self-employed)--professional immigrants from mainland China have no financial and family support. Therefore, they might experience more struggle during the transition, and so have more to say.

The major reason that I chose parents of elementary school age children was because previous research shows that parents of high school children tend to be less involved in their children's schooling or are not found to be as participatory (Catsambis & Garland, 1997).

Purposeful sampling (i.e., not random) was used to focus on information richness and provision of specific details by each participant rather than representativeness. A purposeful sample was chosen "because they [purposeful samples] have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p.78). Heppner and Heppner (2004) maintain that a purposeful sample ensures that the participants have some in-depth experience of parenting and could provide meaningful information to fulfill the purpose of a study. Only those participants who are willing and able to describe their experiences and thoughts can be selected (Becker, 1992).

The criteria I used to select participants from Chinese immigrants included: (1) being accessible and volunteering to participate in this study; (2) being willing and able to describe their experiences and thoughts; (3) having at least one child in elementary school and living in Windsor; (4) immigrating to Canada within the last 15 years; (5) at least one parent having a job. I intentionally excluded those families with no work income because they might either be

less involved in their children's education due to inadequate finances or more involved because of more time.

Recruitment of Participants

Upon receiving an approval letter from the Research and Ethics Board of the University of Windsor, I started the process of recruiting participants. A recruitment letter was used to explain the purpose of my study and provide detailed information about the study process. The letter was written both in English and Mandarin. The recruitment process received assistance from the chairman and board members of the Chinese Association of Great Windsor (CAGW). I was a board member of CAGW for a few years. I believe this service helped me to persuade the chairman to circulate an electronic copy of my invitation letter to Chinese immigrants. I also approached the priest of Windsor Chinese Alliance Church in Windsor, Ontario, where many Chinese people worship, to distribute letters of invitation and to make an announcement about my study. I was once invited by this church to give a workshop on parental involvement in children's education, so I had little difficulty in requesting assistance from the priest. I requested volunteers to participate based on the research criteria stated. Those who were interested in participating were invited to contact me by phone or by email. Responses to the recruitment letter were quick. Within two weeks, 25 Chinese immigrant couples sent emails or called, indicating their interest and willingness to participate in this study.

Once I had all possible respondents, I informed selected participants of detailed activities to be involved. Through e-mail, I sent the selected participants a letter of information for consent to participate in research to ensure that each participant understood the purpose of

this study, the procedures, the duties they would be expected to fulfil, their rights to withdraw at any time, and the way to access prospective research results.

In the last step of recruitment, I called participants to arrange the times and locations for interviews and to ensure that the times and locations were convenient for both the participants and me.

Data Collection

Interview

Open-ended interviewing was used as a primary method of data collection. The benefit of open-ended interviewing was that it provided enough room for participants to interpret questions asked and express their general views or opinions in more detail freely, and it also allowed me to have some control over the flow of the topics (Berg, 2007).

Interview locations were chosen based on the convenience, comfort, and privacy of the participants. Eight interviews were conducted at participants' homes, one in a church office while the couple's child was attending a Chinese language class offered by the church, and the other three in a cafe. For the interviews conducted at participants' homes, parents were interviewed when their children were at school. For parents with younger children, arrangements were made for babysitting.

Parents were informed that they could choose to speak either in English or Mandarin to ensure that questions and answers were fully comprehended by both interviewees and the researcher and that participants were able to express themselves as clearly and fully as possible. As a result, all interviews were conducted in Mandarin.

The interviews were conducted in a unit of family. A face-to-face interview with father and mother was conducted at the same time; no children were present during the interview. An interview guide was pre-designed (See Appendix D), which was an informal “grouping of topics and questions that the interviewer could ask in different ways for different participants” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 195). Interview guides helped researchers to focus an interview on the topics at hand without constraining them to a particular format.

To keep the participants’ thoughts flowing freely, the interviews between the participants and me were not only confined within the frame of the guide. Before and after the interviews, we had casual conversations in which participants spoke of many other aspects which were not mentioned in the interview guide. For instance, one participant detailed their working experiences in China and Canada and expressed his point of view on the development of China; another participant described how she found a competitive job in Canada. Those participants’ extensive descriptions of their experiences provided valuable data, which helped me to achieve an in-depth understanding of their life experiences and parenting methods.

During the course of interview, I started with open questions about participants’ demographic information to collect important contextual data (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Then I asked open-ended questions about the participants’ experiences and perceptions regarding their involvement in their children’s education. The general questions sought information about whether and where they got involved in their children’s education. Based on the responses from each participant, I followed up with probe questions, allowing participants to freely express their perceptions, experiences and interpretations in more detail.

Following are three examples of open-ended questions that were used to begin the process: *Do you do anything for/with your children after school? If not, what are the reasons? If yes, what do you do after your children return home from school during the week? What are your opinions on parental involvement in your children's outside school activities?* I also asked follow-up questions in each of these categories to clarify and focus on the participants' responses.

Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The process of interviewing started in the first week of May and lasted for seven weeks, till late June 2009. All participants initially indicated they agreed to be tape-recorded. However, when interviews took place, two couples felt shy and uncomfortable with the tape recorder, as they did not want their voices to be recorded. Instead, they preferred to take longer for the interview in order to let me take notes sentence by sentence. As a result, the interview lasted longer: one hour and 50 minutes.

After each interview, I read my notes and looked for ideas that I wanted to know more about. Follow-up telephone calls were made within one week of completing the face-to-face interviews to see if participants had any information they wanted to add to the interview or to ask them to explain more or give examples regarding some key ideas they talked about during the interview. I also sent the transcripts to the two couples whose interviews were not tape-recorded to confirm that the notes I took had accurately recorded what they said. After the completion of all interviews I sent thank you letters to all the participants in this study.

Field Notes

I regularly took field notes during the research process. After finishing an interview, I recorded detailed descriptions of interviewees, time, location, and specific conversations. My

notes also recorded the participants' gestures, and specific expressions that tape recording could not catch, or things that I chatted with them about before or after the interview recording. For instance, in one of the three interviews conducted at a cafe, the mother talked about how her style of parenting was influenced by her father, while they were driving me home. This was a very relevant idea I had hypothesized about but was not mentioned during the interview. When I returned home, I jotted down notes and wrote down my thoughts. In addition, I recorded my quick reflection of the interview and any ideas that would inform my next interviews. These field notes helped me immensely and made the transcription process easier. They served as a reminder for me to recall what happened in the interview as I transcribed the interview tapes and analyzed the transcripts.

Data Management

With permission from the participants, all but two interviews were tape-recorded and kept for later transcription. On the tapes and transcripts, each participant was identified by number. There were no connections between the interview data and the individual's true identity. The date, length of time, background of interviews, contact information, and other related information were recorded in detail.

I created one folder on the computer in order to store the information for each participating family. The information collected was for research purposes only. Recordings and transcripts were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office. After the study was completed, all recordings, transcripts and other information gathered about subjects were stored safely for five years before being destroyed.

Data Analysis

After finishing the first interview, I began to transcribe it. Interviews were transcribed in Chinese since all the interviews were conducted in Mandarin. I did not translate all the transcripts into English. I believed that reading the original language described by participants allowed me to more accurately capture and provide a better understanding of the meaning. Certain parts of transcripts were translated into English later, when these were used for quotations. I invited a Chinese professor and a Chinese doctoral student who had an excellent background in both Chinese and English to listen to the tapes and review my transcripts and translations to ensure that bias from the researcher would be reduced. The process of translation/transcription lasted for two months, from late June to late August 2009.

Data analysis began immediately after completing the first interview and continued throughout the study. Thus, the themes in early interviews could be clarified with more probing in later interviews. I took the following steps to analyse data, which was mainly based on Creswell's (2005) suggestions on steps of data analysis:

First, I read the twelve transcribed manuscripts in their entirety several times to obtain a general sense of the data. Then I worked on each manuscript, listening to the statements which were relevant to the topic and grouping these statements in preliminary ways. Each statement was treated equally in this phase of the data analysis.

Second, statements which were overlapping, repetitive, and vague were reduced. Those unnecessary or insufficient for understanding the participants' experiences or those impossible to abstract and label were also eliminated. The statements that remained were then recorded as the invariant constituents.

Next, I clustered the invariant constituents that were related to each other into a thematic label. The data were coded into units and organized into categories with similar characteristics. This was compared with field notes and personal reflections to find unified themes and common threads.

The literature and my research purposes provided me with some guidance in terms of identification of themes. However, I looked for categories missing from the literature, as well. All the categories were compared with each other, and with additional indicators from the data to further define the theme (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

A constant comparative analysis was used for data analysis (Schwandt, 2001). It involved taking one piece of data and comparing it with all others that might be similar or different in order to develop assumptions about the possible relationships among various pieces of data. This process continued with the comparison of each new interview or account until all were compared (Strauss & Corbin, 1997).

Levels of frequency, specificity, emotion and extensiveness were used to determine the degree of importance of a particular theme, along with any additional categories that might appear (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Verification Methods for Credibility

Patton (2002) maintained that to ensure the credibility of the findings, the researcher should engage in rigorous fieldwork and methods to maintain both validity and reliability of the study. First, I intentionally chose participants with elementary school children at various school levels and of both genders, together with individual differences such as working status and the length of time in Canada, in an effort to offer a wide range of perspectives on the

research. In addition, I chose both fathers and mothers from twelve families so as to get supplementary data and allow both their voices to be heard.

Regarding methodological triangulation, I utilized different sources for data collection, including open-ended interviews and field notes. Those various sources were carefully selected in order to generate a holistic picture of the central phenomenon and uncover any number of possible truths and meanings manifested in the experiences or words of participants (Schram, 2003).

To achieve a high validity of data collected, my interview questions were developed by referring to the relevant literature, the researchers' own knowledge and experience, and the preceding investigations within the study (King, 1994). They were piloted with one nonparticipant Chinese couple. In addition, modifications to the questionnaire were made in the process of data collection, as mentioned above.

During the course of interview, I asked follow-up questions after the general or specific questions to clarify and focus the participants' responses. After transcribing the data, I sent copies of the transcripts to the two couples whose interviews were not tape-recorded to confirm that the notes I took had accurately recorded what they said. I also debriefed the participants regarding my findings from each interview to further improve the validity of my research.

Reflexivity (Creswell, 2007) refers to the process when "the researchers reflect on their own bias, values, and assumptions and actively write them into their research" (p. 58). I respected the responses I received even if they contradicted my personal preconceived notions. I acknowledged that my personal experiences and beliefs as a recent Chinese

immigrant have an effect on the research process, from data collection and analysis to interpretation (Creswell, 2005; Mishler, 1986; Robin & Robin, 2005). In addition, I invited a Chinese professor and a Chinese doctoral student with excellent Chinese and English language skills to review my English translations and transcripts.

The Role of the Researcher in the Study

As the researcher is the primary instrument in a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), it is acknowledged that the researcher's personal experiences and beliefs cannot be separated from the phenomenon investigated, but rather have an effect on the research process, from data collection and analysis to its interpretation (Creswell, 2005; Mishler, 1986; Robin & Robin, 2005).

I was born, raised, and educated in China. After graduating from high school, I received four years' higher education and then became a university teacher, as my parents did. Since I was a girl, my parents had emphasized the importance of education. My given name, Lan, “岚” comes from the name of an ancient famous scholar “纪晓岚”, which represents my parents' expectation for me to become a scholar. As a Chinese mother, I also hold high expectations for my son, as many Chinese parents do, and made efforts to help him with his academics.

To enlarge my knowledge and receive a Western education, I came to Canada. I experienced culture shock and suffered from a language barrier. Volunteering in the Chinese Association of Great Windsor and working in an immigrant information center for a short while, I had opportunities to communicate with the Chinese immigrant parents from mainland China, knowing and sharing their concerns, such as cultural conflict, language

barriers, working status and their children's education.

My personal experiences in China and Canada helped me to share and understand participants' behaviors in and perspectives on parent involvement in their children's education. Such experiences not only inspired me to conduct this study, but also provided me with great potential for an in-depth understanding of the study's issues.

In the process of this study, I played a different role as a researcher. In the process of data collection, I identified myself as a questioner, active listener, and observer. I reminded myself that the purpose of the research was to learn participants' perspectives and that I should "aim at being as open and receptive as possible to participants' descriptions of their experience of the phenomenon" (Hein & Austin, 2001, p. 6). Therefore, I listened to participants' descriptions of their experiences, thoughts and beliefs, and their interpretations of these experiences. I only encouraged participants to provide more details of their descriptions without giving suggestions and comments. The purpose of this encouragement was to enable participants to speak in their own voices and to tell their own stories. The questions asked were reformulated over the course of the interview according to each participant's specific background, experiences, and interpretations; also, questions emerged from my own knowledge, experiences, and thoughts as a Chinese mother and Chinese immigrant, rather than remaining standardized and predetermined by the interview guide (Mishler, 1986). Since I shared the same cultural background and immigrant experience with participants, the participants' ideas were more accessible; also, participants were more comfortable and more open to in sharing some personal experiences, feelings and views that they did not want to share with others they considered as outsiders (Berg, 2007).

While analyzing and interpreting, I included my own knowledge, understanding, and interpretation based on participants' narrations. My educational experience in China allowed me a better understanding of the Chinese educational system and its strengths and weaknesses. The similar experiences and background I have as a Chinese immigrant mother gave me sympathy and understanding of the issues addressed by the participants. As a Chinese person, I understand their traditional cultural values. For instance, Chinese parents hold high educational expectations for their children and would like to spend as much time, money, and energy as they can to help and support their children in academic activities. As a Chinese immigrant, I also experienced cultural conflicts and the feeling of being lost and confused in the host country. It was easy for me to recognize the cultural clues in the participants' expressions as well as to more accurately understand the meaning of participants' phrases, which they might have borrowed from Chinese culture. My reflective field notes recorded my interpretations based on my own life experiences and knowledge about Chinese parenting styles and the associated sociocultural factors.

Chapter 4 FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the interviews with 12 couples of Chinese immigrant parents. Three themes emerged from the data collection: parental involvement in school, parental involvement outside school, and perspectives of parenting and school education in Canada and China. These themes are connected with the research objectives: 1) to describe how Chinese immigrant parents become involved in the education of their elementary school age children in Canada; and (2) to learn how Chinese immigrant parents perceive the differences between Canadian and Chinese cultures in the context of their children's education. The first section of this chapter presents participants' profiles, which are followed by a description of school involvement of Chinese immigrant parents in their children's education, which is then followed by a presentation of extracurricular involvement of Chinese immigrant parents. Finally, parents' perceptions of the Canadian and Chinese school systems are presented.

Participants' Demographics

Table 1 presents the background information of each of the twelve families at the time of conducting the study. This information is presented by family and includes the number of children, parents' education level, occupations in China and Canada, and years of residence in Canada. To protect the identities of the participants, pseudonyms are used throughout the document. Twelve Chinese immigrant families took part in this study, with both parents in each family. Seven of the twelve families had one child and the other five had two children. For the families with one child, two of them had a son and the other five had a daughter. For the families with two children, three families had one son and one daughter and the remaining

two had two sons. The majority of the families were highly educated professionals. Except for one mother who had obtained a college diploma, the rest of the parents had received university degrees before they came to Canada. Upon settling in Canada, four parents had a doctoral degree, eight had a Master's degree, and two had a Bachelor's degree from Canadian universities. At the time of data collection, in June 2009, one father was going to obtain his Master's degree from a Canadian university; two mothers were going to obtain Bachelor's degrees. The other seven participants did not continue with their studies after arriving in Canada. Seven families had resided in Canada for more than 10 years, and five families had lived in Canada for less than five years. Table 1 describes the background information of the twelve families in this study.

Table 1. Background Information on the Twelve Families

Participants		Education	Occupation		Years in Canada
			China	Canada	
Family 1	Father	Ph.D. *	Science researcher	Mechanical engineer	13
	Mother	B.Sc.	System engineer	Home-maker	
	Son	Grade 2			
	Daughter	Sophomore			
Family 2	Father	B.Sc.	Engineer manager	Labor Worker	4
	Mother	B.Sc.* (finishing)	Accountant	University student	
	Son	Grade 1			
Family 3	Father	M.D.*	Software engineer	Technician	4
	Mother	B.Sc.* (finishing)	Software engineer	University student	
	Daughter	Grade 3			
Family 4	Father	Ph.D.*	Professor	Electrical engineer	15
	Mother	M.D.*	Professor	Mechanical engineer	
	Son	Grade 4			
	Son	Grade 11			
	Father	MBA *	Department	Labor worker	

Family 5			Manager		3
	Mother	College Diploma	Technician	Labor worker	
	Daughter	Grade 7			
Family 6	Father	M.D.*	Science researcher	Computer Engineer & Self-Employed	14
	Mother	M.D.*	Science researcher	Accountant	
	Son	Grade 4			
	Son	Grade 11			
Family 7	Father	B.A.	Businessman	Self-employed	13
	Mother	M.D.	Medical Doctor	Massage Therapist	
	Daughter	Grade 7			
Family 8	Father	M.D.*	Professor	Computer Engineer Technician	4.5
	Mother	M.D.*	Journalist	Home-maker	
	Son	Kindergarten			
	Daughter	Grade 5			
Family 9	Father	Ph.D.*	Science researcher	Computer engineer	14
	Mother	B.Sc.*	Medical doctor	Public Health Consultant	
	Daughter	Grade 3			
	Son	Freshman			
Family 10	Father	M.B.A. * (finishing)	Marketing manager	College student	3
	Mother	B.A.	Interpreter	Self-employed Owner of Business	
	Daughter	Grade 6			
Family 11	Father	B.Sc.	Computer engineer	Mechanist	11
	Mother	B.Sc.*	Librarian	Learning Commons Specialist	
	Daughter	Grade 7			
Family 12	Father	M.D.*	Editor	Home-maker	13
	Mother	Ph.D.*	Professor	Professor	
	Son	Grade 3			
	Daughter	freshman			

Note: * =degree obtained in Canada

Family 1

Family 1 has been in Canada for thirteen years and has two children: one son and one daughter. The son is in grade 2, and the daughter is a first year university student. The father, upon obtaining a Master's degree in science, became a researcher in a research institute in science and technology in China. He came to Canada to pursue his doctoral studies in mechanical engineering and found a job shortly after receiving his doctorate. At the time of the study, he was a mechanical engineer in a company in the United States. The mother, a homemaker, had a Bachelor's degree in science and was a system engineer in China before joining her husband in Canada. As they responded to the questions about the role that language played in their settlement process and in the school involvement, I learned that for the father, language was no longer a barrier after over ten years' of university study and work for a company in the United States. However, the mother did not feel confident when she had to talk with school teachers and to get involved in school-based activities due to the language barrier. She remarked that as a homemaker, she had more flexible time and would like to volunteer as a classroom helper. However, this volunteer work required higher levels of English language proficiency to communicate with non-Chinese speakers; therefore, she thought she was not equipped to do so.

Family 2

Family 2 has been in Canada for four years and has a son in grade 4. Both the father and mother had Bachelor's degrees in science. In China, the father was a department manager in a big company; the mother was an accountant. They came to Canada for their only son's better education and future development. They said that the fierce competition among

students, coupled with the burden of school learning in China, made them decide to immigrate to Canada. To illustrate what he called a burden, the father said that he once called one of his friends in China on Labor Day. His friend's daughter, who was in grade 7, answered the phone and told him that her parents went out for one week's travel; however, she did not go with them because she had a lot of homework to do.

As a result of the economic situation in Canada, this couple had not found a job; the wife was busy with her studies at the University of Windsor, majoring in nursing. She chose this major because she was told that it was easier to find a job as a nurse. When responding to the questions about the role that language played in their settlement process and in school involvement, the father said that his English was not good enough, which blocked him from communicating with school teachers, and the mother talked more with the teacher during the parent-teacher conferences. However, the mother could not always completely understand what the teacher was talking about and she also found it difficult to express herself in English.

Family 3

Family 3 has been in Canada for over three years, with a daughter in grade 3. Both the father and mother had Bachelor's degrees in science and were software engineers in different companies in China. They came to Canada for their child's better school education and their personal development. After spending one year but failing to find a job, the husband had to go to school to obtain a Master's degree in computer science from a Canadian university. At the time of the interviews, he had just been offered a job as a computer technician in a private company. The wife was a nursing student. When responding to the question about the role

that language played in their settlement process and in the school involvement, both the father and mother said that language was a barrier impeding them from communicating with school teachers and other native English speakers.

Family 4

Family 4 has been in Canada for 15 years and has two sons. The elder son, a grade 11 student, was born in China. The younger one, in grade 4, was born in Canada, after the father found a job. Before immigrating to Canada, this couple were assistant professors in a top university in China. They came to Canada to further their education. The husband obtained a doctoral degree, and the wife obtained a Master's degree from a Canadian university. Both of them majored in engineering, and at the time of the study they were working for different big companies in the United States. When responding to the question about the role that language played in their settlement process and in school involvement, they said that there were no language problems in communicating with school teachers and other native English speakers.

Family 5

Family 5 has resided in Canada for five years. Their only daughter was born in China. She is in grade 7 in a gifted class. Before immigrating to Canada, the father had a Bachelor's degree in business management and became a manager in the sales department in a foreign company in China. The mother obtained a college diploma and worked as a technician in a chemical factory in China. After two and a half years of trying without success to find a job, the husband went to a Canadian university and obtained an MBA degree. Even with the Canadian MBA degree, he still could not find a job that matched his profession; therefore, he had to take two labor jobs in two places. His wife also had a labor job in a factory. For this

couple, the main purpose for immigrating to Canada was for their daughter's education.

When responding to the question about the role that language played in their settlement process and in their school involvement, I learnt that language was a barrier that blocked the mother from communicating with the school. During the parent-teacher conferences, the mother just listened to the dialogue between the teacher and her husband.

Family 6

Family 6 has been in Canada for 14 years and has two sons. The elder son is in high school, the younger son is in grade 4. The mother came to the United States as a visiting scholar and extended the length of the visa by the pursuing advanced research in an institute in the United States. From there she applied for landed immigrant status in Canada, which then later allowed her husband to come to Canada as a landed immigrant. This couple used to work as scientific researchers in a famous research institute in China. At the time of this study, they worked in two respected companies in the United States. The father also has his own businesses in Canada and China. When responding to the question about the role that language played in their settlement process and in school involvement, they said there had no language barriers.

Family 7

Family 7 has resided in Canada for 13 years and has a daughter in grade 7. Both parents had Bachelor's degrees in China. The father graduated from the Department of Russian Language in a university in China, and started his own business after graduation. The mother obtained her college degree from a Chinese traditional medical university. After graduation, she worked in a foreign company. Now, the father has his own business with China and the

mother obtained massage and acupuncture certificates in Canada and, at the time of the interview, she worked in a hospital and also ran her own clinic. They came to Canada for the nice living environment and better education for their daughter. When responding to the question about the role that language played in their settlement process and in school involvement, the father said although he had been in Canada for over 10 years, most of his clients were Chinese; he could not always express himself fluently in English when communicating with school teachers. The wife indicated that that she had no problem talking with teachers.

Family 8

Family 8 has been in Canada for four and a half years and has two children. The daughter is in grade 5 and the son is in kindergarten. The father has a doctoral degree and was a university professor in China. The mother has a Bachelor's degree in Chinese language and was a journalist for a newspaper press in China. They immigrated to Canada for their children to have a better educational environment and improved future opportunities. After over two years of trying but failing to find a job, the father felt very distressed and frustrated. Finally, he went to university and obtained a Master's degree in computer science. At the time of the study, he had recently found a job working as a computer engineer. The mother obtained a Master's degree in computer science from a Canadian university, but she had to stay at home to take care of the housework and children so that her husband could concentrate on his work. When responding to the question about the role that language played in their settlement process and in school involvement, both said that generally, language was not a big problem for them in daily life-based communication.

Family 9

Family 9 has been in Canada for 14 years and has two children, a daughter and a son. The son is a second year university student and the daughter is in Grade 3. The father came to Canada to pursue his doctoral study; the mother obtained a Bachelor's degree in medical science in China. She came to Canada to accompany her husband. She obtained a college degree in health education in Canada. After graduation, she found a job as a health consultant in Windsor community. The father worked in a company in the United States as an electronic engineer. When responding to the question about the role that language played in their settlement process and in school involvement, this couple said there was no language barrier for them since they communicated with people in English daily while working.

Family 10

Family 10 has resided in Canada for three years and has one daughter in grade 6. The father had a Bachelor's degree from China in business management and had worked in a foreign company in China as a sales representative. At the time of this study, he was taking MBA courses at a community college and also aiming to later obtain a MBA degree from a Canadian university. The mother obtained her Bachelor's degree in Russian studies in China. She had worked in a foreign company as an interpreter in China. Realizing the difficulty of finding a job in Canada, she had started to run an ice cream shop one year prior to the interview. They immigrated to Canada for their daughter's better education and for the father's educational development. When responding to the question about the role that language played in their settlement process and in school involvement, this couple said that language was one of the factors that blocked them from school involvement.

Family 11

Family 11 has been in Canada for eleven years and has one daughter in grade 7. They immigrated to Canada for their daughter, who had been diagnosed in China as a little slow in intellectual development. They learned that the Canadian school system had very good policies for students with developmental disabilities. Before coming to Canada, the father was an engineer, and the mother was a librarian in a Chinese university. They said that they did not hold high expectations of finding jobs in Canada that matched their professions. The father worked as a technician in a company, and the mother worked as a librarian in a public school. She got this position after she obtained a Bachelor's degree in library management science from a Canadian university. When responding to the question about the role that language played in their settlement process and in school involvement, the father said his English was not good enough, otherwise he could get a promotion at work. The mother said that since she worked in the school library she had no problems communicating with teachers. She was one of the two participants who stated that they are part of Parent Council activities.

Family 12

Family 12 has been in Canada for 12 years and has two children. The son was in grade 4, and the daughter was a third year university student in Toronto. This couple immigrated to Canada originally for their own educational development. The mother obtained a Bachelor's degree in English language in China; she then obtained her Master's degree and later doctoral degree in economics from a Canadian university. Before she graduated, she found an assistant professor's position in a university in the United States. The husband obtained a Bachelor's degree in Chinese language and literature in China; he then finished a degree in

Educational Technology in Canada . He said he likes literature, history, and art. However, he found that as a minority, it was very difficult finding a job in these areas in Canada.

Following his studies, he ran a computer repair company for a half year, but had to close it because there were not enough clients. At the time of the interview, he was a homemaker and took care of their two children. When responding to the question about the role that language played in their settlement process and in school involvement, the father said it had been a barrier in the first few years after arriving in Canada; however, he found his English had improved and it was no longer a problem influencing his daily life and communication with school teachers. His wife concurred and said that English was not a problem due to living and working in Canada.

For the convenience in this study, I use FF1 to refer to the father from family one, and MF1 to refer to the mother from family one. Such abbreviation continues through the 12 families of this study.

School-based Involvement

Types of School-based Involvement

The types of school-based involvement that parents reported were: parent-teacher conferences, fundraising, attending children's school performances, volunteering, and sitting on parent councils.

Parent-teacher conferences. All participants reported that they attended parent-teacher conferences, regardless of how busy they were and whether or not language was a barrier. Sometimes parents went to the meeting together; other times, only one parent could go to the meeting. For instance, MF9 said, "My husband and I tried to arrange the time to attend the

parent-teacher conferences together. Most of the time, I attend this conference on my own since my husband is too busy.” MF5 self-perceived that her English proficiency was not good, but she still went with her husband:

Although my English is not good, I like to go and sit beside my husband. I want to know all the information about my daughter instead of staying home waiting for a report from my husband.

The number one topic that parents often asked about during the parent-teacher conference was their children’s academic achievement. For instance, MF9 said:

I ask the teacher about my daughter’s academic achievement, such as whether she likes to ask questions in class, whether she is actively involved in group work, as well as what kinds of things I can do to help my daughter’s academic development at home, and so on.

MF8 said, “I ask about my daughter’s academic performances in school, such as what subjects are my daughter’s weaknesses and strengths. I ask for some suggestions from the teachers so that I can assist my daughter at home.”

Apart from academic achievement, parents also asked about their children’s social behaviors such as whether their children followed the school rules, respected teachers, and got along well with other students. For instance, MF4 said, “In addition to asking about my son’s performance in academics, I also ask whether my son respects teachers, whether he follows school rules, and whether he is getting along with other children.” FF10 commented, “to be honest, respecting teachers and obeying school rules are also important as academic achievement. So, I also ask the teacher about my daughter’s behaviors in school.”

Parents who had lived in Canada for over ten years also asked about other school events such as sports, fundraising activities. For instance, Family 1 arrived in Canada over thirteen years ago. The father said,

We also want to know what and when school events are going to take place, such as children's show, swimming competition, and fundraising. When I get this information, I can arrange time and try to attend these activities, or my wife can take part in these activities according to her availability."

Family 6 has been in Canada for 14 years. MF6 said,

I am not concerned much about my son's academics because the teacher always tells me that my son is doing very well. He always gets A's. Beside academics, I also want to know what is happening or what is going on in the school so that I can manage to positively get involved in these activities. As well, I can give my child some instructions.

The recently arrived families (2, 3, 5, and 10) tended to focus more on their children's academic achievement and whether their children get along with others. For instance, MF2 has been in Canada for four years. She remarked, "I always ask about my daughter's academics. Academics is the most important thing for school children."

MF3 has been in Canada for four years. She said,

I asked the teacher about whether my daughter could catch up with her peers in academics, and whether she had any language difficulty in school because when we arrived in Canada, she had been in grade 3 in China. My English is not good, so I am concerned about my daughter's language proficiency.

Fundraising. Parents actively encouraged their children to engage in different types of fundraising activities, depending on their own situations. Some parents gave their children money to buy and/or sell chocolates in the community for the school. Others cooked food at home and let their children sell it to get money for the school. MF8, a homemaker, said, “I am not sure how to cook the Western food, but I learned from other parents how to bake cookies. Then my daughter brought cookies to school and sold them to her schoolmates. Then she gave the money to the school.” FF7 said, “Sometimes, my daughter brings home a book list and asks us to buy some of the books. I usually buy some for my daughter. I also drive her to sell the books to other parents for the school.”

Parents believed that taking part in fundraising activities is a way to contribute to the school. So they like to take part in these activities when they are able to so. FF9 said,

The public schools in China do not ask parents to raise funds to support school projects. However, since my child’s school expects and encourages parents and children to raise funds and it is good for the school, we do our best to support this activity.

Some parents stated that the support for school fundraising activities not only benefits the school but also fosters their children’s social skills. For instance, FF3 expressed his view on fundraising:

To get involved in school fundraising is not good just for the school, but is also good for the child. To raise funds, children are required to sell chocolates. We drive her and stand far away to watch and guard her. I saw her knock at the doors and communicate with people, either our friends or strangers, to sell the chocolate.

My daughter was very shy. This activity helped her to be brave and to develop social skills.

Attending children's school performances. The majority of parents (10 families) remarked that they often attended their children's school performances like drama, school concerts, sports, and school parties. FF1 narrated his experience of attending his son's performance in celebrating Christmas last year. He said, "My wife and I attended his Christmas performance last year. While my son was singing and dancing with his peers on the stage, we were so proud of him. I took a video recording his fabulous performance." MF9 said, "My husband and I would go together to attend my daughter's shows in school. If my husband is too busy, I would go to the show myself."

Parents remarked that to attend the children's performance is an expression of the care and support they have for their children. Consequently, the children get a sense of success when they know that their parents are present. MF11 said:

A child needs support and encouragement from parents. When my husband and I took part in my daughter's performance, my daughter was very happy and excited. She even drew a picture, which depicted a mother and father watching their daughter's show in school. This picture was put on the wall in the classroom by her teacher.

Field Trips. In terms of field trips, two mothers (MF1 and MF8) and one father (FF12) who are homemakers stated that sometimes they got involved to assist school teachers in monitoring students. MF8 said, "I don't work, so I go to field trips. I feel good that I can do something for school." MF1 perceived that her English proficiency was not good enough to

communicate with native English speaking students, but she wanted to volunteer as a field trip assistant “if there were some Chinese children in the field trip.” FF12 remarked, “Doing volunteer work made me have a good sense that I could contribute to the school.”

Parent-teacher council. With respect to parent-teacher organizations, among the 12 families, only two mothers (MF4 and MF12) reported that they were members of the Parent Council. MF4 said:

I attend the parent monthly meeting as a Parent Council member. The Parent Council aims to involve parents in school decision-making and organization by listening to their voices about important issues in school, discussing the ongoing school plans and events. Simultaneously, the Parent Council provides [an] opportunity for parents to put forward suggestions and expectations from the parents’ side. As a Parent Council member and to attend meetings monthly, I get to know what the school is going to do and provide my suggestions for many school issues. It also broadens my knowledge and understanding of the Canadian school culture, which will eventually help me use more appropriate ways in raising my child.

MF12 said, “My son is a little bit slow in academic learning. So I pay close attention to what is happening in school. As an immigrant parent, I have realized that the Canadian school system is different from China. I hope the school and parents can better understand each other and I want my voice to be heard.”.

For the remainder of the ten families, four had heard about and knew the function of the parent-teacher organization but never joined it; four families had heard about it but were not

sure of its exact function; and two families stated they had never heard about it.

I explained the function of the parent-teacher organization to the parents who did not know about it and asked whether they wanted to join this organization. These ten families expressed that they would not attend this organization. They believed that it is the school's responsibility to make decisions on school issues; parents just follow those decisions rather than voice their own opinions. FF1 said, "I trust the school. As a parent, we try our best to support the decision the school makes." MF10 said, "We are not familiar with the Canadian school system. In China, schools do not ask parents to engage in school governance. It is the school's responsibility to make decisions and tell us what to do. What parents should do is to follow school decisions and to help our children at home."

In reply to my question about their opinion on parent involvement in their children's school activities, all the participants believed that school-based involvement is positively associated with their children's educational development. They listed the following benefits of their involvement: (1) they get information about how their children are doing at school academically and learn about their children's behaviors; (2) both parents and teachers know each other's expectations; (3) they meet other parents and learn how they educate their children. By gaining this information, they can provide better help to their children. For instance, when asked about the connection between parental involvement in school activities and the child's development, MF12 said, "Through attending school activities, we know our child's school performance and know what is going on in the school. Thus, we can offer better help for our child's development."

MF9 said, "I like to talk with other parents when I meet them in school. I talk to them

about how they educate their children. I also get more information about the school by talking with them. So it is easier to find topics and figure out appropriate ways when I am with my child.”

Reasons for Limited Involvement

Although participants got involved in some types of school-based activities, they remarked that they usually did not do so if they were not invited by school teachers. They provided several reasons for limited in-school involvement: lack of time, language barriers, unfamiliarity with the Canadian school system, and different cultural values.

The lack of time was the most commonly cited reason. Apparently, school activities take place during weekdays, when many Chinese parents either were at work or were attending classes in the University. FF8 just found a job after years of searching. He said, “It is very difficult to find a job now. Since I got my present job, there is a lot of pressure at work. As a minority group here, I have to do work very hard and do much better than mainstream people so that I can keep my job. I really do not have time.”

MF5 expressed a similar view:

I am doing labor work for 10 hours each day. When I return home, I am exhausted and I have to do housework. I really have no energy to attend my daughter’s school events. If I ask for a leave from my work, I will lose money. As a new immigrant family, seven or eight dollars are important to my family. I need the time to earn a living.

MF2 said, “I am very busy with my university courses. There are reading and writing assignments. I do not have enough time to attend the school activities except for the parent-teacher conference.”

Language barrier is another reason preventing some Chinese immigrant parents from getting involved in school-based activities. This holds especially true for the recently arrived parents. FF2 has been in Canada for four years. He said, “My English is not good. My wife talks with the teacher during the parent-teacher conference. Although her English is not very good enough, she is a university student, after all. She is better than me.” MF5 has been in Canada for three years. She explained,

My English is not good. I do not completely understand what the teacher is talking about during the parent-teacher conference. So I just listen to my husband talking with the teacher. If my husband cannot go for the parent-teacher conference, I do not think I would like to go.

MF1 is a homemaker. She said,

As a homemaker, I have time, but my English is not good. I volunteer for the children’s field trips only when I know there are some Chinese children attending the field trip, so I can do some help in my mother tongue.

Unfamiliarity with the Canadian school system is reported as another reason for participants not getting involved in school-based activities. MF3 said, “I do not often get involved in school activities although I would like to. I am not familiar with the Canadian school culture. I do not know how to do it in a correct way.”

FF5 expressed similar concerns. He remarked,

In China, parents are not required to physically participate as volunteers, or as fundraisers. What parents do is to accompany the child during homework, provide supplementary exercises, and buy whatever benefits the child to study. In Canada, the school system is different. I do not go to school that often. I am not sure what I should say and do, and what I shouldn't. I am afraid that I might get into trouble by saying or doing some things incorrectly.

MF4, who is one of the two mothers who attended school Parent Council meetings, expressed her view:

I do not see Chinese immigrant parents attending Parent Council meetings. They are not aware of their rights. This may be influenced by Chinese culture. China is a highly hierarchical country. In China, someone above you always makes the decision. In the working place, you obey the boss or your leaders; in the school, students obey the teachers; parents follow the school decisions. Growing up in the Chinese cultural context, they are used to following the rules but not in providing suggestions or expressing opinions.

Some parents (families 2, 7, and 10) maintained that they trust teachers to take care of their children well, so that they do not go to school if they are not invited. Others (families 7 and 10) expressed that it is unnecessary to go to school that often if their child is good at academics. For instance, FF2 explained, "I seldom go to school to talk with teachers without invitation. We Chinese highly respect and trust the teacher. I believe teachers will take care of my daughter very well."

FF10 commented,

We do not think we need to go to school that often. My daughter's average score is over 90. She is doing very well in reading and math. You know, in China, only when a child makes trouble or is not good at academics, the teacher asks the parents to visit the school.

Outside School Involvement

Chinese immigrant parents are actively involved in children's education outside of school. This section explores this involvement from the following five aspects: (1) activities focusing on school subjects; (2) supporting extracurricular activities; (3) fostering basic life skills; (4) providing moral education; and (5) roles of father and mother in parenting.

Activities Focusing on School Subjects

With one exception, the participating families reported that they helped their children with school work after their children came in from school. The actual approaches varied depending on the children's ages. The following narratives represent typical ways that parents are involved in children's homework and the changes in this involvement as children grow:

While my daughter was doing her homework at her young age, I always sat beside her, watching her silently so that I was able to discover whether she was doing work correctly, whether her learning habit needed to improve; as well, I could give her explanations immediately when she asked. Now she is grade 6. Since she has formed some good learning habits and is more independent, I do not need to sit beside her, but I remind her to do homework on time or ensure she has finished and has double checked her homework. (MF10)

FF5 shared a similar idea:

When my daughter was in grade 4, she needed to do some projects. I helped her set up schedules for the projects and gave her some ideas about what to do when she asked me. Now, she is in grade 7 and she can make the schedule by herself. So what I do is to remind her to follow the schedule each day and double check when she finishes her projects. After she finishes her project, I ask her to present it in front of her mother and me. Then, we give her some comments and suggestions. She told us that such practice makes her well prepared for her other presentations in class.

In addition to helping their children with the teacher-assigned homework, participants indicated that they gave their children extra homework. They purchased and borrowed books in a variety of topics that were recommended by teachers or other parents for their children to read. Participants believed that reading various books after school could not only enhance their children's reading and writing abilities, but could also help them better understand school subjects, including mathematics. Also, reading widely was believed to broaden their children's knowledge and foster good habits for lifelong learning. FF7 illustrated his belief in reading by providing his daughter's reading patterns:

My daughter is in grade seven. I asked her to finish two thousands books before she goes on to grade 10. Over the past three months, she has finished 300 novels. She now reads much faster than when she began to read one year ago. She can finish two novels with three hundred pages within two or three days. To prove her understanding of the books to us, she wrote summaries or she told us what she read about. Her reading topics include animals, history, geography, the universe,

and religions. Reading widely broadens her knowledge and enhances her comprehensive ability in language and other subjects. You know, I learned Russian language in the university and my wife learned Chinese traditional medicine. Unlike many Chinese, both of us are not good at mathematics. But in recent years, my daughter has become very good at mathematics. I believe reading increased her understanding of math.

Most parents, mainly mothers, reported that they started to read books frequently to their children before they entered kindergarten. For instance, MF9 revealed:

When my older son was one year old, I started to read books to him at night at bed time.... When I had my daughter, I did the same thing as I read to my son. Now, my daughter is in grade 5 and my son is in the university. They both love to read and are very good at writing. I believe that reading is very important for children's brain development, and to love reading is a lifelong rewarding habit.

In addition to fostering the children's reading habits, parents also used a variety of ways to help children with their math study. They purchased mathematics books, explained the math content, and asked their children to do the exercises following the examples in these books. Parents usually teach their children mathematics before they start elementary school.

For instance, FF1 noted:

When my son was 2 or 3 years old, I began to teach him to read and count numbers. When he was 5 years old, I taught him simple calculation, such as one plus one equals to two. Later, I brought a series of math books, both from China and the United States, from the bookstore. First, I explained the knowledge and

principles of math following the books; then I provided an example to show him how to use that knowledge to solve problems; finally, I asked him to do the problems in the book. I checked it after he finished, and gave further explanation when necessary. Each day, I asked him to finish one page of the problem book.

For the parents who did not have time or were not good at math themselves, they either hired a private math tutor or registered their children in afterschool math classes. MF7 commented, “Both my husband and I do not have time and we are not good at math, so we sent our daughter to an afterschool math class named Kumon where children do math problems at a fixed schedule, and the math teacher provides feedback.”

However, one participating parent, FF2, neither set his son with extra math problems nor registered him in any afterschool math classes. He explained:

My father is a top math teacher in a secondary school in China. My major was math. I think that people learn math for two purposes: (1) to become a math researcher working in an institution and (2) to use math in daily life. Most people learn math for the second purpose. I don't want my son to become an expert in math. For those who do not want to do research in math, like my son, I believe the best way to learn math is to learn from daily life experiences rather than doing the indefinite paperwork, I mean the math problem solving.

When asking the perspectives of their involvement in their children's school subjects, participants provided two major reasons: (1) Chinese traditional culture highly values education, and (2) their minority status. All participants indicated that they wanted their children to obtain a higher education. No family in this study wanted their children to go to

work after graduation from high school. Actually, the majority of participants expected their children to attend the top universities in North America. MF12 remarked,

We Chinese people have valued education since ancient time. When I was young, my parents told my brothers and me to study hard. I always obtained high marks while I was a student in universities both in China and Canada. I received the benefits from high academic achievement. I obtained a teaching position in a university in Canada while I was writing my dissertation. I hope my children can go to a top university here, so we spend a lot of time helping our children in their academics.

FF7 has been in Canada for 13 years. He said:

We are a minority; we have to work very hard and do much better than the mainstream people. Our target university for my child is Harvard University. In Canada, everyone can go to university if he or she really wants to. However, one can more easily find a good job with a degree from a prestigious university than a degree from an ordinary university. To ensure my child can go to a top university, academic achievement is most important.

Family 5 has been in Canada for three years. Neither the father nor the mother could find a job. They expect their daughter to go to a top university. The father said:

As a new immigrant, it is very difficult to find a job and live a stable life.

Although I obtained an MBA from a Canadian university, I have to do labor work.

So we hope that she (their daughter) can go to a top university in North America

so that it will be more possible to find a good job and have a stable life in the

future. I tell our daughter to study hard in academics and I do our best to help her.

Now she is in a gifted child class.

Supporting Extracurricular Activities

All the participants reported that they got involved in their children's extra-curricular activities. These activities included inside home activities such as playing computer games, watching television, playing ping-pong, and playing chess with their children. Outside home activities including taking children to arts, drama, music, dance, swimming, biking, and skating classes; visiting libraries and museums; and traveling with children. For instance, FF1 said, "My son likes to play computer games. He also played ping-pong and went to swim with me. In addition, like many Chinese immigrant parents, we also sent him to learn drawing and play the piano every week." Besides piano and drawing classes, MF9 also sent her daughter to various dance classes: "My daughter attended various dance classes, from Chinese traditional dance [and] ballet to hip hop. She kept me so busy since I had to drive her to these different classes every week."

Whatever their financial conditions were, all participating parents were willing to spend money for their children's extracurricular activities. MF2 said, "I am a university student; my husband is doing labor work. We do not have much money, but we spend as much as we can afford on extracurricular activities for our son without hesitation if we believe they are good for his development." The father added, "I will make an effort to make money for my son to hire a private sport coach, learn hockey, golf, and so on."

Both the parents from family 6 worked for a big company in the United States and earned good salaries. The mother registered their sons in various sports activities. Their sons

received a small group training each week, and the parents also hired private coaches in order for them to learn tennis and golf. The mother said, “Besides paying the small group training fee, my sons received the tennis training three times each week. It costs \$52 each hour. It is expensive but it is worthwhile. Since last September to the end of this April, my son has made great progress. He is almost at the level of people who had played tennis for two years.” She continued, “When financial conditions permit, it is very necessary to hire a private coach.”

Parents spent time, energy, and money on their children’s extracurricular activities through selecting the extracurricular activities, dropping off and picking up children from different locations, and monitoring their children practicing what they learned at home. MF10 commented, “We spend almost [all] our break time, both weekday and weekend, in our children’s academic and extracurricular activities. It is worthwhile for our children’s development. Chinese parents would like to do almost anything for their children’s development. That’s our Chinese culture.”

Although participants register their children in different classes such as music, dancing and painting, they do not want their children to choose these areas as their future careers. MF12 said, “I registered my son for piano class. I do not have the intention to foster my son as a pianist. I just hope he can learn a music instrument and get some sense of music.” The mother of family 3 said, “I do not want my daughter to choose art as her major. It will not be easy for minority people to find a stable job. If she cannot find a stable job, she will have a financial problem.” In fact, participants tended to guide their children to seek technical and business degrees that have a clear link to future “safe” jobs in the workplace, such as

computing, engineering, medicine and law. For instance, FF2 said, “I expected my son [to] go to law school or business school to become a lawyer or businessman.”

When asked about how they perceived their involvement in their children’s extracurricular activities, participants remarked that parental involvement in extracurricular activities was an important part of children’s education. It is believed to be good for parents to help children with their future career choices. FF1 said,

We do not know what my son will be interested in for his future major. Now he is too young. However, attending various extracurricular activities can help him to find out what he really loves and what he is good at. It will be beneficial for him in making [a] future career choice.

Others stated that these activities may foster the child’s confidence and various interests. MF11 said, “There’s nothing more pleasing to a child than accomplishing something and doing well at a particular activity. My daughter likes to draw. When my daughter finishes drawing, she likes to show us. We tell her she ‘did a great job.’ She is happy. I posted her drawing on the wall and when my friend looked at her work, she was very proud of herself.”

In addition to attending extracurricular activities, participants reported that they had their children engaged in other activities in the community. These community activities include visits to the library and museum, attending community concerts, and going to church on weekends. MF4 said, “During the weekend, I like to take my son to the public library.... He could read there the whole day. He enjoys reading very much. He told me that when he reads, it seems that he is watching his favorite movies.” Some parents mentioned that church is another educational resource for their children, which compensates for the limitation of

school education in such areas as faith. Going to church results in the creation of extended family networks; it also allows multiple adults from the same ethnic group to influence children's education and share expectations of children's behavior and academic achievements.

Participants reported that they took their children to travel on weekends and/or holidays. Those who were in good financial condition took their children to travel across Canada, the United States and sometimes back to China for holidays. They remarked that traveling is important for children to learn what they cannot learn from school and that children can learn about different cultures and customs in different places. For instance, FF4 took his children to travel in different places during the holidays; he remarked:

During the holidays, we took our children to travel each year. We tried to take them to different places, to experience different cultures and customs, and to meet different people. We have been to Boston, New York, Florida, California, Hawaii, Vancouver, and Montreal.... My daughter wrote in her diary each day to record what she had experienced and her reflections during the trip. It is good for her academic achievement, too.

During the weekend, participants drive their children to the nearby counties around Windsor, such as Limington, to pick apples or strawberries or to visit a tomato farm. FF11 elaborated on a BBQ activity with several families and their children:

During weekends or holidays, we usually encourage our daughter to go outside. In this early May, we gathered with several Chinese families with their children at a local park for a BBQ. It was a windy day, a great day to fly a kite. I brought a big

kite, instructed the children about how to fly the kite, and then I talked about the movement of air.

Participants who at the time of the study had been in Canada for less than five years were still struggling with the cost of extracurricular activities. Although they could not afford to travel far away from Windsor, however, they tried different ways to broaden their children's knowledge. MF5 noted:

Both my husband and I are doing labor work. We do not have much money to travel to other cities or countries, but we try our best to have our children to learn from nature. We take our daughter to the counties around Windsor. It is an excellent way for a child to learn about the world around her. Sometimes, we walk to the park for my daughter to listen to and observe nature. She can smell the grass, listen to the birds, observe the falling leaves, and see new plant growth. Also, a duck pond with lots of different kinds of birds is a great opportunity for her to enjoy the outdoors and learn new things.

It is worth noting that while supporting children's participation in extracurricular activities, parents remarked that they tried to balance learning school subjects and extracurricular activities. FF12 said:

Extracurricular activity is necessary for children's interests, relaxation and fun. However, there should be a balance between school work and non-academic activities. After all, academic achievement is the first important thing for school-age children.

These parents' assertions represent the majority of Chinese parents' views on academic

and non-academic activities. Although they said they wanted their children to have balanced lives, academic achievement was prioritized over entertainment.

Fostering Basic Life Skills

Participants stated that they began to foster their children's social communication skills after living in Canada for a while. For instance, MF8 said:

Parents in China do not emphasize communication skills. When my sister and I were school children, like many Chinese parents, my parents viewed academics and being honest as most important. They did not foster our social communication skills. So I am still a shy person and feel uncomfortable to talk to unfamiliar people and I am very nervous when I have to talk in public, like doing a presentation in the class. Since I came to Canada, I found that Canadian people are very good at communication with others. I think it is very important to communicate with your friends, colleagues and boss, and know how to express your idea to others. So, I pay attention to foster my daughter's social communication skills.

Participants remarked that they either took part in or held parties or engaged their children in these parties so as to foster their children's communication skills. Thus, their children were able to meet and communicate with their parents' friends and their children. For instance, FF1 said, "We often go to parties or hold a party ourselves during the weekend. In this way, our son can have a chance to contact people and greet, talk, and play with his friends." FM1 provided an example:

My son is an only child at home now. Most time, he plays his computer games by

himself. When his friend came, both of the two children wanted to play the computer game. To solve the conflict, they had to negotiate to play in turns. This skill is very important for his future.

Participants also encouraged their children to invite their friends to celebrate birthdays in order to develop friendships. MF9 stated, “On my daughter’s birthday, I made a birthday cake and prepared some Chinese food; her father order pizza. We invite my daughter’s friends to our home to celebrate the birthday. Sometimes, I brought her and her friends outside, for instance, to the swimming pool, to celebrate her birthday.”

Some participants encouraged their children to volunteer in the community. For instance, MF10 mentioned their daughter played piano for the church as a volunteer. MF11 stated that her daughter volunteered to help the librarian to clear up chairs and tables and put the books into shelves. MF5 brought their daughter to church on Sunday. She said,

On Sundays, we bring our daughter to church where my daughter can meet people of different ages and from different parts of China. As well, my daughter goes to church to look after the younger children aged between two and three. My daughter is very shy. Through these activities, she has the chance to learn how to communicate with different people.

These parents believed that communicating with different people provided opportunities for their children to meet other adults and learn how to build relationships with them. By volunteering in the community, children learn to resolve their own conflicts and understand social boundaries. They may also gain awareness and appreciation of others and develop sensitivity to the needs of those around them by getting involved in mainstream

community activities.

In addition to fostering children's communication skills, participants also taught their children to do some household work such as cooking, organizing their bedrooms, and cutting grass. For instance, FF9 said, "I ask my son to cut grass with me in the summer and shovel snow in the winter. It is important to foster in a child some daily life skills." MM12, a university professor, taught her daughter how to cook. She remarked that it was necessary for a child to at least have some conceptions of doing housework. She commented:

We Chinese parents focus too much on academic learning. Parents do not ask their children to do any housework. Recently there are many Chinese international students come to study in the North American universities. These students are smart, but lack independence and self-management abilities. Large numbers of them do not know how to cook, so they have to spend a lot of money eating out. Their rooms in the dormitory are so messy. I know that their mothers did these things for them in China. Parents in Canada are different. They foster their children to do these things on their own when they are young. They even let the bab[ies] sleeps alone in their own room at night; we Chinese have our baby sleeping with the parents at least until before going to kindergarten.

Providing Moral Education

Participating parents emphasized the importance of morality. When asked "What kind of people do you want your children to be?" many parents stated that they expected their children to be successful persons so that they could honor the family and contribute to society in the future. They explained that a successful person is imbued with elements of morality,

academic achievement, good health, and has broad knowledge and interests. Most participants viewed morality, such as honesty, respect for parents and teachers, and helpfulness and consideration for others as being as important as academic achievement. For instance, FF3 stated, “I hope each of my child[ren] will become a useful person who is independent, honest, nice, well-rounded, and who will contribute to society.” MF6 stated she often told her son that when others need help, he should do his best to provide it.

Parents taught their children that family members should love each other. They believed that their children should love family members, respect parents and seniors, and take care of the seniors and the young. Later, they would extend the love to others outside of the home. Participants believe that morality does not come with birth, rather, it is acquired through education. FF3 stated, “Children need to be disciplined at an early age. Nobody is born with moral values and knowledge on how to behave.” MF3 echoed her husband’s view by telling a story about how she educated their son to respect and be considerate of others:

Last summer the whole family drove out to pick up strawberries. At noon time, we were very hungry, tired, and thirsty. We sat down on the plastic-made cloth on the grass. I brought fruits, bread, and three pieces of chicken drumstick, one for each of us: my son, my husband, and myself. My son finished his chicken drumstick quickly and took his father’s. After he finished it, he began to take mine and put it into his mouth without asking me. I was not happy when I noticed it. It seemed to be not a serious thing. A child wants to eat his parents’ food. But something important that parents could not ignore is that my son considered only himself, not his father and mother. I told him that while parents love and take care

of their children, children should also love and consider their parents' needs. A person should consider others rather than only himself. He changed after this picnic. When his grandma came to visit us from China, he often served food to his grandmother, his father and me, and finally served himself.

Participants also educated their children to work hard. FF5 said, "I always told my daughter to work hard at her schooling so that she can gain academic excellence. I told her success comes through effort. I asked her to post the saying 'No sweat, no gain' on the wall of her room. It will remind her every day when she looks up at the saying."

All participants indicated that they sent their children to take a Chinese language class during the weekend. These classes are hosted either by an international language school, the Chinese Church, or Chinese community organizations. Three participants reported they organized a Chinese school themselves at home by working together with four other Chinese families. Every week, children went to one family. One parent from the seven Chinese families worked as a Chinese teacher for one week, and the rest of the parents provided the individual instruction, such as correcting children's pronunciation and writing, checking the exercises, and answering the questions while children were doing exercises. FM4 said, "We have a Chinese class set up by several Chinese families. So we often keep in touch by phone and face to face talk. By chatting, we exchange ideas on running this Chinese school and educating children in the Canadian context."

Participants provided various reasons for having their children learn the Chinese language such as developing children's brains as well as having more opportunities to find a good job, as China is becoming a big market. However, one common reason offered by all

parents was to maintain their Chinese heritage. For instance, FF4 explained, “As a Chinese, my son should know and learn Chinese language and culture. His parents, grandparents and relatives are Chinese. His root is China. He should absorb the essences of the Chinese cultural values, such as respecting parents and teachers, being honest and gaining academic achievement.” MF12 expressed similar views on the reason for their children learning Chinese: “Being Chinese, I want my child to carry out Chinese cultural values. Besides, I want my child to learn [the] Chinese language so that he can communicate with Chinese relatives and friends in China.”

Gender Difference in Parenting

When asking about individual roles the mother and father play in educating their children, the majority of participants remarked that the father and mother had a common goal in terms of educating their children but played different roles in parenting. In general, the mother’s roles are primarily running the home and taking care of children. Mothers dealt with children’s academic-related work, such as communicating with school teachers, reading for or with their children, helping with homework, and dropping off and picking up their children after extracurricular activities. For instance, MF9 said, “When my older son was one year old, I started to read books to him at night at bed time When I had my daughter, I did the same thing as I read for my son.” MF6 said, “I accompany my daughter to do her homework at home I usually attend parent teacher conferences for my child.”

Generally, fathers spent less time with their children but more time at their own work, compared to mothers. However, fathers contributed substantially to specific areas of their children’s out-of-school learning. There was a focus on practical activities, such as playing

ball, bike riding, and swimming. The fathers' involvement in these areas of learning was said to be higher or more frequent than that of the mothers. For example, FF9 remarked, "When I have time, I bring my daughter to swim or ride bicycle during the weekend." "Sometimes, I play chess with my son after he finishes his school work," FF1 said. "During the weekend, I bring him to swim and ride bicycle."

Some fathers tended to spend more time helping their children with their homework when the children grew older. They provided their children with encouragement and support for doing schoolwork, as well as fostering good study habits, or teaching life philosophy.

Mothers mentioned that they liked to communicate with people or to read books in order to gain more knowledge about parenting. For instance, MF6 remarked that by communicating with her boss and colleagues, she had learned that sports are highly valued in Canada. Therefore, she registered her children in several sports activities from summer swimming to winter hockey, skating, and skiing. Other parents shared the same idea. MF4 commented:

I often talk with Chinese and Canadian parents about how to educate children in Canadian society. For instance, by talking with Canadian parents, I learnt Canad[a] emphasizes leadership skill. I purposely foster my child's leadership ability. I attend the monthly parents' meeting to discuss school-based activities, express my views on school plans, and let my voice be heard. I also like to read books on parenting, which broadens my knowledge and provides ideas that I can use in my parenting practices.

However, no fathers mentioned that they communicated with other parents or read

books for parenting. They stated that they educated their children according to their own experience as a child. The parents who had two children said they also learned from the experience of rearing the elder child. For instance, FF1 observed,

I was young and suffered from work pressure at the time we had our first son. I didn't spend much time with him. I played a strict father's role, as many Chinese fathers do. I seldom smiled at him nor communicated with him. He was sort of scared of me. I once had a very tense relation with my son. We did not talk; he only talked with his mother. When we had the second child, I had a stable job and much better economic condition. I reflected on rearing my elder son. I spent more time with my younger child, played computer games or brought him to swim or ride a bike whenever I had time. I often hugged him and told him how good he was and how I loved him. In turn, he likes to talk to me about what happens in school and whether he felt happy or not.

Interestingly, all the mothers in this study had worked in China. However, after arriving in Canada, some became homemakers. MF8 obtained her Bachelor's degree in Chinese language and worked as a journalist in China. Subsequently, she obtained Master's degree in computer science in a Canadian university. However, she had to stay home and take care of the children to ensure that her husband could focus on his work. She explained, "It is difficult to find a job to match my major; my husband just found a job. We have two children to look after."

MF1 came to Canada with her husband thirteen years ago. She explained the reasons she chose to be a full-time homemaker:

My husband works in the United States. My daughter has graduated from the University of Toronto and works in Toronto. I do not worry about financial issues. As a full-time housewife, I have a lot of time. I read cook books and magazines to learn how to cook delicious and nutritional food for my son and husband. I have time to send my son to take part in various extracurricular activities. Also, I bring him to the library and I play games with my child, which promotes a close relationship. I cannot imagine where I could find time and energy to do all these things if I went to work.

Perspectives of Parenting and School Education in Canada and China

Parenting Styles in China

When asked to compare parenting in China and Canada, participants listed two major values of parenting children in China: (1) employing strict methods to control children, along with the demand for absolute obedience and unquestioning compliance with parents' wishes; and (2) not expressing love verbally.

Control and obedience. Participants remarked that parents in China tended to control children and demand absolute obedience from their children, including unquestioning compliance with parents' wishes. MF9 recalled when she was a child, she and her sibling were not allowed to ask questions when their parents asked them to do things. She explained that children just obeyed what parents said and followed directions without question.

FF3 said his father, a high school math teacher, asked him to choose mathematics as his major for university. He had to follow his father's wish, although he was interested in computer science. He said:

At that time, computers were not popular in China. If I had learned computers for four years in the university, I would be a pioneer in computers in China. I would be developed very well in my career. However, that is the Chinese traditional cultural value. A child, even an adult, has to obey and respect their parents' ideas and wishes.

MF11 gave an explanation: "In China, it is parents' responsibility to take good care of their children, including making decisions about what major they should take in school and even whom they should marry. Children may not like parents' decisions, but they have to follow them."

Less verbal expression of emotion. Participants remarked that parents in China, particularly fathers, are not used to praising their children or to expressing love to their children verbally; instead, they express emotions through their actions. MF6 said,

I remember when I was a school child. When I did something very well, for example, I got high marks, my mother either cooked my favorite food for me or bought me a small gift. When I was ill, she was so worried about me and took very good care of me. I could feel she loved me very much, but she never told me that she was proud of me or that she loved me.

FF4 said,

In my memory, my father did not talk very often. He looked strict and seldom smiled at his children. I remember when I received an offer from a top university in China, our relatives and neighbors came to congratulate me. I believed my father was very happy as I read this feeling from his eyes. However, he did not

say any words to praise me but just put his hand on my shoulder. When I became a father, one day my father told me, “A man, in Chinese culture, should be stable and not show his emotions easily. He should behave like a mountain to provide firm support to his family so his family members can rely on this man’s stability.”

Parenting Styles in Canada

Following children’s interests. After they came to Canada, participating parents recognized that Canadians respect children’s interests and like to communicate verbally with children. Accordingly, they adjusted their attitude of parenting by providing their children with some freedom to do things rather than requiring them to blindly follow their parents’ wishes. FF5, for instance, hoped his daughter could learn swimming. Thus, he registered his daughter for a swimming class. After taking one semester of swimming class, the daughter said that she did not like it. FF5 said, “Since she did like it, I did not want to push her. As she loved to read and play piano, she could keep on doing these activities.” MF9 compared their two children’s education experience:

My son has played the piano for over 10 year and loves playing the piano. I wanted my daughter to play it, too. However, after she had learned to play piano for three years, she began to complain it was too much. If I was in China, I might say, no, you cannot stop; your brother is your example. But here in Canada I cannot push her if she really does not like it. So I told her to think it over for one week before making a final decision. After one week, she came to me and said she would like to take one month break in summer and restart it in September. I asked her, “Are you sure you want to continue?” She nodded her head and said, “Yes,

Mom. I have thought about it for one week. I like it and just want to have one month break.” I supported her decision.

Participants emphasized the importance of respecting children’s interests. FF2 said, “Since I came to Canada, I have learned gradually that children should choose what they really like. If we push them to do something they do not like, they may do it unhappily. I do not think parents want their children to suffer from such unhappiness.”

Praising and expressing love verbally. Participants reported that parents in China do not praise children nor express love for their children verbally. After arriving in Canada, participants noticed that both Canadian teachers and parents always gave positive feedback, appreciation and praise to children and that their children were very happy about it. FF4 said:

In Canada, people like to express their emotion to each other. Between friends who have not see[n] each other for a while, when they meet, they hug each other; they praise the lady’s style, and tell their colleague what a beautiful skirt she has. In the school, teachers always express praises to children. Parents often hug their children and tell them how they love them and what great children they are and the children look very happy. I never did it for my elder son, as I was not used to it. However, since I had my second son, I changed. Every night when my younger son goes to bed, I always go to his bed, hugging him and telling him, I love you, honey.” I can see [the] sweet smile on his little face. I really enjoy watching my happy and lovely little boy when he closes his eyes.

MF6 shared a similar expression of emotion to their children:

I told my son that we always love him even when we blame him for his

wrongdoing. Actually, he is a very good boy. He has received many awards in sport and math contests. So my husband and I often tell him that we are so proud of him.

Respect and control. Although participants appreciated the Canadian culture of respecting children's opinions and interests, they were discontented with the schools and parents who provided children too much freedom and little discipline, thus laying too many responsibilities on children. For instance, MF12 said,

In Canada, children are given too much freedom. I am concerned that if we do not discipline them when they are young, it may be very difficult to discipline them when they become teenager[s] and it may be difficult to avoid or reduce the harmful impact.

Participants remarked that the lack of control and guidance of the children's behaviors contributed to the most common issues, such as smoking, drug abuse, early dating and teenage sex. Control and guidance for children are necessary as "kids are kids after all; they are not mature and not able to make correct judgments in many cases" (FF9). Parents respected their children while disciplining and guiding them. They disciplined their children for a balance between academics and entertainment; they monitored their children's friend-making and ensured a moral education. For example, FF6 said,

My son loves to watch TV. He used to watch it for hours without doing his homework I assigned for him. Watching TV can broaden knowledge, provide relax, and fun.... However, as a school child, academic achievement is most important. I talked with my son about [the] TV programs he preferred. Then we

made a schedule about what time to watch TV, do homework, read, and do math exercises together. Once this schedule was fixed, I asked him to follow it. Then I monitored him, allocating time on studying and watching TV.

However, there is a difference between families who came to Canada earlier and more recently. Participants in this study were divided into two groups according to the length of residence in Canada. Those participants in the group who came to Canada earlier and had been in Canada for over five years were designated as “early arrivers;” participants in the group who came to Canada within the last five years were designated as “newcomers.” The newcomers tended to use more traditional Chinese ways of educating children. MF2 has been in Canada for four years. She said that her son likes to ask her so many whys; she just asked her son to follow her and told her son, “Do not ask me so many ‘whys.’ Because I am your mother, you just follow me. And my son becomes angry with me.” She stated that in China, children do not ask so many questions of their parents and parents do not explain everything. Children just do whatever parents ask them to do. She continued added that due to the difficulty in finding a job, she had to go to a Canadian university as a nursing student. The language barrier and the different educational system increased her study pressure. Every day, she was so tired and had no time and energy to communicate with her son in a mild way. Another example is from the father of family 8. FF8 has resided in Canada for four and a half years. When he found that his daughter was not doing well, having one B and two C’s, he became very angry. He blamed and scolded her until she cried. He explained,

In China, I taught in a top university. I was respected by my colleagues and students because of my research ability and excellent teaching; my wife was a

journalist for a big publisher. But we found there was a dramatic difference when I came to Canada. I was close to 40 years of age when I arrived in Canada. With the new environment and language barrier, everything was so new and so hard for me. For more than three years, I could not find a job. I had heavy pressure and needed to let it out. I could not find a job matching what I had learned in China and had to go to university again. The only reason for us to stay in Canada is for my children. I expected my daughter could study hard and be good at academics. But she did not put all her heart into her academic study but spent much time drawing, playing piano, and even playing computer games. I felt ashamed for her. I just couldn't understand that she got such low marks but looked so calm. She showed no sadness and did not feel shameful at all. When I was a student, I never had such low scores. If I did one mistake, I would feel very sad and wish that there was a hole in the ground that I could hide in... Nothing went smoothly after we came to Canada.

The mother added, "Although my husband scolded our daughter for her low marks and not work hard in academics, she still made similar mistakes and did not want to talk with her father. I heard that Canadian schools do not value academic marks as high as in China. I thought maybe how parents deal with the children's results of examination in China was not appropriate in Canada."

The father continued,

My wife and children became my victims. I scolded them and later felt regretful.

This year, I found a job. So I can now support my family and my life is

comparatively stable. Now I try to understand the Canadian school system and use milder ways to educate our daughter. My daughter began to talk with me and I can see her happy face sometimes now.

The earlier arrivers were aware of the difference between parenting in Canada and China. These parents did not completely control children or ask for complete obedience from them. For instance, MF1, who has been in Canada for 13 years, commented:

The longer we stay in Canada, the more we learn parenting methods here. Parents' completely controlling children and asking for their obedience without question does not work in Canada. So we try to integrate both Chinese and Canadian styles of parenting. We give some guides and suggestions to my son when necessary but also respect his decisions.

Perspectives of School Education

When participants were asked how Canadian elementary schools differ from the ones in China and what their opinions are on the most/least favorable aspects of the elementary schools in China and in Canada, participants perceived both strengths and weaknesses of schools in China and Canada

School education in China. With respect to the strengths of schools in China, participants appreciated the primary education in China as more academically solid than that of Canada. For instance, they stated that Chinese schools emphasized the basic knowledge of mathematics and the skills of solving mathematics problems. MF11 stated, "I know some Chinese children who were just at an average level in mathematics in China. But they became top students in mathematics in Canadian schools. The mathematics that the grade 3 children

learn in Chinese schools is equivalent to what the grade 5 children learn in Canadian schools.”

In addition, participants stated that Chinese school teachers are very responsible for the teaching and are strict with their students. Therefore, parents trust the teachers and do not need to go to school except when the teachers ask them to. In many cases, the teacher asks parents to come to school when their child receives a low mark, does not listen to the teacher’s lecture, does not finish the homework on time, or fights with other students.

Besides the strengths, participants remarked on several major weaknesses of Chinese schools: over-emphasis on examination, textbook-based, and lack connection with daily life experiences. Participants reported that Chinese school education is examination-orientated. Good marks on NCEE are the final goal of any level of school education, from elementary to high schools. The competitive atmosphere creates enormous stress on schools, children, and parents. For instance, MF3 observed, “In China, education emphasizes the importance of examination. After my niece finished the school assignments, she had to do several sets of questions to prepare for exams. These questions are taken from a book my sister bought for her.” MF8 said, “In my hometown, even the kindergarten children began to receive training for Olympic mathematic completion.”

In addition, participants stated that teaching is based on textbook contents and there is a lack of connection between what the children learn in class and daily life experiences. Teaching focuses on transmitting knowledge using duck-feeding methods. School children learn knowledge through listening to the teacher and reading the textbooks. FF11 noted, “In elementary schools in China, the teacher always followed the textbook and the textbook was

disconnected with daily life. After class, school children had to do a lot of homework. They could not finish until 10:00 p.m. or midnight.”

Academic training is over-emphasized in school. Students spend most of their time doing homework and memorizing the key points of what they have learned over and over, preparing for examinations. The non-academic activities such as sports, music, and arts are given little attention. Students had little time for taking part in extracurricular activities.

MF12 commented:

If I was in China, I would have to require my child to study hard and to focus on academic achievement so that she can pass NCEE. And I could not encourage my child to take part in extracurricular activities since my child would have no time and energy for them.

In addition, participants suggested that Chinese schools have too many limitations. There is a lack of training for creative, independent thinking; self-management ability; and social communication skill. MF5 said, “There is always a right or wrong answer in China. It limits a child’s creative and independent thinking.”

Both the mother and father from family 9 remarked that when they were school students, the school emphasized academics only, and both of them were weak in social communication skills. The mother said, “When I met more than two people, even though I sort of knew them, I did not know what I should say and I felt awkward.”

School education in Canada. With respect to the Canadian school system, all participants expressed overall satisfaction. The participants listed two major strengths of Canadian schools: (1) emphasis on the connection of school education with daily life

experiences, (2) emphasis on students' well-rounded development.

First, participants valued the Canadian schools' emphasis on the connection of school education with daily life experiences. For instance, MF11 elaborated how the teaching connected with daily life practice:

Canadian school emphasizes social skills, such as the ability to solve daily life problems. I remember my daughter did a project about fire safety when she was in grade 2. The teacher invited the firefighter as a guest speaker to introduce knowledge of fire safety. After that, the teacher set an assignment to each student: with the help of a parent, each student needed to make sure of the existence of fire prevention equipment in the building or house they lived in, and learn how to use the equipment, where the exit is, and what they should and should not do if a fire takes place. Finally, students were required to draw out a map of escape from the building or house assuming a fire took place. Since that, my child had a stronger awareness of fire. He asked me to bring him to visit the fire station, and asked me to buy him various fire fighting cars and a video.

Second, participants appreciated Canadian schools' emphasis on well-rounded development. Canadian schools view academics as only one part of education. Besides the academics, schools also encouraged students to develop various other skills and abilities. For instance, schools foster students' independent thinking, cooperation, and social communication skills. Teachers employ various teaching methods to satisfy students' different learning needs and encourage children to ask questions and to express their own points of view rather than just copy what the textbooks or teachers say. MF10 illustrated her

understanding of how Canadian schools foster students' various abilities through projects and presentations:

One day my daughter got back home from school and asked me to bring her to the public library to search for information about a frog. I took her to the library. She borrowed about ten books about frogs. In the following day, she read, took notes, and finally wrote about a three-pages-paper including five parts: introduction, what frogs eat, how frogs eat, the features of frogs, and the conclusion. Besides, this project included pictures which described the process of living, accompanied with titles under each picture. She presented her project in front of her teacher and classmates. The main point here is not about how much knowledge of the frog my daughter has learned; the influence of the process of doing the research is profound. She concentrated so hard to gather information, read articles, identify points, and write the essay. She worked independently all through the procedure. She totally used her brain to carry out every step, thus she achieved much more knowledge and skills, besides [learning about] frogs. In addition, the presentation of this project to her classmates fostered her language expression and communication skill.

MF12 appreciated that Canadian schools fostered students' independent development. She said, "Canadian school encourages children to do research on their own. Doing research can help children to analyze problems and solve problems by themselves. In the meantime, students can practice what they have learned in real work through the process of research."

Parents remarked that since Canadian school did not view academics as the only

standard to judge student school learning, students had time to take part in various activities they like. These activities included sports, music, and arts, as well as time to play with their peers, travel with parents, and to do volunteer work in school or the community. Thus, children in Canada had a richer and happier childhood compared with Chinese elementary school students, who had to concentrate solely on academic learning.

MF10 said, “In Canada, children are looking forward to going back to school after the summer and winter vacation because teachers and students are interactive in class; as well, they can play with their peers and have fun in school. FF2 remarked,

Many times, when I went to pick up my son from school around five in the afternoon, he often complained, ‘Daddy, you come too early to take me home. I want to keep on playing with my peers.’ But in China, children wish they could stay at home as long as possible because they have to listen to the teacher in class and have to do a lot of work in school.

In addition, many parents appreciated that they always received positive feedback from their children’s teacher during the parent-teacher conferences, such as “Your child did a great job” or “Your daughter is very good.” They said since the teacher always gave the comments on the positive side of the children, this increased their self-confidence. This is very different from Chinese schools, where the teacher always pointed out the weakness of the students and how the parents should help their children.

The weaknesses of Canadian schools that participants mentioned include the overabundance of positive feedback from the teachers; the lack of effective academic services; and giving children too much freedom.

Interestingly, although many participants appreciated the always-positive feedback from teachers, some participants questioned such feedback. For instance, FF9 stated:

There is too much praise for children's school performance from the teacher. They always tell you the positive side. Every person has his or her strengths and weakness[es]. I wanted to know both sides of my child's performances. In addition, there is no comparison. In China, the teacher ranked students by their examination scores, but in Canada you do not know about other students' performances. You know only your child, only his or her positive side. Although there is no comparison in school, there is competition in society.

MF9 expressed a similar concern. She said, "It is unrealistic to think that my daughter is always very good. I hope the teacher can tell me both my daughter's weaknesses and strengths so that I can completely know her and know how to help her."

In addition, participants complained about the lack of effective academic services that Canadian schools provide. All parents complained that students had too little homework and were concerned that their children could not learn much in school. They were concerned that the grade 1 to grade 3 school children had almost no homework to do. For instance, FF1 said, "I do not understand how an elementary school child had almost no homework before grade 4. So, like many Chinese parents do, I have to give my child some homework."

FF7 noted:

I am so concerned that my daughter did not learn much in school because I did not see she did her homework. When I asked her, she said there was no homework. We asked the teacher to assign more homework to the students and

the teacher always said my child was very good and she did not need to do extra homework. I just wonder about how come an elementary school child has no homework. In China, the school children had a lot of homework. They even could not finish their homework before 10 o'clock at night.

Some participants also disagree with the Western cultural practice of providing children too much freedom and letting children make their own decisions without controlling and guiding children's behavior through discipline and rules. For instance, FF7 said,

Children are children, after all. They are too young to make correct judgments. Children need to be disciplined when they are young. Parents should not allow too much freedom to their children. Otherwise, it will be very difficult to avoid or reduce the misbehaviors Canadian youth have, such as smoking, drugs, dating at an early age, and teenage sex.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter, I presented findings regarding how Chinese immigrant parents become involved in their children's education and how they perceive the differences between Canadian and Chinese cultures and education. In this chapter, guided by the sociocultural theory (Forman, Minick, & Stone, 1993; Rogoff, 2003; Rogoff & Angelillo, 2002), I discuss the findings, considering the participants' socioeconomic status and cultural values. The discussion is based on accounts provided by the 12 couples of Chinese immigrant parents in this study, along with the research literature, my field notes, and local Chinese newspaper articles. Since qualitative researchers believe that the researcher's identity, values, beliefs, and reflections cannot be entirely separated from the process of interpretation (Creswell, 2005; Mishler, 1986), my personal background in both Chinese and Canadian cultures inevitably influenced my interpretation.

Lack of School Involvement

All participating parents in this study were involved in some kinds of school-based activities, including parent-teacher conferences, school fundraising, and attendance at children's performances such as music and sports shows. A few participants who were homemakers sometimes volunteered for school field trips. Two participants joined parents' councils.

Participants in this study acknowledged the importance of being involved in their children's school activities. They believed that their involvement informed them about their children's school performance (especially academic performance). Involvement also made

them aware of their children's social behavior, such as whether they were following the school rules, respecting the teachers, and getting along with other children. They also got chances to know the school's and teachers' requirements. The participants believed that by knowing all this information, they could make a better plan to help their children at home. In addition, although schools in China do not require parents to work as volunteers and fundraise for the school, participants got involved in these activities in Canada. They did so because after they had resided in Canada for a while, they recognized that this is the schools' expectation.

Previous studies (Amatea, Smith-Adcock, & Villares, 2006; Epstein, 1987; Fuligni, 1995; Muller, 1998) show that mainstream parents tend to get actively involved in school activities even without school teachers' invitation, and they like to take part in school decision-making activities, governance, and advocacy. However, this study indicates that most participants do not get actively involved in school activities if they do not receive an invitation from the school or teacher. The majority of participants (10 out of 12 families) reported no interest in getting involved in school decision-making activities and governance.

Reasons for Lack of school Involvement

Participants reported that there were three major factors influencing their lack of involvement: (1) socioeconomic status, (2) language barrier, and (3) cultural differences.

Socioeconomic status. This study shows that work status and family income influence parents' involvement in school activities. For instance, in comparison with working mothers, stay-at-home mothers stated that they have more flexible time to participate in school-organized field trips. In addition, a majority of participants who were not active in

school involvement were from low income and labor work families; some of them had to have multiple jobs to support their families. They stated that when they returned home they were very tired and had no time and energy to participate in their children's school activities, although they wanted to.

This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies (Benson & Martin, 2003; Inaba, 2005; Shumow & Harris, 2000). For instance, Benson and Martin (2003) conducted a study exploring the correlation between parents' working status, family income and parental involvement in school. They found that parents holding low socioeconomic status (SES) participate less in the schools than their higher SES counterparts due to inflexible work schedules, the need to work more jobs, and/or tiredness from work.

Language barrier. Besides the socioeconomic status, language barrier is another factor that contributes to the lack of parental involvement in schools. The real and perceived low English language proficiency hinders some parents from communicating with schools and leads parents to be less involved in their children's school activities. This finding is consistent with Mapp's (2003) study showing that parents who speak languages other than English may experience fewer opportunities to volunteer in the schools. This finding is also consistent with Constantino, Cui and Faltis' (1995) study on the language barrier and Chinese parental involvement in schools from the perspectives of the teachers and parents. This finding indicates that the language barrier hinders Chinese immigrant parents from communicating with their children's school teachers.

Cultural differences. Previous studies indicate that cultural differences are one of the reasons that immigrant parents are less involved in school activities (Chao, 2002; Epstein &

Dauber, 1991; Harry, 1992; Li, 2001). Epstein and Dauber (1991) state that White middle-class teachers may value and reward independence and assume that parents will involve themselves in the school activities of their children. But other cultures may view it as rude for parents to go to school without an invitation. Thus, parents' lower level of involvement in school cannot be universally understood as an indicator of lower interest in their children's education. In the Chinese culture, teachers and parents are expected to play different roles with respect to the children's education (Gu, 2008; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Parents are responsible for their children's behaviors at home, while teachers are expected to have responsibility for student's learning and behaviors at school. Only when a child causes trouble, such as a violation of school rules, or is in need of extra help in academic work are parents contacted. If the students behave well in school, both the teachers and parents do not feel the need for parents to go to the school (Gu, 2008; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009).

Different cultural values and unfamiliarity with the Canadian school systems contribute to Chinese immigrant parents' lack of involvement in their children's school activities. Since Chinese immigrant parents are not familiar with the Canadian school system, they are not sure what to say and with whom to talk. They are afraid that they may offend the teachers if they ask or say something inappropriate, so they choose to remain silent.

Previous studies (e.g., Epstein, 1987; Fuligni, 1995; Georgiou, 1999; McNeal, 1999; Singh et al., 1995) indicate that Caucasian parents actively get involved in school-based activities such as volunteering in class, participating in school government, and decision-making. This study reveals two different perspectives of the teacher-parent relationship in Canada and China. Canadian school culture encourages a closer parent-school

relationship, nurtured by parents spending more time in school (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Hill & Taylor, 2004). In Chinese culture, teachers are perceived as an authority and experts in education. A hierarchical relationship between teachers and parents exists.

Since Chinese tend to obey authority, they often adapt and adjust themselves to meet the needs of the school rather voice their opinions regarding their children's education. Under such cultural influences, the majority of Chinese immigrant parents may be not aware of their rights. Therefore, they tend to take a passive role in getting involved in school and allow one-way communication to take place. This is particularly true for new Chinese immigrants, who are less familiar with the North American culture and school system.

High Educational Expectations and Well-Rounded Development

Unanimously, all participants in this study held high educational expectations for their children. They all stated that they expect their children to attend university. No family wanted their children to work right after finishing high school. Actually, participants expected their children would be able to attend top universities in North America. As a result, academic achievement was highly valued by participants. Children's academic achievement was the number one topic that all participants always asked about during parent-teacher conferences. Outside school, participants spent a lot of time helping their children in academics. They not only helped their children with their school homework, but also gave supplementary homework in subjects such as language arts and mathematics. They bought books and mathematic texts from different sources. They began to read books to their children at a young age and required them to read broadly so as to broaden their horizons and knowledge,

in order to enhance their comprehension ability. They tutored their children or hired private teachers to help them with mathematics.

Participants reported that in China education has been highly valued since ancient times. Although they anticipated some of the great challenges in the new culture, they voluntarily chose to come to Canada for personal advancement and their children's education. They believed that education was the best way to overcome barriers and compensate for anticipated discrimination in the job market. They expected their children to go to top universities in North America, as they believe that it is easier to find a "safe" job and have a stable life with a degree from a prestigious university.

The findings on participants' emphasis on academics are consistent with previous studies (Li, 2001; Dyson, 2001; Zhou, 2000), which indicate that Chinese parents place great emphasis on academic achievement as a means of acquiring personal advancement, high social status, wealth, and respect in the Chinese society and as a means of overcoming discrimination and gaining opportunities in North America. These studies (Li, 2001; Dyson, 2001; Zhou, 2000) indicate that Chinese traditional values of education play an important role in parenting. In ancient China, academic achievement was highly valued and closely associated with a stable life in the future. In modern China, the situation remains the same. Children's families and schools share a common goal: to prepare school children to pass a number of examinations from elementary to high school so that they can pass NCEE and attend university and eventually find a good job, live a stable life, and bring honor to the family. If the child cannot pass NCEE, the child cannot attend university. Consequently, it will be not only very difficult for this child to find a good job, but also the child and the

whole family will feel ashamed, as the child will be viewed as incompetent. The traditional values have been embedded so deeply in their minds from generation to generation (Chao, 2000). Even though they are living in Canada, these values still influence their thinking and actions. As FF1 said, “We Chinese people emphasize education and view academic achievement as a very important thing because it connects with children’s future[s].”

The participants’ emphasis on academics also supports previous studies of Asian Americans (Chao, 2000; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Kao, 1995; Leong et al., 1999; Sue & Okazaki, 1990) . As voluntary minorities who chose to come to this country, Asian Americans are more willing to play by the rules of the host society and view education as a respected avenue to success in Euro-American, middle-class society (Chao, 2000). Sue and Okazaki (1990) argue that Asian Americans tend to see education as the only route to success, due to their perceptions of limited mobility in other careers (e.g., sports, politics, and entertainment). Thus, Asian Americans are perhaps forced into an over-reliance on education for sound mobility objectives.

Parents in this study reported helping their children with their school subjects and homework, which is in agreement with the results of Li’s (2006) survey regarding Chinese immigrant parents’ perspectives of their children’s literacy, learning, homework, and school-home communication. Through studying 26 middle-class Chinese immigrant parents in the United States, Li found that Chinese parents especially attempted to foster their children’s reading and mathematics abilities. Parents getting involved in their children’s math activities may have significantly contributed to Chinese American students’ outstanding academic achievement in math (Huntsinger et al., 2000).

These findings support previous studies (Cai, 2003; Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1996; Huntsinger et al., 2001; Li, 2006), which report that Chinese parents expect and help their children to do much more homework than European American or Canadian parents. For instance, Chen, Lee, and Stevenson (1996) compared students' achievements and their parental involvement in China and the United States. They found that parents in China spend more time helping their children with school homework than parents in the United States. More recently, Cai (2003) conducted a study of over 500 sixth grade students in China and the United States. Cai found that a larger percentage of Chinese parents checked their children's homework more regularly than parents in the United States.

This study is consistent with Wu's (2001) study, which indicates that generally Asian parents spend a great amount of time on their children's academics. Participants accompanied their young children while they did homework and checked their homework as well. When children grow older, the parents help them by reminding them of the assignment deadlines, listening to their children's rehearsal of project presentations, and providing feedback.

Current findings, however, bring into question Ma's (1998) study on acculturation and parental involvement of Chinese immigrant mothers. Ma studied 95 Chinese immigrant mothers in New York City, who came to the United States after the age of 16 and had a child 10 to 14 years old. Ma concluded that Chinese immigrant mothers had problems helping their children with their homework, with English literature, and with selecting story books. The majority of mothers in the present study reported that they read English books for their children starting at an early age; they tutored their children in mathematics; they listened to their children's project rehearsal at home before their children presented it in class and

provided some suggestions; and they helped them select books in the library. The discrepancy between this study and Ma's study may be due to the different characteristics of participants selected. Ma's study was conducted over 10 years ago. The participants' educational level was not mentioned. However, in the present study all the Chinese immigrant mothers had obtained at least a Bachelor's degree in China. They had studied English for years, both in schools and universities, before coming to Canada. Moreover, the majority of the Chinese immigrant mothers had obtained graduate degrees in Canadian universities, and two of the mothers had recently obtained Bachelor's degrees in nursing at the time the interviews took place. The participants did not report problems in assisting with their elementary school children's homework.

In addition, the present study supports previous studies (e.g., DeGarmo, Forgatch, & Martinez, 1999; Turner & Johnson, 2003) regarding the correlation between parents' educational background and their involvement in their children's education. These studies suggest that parents' education makes a positive contribution to parenting, which in turn influences children's outcomes. The mothers with more education benefit from their knowledge and skills for parenting their children (Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Pan, Rowe, Singer, & Snow, 2005). Parents with a higher level of education have been found to be more involved in their children's learning than parents with a lower level of education (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000). Nevertheless, for parents with a low level of education, despite the high value parents may place on education, a lack of educational experiences and familiarity with the school system may hinder their involvement (Entwisle & Hayduk, 1982; Seginer, 1986).

All participants remarked that they provided moral education to their children. For instance, they taught their children that family members should love each other, respect teachers and help others, and work hard to gain high academic achievements. A typical example is to ask their children to learn the Chinese language and its culture. They expressed that they wanted their children, through learning the Chinese language, to remember their Chinese roots and absorb the essence of Chinese cultural values, such as respecting parents and teachers, being honest, and working hard to gain academic achievement. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Chao, 1995; Lin & Fu, 1990). These past studies indicate that in Chinese culture children's moral behaviors, such as respecting parents, loving family members, respecting and obeying teachers, following the rules, and being nice to people and willing to help others in order to create a harmonious social environment and eventually contribute to the society, are valued. This finding also supports previous studies (Chao, 1996; Park & Chi, 1999), which show that many Chinese immigrant parents want their children to maintain Chinese culture by learning the Chinese language.

Ho (1981) states that Chinese parents focus on their children's academics and are less likely to encourage their children's independent ability. The present study, however, shows that instead of asking children to focus only on academic achievement as most parents do in China, participants also encouraged and supported their children's involvement in various extracurricular activities. They also fostered their children's basic life skills, such as social communication abilities and housework experiences. In addition, participants also attempted to broaden their children's knowledge in different ways, such as visiting museums, going to public libraries, and traveling. These parental behaviors are very similar to what mainstream

parents do. Epstein (2001), Gutman and McLoyd (2000), and Sun (1998) report that mainstream parents encourage their children to take part in extracurricular activities and utilize community resources such as libraries, museums, concerts, and plays to enhance their children's educational experiences. This finding highlights the changes Chinese immigrant parents made in their parenting styles after moving from China to Canada.

However, it is worth noting that although participants placed an emphasis on raising children as well-rounded persons, generally, all viewed academic achievement as the most important matter. The emphasis on academic achievement confirms that traditional cultural values and practices still have significant influence on Chinese immigrant parenting practices in Canada.

Gender Differences in Parenting

Traditionally, Chinese fathers work to support the family and mothers stay at home, taking care of the children and doing housework. Mothers are responsible for the day-to-day care of children, especially for younger children (Demos, 1986). Fathers are less involved with their children until they get older, around the time of high school.

This study, however, reveals that the roles of Chinese immigrant fathers and mothers are different after they have lived in Canada at least for a while. Among the interviewed families, the working parents shared the responsibility of educating their children. Although mothers generally were more involved in their children's education, such as communicating with school teachers, helping with children's homework, and reading to their children at a young age, fathers also got involved in their children's education. They contributed to specific areas of their children's out-of-school learning. Fathers usually focused on children's

practical activities, such as playing ball, riding bike, and swimming. The fathers' involvement in these areas of learning was reported to be higher or more frequent than that of the mothers. This finding was consistent with the previous studies (Hofferth, 2003; Lamb & Lewis, 2004; Nord, Brimhall, & West, 1997), which indicate that mothers spend more time in caretaking and on their children's academics than fathers, while fathers are more involved in play activities with children.

This study found that mothers more likely to communicate with others, including school teachers, other parents, or colleagues, to gain knowledge about parenting in Canadian society. However, no fathers mentioned that they communicated with other parents to gain knowledge about parenting. Rather, they preferred to educate their children according to their own life experiences. Those fathers who had two children also learned from the experience of parenting the elder child. This study is consistent with the findings from previous studies by Wood and Rhodes (1992) and Zhou and Xu (2007), which indicate that females tend to be social learner, while males tend to be more independent task-oriented learners. For instance, in Zhou and Xu's (2007) study, the researchers explored the gender differences in the use of technology in higher education. A survey was administered to all full-time faculty and sessional instructors. Results suggested that females tended to learn how to use technology from others, whereas males were more likely to learn from their own experiences.

In my study, there are two mothers and one father who stayed home to take care of their children. The father and one mother had Master's degrees from Canadian universities but couldn't find a job matching their education and work experiences. As a result, they had to stay at home. By and large, the parent who stays at home is determined by who will be able

to find a job. The parent who cannot find a job is the one who will stay home to look after the children. This is different from the traditional roles of Chinese parents in a family: fathers work outside and mothers stay at home taking care of the children (Mandell & Sweet, 2005; Muller, 1995; Kao & Tienda, 1998). When finances are not a concern for a family, the mother is the one who volunteers to stay home. The other mother participant in the study who stayed at home provides a case for this statement. Her husband worked in a big company in the United States with a very good salary. She chose to stay home.

Traditionally, Chinese culture emphasizes family harmony through emotional restraint. Bond and Wang (1983) and King and Bond (1985) indicate that both Chinese parents, especially fathers, are seldom expressive of their affections or praise their children orally. However, this study challenges this. The participants hugged their children, praised their children for doing a good job, and explicitly expressed their pride in and love of them. In addition, according to Hsu (1981), traditional Chinese mothers are viewed as kind and fathers are viewed as strict with their children. Fathers are less emotionally involved with their children's education. However, fathers in this study revealed that they often played with their children, such as swimming, playing ping-pong, and taking bicycle rides, especially if they had a son. This mainly took place among the early arrivers due to their available time and energy and higher living status.

Perspectives of Parenting and School Education in Canada and China

Parenting in China and Canada

In China parents perceive academic achievement as the most important thing. They ignore their children's extracurricular activities and do not expect their children to do

housework (Huntsinger, Huntsinger, Ching, & Lee, 2000). However, after moving to Canada, participants realize that well-rounded development is important. Although they still see academics as the most important part of education, they know their children also need to broaden their knowledge and develop non-academic skills in order to better adapt themselves to Canadian society. As discussed previously, participants hold high educational expectations for their children and help them with their academics; meanwhile they also encourage their children to take part in extracurricular activities, to foster life-based skills, and enhance their children's educational experiences by taking them to libraries, museums, concerts, and travel (Epstein, 2001; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000).

Chinese parents' insistence on high expectations for their children can be explained from two different but related aspects: cultural inertia and immigrant status. Although they live in Canada, their perspective about education, developed in China, is still active and influences their actions. Education is seen as a tool to achieve social mobility in China. This concept is actually amplified by the difficult experience they have gone through in their job search. Their past education is often not counted by Canadian employers. Many of them have to be re-educated in Canadian universities in order to find a job. This unpleasant experience reinforces their concept about the significance of education for themselves and their children. As Leong et al. (1999) and Sue and Okazaki (1990) point out, Asian Americans see education as a way to overcome prejudice and achieve success, and this has an important influence on Chinese immigrants' parenting practices.

It has been argued that Chinese parents tend to require obedience from their children (Chao, 1994; Lin & Fu, 1990). However, the present study has partially failed to support this

conclusion. Instead of asking children to obey them like many Chinese parents do or letting their children do whatever they want to do as some mainstream parents do, Chinese immigrants learn to respect their children's interests and have good communication with them. For instance, a participating family had a child who wanted to quit the piano program. Instead of simply forcing the child to continue learning piano, as many parents might do in China, the parents listened to their child's voice, explained the benefits of playing piano, and had the child make the final decision. Participants believed that children would be self-motivated and persist when they worked on what they were interested in. While participants respected their children's interests, there was a boundary. That is, they did not allow the children to do everything according to their own likes or dislikes. The children had to follow their parents' will: to be an honest person, to persist on a task, to work hard to gain academic achievement, and to respect parents and teachers. Parents asked their children to finish homework first, before engaging in extracurricular activities. In short, parents have control over their children in principle but give some freedom to them, too. They integrate their original cultural values with the host culture norms in their parenting practices.

School Education in China and Canada

Unanimously, all participants deeply appreciated the emphasis on children's individual development in Canadian public schools. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods to meet students' different learning styles and interests. Students were encouraged to ask questions and to express their own opinions based on rich resources. This is completely different from the examination-oriented, teacher-centered, and text-book based education in China (Neuman, & Bekerman, 2000; Spizzica, 1997). Participants remarked that it was students who chose the

topics for projects and therefore students were more willing to spend time doing the projects that were interesting to them. In contrast, Chinese teachers often choose the topics for students, whether students are interested in those topics or not (Neuman, & Bekerman, 2000; Spizzica, 1997).

Apart from the satisfaction with Canadian schools' emphasis on individual development, participants also expressed their appreciation for the well-rounded educational training model in the Canadian school system. Unlike Chinese schools' over-emphasis on academic achievement, Canadian schools stress skills and abilities such as language expression, creative and research abilities, teamwork, and social communication ability. As the mother of Family 11 said, "Canadian schools aim to foster a social person, who has life skills and a variety of abilities. Students with these skills and abilities will be better integrated into the society after they graduate from schools." Because of their appreciation of the Canadian school system, all participants remarked that they would like to stay in Canada, regardless of their economic and life situation. This holds especially true for the new Chinese immigrant parents, who experienced the sharp contrast between China and Canada. These parents in China had their stable jobs, comfortable lives, and a rich social network. After coming to Canada, the language barriers, the cultural differences, fewer job opportunities, and an uncertain life led these parents to disappointment and mental stress. But they still decided to stay in Canada for the sake of their children's education. As the father of Family 5, who immigrated to Canada three years ago, said, "It is absolutely a sacrifice for adults like my wife and I to immigrate to Canada, but it is worthwhile for my daughter. She enjoys the school here. She is a top student in a gifted program. We expect her to attend a top university

in North America. This would be just a rosy dream if we were still in China.” This study supports the claim that Chinese parents are willing to sacrifice themselves to help their children’s development (Li, 2001; Li, 2005b; Louie, 2004; Dyson, 2001).

This finding also confirms a local Chinese newspaper report on the motivation of recent Chinese immigrating to Canada. The newspaper reports that the examination-oriented education system, spoon-feeding and text-based teaching methods, and fierce competition lay a heavy burden on the shoulders of the school children and parents in China. It is the less competitive education environment, the flexible teaching methods, and the wide choices of universities in Canada that motivate an increasing number of Chinese parents to immigrate to Canada (Windsor Chinese Press, July 10, 2007).

Interestingly, although the majority of parents disliked the high pressure from academic work where their children did not have time to play and relax in China, participants expressed their concerns about the lack of adequate academic training provided by Canadian schools, particularly in mathematics. They were concerned about the small amount of homework assigned by school teachers. Parents were worried that their children did not learn much from school and contended that the Chinese system laid a solid foundation in academics. Students reinforced the knowledge by doing homework every day. In Canada, the elementary school children had almost no homework before grade 4. To compensate, parents arranged a tight schedule for their children, assigning supplementary homework, teaching extra content beyond the school curriculum, hiring tutors for their children, and sending them to afterschool classes.

Participants' concerns about the lack of adequate academic training can be interpreted in two ways: on the one hand, Chinese parents value knowledge and education. On the other hand, participants may lack adequate understanding of the different school systems in China and Canada (Dyson, 2001). With different socio-cultural contexts, the goals and purposes of education in the two countries are also different.

In China, following Confucius' ideology, education has been believed to lead to social mobility since ancient times and still has a strong influence on Chinese people today. Many Chinese people view education as the only way to gain a better life and high social status. Although the Chinese government has realized the weaknesses of its school system and began education reform a while ago, the inadequate human and capital resources for a large population assure the continuing existence of a fierce competition among schools and within the society (Ma, 2004; Xiao, 2007). Many schools focus their teaching on helping more students pass NCEE to get into university.

In contrast to the Chinese school system, Canadian schools emphasize and encourage the development of children's cognitive skills, analytical abilities, and creative and critical thinking. They realize that children come to school with different backgrounds and talents. Their missions are to let the children enjoy coming to schools and gain personal development. The major purpose of school is not how much children have learned, but providing chances for them to find individual interests, explore their potential abilities, and have a happy childhood.

The Length of Residence and Psychological Adaptation

The early arrivers stated that the major reason they immigrated to Canada was to pursue further study in Canadian universities and to seek better development opportunities. They often came to Canada with a Chinese-born child. As foreigners, they had to spend most of their time studying in Canadian universities before looking for a job. Once having gotten jobs, they had to put almost all their energy into their work for the first few years. Therefore, they did not have enough time and financial resources to invest in their first child.

After years of hard work, the majority of the participants obtained Master's or doctoral degrees from Canadian universities, often with a major in computer science, engineering (mechanical, environmental, computer engineer) or finance. Fortunately, the Canadian job market in these areas was pretty good when they graduated. It did not take long for many Chinese immigrants to find jobs that matched their backgrounds. With strong subject knowledge and well-known hard work ethics, many of these immigrants have become key workers and received promotions in their workplaces. Soon after their job and life became more stable, the early arrivers had their second child. They were able and willing to spend more time with their children as academic tutors, play-partners, and life guiders. They were also able to afford day camp and hire private teachers for their children's extracurricular activities and had the time and financial resources to take their children to travel around North America, Europe or Asia during the holidays for the purpose of broadening their children's knowledge and experiences.

These earlier arrivers were becoming more familiar with the mainstream cultural values and had better English language communication abilities after living in Canada for a while.

Consequently, the early arrivers were less stressed than the newcomers. As a result, their children receive more positive impact from their parents. The majority of early arrivers said that their second child received more care and support from them.

In contrast to the early arrivers, the newcomers have different situations. In the past decade, China has witnessed rapid development in economy, education, and other areas. The newcomers often had very good jobs and a high living standard in China. Most of them are highly trained professionals, young business managers, and other white-collar workers who enjoyed high social and family status in China. The reason for their migration to Canada is for their children to have better education. They state that children do not have a happy childhood in China because of the high pressure of academics on their children, the boring teaching methods, and the endless homework. Parents in this group also worry about their children's future development due to overpopulation and fierce competition in NCEE.

Unfortunately, the newcomers moved to Canada just as North America experienced an economic crisis and the Canadian job market went into a slump. It is still very difficult for new Chinese immigrants to find jobs matching their professions. It is even more difficult for those who do not have North American college or university degrees/diplomas (Li, 2000; Tian, 2000). As a result, many of them have to either go to university to obtain a Canadian university degree, or work as laborers for basic survival (Li, 2001). In addition, the language barrier and unfamiliarity with the cultural systems of the new country also contribute to the newcomers' psychological stresses and frustrations more than the early arrivers in the process of adaptation.

Moreover, these new Chinese immigrants lost so much that they were accustomed to having in their homeland: good jobs, financial security, stable lives, and social networks. The sharp contrasts of working and living conditions caused many psychological health issues such as confusion, stress, and frustration, as reported by Adelman (1998), Lee (1996), Li (2000), Sue and Sue (2003), Tian (2000), and Yu (2000).

These findings are in accordance with the previous studies on new Chinese immigrants, which report that the new Chinese immigrants face difficulties searching for jobs that match their education (Tian, 2000). The studies (Li, 2000, Li, 2000a; Pendakur & Pendakur, 1998) indicate that although the majority of new Chinese immigrants are highly educated and skilled workers and professionals, their educational credentials and work experiences obtained in China more likely are not recognized or at least are discounted.

Parents' psychological problems influence the ways they educate their children. For instance, some parents must work more than one job. They do not have much time to stay with their children or to get involved in their children's activities. They tend to lose their tempers more easily and to scold their children when they find their children do not meet their high expectations. For example, due to the struggles with life survival and unfamiliarity with the Canadian school system, when the father of Family 5, who immigrated to Canada four years ago, found that his daughter did not get the high mark of "A", he felt very disappointed and scolded his daughter. Other parents had to go back to school to obtain a Canadian university degree in order to find a job. Another example is from the mother of Family 2. She remarked that she felt very sorry for her son because both she and her husband did not have enough time to take good care of him. She had to spend time on her study in

order to finish her university school work, and her husband could not find a job and felt disappointed and frustrated. Consequently, both the father and mother tended to lose their tempers with their son.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed at exploring the behaviors and perspectives of Chinese immigrant parental involvement in the education of their elementary school children in Canada and to understand how their sociocultural beliefs and life experiences influenced their involvement.

Summary of This Study

This qualitative study used qualitative interviewing as the primary method of collecting data. Twelve Chinese couples who immigrated from mainland China to Windsor participated in this study. Qualitative interviewing allowed participants to describe detailed personal accounts and provided rich data regarding these parents' involvement and perceptions of their elementary school age children's educational development. Field notes were used as a supplementary source to record interview logs and my personal reflections of the research process.

This study reveals that all Chinese parents were involved in their children's education in and outside of school settings, regardless of their differences in personal experiences. They expressed belief that their involvement in their children's education was beneficial. Chinese parents got involved in school activities mainly by attending parent-teacher conferences, taking part in the school fundraising activities, and volunteering for the field trips organized by school teachers. Although parents were not expected to participate in school fundraising activities nor volunteer for field trips in China, the majority of the participants made an effort to take part in these school activities to adapt to the Canadian school system as best as they could.

However, generally speaking, participants did not go to their children's school without teachers' invitations. The language barrier, lack of time and energy, and unfamiliarity with the Canadian school culture were stated as the main reasons contributing to participants' limited involvement in school activities. For instance, in Chinese culture, teachers and parents are expected to play different roles with respect to children's education. Parents are responsible for their children's behaviors at home, while teachers are expected to look after their children's learning and behavior at school. Teachers are regarded as authority figures and are highly respected and trusted. For these reasons, it is deemed inappropriate to go to school to question teachers and voice parents' views without the teacher's invitation. When Chinese parents come to Canada, they often do not know that it is the parents' right to have their voices heard in school.

Compared with school-based involvement, the parents were more actively involved in out of school activities of various types. Due to the pressure originating from their Chinese cultural background, Chinese immigrant parents still viewed academic excellence as the most important thing for school children. They often held high educational expectations for their children's academic performances and assisted their children with school work or hired tutors for them. They also provided their children with moral education, such as the importance of respect for teachers and diligent study. Meanwhile, they learned that well-rounded education rather than academic achievement alone is emphasized in Canadian society. They therefore encouraged children to take part in a variety of extracurricular activities and develop life-based skills. It is quite clear that both Chinese and Canadian cultural values contributed to Chinese parents' involvement in their children's education.

In traditional Chinese culture, fathers work as bread-earners, while mothers spend more time taking care of children and the home. Mothers take the major responsibility for educating children, especially before they go to high school. Traditionally, both fathers and mothers seldom verbally express their love for their children. However, after moving to Canada, changes occur with respect to the roles of fathers and mothers in parenting. In the majority of the families, both fathers and mothers share the responsibility for educating their children. Both fathers and mothers help with their children in academics and express their love for their children verbally. Fathers tend to play with children, while mothers do housework and take responsibility for the day-to-day care of children. Who becomes homemaker and/or caregiver, if anyone, depends on the financial situation.

In terms of parenting styles, participants generally respected their children's interests and choices of extracurricular activities rather than asking them only to obey. However, they exercised their authority in the ways that they believed important. For example, they firmly required their children to be honest, respect parents and teachers, work hard in academic achievement, and make good friends.

With respect to the school system, the participants generally appreciated the Canadian public school system more than the Chinese one. They especially appreciated Canadian schools' emphasis on individual development, research, and daily life-related skills and abilities, as compared with the text-based, examination-oriented, and teacher-centered school system in China. However, they were concerned about the lower emphasis on academic basics in Canadian schools, especially in mathematics. They praised Chinese schools for laying a solid foundation in basic subjects. For compensation, participants provided extra

homework for their children. The parents also disagreed with Canadian schools and those parents who provided too much freedom to children. The parents expressed belief that the elementary school children were not mature enough and that they lacked the ability to make adequate judgments, and they therefore exercised control and discipline to set their children on the right path.

It is worth noticing that the findings suggest a difference between the newcomers and early arrivers in parenting, corresponding to their differing degrees of acculturation. In comparison with the early arrivers, the newcomers suffer more from psychological stress and frustration due to the sharp contrast between sociocultural contexts and personal experiences in China and Canada, along with the language barrier, work status, and cultural differences. The difficulty in finding jobs matching their previous educational background and working skills is one of the big factors causing these parents' stress and frustration. Such psychological pressure in turn makes them more likely to lose their tempers and be impatient while educating their children. As a result, parents' psychological pressure may affect the child's behavior, social and academic competence, and mental health (Downey & Coyne, 1990).

To meet various challenges in a new country, participants tend to integrate their original cultural values with the host cultural values in parenting during the process of transition and adjustment to the new land (Berry, 1997; Ward et al., 2001). On the one hand, they maintain Chinese traditional cultural values; on the other hand, they gradually adapt to the host culture. The process of change and the degree of adaptation is complex and dynamic, depending on the length of residence in the new land, individual socioeconomic status, political conditions,

and sociocultural context in both original and host countries (Berry & Kim, 1998; Sayegh & Lasry, 1993).

Contributions and Implications

The present study contributes to the theory of parental involvement. Many previous studies focused on mainstream parental involvement in school (Dwyer & Hecht, 1993; Romo & Falbo, 1996; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, and Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). Walker et al. (2005) conducted an empirical study on parental involvement based on a theoretical model of parental motivation and students' academic outcomes proposed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995; 1997). Their study revised the original parent involvement model by exploring reasons for and forms of mainstream parental involvement in their children's educational development.

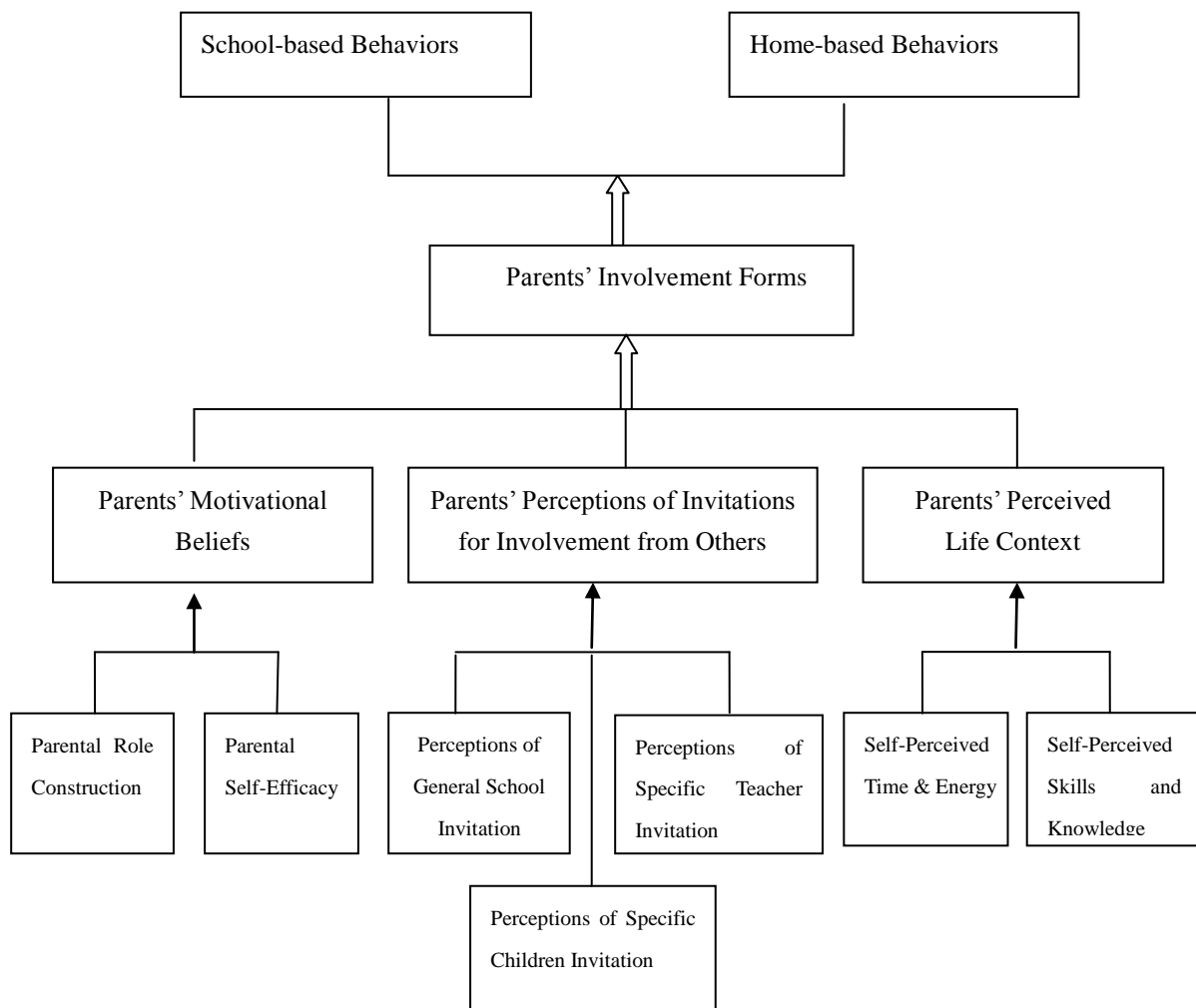
In the revised model (see Figure 1), Level 1 is composed of three parts: (a) parents' motivational beliefs; (b) parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from others; and (c) parents' perceived life context. *Parents' motivational beliefs* are defined as their self-constructed role and self-efficacy for getting involved in their children's education. *Parents' perceptions of invitations* for involvement from others are defined as perceptions of general school invitations, perceptions of specific child invitations, and perceptions of specific teacher invitations. *Parents' perceived life context* is defined as self-perceived time and energy and self-perceived skills and knowledge. Level 2 relates to parents' forms of involvement, which include school-based behaviors and home-based behaviors.

In my study, all participants shared the belief that their involvement would benefit their children's education. In other words, they did see their roles in their children's education

as beneficial. The parents did get involved in their children’s education through both in- and out-of- school activities. However, some of participants reported low self-efficacy for actively getting involved in school-based activities due to the language barrier. The school-based activities that participants were involved in included attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering on field trips, and attending school concerts and sports events. For these events, the parents always received invitations from schools or teachers. This finding supports the model of Walker et al. (2005) regarding the significance of parents’ perceptions of invitations for involvement from others: schools, children, and teachers.

Figure 1

Walker et al.’s (2005) model of the parental involvement process



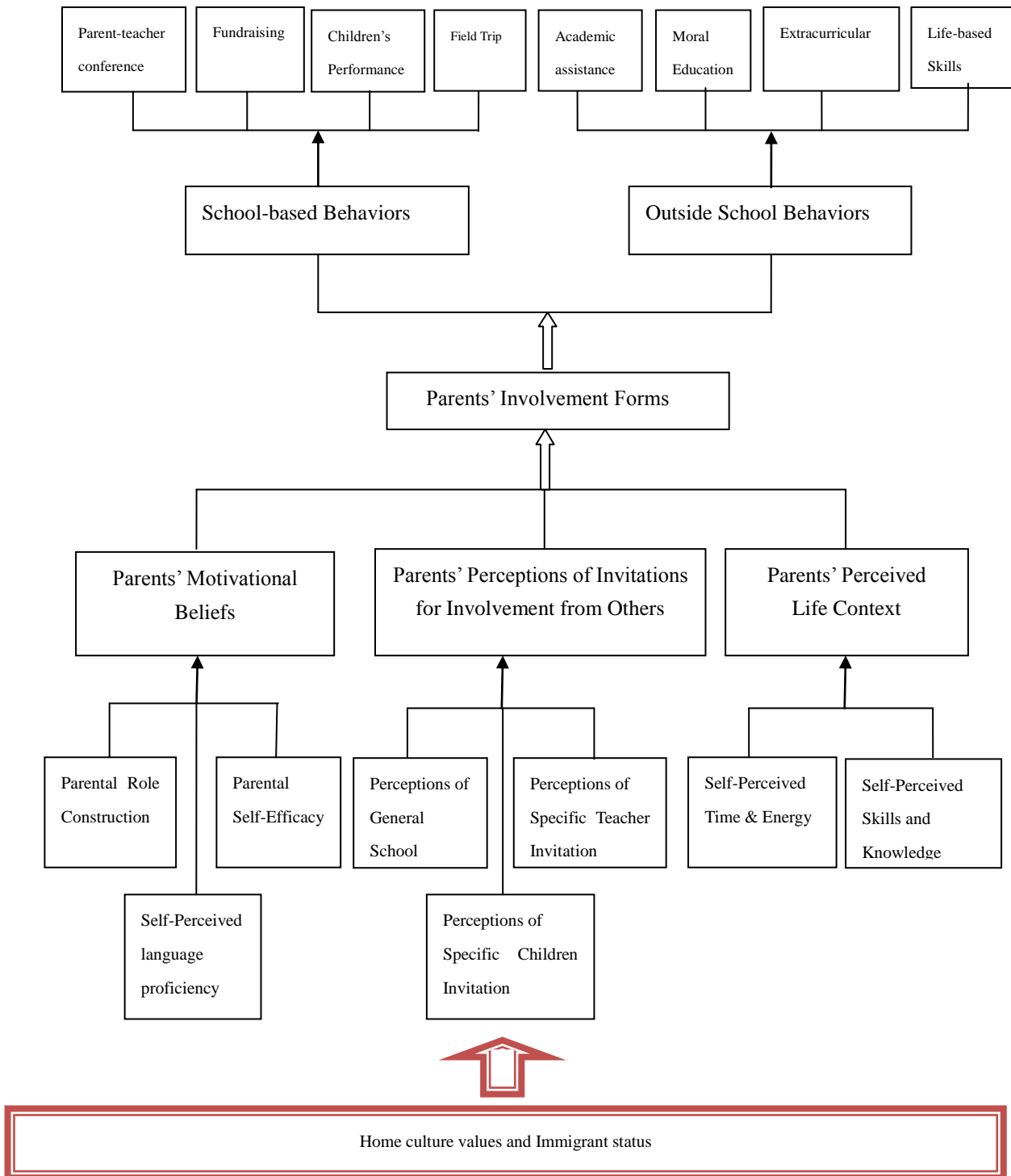
As far as the factor of parent's perceived life context, this study also provides evidence for the parent involvement model of Walker et al. (2005). In my study, the lack of time and energy were reported as among the major reasons that impeded Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education, particularly for those participants who came to Canada lately. In addition, their inadequate knowledge about the English language and Canadian culture kept them from getting actively involved in many school-based activities.

My study not only provides evidence to support the model of Walker et al. (2005), but also enriches this model with a cultural dimension (see Figure 2). By exploring the perspectives and practices of a group of Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education, this study demonstrates that in addition to the three categories of factors portrayed in Walker et al.'s (2005) model, participants' original cultural values and immigrant status play important roles in encouraging or discouraging parents to get involved in their children's educational development. For instance, this study shows that parents do not often get involved in school-based activities without schools' and teachers' invitations. Cultural difference may be one reason. In Chinese culture, teachers and parents are expected to play different roles with respect to children's education. It is not appropriate to go to school to question teachers and voice parents' views without teachers' invitations. Instead, with their high expectations for children's academic performance, parents spend much time out of school to support their children. As immigrants, Chinese parents believe that attending a top university with excellent academic records is the best way for their children to obtain a safe

job and live a stable life. Thus, they are willing to spend time and money to help their children with out-of-school academic practices.

Figure 2

An enriched model of the process of parental involvement with a cultural dimension



In the process of acculturation, Chinese parents gradually realize that Canadian schools and society promote well-rounded education instead of focusing only on academics. The blended cultural values provide an interpretation for Chinese parents' involvement behaviors: providing extra homework to their children in addition to taking them to non-academic activities, such as sports, music, and dancing programs. In terms of parenting style, on the one hand, they respect their children's interest; on the other hand, they exercise overall control of their life schedules.

Walker et al. (2005) portrayed parents' involvement in two forms, school-based and home-based. The present study extends school-based and home-based parental involvement behaviors into other settings, such as taking their children to church or the library, or traveling in and out of Canada. Therefore, this study adds details to the nature of both in- and out-of-school parental involvement behaviors.

This study has practical implications for parents, school teachers, teacher educators, community service providers, and policy makers. For parents, this study provides details on how Chinese immigrant parents become involved in their children's education at home. The findings may provide information to other parents, which will inform their parenting practices. Additionally, this study implies that it will be helpful for already adapted Chinese immigrant parents provide newcomers some assistance. Better English skills, experiences in job search, and familiarity with the Canadian education and culture will be beneficial for newcomers' parental involvement in the process of transition from a Chinese to a Canadian lifestyle.

This study found that language barrier, cultural differences, and lack of time are the major factors that impede Chinese immigrant parents from getting involved in school activities. In order to help new immigrant parents resolve the language barrier, schools can provide translators with a bilingual background (who know English as a second language). Schools can also create opportunities for parents to better understand the Canadian school system and its expectations for children and parents by hosting workshops with interpreters and distributing brochures in different languages. Also, schools can view the diversity as an asset for teaching. Teachers can invite parents with multicultural backgrounds into classrooms, integrating their cultural values and knowledge into school children's learning by using interpreters. Thus, teachers can also learn the essence of different cultural values in educating children. For instance, Chinese parents' support for their children plays an important role in their children's outstanding achievements in mathematics. Teachers may invite these parents to share the ways they help their children in mathematics.

Teacher education programs can add home-school partnership into the curriculum to prepare pre-service teachers for teaching in multicultural school contexts. The curriculum can include a comparison of the mainstream culture with other cultures, the different educational values, the ways of parenting children, and strategies and skills to engage immigrant children and communicate with their parents.

Time is a challenge for many immigrant parents due to their labor-intensive work schedules. Teachers can use various methods of keeping in touch with parents. Apart from arranging face-to-face meetings, teachers can send emails, write notes with different language versions, and make phone calls to exchange information on school children's schooling, other

school events and activities, and listen to the parents' voices, concerns, suggestions, and expectations for teaching and schooling.

The community can work together with school and family to contribute to the wellbeing of children and support families by providing information on and referrals to community institutions, such as schools, libraries, parks, cultural centers, and other places for social interaction. The community can hold workshops on parental involvement, such as seminars on how working parents can balance the demands of work and family life. Chinese community associations and Chinese churches can also play a more active role in bridging the cultural gap between schools and Chinese immigrant parents.

This study also offers implications for the Canadian government and policy makers. The professional immigrants received higher education and had rich working skills in their original country. However, this study reports that the recent professional immigrants experience great difficulty in finding jobs that match their previous educational backgrounds and work experiences in China. This becomes one of the major reasons causing the recent professional immigrants to suffer from psychological stress and frustration. Such psychological pressure in turn leads to parents' negative parental behaviors toward their children. In order to survive, these recent immigrant parents either have to spend years in the university in order to obtain a Canadian university degree or they have to do labor work, which is a waste of human capital for Canadian society. It is very important for the government and policy makers to recognize these immigrants' educational credentials and working experience and to provide more working opportunities and short-term training

programs to update their skills in order to help them adapt to the new land and contribute to Canadian society.

The limitations of this study suggest directions for further study. First, this study is limited by its research method. Since interviews were the primary data collection tool, participants' verbal self-reports may be biased due to immigration-related psychological or emotional difficulties; also, there existed the possibility of inaccuracy in participants' descriptions of their parenting experiences. These factors might lead to inconsistencies between what participants reported to me and what they actually thought and did. In addition, given the small number of selected participants, the findings cannot represent all Chinese immigrant parents in Windsor, nor other Chinese immigrant families across Canada. To generalize conclusions applicable to the whole Chinese population across Canada, mixed methods research will be necessary in the future.

Second, the participants in this study are professional Chinese immigrant parents with higher education backgrounds. Therefore, this study cannot represent other Chinese immigrants who are less educated in Windsor, Canada. More research is necessary to cover the Chinese immigrants with different educational backgrounds. Further, school teachers and immigrant children also need to be included in future studies in order to provide different perspectives on immigrants' parental involvement in their children's education.

Furthermore, my study indicates that immigration to Canada changes the role of fathers and mothers. Although all participants received higher education in China and some even obtained Master's degrees from a Canadian university, due to the financial situation, a few mothers, and even one father, stayed home as a caregiver of their children. What are the

father's and mother's perspectives on their new roles of parenting in the process of the transition to Canadian society? This is an interesting topic and worthy of further research. For several decades, researchers of children's education issues have focused on studying the role of mothers. Less is known about how the father's involvement impacts children's development. Therefore, the father's role in educating their children deserves further research.

I also recommend that future studies look into Chinese immigrant parents' psychological health issues, as such issues hinder new Chinese immigrants from supporting their children's educational development. Moreover, ways to encourage parents, school, and community to work together to help new immigrant parents with psychological health are also worthy of further study.

Before ending this study, I would like to emphasize that through listening to the participants' own words, this work provides a comprehensive description and analysis of some Chinese immigrant parents' perceptions and behaviors in parenting their children during the process of adaptation and adjustment to Canada. This study shows that Chinese immigrant parents are willing to become and actually do get involved in their children's education. Although many Chinese immigrant parents face challenges in the host culture, they sacrifice themselves to support their children's well-rounded educational development. They integrate their original cultural values with the host cultural values into their parenting perspectives and practices in the process of transition to the new land. They hold high educational expectations for their children, view academics as the most important thing and provide help with their children's academics. Yet they also want their children to receive a

well-rounded education. They respect their children's interests and also exercise necessary control, rather than asking their children to obey parents' ideas unquestioningly, as Chinese parents usually do. This study indicates that the Chinese immigrant parents' behaviors and perspectives in getting involved in their children's education are shaped by Chinese traditional cultural values, parents' personal experiences, and their understanding of the Canadian culture.

Today's children are tomorrow's citizens. Social change depends on good education today. Children's education does not take place only at school, but both in and out of school. It is widely recognized that parents are one essential educational resource for children. Only through a collaborative effort between parents, teachers, and community can well-rounded educational development for children with differing backgrounds be realized. Eventually the effort we make will contribute to the future of Canada, one of the largest immigrant countries.

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Appendix A



Letter of Invitation

Date _____

Dear _____

Thank you for reading this invitation letter for participation in a research study. I am Lan Zhong, originally from China. Currently, I am studying as a Ph.D. candidate at the Faculty of Education of University of Windsor. My research is on Chinese immigrant parental involvement in their elementary school age children's education.

The purpose of this study is twofold: first, to learn how Chinese immigrant parents get involved in the education of their elementary school age children, with a focus on afterschool activities; and second, to gain a better understanding of the Chinese immigrant parents' involvement as they go through a transitional period of cultural adjustment in a new country.

In sharing your experiences, you will become more aware of the methods of your own parenting, as well as learn about the parenting experiences of others during the process of transition and adaptation in a Canadian sociocultural context after I finish this study, when you read the final study, or the pamphlets I will create. Your reflections on your parenting experiences will also provide information for other parents on parental involvement in their children's academic achievement. Also, this study will contribute to schoolteachers' better understanding of Chinese immigrant children's school performances and their parents' behaviors in their children's education. This study may motivate policy makers to develop appropriate home-school-community cooperative program.

You will be expected to do the following specific things if you agree to participate in my research:

1. Attend an approximately 60 minute interview with the researcher. The interview will be audio-taped in order to instill confidence in its reliability as an impartial and accurate record of the interview.
2. The follow-up phone calls will be made if you have any other information you may want to

add to the interview – information that you may have remembered later. (This will happen no later than a week after interview.)

3. Check over the accuracy of data provided by or related to you through email when necessary.

I am looking forward to and value your participation in my study. If you are interested in my study and/or have any further questions before making the decision to participate, please contact me by e-mail: zhongl@uwindsor.ca

Sincerely,

Lan Zhong



邀请信

尊敬的家长:

感谢您阅读这封邀请信.我叫钟岚.来自中国.我是温莎大学教育系博士研究生.我想邀请您参加由我进行的关于中国移民父母教育孩子的研究.

论文的目的在于探究中国大陆移民父母在经历加拿大社会文化转变及适应过程中,对小学年龄阶段的孩子教育投入的看法及具体的教育行为方式.

通过分享您的经历,您将提高自己对你教育孩子的认识;同时,通过阅读我完成的研究报告,您也可了解其他父母在适应加拿大社会文化的过程中教育孩子的经验.您对自己教育孩子经历的反思也可为其他父母提供教育孩子的信息.同时,这项研究将帮助学校老师更好地了解中国移民孩子的学校表现以及中国移民父母教育孩子的行为方式.该研究也可能帮助政策制订者拟定恰当的家庭-学校-社区的合作项目.

如果您愿意参加该项研究,您需要做如下步骤:

1. 调查者将和您面谈大约60分钟.该面谈将被录音.调查者也会做笔记记录面谈内容,以增加面谈内容的准确性及完整性.
2. 如您还有相关信息---在面谈时您可能忘记的信息---需要补充,我将通过电话,电子邮件,或者面谈的方式与你进一步联系.
3. 如有必要,我会通过电子邮件来确认您提供的或者与您相关的信息的准确性.

我期待并珍视您的参与该项研究.如果您对该研究有兴趣或有任何疑问,请用电子邮件与我联系: zhongl@uwindsor.ca

此致

敬礼!

钟岚

Appendix B



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: Chinese Immigrant Parents' Involvement in the Education of the Elementary School Age Children in Windsor, Ontario: Perceptions and Practices.

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Lan Zhong, a doctoral student from Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Lan Zhong at zhongl@uwindsor.ca.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is twofold: first, to learn how Chinese immigrant parents get involved in the education of their elementary school age children, with a focus on afterschool activities; and second, to gain a better understanding of the Chinese immigrant parents' involvement as they go through a transitional period of cultural adjustment in a new country.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

4. Attend an approximately 60 minute interview with the investigator. The interview will be audio-taped in order to instill confidence in its reliability as an impartial and accurate record of the interview.
5. The follow-up phone calls will be made if you have any other information you may want to add to the interview – information that you may have remembered later. (This will happen no later than a week after interview.)
6. Check over the accuracy of data provided by or related to you through email when necessary.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The only minimal risk is that you and other parents may talk to each other about the research.

The only inconvenience may be the scheduling of the interviews. It is important that I schedule the interviews in ways that do not interfere with your own personal and work schedule. Therefore, interviews will be scheduled so as not to conflict with your work times.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

After I finish this study, when you read the report of this study, or the pamphlets I will create, you will learn about the parenting experiences of others.

Your reflections on your parenting experiences will also provide information for other parents on parental involvement in their children's academic achievement. Also, this study will contribute to schoolteachers' better understanding of Chinese immigrant children's school performances and their parents' behaviors in their children's education. This study may motivate policy makers to develop appropriate home-school-community cooperative programs.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not receive payment for participation. As a student I do not have means to compensate beyond producing thank you letters.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Data will be kept secured in a locked filing cabinet in my possession. After the study is completed, the files will be stored safely for five years before they are shredded.

Interviews will be audio-taped. On the tapes and transcripts, each participant will be identified by research participant number and a corresponding pseudonym. There will be no connection between the interview data and the individual's true identity. At the end of transcription, audiotapes will be destroyed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you are free to withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Or you can refuse to answer questions you don't want to answer and still remain in this study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. You also have the option to withdraw from the study without any consequences up to the time that I write my dissertation.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

The feedback to you will be in June 2009. Emerging study results will be shared with the subjects. They will be sent to you via email for review and comments. A copy of the study will also

be available at the Leddy Library, University of Windsor. A summary will be posted on the REB website in the University of Windsor.

Web address: www.uwindsor.ca/reb Date when results are available: May 2010.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data may be used in subsequent studies of a similar nature.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study entitled **Chinese Immigrant Parents' Involvement in Elementary School Age Children in Windsor, Ontario: Perceptions and Practices** as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject

Date

Signature of Subject

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date



同意参加研究的同意书

研究课题： 安大略省温莎地区中国移民父母对小学年龄阶段的孩子教育问题的认知及教育方式探讨

您被邀请参加由温莎大学教育学系博士生钟岚进行的一项研究。如果您有任何问题，请与钟岚联系，zhongl@uwindsor.ca。

研究目的：

论文的目的在于探究中国大陆移民父母在经历加拿大社会文化转变及适应过程中，对小学年龄阶段的孩子教育投入的看法及具体的教育行为方式。

研究过程：

如果您愿意参加该项研究，您需要做如下步骤：

1. 调查者将和您面谈大约60分钟。该面谈将被录音。调查者也会做笔记记录面谈内容，以增加面谈内容的准确性及完整性。
2. 如您还有相关信息---在面谈时您可能忘记的信息---需要补充，我将通过电话，电子邮件，或者面谈的方式与您进一步联系。
3. 如有必要，我会通过电子邮件来确认您提供的或者与您相关的信息的准确性。

可能的风险和不适：

参加该研究没有任何风险和不适。唯一的不便之处是安排面谈的时间。我们将确保您参加此研究不会影响你自己的时间安排。所以面谈的时间将不会和你的工作和休息时间冲突。

对参加研究者以及对社会的益处：

通过分享您的经历，您将提高自己对你教育孩子的认识；同时，通过阅读我完成的研究报告，您也可了解其他父母在适应加拿大社会文化的过程中教育孩子的经验。您对自己教育孩子经历的反思也可为其他父母提供教育孩子的信息。同时，这项研究将帮助学校老师更好地了解中国移民孩子的学校表现以及中国移民父母教育孩子的行为方式。该研究也可能帮助政策制订者拟定恰当的家庭-学校-社区的合作项目。

参加研究的报酬:

作为一名在校学生,我目前没有足够的经费来源作为参加此项研究的自愿者的报酬. 但我会以感谢信的方式,表达我对您支持该项研究的感谢之情.

保密守则:

该研究中所获取的信息,只要能够和您联系起来的都将保密. 只有得到您的许可才可能公开. 研究中将使用假的名字来保护你的隐私. 所有的数据都会安全地保管,只有我能够接触. 面谈中将进行录音. 录音的资料和翻转的书面资料中的参加者都只有一个数字和相关的假名. 面谈的资料和参加者的真正身份将没有联系,并且在研究完成之后,磁带将被销毁.

参加研究和推出:

你可以选择是否参加此研究. 如果你志愿参加,你可以在任何时候选择退出,而不用担心有什么后果. 您也可以拒绝回答某些问题,但依然参加研究. 在某些情况下,研究人员可能会劝您退出. 您也可以选择把你的资料从研究中删除.

研究的反馈:

研究的结果将和参加者共享. 通过电子邮件的方式,研究人员将寻求您的反馈. 研究结果最后会保留在温莎大学的 LEDDY 图书馆.

后续研究对数据的使用:

您提供的信息有可能在类似的研究中使用.

参加研究人员的签字: _____ 日期: _____

调研人员的签字: _____ 日期: _____

Appendix C



CONSENT FOR AUDIO TAPING

Research Subject Name: _____

Title of the Project: Chinese Immigrant Parents' Involvement in the Education of the Elementary School Age Children in Windsor, Ontario: Perceptions and Practices.

I consent to the audio-taping of interviews.

I understand these are voluntary procedures and that I am free to withdraw at any time by requesting that the taping be stopped. I also understand that my name will not be revealed to anyone and that taping will be kept confidential. Tapes are filed by number only and stored in a locked cabinet.

I understand that confidentiality will be respected and that the audiotape will be for professional use only.

(Signature of Participant)

Date

(Signature of Researcher)

Date



同意录音

研究对象的姓名:

研究题目: 安大略省温莎地区中国移民父母对小学年龄阶段的孩子教育问题的认知及教育方式的探讨

我同意对访谈内容进行录音。 我自愿参与访谈。 我可以在任何时间要求停止录音。 我的名字不会泄露给任何人,而且录音内容保密。 录音的资料只用数字存档, 并保存在上锁的储藏柜里。

我知道研究人员对有关我个人的一切信息保密。 录音内容只用于研究需要。

研究对象签字

日期

研究人员签字

日期

Appendix D

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Question Group A: Pre-entry characteristics

1. Would you please tell me the major reason(s) that you came to Canada?
2. What challenges have you experienced in using the English language in Canada? Has the challenge of English language influenced you getting involved in your children's school activities?
3. Would you please tell me your experiences about job hunting in Canada? Did it influence your getting involved in your children's education development?

Question Group B: Parental involvement in school

4. How often do you go to your children's school?
5. If you do not often go to your children's school, what are the reasons?
6. When you go to your children's school,
 - a) In what situation(s) do you go to school (e.g., are you invited by the school teachers)?
 - b) What do you usually do in school (e.g., attend parent-teacher conferences)?
 - c) What is your opinion on parent involvement in your children's school activities?

Question Group C: Parental involvement outside of school

7. Do you do anything for/with your children after school? If not, what are the reasons?
8. If yes,
 - a) What do you do after you children return home from school during the weekday?
 - b) What do you do on the weekend?
 - c) What do you do during the holidays (e.g. March Break, Christmas, Chinese New Year?)
9. What are your opinions on parental involvement in your children's outside school activities?
10. What roles do you or your spouse play in educating your children?
11. What expectation do you have for your children's education?

Question Group D: Cultural values in parenting children

12. In your opinion, how do Canadian elementary schools differ from those in China (e.g.,

teaching styles, student-teacher relationship)?

13. What is opinion on the most/least favorable aspect of the elementary schools in China and in Canada?
14. How do you perceive the differences of parenting children in China and Canada?

访谈问题

A 组问题：先前背景

1. 可否告诉我你们来加拿大的主要原因？
2. 在加拿大你们使用英语有什么挑战吗？这种挑战是否影响到你们投入孩子在读学校的活动？
3. 可否告诉我你们在加拿大找工作的经历？这些经历是否影响到你们对孩子教育的投入？

B 组问题：父母投入学校活动

4. 你们常到孩子的学校去吗？
5. 如果你们不常去，是什么原因呢？
6. 如果你们去学校，
 - (1) 什么情况下去呢（例如，学校老师邀请）？
 - (2) 在学校，你们通常做些什么呢（例如，参加家长会）？
 - (3) 对投入孩子学校活动，你们是怎么看的？

C 组问题：父母投入校外活动

7. 孩子放学后，你们会为他/她或跟他/她一起做些什么吗？如果没有，是什么原因呢？
8. 如果会，
 - (1) 平时孩子放学后，你们为他/她或跟他/她一起做些什么？
 - (2) 周末你们为他/她或跟他/她一起做些什么呢？
 - (3) 节假日（例如，春假，圣诞节，春节），你们为他/她或跟他/她一起做些什么？
9. 对投入孩子校外活动，你们是怎么看的呢？
10. 在教育孩子方面，作为父母亲，你们扮演什么样的角色？
11. 对孩子的教育，你们有什么样期待？

D 组问题：教育孩子方面的文化价值观

12. 你们认为加拿大的小学教育与中国小学教育有些什么区别（例如，教学方法，师生关系）？
13. 关于中国和加拿大的小学教育有那些方面你们认为是最喜欢和最不喜欢的？
14. 你们怎么看待对中国和加拿大在教育孩子方面的区别？

VITA AUCTORIS

Lan Zhong graduated from Chongqing Normal University, China, in 1985. She received a Master's degree in education 2005 from Lakehead University. She is currently a candidate for the doctoral degree in education at the University of Windsor and expects to graduate in fall 2010.