

CHILDHOOD SOCIALIZATION: CHINESE PARENTS  
AND AMERICAN PEERS

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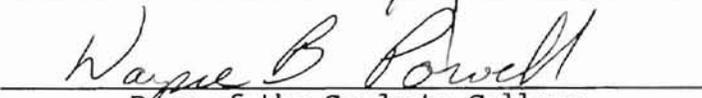
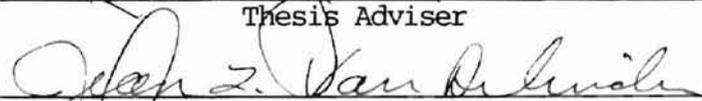
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The United States is an ever-increasing population of culturally diverse people. Specifically, the American classroom reflects the changing composition of U.S. society and research statistics have captured the present reality and future expectations of this demographic trend. For example, Waggoner (1993) found that 14% of the school population does not speak English at home. And future projections include the following; by the year 2000, two-fifths of all school-age children will be children of color (Banks, 1991) and one-third will be of ethnically diverse backgrounds.

For the most part, those interested in the dynamics of the classroom have been in the field of education, but recently, those in the social sciences have given increased attention to children, classrooms, and peer cultures. For several years the changing composition of the American classroom has been studied to inform federal, state, and county entities of the presumed impact such demographic alterations will have on the educational process. In particular this research has made the popular term "multiculturalism" into an alerting device, advising communities to create schools that provide a non-discriminatory atmosphere and curriculum. Yet even beyond housing academia, schools and classrooms house distinct social worlds for children and adolescents. Hence other disciplines, particularly sociology, have focused on such issues as attitudes and prejudices among students, interracial relationships and

conflicts, and differences between cultural groups. A relatively less explored issue is that of childhood socialization and conflict of family versus peer values.

The concept of socialization has developed toward an interactionist perspective. Traditionally, socialization has been recognized as an outcome, the creation of productive, socially contributing adults, and recognizes parents and other adults, teachers and ministers for example, as the primary socializers of children. On the other hand, symbolic interactionists recognize socialization as a process in which the person, child or adult, plays an active part in his or her own social development. These theorists and researchers assert that socialization not only occurs while adults interact with children, but also when children interact with one another. Thus, symbolic interactionism provides an alternative to the assumption of childhood being non-social. For example, Leena Alanen, in her chapter in Sociological Studies in Child Development (1990), articulates her critical opinion of the way in which children are negatively defined in traditional social theory: defined not by what the child is, but by what he or she is subsequently going to be. Alanen explains this perspective is elitist, in that children are not recognized as contributing to their own socialization, but that the aspects of their socialization are defined by adults. This perspective ultimately "works against noticing any conflicts or contradictions in the process" (p. 19). Alanen concludes that ethnographic, phenomenological or cultural analysis of children's lives will help bring about a more complex notion of socialization.

These approaches suggest that children are social actors and agents of their own development.

Some researchers have now begun to study childhood with the understanding that socialization is not an outcome, but a process, interactive and perhaps, contradictory. Yet, this framework has not been widely used by sociologists studying children's social worlds and socialization. Alanen (1990) suggests that researching social relations, structures of social interaction, and institutionalized social practices might alert us to further assumptions of childhood socialization. Simultaneously, other researchers have asserted the need to explore the possibility of conflict in the socialization process. Corsaro and Rizzo (1990) for example, explain that "the ways in which socialization differs in the peer group and in the family remain to be adequately described" (p. 468).

## Background

### Children's Social Worlds

A number of studies have documented the impact children have on each other while interacting. Interactionists assert children act on their environment and participate in social worlds where they socialize each other. For example, Goodwin (1990) has shown through ethnographic research that children not only shape themselves but also shape others through peer interaction. Furthermore, Corsaro and Rizzo (1990) claim "the peer culture has a basic autonomy and irreducibility" (p. 466). Specifically, Corsaro (1992, p. 162; 1988,

p. 3) identifies a peer culture as "a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share."

Symbolic interactionists addressing childhood socialization recognize some distinct ways in which children interact and socialize one another. First of all, language and discourse is the most critical tool for the child's construction of the social world (Corsaro 1985). Symbolic interactionists understand language as more than simply adult speech. Denzin (1977, p. 95) following Blumer, defines language as set of "significant indicative gestures" (cited in Musolf 1996, p. 318). Thus, children engage in this language of gestures before they master adult speech. The second form of child interaction is play or games, the most often researched area. Games are forms of social interaction performed by one or more participants. "They familiarize children with rules, engender skill acquisition, and habituate them to competition, cooperation, as well as authority, goals, plans-of-action, and chance, all of which significantly contribute to the unfolding of adult lives" (Denzin 1977, p. 15).

Yet, socialization does not take place only within the peer group. The family is another primary group for children. In particular, many researchers ask, "What part does the family play in the childhood socialization process?" Moreover, they question the origination of cultural routines in peer groups. Musolf (1996) states, "Corsaro's claim that cultural routines originate in peer groups may be misleading if there is no prior study of the family"

(p. 316). As offered by Handel (1990, p. 465) it has also been concluded that cultural routines are learned in parent-child interaction long before children are capable of entering into peer groups, as well as concurrently with peer group participation (Grief and Gleason 1980; Snow, Dubber, and DeBlauw 1982). In a response to Handel's criticism of the neglect of the family in their work, Corsaro and Rizzo (1990) state:

Once children begin to interact regularly with peers they come to recognize that they have the ability to produce their own shared world without direct dependence on adults. At this point, children begin to socialize each other and inputs and experiences from the adult world are often interpreted within the routines of peer culture. In short, with the creation of a peer culture, other children become as important as adults in the socialization process (p. 467).

Furthermore, these researchers acknowledge the correctness of Handel "when he argues that confusions and uncertainties of social knowledge that children experience are often readdressed in the family as well as the peer group" (Corsaro and Rizzo 1990, p. 468). And perhaps more importantly, they agree that there may well be socialization conflicts for the child because families and peer groups address the same problems differently (Corsaro and Rizzo 1990; Handel 1990).

#### The Importance of Culture

Because the number of ethnic children is growing at a significant rate in the United States, one of today's most studied issues in

regard to children is the acquisition of an ethnic identity. Cooley's looking glass self is a perspective that helps one to understand the dynamic between interaction and the child's link to society. The idea of the looking glass self is that "people possess consciousness and that it is shaped in continuing social interaction" (Ritzer 1996, p. 197). Additionally, it is within primary groups (intimate, face-to-face groups) that interaction links people to the larger society. Particularly for children, one's primary groups include the family and the peer group. Today one may attest that the media, although not physically interactive, has become a primary group for children as well. In regard to minority or ethnic children, Rotheram and Phinney (1987) identify both, the media and direct contact, as how children learn that some of their behaviors, which to them are the only way to behave in a given situation, are in fact "ethnic" (p. 23). Children usually recognize the more obvious ethnic differences, such as skin color, language, clothing, etc., and then as they grow older, children see cultural and ethnic differences in a broader range of areas, such as behavior, attitudes, and values. Likewise, Mead's (1934; 1962) concept of the generalized other appropriates the community as the responsible force that interactively creates our "self." It is precisely in integrated school settings that children can experience this awareness as a part of acculturation, a unique additive to the socialization process.

In the same way Cooley's and Mead's theories are interactive, Rotheram and Phinney (1987) point out the "possibility of conscious choice." Conscious choice is a way of stating that children can

decide to emphasize one's own distinctive cultural patterns or adopt the pattern of another group. Yet, it is not clear at what age children begin to be able to choose which ethnic patterns they will adopt, that is, which reference group they will have (p. 24).

Generally, the goal of American schools in socializing children is multicultural competence. This goal emphasizes the benefits of socialization to more than one cultural group's norms (Fitzgerald 1971; McFee 1968). Offering support to this perspective Rotheram and Phinney (1987) cite several research efforts that have associated "forced choice," the decision to identify with and behave in accordance with one's own culture or that of the dominant culture, with insecurity, anxiety, increased emotionality, distrust, hostility, and defensiveness (Child 1943; Goodman 1964; Lewin 1948; Mussen 1953; Paz 1961; Stevenson and Stewart 1958).

#### Purpose and Objectives

This research concentrates on the possibility of conflict between peers and families in the socialization process of immigrant children and children of immigrants. Specifically, I ask how might cultural dynamics in the family and school-age peer cultures interact in the socialization of children. To examine the possibility of socialization conflict, my focus is on immigrant children for whom socialization takes place in a culturally distinct family and in a mainstream, American school.

To limit the scope of the study I will be focusing on Chinese immigrant families. It has been well researched and documented that

the Chinese in America, specifically in densely populated Chinatowns, continue their Chinese traditions and culture. Thus, studying the Chinese in Stillwater, Oklahoma is appropriate for the purpose of examining the possibility of conflict between Chinese families and American peers and for comparing the findings with research conducted on larger, urban populations of Chinese youth. This study is guided by the following questions:

1. What do Chinese immigrants, who are parents of school-aged children, say about the socialization of American children?
2. Do Chinese immigrant parents suggest conflict between the values and expectations they teach their children and the values and expectations non-minority American peers emphasize?
3. Do parents identify particular areas in which their Chinese and Chinese-American children are influenced by non-minority American peers?
4. If parents suggest an influence, to what extent do their children experience conflict of culture in their socialization?

While the above questions provide examples of the kinds of information in which I am interested, my primary objective is to uncover the relationship between peer groups and families in Chinese children's socialization process. When the three elements of peer group, family, and culture merge, what is the child's social world like? To what extent does the child experience conflict of values and social expectations? At what point, if any, does his or her adjustment lead to the decision to follow one cultural way over another? My general hypothesis is that Chinese children or children

of Chinese immigrants who attend public school in America may deal with such conflict and that, perhaps, peers will have the greatest impact on the socialization process. I further presuppose that Chinese immigrant parents who emphasize Chinese ways will identify less commonalities between their values and American ones and will have concerns if their children act in ways they consider American. These issues are explored in relation to the knowledge gained about the particular Chinese families that reside in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

#### Significance of the Study

As already discussed, childhood theorists recognize many questions remain unanswered and many issues remain to be considered in the scope of socialization. For the most part, the study of childhood socialization has not departed from the traditional perspective that identifies children as non-social and non-contributors of their own development. Moreover, even less explored are issues of conflict within the process of socialization. One of Alanen's (1990) suggestions is a cultural analysis of children's lives, which would provide information to better understand the complexity of socialization. Hence, studying the socialization experience of immigrant children and children of immigrant parentage within the context of acculturation may shed some light on the questions that remain concerning the interactive nature of the socialization process. Again, symbolic interactionism considers this process interactive because children actively participate in their own socialization, i.e. the acceptance of certain values,

behaviors, ideas, etc., that may or may not be of his or her native-culture. In addition, such a study would envelop a generational analysis of the social adjustment within immigrant families.

Because of the diversity of the American population it is of interest and concern that the issues related to immigration, for example, acculturation, and the components of ethnic children's socialization, for instance, identity development, be understood more fully. Important to note here is that it has been estimated that between 1995 and 2020, the percent of Asians in the state of Oklahoma alone will increase by over 200 percent (U.S Bureau of the Census 1990). Thus, gaining knowledge of minority and immigrant children's socialization can possibly lend to the creation of both communities and institutions of learning that offer respect and help to the adults and children who want to thrive in their host culture, regardless of the degree of interest in retaining their native-born culture. The opposing side of thriving in a new environment is what Betty Lee Sung (1987) found among Chinese adolescents in New York City. Specifically she explains, "Gang members in New York's Chinatown are almost exclusively foreign-born immigrants who are having difficulty adjusting to a new way of life in a new country" (p. 137). This example is not to say that the Chinese children in Stillwater are on route to this kind of lifestyle, but is to illustrate the importance of understanding the immigrant experience and to afford what difficulties and challenges may exist for these youth.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Different aspects of the Chinese immigrant experience have been researched. Historians, family researchers, childhood theorists, and linguists have all contributed to the knowledge we have of the Chinese in America. In this review of the literature, information on issues related to all of these fields are offered in brevity. Specifically, the first section provides an historical account of the laws impacting Chinese families in the West. The second issue discussed is the kinds of families now living in America and the values researchers have associated with them. The third and fourth sections present the dynamics of the new second generation of Chinese children and what the literature reveals about peer influence. Section five outlines what researchers have found concerning interaction that occurs at school. The sixth section offers an introduction to facets of language. Finally, the last two sections of the chapter explore theories of cultural adjustment.

#### History of Chinese Migration to the West

Large-scale Chinese immigration to the United States began around the middle of the nineteenth century. Among the first Chinese in the United States were coolies, or immigrant laborers, who worked for such industries as the railroad and shrimp-fishing. Other large numbers of Chinese men came to search for gold, in hopes to bring their families from China. Many did not accumulate enough money

to bring their wives and children before the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, while many others could not afford their own return to China. While they were acknowledged for their hard work and dependability (Sowell 1996), policies were implemented that disheartened the Chinese men in America. In particular the racial atmosphere of mid-1800 California had been exacerbated by the masses of American gold-seekers. Discriminatory laws and practices forced many Chinese out of direct competition with white miners. Additionally, federal law excluded Chinese people from becoming naturalized citizens; hence, the Fourteenth Amendment did not supply them with basic rights and opportunities. It was not until 1943 that the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was repealed. This act had separated husbands and wives, and parents and children for decades.

The biggest change in immigration did not begin until the mid 1960's with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965. The Immigration Act discontinued national-origin quotas and made family reunification and filling needed occupations the chief criteria for entry. A 20,000 person annual limit was given to each country, but spouses, parents, and children were exempt from this number. Since the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, between 20,000 and 30,000 Chinese, primarily from Hong Kong, have entered every year. Immigration policies and discriminatory laws for over 100 years made the Chinese in America struggle against poverty and resist the damaging effect of families being separated for long periods of time. But, at this point, the image of the Chinese immigrant begins to change.

Compared to older immigrants, the post-1965 immigrants ranged from working class families who arrived with very little to those with substantial assets seeking a secure place to invest their capital. Older immigrant families of the 1940's and 1950's arrived as students, while the younger segment of immigrants, those who came after the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, had already attained university educations in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Furthermore, coming from urban backgrounds, the post-1965 immigrants differed in language, speaking Mandarin Chinese instead of Cantonese. Due to the linguistic, regional, and educational differences of these groups of immigrants there continues to exist a social gulf between them. While the older segment were Chinatown based, the new, immigrant families of professionals and the American-born Chinese, decided to reside in white, middle-class neighborhoods in the city or suburbs. Even among the Chinese families of professionals and the American-born Chinese there are vast differences in the maintenance and expression of Chinese culture. The differences between the segments of Chinese in America are important to consider when attempting to understand the populations of Chinese and Chinese-Americans living outside Chinatown-based communities.

#### Chinese Families Living in America

By 1960, more than 60 percent of the Chinese in America were born here (Glenn and Yap 1994). Families of American-born Chinese are either second, third, fourth, or fifth generation Americans, many of whom work and live among the white middle class. Wong (1985)

reports that many values of the American middle class have been absorbed by American-born Chinese. These values include neolocal households, independence, privacy, the habits of purchasing appliances on credit, materialism, emphasis on success, etc (p. 243). Wong further concludes that American-born Chinese do not faithfully follow traditional Chinese customs. They eat some Chinese food and celebrate some Chinese festivals, but they do not speak Chinese in the family. Furthermore, although parents may be interested in retaining some traditional practices, children of these families say they are American first and Chinese second. In Wong's study, the majority of parents whose children wanted to be accepted in the American society overwhelmingly compromised and did not impose their preferences on their children.

After the Immigration Act of 1965 there was an influx of immigrants; and by 1980, the American-born families were no longer the majority, 63.3 percent of the Chinese population was foreign born (Glenn and Yap 1994, p. 129). This second segment of Chinese families in America are recognized as families of professionals. Families of professionals include all first generation Chinese who were either stranded in this country or voluntarily migrated to the U.S. for professional reasons or economic opportunities (Wong 1985, p. 244). These families live in predominantly white middle-class neighborhoods and both husbands and wives have college or postgraduate degrees and are employed in mainstream institutions, such as universities and research centers. Wong describes this group as considerably westernized even before emigrating; having come from

major urban areas in China, they had adopted western clothing, recreation, eating, and living habits. Yet, since the majority of family heads were born in China and had been educated in China, certain cultural roots had been planted. Values such as filial piety, frugality, hard work, hospitality, and propriety are still deep in their thinking (Wong 1985, p. 245). Additionally, fully 80 percent of all Chinese persons 5 years and over were reported to speak a language other than English at home, indicating Chinese-American families are retaining aspects of their traditional culture (Glenn and Yap 1994, p. 133). Thus, in terms of cultural orientation, Wong (1985) states that there is no consensus among all Chinese professionals who are first generation immigrants (p. 246). Some may agree with complete Americanization, while others hope to straddle Chinese and American culture, teaching their children the benefits of both. Wong asserts however that, "their American-born children tend to be completely Americanized disregarding the efforts of their first generation parents" (p. 246).

Essentially, there can be almost any possible combination of Chinese and non-Chinese culture within Chinese immigrant and Chinese-American families. Differences in national origin, socioeconomic backgrounds, residential decisions and other factors contribute to the variability of Chinese families in America. Yet, even within families, generations living together undergo the experience of immigration and adaptation differently.

## The New Second Generation

The exclusion of the study of children in the experiences of immigrants has been largely cited by researcher and author Betty Lee Sung (1985, 1987). She states, "A review of the literature reveals almost a total vacuum in studies on how children weather the immigrant experience" (1987, p.1). This generational distinction is important because of the changing Chinese population in the United States.

According to the 1990 U.S. Census, about fifteen percent of all children in the United States are immigrant children or children of immigrant parentage. Moreover, ninety percent of Asian-American children are members of the first or second generation (Zhou 1997). These contemporary immigrant children are referred to as the new second generation. Although children born in the United States are the true second generation, most literature includes contemporary immigrant children who have arrived in the United States before they reach adulthood as being a part of the new second generation (Gans 1992, Portes 1996). Rumbaut (1991) has coined the term "one-and-a-half generation" to describe children not born in the United States who straddle the old and the new worlds but are fully part of neither.

### American Peers

Sung (1987) explains, in traditional Chinese society, stress is put upon the vertical relationships within the family. Likewise

in her study, "Socialization Patterns Among the Chinese in Hawaii," Nancy Young (1972) notes her observations of Chinese families in Hawaii indicate child-rearing techniques that result in parent-oriented, as opposed to peer-oriented behavior. The Chinese child is socialized to accept that priority is placed upon the well-being of the group rather than on the individual, so one's individual rights, concerns and happiness are downplayed for the larger good of the family. In the dominant American culture, the peer group exerts a very strong pull against the family at an early age. Peer acceptance is a horizontal relationship that children strive to master. There is great importance placed on being accepted and liked by one's classmates, playmates and friends. As previously discussed, researchers have found "peer relationships are of central importance in socialization, providing expectations, models, and reinforcements that shape a wide variety of social behaviors, attitudes, and perspectives" (Johnson 1980, p. 126).

Many researchers have outlined differences that exist between the Chinese culture and American culture that may contribute to tension for immigrant children and children of immigrant parentage. Some of the cultural values that Chinese immigrant families possess, such as the importance of family and education, have already been discussed. Additionally, the variations of Chinese and non-Chinese customs that are seen in immigrant homes today have been presented. In regard to the peer environment, Betty Lee Sung (1987) discovered several areas of the dominant American peer culture that are in opposition to Chinese teachings, including, physical and verbal

aggression versus intellectualism, individualism versus family priority, and sexuality and sports achievement versus educational aspirations. Even American and Chinese heroes and heroines differ. American culture admires popular figures, actors, athletes, and sometimes political figures, while the Chinese culture respects scholars, inventors, hard workers, and those who put nation above self. Although contemporary China has experienced some change where actors and singers are now becoming quite popular, most immigrant parents hold fast to traditional ideas.

Other researchers have reached similar conclusions regarding the areas of life in which peers contribute to socialization. Sung cites Segal and Yahraes (1978) who assert, "It is largely through the child's interactions with peers that many of life's most important attitudes and behaviors are shaped in the young - for example, learning to find sexual expression, to display and modulate aggressive instincts, to live by ethical standards, even to overcome disabling fears and anxieties and gain a sense of emotional security" (p. 237). Similarly, Johnson (1980, p. 125) lists several ways how student-student interaction impacts children and adolescents: 1) socialization of values, attitudes, competencies, and ways of perceiving the world; 2) teaching the social competencies necessary to reduce social isolation; 3) providing the context in which children learn to master aggressive impulses; 4) contributing to the development of sex-role identity; 5) contributing to the emergence of perspective-taking abilities; and 6) influencing educational aspirations and achievement.

## The Institution of the Public School

The potential for interaction is greatest at school which provides the environment for peers to contribute to one another's socialization. On the basis of his review of the literature, Schmuck (1971) concludes that compared to interactions with teachers, interactions with peers are more frequent, intense, and varied. In addition to providing children the chance to participate in peer groups, Sung (1987) acknowledges the pervasiveness of the school as a cultural and social institution saying, "The school remains the primary socializing institution, for it immediately takes the immigrant child under its wings to educate, mold, and shape that child at all entry levels from kindergarten through high school" (p. 63). Furthermore, Richard Pring (1975) discusses socialization as an aim of education in which there are distinct objectives, for example, learning about local society, providing a moral education, and training in the "correct" social attitudes. Thus, children interacting in a peer group at school are participating in a particular cultural and social setting.

How immigrant parents view the American public school system is important in understanding the potential for conflict in the process of their childrens' socialization. Some of the opinions offered by immigrant parents about the American school are very displeasing. Mikyong Kim-Goh's (1995) research reveals the opinion of Asian-American parents who think the discipline [in American schools] is far too lax or nonexistent and see schools as

opportunities for their children to become ill-disciplined and disrespectful to them like "American" children. Other negative opinions have been documented, for example, this opinion expressed by an immigrant mother:

Because the family budget is too great, the parents usually have to work and leave the children at home with no one to care for them. That's why our children pick up bad social habits and become Westernized to the point that their own culture gets washed away. Their faces are Chinese but their action and language are all western. How could our children not learn to be bad? (Chinese American Workers: Past and Present 1980, p. 55).

The opinion of Chinese immigrant parents is based on their knowledge of school in China and the Chinese scholarly tradition, *rujia*. Compared to education in China, American schools would appear less disciplined. Children spend more hours at school and have more work at school and after than American students. Additionally, since the founding of the People's Republic of China, moral education has been incorporated into school programs. In 1981, the subject "values/moral education" was introduced. This subject was started to instill in the young values of five "loves", love of the motherland, love of the people, love of labour, love of science, and love of socialism (Nan-Zhao 1994). Furthermore, Radcliffe (1994) quotes Tu Weiming (1991) who states, "The Confucian insistence that learning is for the sake of self, and that the self is a center

of relationships, is in sharp contrast to the doctrine of individualism in the modern West" (p. 40).

### The Importance of Language

Largely, a review of the literature reveals that most researchers agree that language difference is the biggest problem for immigrant children. Once children learn the language of the dominant culture they begin to feel more comfortable in their school and peer environments. In a deep desire to be accepted, some children refuse to speak their home language and are ashamed of their parents when they speak their own tongue in public (Kim-Goh 1995). Sung (1987) considers the extreme importance of language in the immigrant child's socialization when she explains, "In the haste to gain a tool whereby one can begin to deal with one's new environment, other facets of language that should be taken into account are often lost" (p. 108). For example, Nan-Zhao (1994) explains that the Chinese language is a medium of national identity and continuation of cultural tradition. Sung (1987) cites Dean Marta Sotomayer (1977) of the University of Houston School of Social Work, who says:

Language has many functions other than that of communication. Language is the intermediary of ideas, which allows people not only think in that language, but also to think through the vehicle of language itself. Thus, it is a creative force, molding one's thoughts and inevitably influencing behavior ... Language is also a cohesive force that promotes a sense of belonging and group solidarity. Psychologically language plays

an important role in the formation of the self-concept ... The sense of belonging, vital to the development of the self-concept, becomes blurred if one's language, cultural patterns, and ethnic experiences are not reflected and supported, but given a negative connotation (p. 195-203).

One must learn the language of the society in which he or she lives to interact with others. Immigrant children in an American school must learn English to understand the teacher, to socialize with classmates, and to begin to establish an understanding of the culture in which he or she has been placed. Hence, the socialization of immigrant children and children of immigrant parentage is considered in the context of acculturation theories, which explore the unique experiences of these children and families.

#### Theories of Cultural Adjustment

The impact of acculturation is integral to understanding the socialization process of immigrant children. In Growing Up the Chinese Way, Rosenthal and Feldman (1996) define acculturation in this way: The concept of acculturation is used to refer to those changes that groups and individuals undergo when they come into contact with another culture (p. 287). Additionally though, they cite Taft (1985, 1986) who furthers the conception of acculturation as a resocialization process. Taft's explanation of acculturation assumes that increased contact with the host culture will lead to a shift away from the traditional values, attitudes and behavior of the culture of origin, especially over several immigrant

generations. More current models of cultural adjustment emphasize a less assimilationist view and a more selective, multidimensional nature of the acculturation process. For example, the idea that "core" elements of a culture may be persistent to change, while other features may change more rapidly is agreed upon by many authors (Berry 1980; Bond and Yang 1982; Rokeach 1979; Triandis, Kashima, Shimada, and Villareal 1986).

The latter viewpoint provides the framework for some who see the possibility of individuals successfully integrating the two cultures to which they are exposed. Integration implies interaction between minority and host society resulting in change in cultural amalgam without loss of cultural identity (Sommerland and Berry 1970). In their review of the literature, Rosenthal and Feldman (1996) found many studies affirming "the notion of biculturality or dual identity, suggesting individuals do not have to choose between two conflicting or competing identities" (p. 304). Likewise, Berry (1980) argues maintaining one's ethnic identity is not incompatible with identification with the dominant culture, but it is possible to maintain or enhance one's ties with both groups.

On the other hand, Rosenthal and Feldman (1996) explain that most writers assume the process of acculturation involves conflict and stress for the individual. This experience has been conceptualized in many ways, acculturative stress (Berry, Kim, Minde, and Mok 1987), culture shock (Furnham and Bochner 1986), and bicultural conflict (Sue and Sue 1971; Taft 1985). For example, Kim-Goh (1995) explains:

For families who have recently immigrated, children are often in conflict between two competing sets of values and norms, which require them to develop one set of behaviors in the family setting and another set in school and community settings ... The children are often torn between a wish to identify with their friends and share their privileges and way of life, and their loyalty to their parents, who may wish them to retain the culture of their native countries (p. 152).

Consequently, the extent to which immigrants may experience conflict is often attributed to the similarities and differences of their native and host culture and the degree to which the new culture is all-encompassing in the life of the immigrant (Zheng and Berry 1991). Likewise, after Cristina Igoa's (1995) fifteen year experience of teaching immigrant children, she concludes, "The farther apart the cultural attitudes of the child's original country and the host country, the more intense are these emotions [of discomfort]" (p. 38).

Most theories of acculturation have primarily considered the adult experience and have failed to account for the acculturation experience of children. The theory that comes closest to considering the uniqueness of acculturation for children is one that explores the potential conflict in families where individuals are experiencing adjustment difficulties. Cheung (1996) shares this understanding, "Even in a shared household, each family member may adjust to the new culture at a different rate and with a different attitude. Different expectations of the new culture can create family tension

and conflict" (p. 321). This difference in the rates of adjustment is known as the theory of differential acculturation which causes generation gaps in terms of values, expectations, and other cultural components among family members. Cheung (1996) explains it this way:

Differential acculturation postulates that the cultural identity of young immigrants varies according to their social attachment with their peers, but that most of them, at some point, consider American culture as an integral part of their development. On the other hand, older immigrants see the family as an important component of their life but identify the new and changing culture as a cause of their adjustment difficulties (p. 324).

According to Aronowitz (1984, 1992) there are three social consequences of migration: 1) language difficulty, 2) school-related and social stressors and 3) disturbance and disruption of family relationships. All of these play a part in the adjustment differences and conflict within immigrant families. For example, children learn new languages faster than their parents. Often times parents rely on their children to read their mail, important documents, etc. This is a dramatic shift from the typical parent-child relationship. Likewise, children and adolescents can easily learn new behaviors from school and the mass media for quick cultural adjustment, while adults have a difficult time re-learning values and attitudes (Cheung 1996).

While differential acculturation provides a theoretical framework exploring family differences in adjustment, just how children construct their own socialization during acculturative experiences has been understudied. Gans (1992) considers pressures of both formal acculturation (through schooling) and informal acculturation (through American peers and the media) will impinge on the second generation. Gans reasons:

Immigrant children may be so overwhelmed by a youth culture and the freedoms unavailable in their old country that, because of the sheer attractiveness of American culture, they may not be willing to accept immigrant parental work norms or to work in "un-American" conditions as many of their parents do, and that they may be unwilling to endure their parents' painstaking efforts toward upward social mobility (p. 173-192).

Similarly, other researchers identify today's immigrant youth as coming from an urbanized, western background, influenced by youth culture and less willing to put up with limited expectations (Sung 1987; Tsai 1986). In either case, whether they are overwhelmed with freedom or have known freedom in their country of origin, the influence of American youth culture exerts a strong pull away from the family.

Using the generation model of German sociologist Karl Mannheim, Garms-Homolova and associates (1984) explain family conflict in terms of changes in the family that occur too rapidly. When new experience patterns differ from the traditional, the new patterns of behavior

may become a barrier to family relationships. In addition, the generation model acknowledges youth as the formative phase in which individuals have the maximum capability to "react to a changed situation by bringing forth new entelechies" (p.3). For example, in Cheung's (1996) study, "Cultural Adjustment and Differential Acculturation among Chinese New Immigrant Families in the United States," the author concludes younger immigrants or American-born Chinese usually feel an immediate need to adjust to the new culture, are readily accepting of cultural values different from those of their ethnic origin, and experience social and peer pressures which contribute to their openness. Likewise, Zhou (1997) asserts, "the younger generation tends to focus on current adjustment, paying attention to the external traits of what they have come to define as being 'American'" (p. 84).

Portes and Rumbaut (1996) explain this generation gap between immigrant parents and their children in a typology of "generational consonance versus dissonance." As described by Zhou (1997), generational consonance occurs when parents and children both remain unacculturated, or both acculturate at the same rate, or both agree on selective acculturation. Generational dissonance occurs when children neither correspond to levels of parental acculturation nor conform to parental guidance, leading to role reversal and intensified parent-child conflicts (p. 84). In a study of intergenerational conflict, Rumbaut (1994) found that tensions were likely to be exacerbated among children who preferred to speak English at home, who had low GPA's and educational aspirations, who spent much time

watching television and too little time on homework, and who experienced discrimination or perceived themselves as being discriminated against.

To what extent and for which immigrants this pull toward American youth culture is strong enough to reconsider one's cultural identity is still being considered. Additionally, some have concluded that conflict depends on the degree of concern parents have of maintaining cultural traditions. For example, in a study conducted by Aronowitz (1992) parental attitudes to social change and new experiences were found to be significant predictors of the adjustment in school of immigrant and native children. Yet, even if children's acculturation rates lead to conflict in the family, Kim-Goh (1995) has concluded that children often accept the differences in their lives in and outside the family and make good adjustments to the dual demands on them, even though this may be achieved only after some pain and conflict. In the same respect, some parents see that adaptation must be made but are uncertain how to do this, and for many of them, there is an absence of acceptable models (Kim-Goh 1995). Whatever the case, whether conflict or not, whether parental support or not, immigrant children experience a unique socialization process, underlined by the stress of immigration and the decisions to be made living in another culture and being a part of different social groups.

Provided in the text above are examples of the issues relevant to understanding the interactive process of socialization more completely. For instance, generational differences in acculturation and intergenerational conflict are important indicators that children

are decision-makers and creators of their own socialization. In the scope of my research, theories of differential acculturation afford the reasoning to consider the social experiences of immigrant children and children of immigrant parentage as opportunities to explore parental and peer influences.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Subjects

This study provides an overview of the experiences of Chinese families in Stillwater, Oklahoma in regard to generational acculturation and socialization of the new second generation of Chinese children. Although the focus is on children, the family backdrop is important in understanding immigrant children's particular situations. Furthermore, because of the specific interest of this study in examining the possibility of socialization conflict for children, parents can provide information on how their child is adjusting, or has or hasn't adjusted to living in a new culture. Additionally, parents may provide relevant comparisons of their acceptance versus their children's acceptance of the host culture. This type of information offers the chance to understand the new second generation more fully. Thus, the methodology of choice was in-depth interviews with parents. After a brief explanation of my interest in studying Chinese families in Stillwater, I began the interviews with some generic questions about their children's migration to America, or if native-born, about their children's experiences at school and with friends. The interview unfolded as an informal conversation about the children and the parents' concerns.

To study socialization of immigrant children and children of immigrant parentage, the Chinese may be one of the best groups in

which to study because they are generally less acculturated than other immigrant groups. Overall, the Chinese in America have maintained a hold on their own culture for more than a century. Particularly, cultural traditions continue in the Chinese districts of densely populated cities.

The population of Chinese in Stillwater, Oklahoma is smaller than the populations of Chinese in New York City or San Francisco, but there exists a Chinese community that upholds Chinese traditions and the Chinese language very well. According to the 1990 Oklahoma Census, there were 535 Chinese living in Stillwater, as well as 42 Chinese families with children under the age of 18. The total number of Chinese children, those under the age of 18, was 62 in 1990. Moreover, the population of Stillwater contains many international persons and families because of Oklahoma State University. This diverse population lends to the ease of various ethnic groups experiencing adjustment with others from their country through organizations and programs supported by the university and community as well.

#### Data Collection

The fieldwork for this study was undertaken in November of 1997 and was completed in March of 1998. The research began at the university, where names and phone numbers of international organizations were obtained. After making contact with the President of the Chinese Friendship Association, which includes members from the community, phone and e-mail contact was made to those parents

listed on the CFA members list. A few interviews were scheduled and obtained through this method. Another access into the Chinese community was the Family Resource Center also located on campus. A successful interview was granted via the Assistant Coordinator who works with many international students who have children. The most important contact made was with a teacher from the Chinese Language School. I was introduced to many parents who took their children to the language school and who also participated in the Chinese Student Association on campus. Several parents invited me to some of the CSA functions including a Chinese New Year Celebration and a CSA meeting.

In addition to interviewing parents, I spoke with Mrs. Hynson who teaches English as a Second Language (ESL), a program attended by many of the Chinese and Chinese-American children and offered at only one elementary school in the area. More than teaching English, the ESL program attempts to provide comfort to children experiencing a new culture for the first time. This interview provided important information about a culturally diverse body of students.

#### Analysis of Data

The intent of speaking with parents and the ESL teacher was to look for occurrences that were not just isolated incidents but were recurrent. After interviewing parents, fieldnotes were compared for the presence of similar issues and detailed examples. Furthermore, the two predominant themes concerning identity and

language reoccurred both during the interview process and through observation. Data gathered by watching children at play at school and observing children at the language school on breaks and at CSA events gave support to issues parents discussed.

In Betty Lee Sung's (1987) research experience in the Chinatown communities of New York City, she found, "seeking information from a community that has always found it more discreet to reveal nothing is a task that calls for ingenuity and perseverance" (p. 7). Myself, as well, found it difficult to gain access to respondents.\* Yet, two things made it easier, being introduced by the Chinese Language School teacher and attending various Chinese sponsored events. In some instances it took both of these factors to establish a rapport with a parent to illicit specific responses and examples. I found the best method is to sit and listen.

\*Largely, the fieldwork was challenging because it was important for respondents to know why I had selected their ethnic group to study. For the both of us, there was an uneasiness of sharing too much information. When my reasons pleased them, parents became more open to talk with them. With some I shared personal stories of my Chinese and Chinese-American friends. The best interviews were scheduled at the first meeting location and later conducted in the homes and offices of the parents, which was most comfortable for them and myself. In some instances, there was also a slight language barrier. On both sides, several words, comments, and questions were asked to be repeated in a friendly concern for giving appropriate and accurate information.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS

#### Socialization and the New Second Generation

The literature on socialization, in particular socialization of ethnic children, is limited. More importantly, researchers suggest numerous assumptions remain in this area of childhood experience. Because of the scarcity of research attempts to explain this phenomena more fully, the socialization of children has been consistently modeled after the traditional, adult-centered perspective that children are not active in their own socialization. More recently, the research efforts of symbolic interactionists, who disagree with the traditional outlook, and instead recognize socialization as an interactive process, not an outcome, have widened the scope of issues relevant to socialization. Some social scientists have used such research efforts as cultural and phenomenological analysis of children's lives which have exposed dynamics often not discovered by other research methods. For example, assumptions regarding the absence of conflict and contradiction in the socialization process have begun to be questioned. Also, little is known of the relationship between acculturation and socialization for immigrant children, specifically, Chinese immigrant children. A few studies have provided some insight into the experiences of these children. Yet, these endeavors have raised more questions.

In Rosenthal and Feldman's (1996) study of Chinese adolescents they suggest the following questions for future research: How does acculturation differ for those adolescents who live dispersed among the local population as compared to those who live in predominantly Chinese neighborhoods? And how does acculturation differ for younger children who may be more influenced by parents than by peers and whose parents may be consciously attempting to preserve and transmit their Chinese heritage? Likewise, after researching Chinese immigrant children in the Chinatown district of New York City, Betty Lee Sung (1987) asks, "But what of the dispersed immigrant children who do not have such help [as large numbers of Chinese enrollment at school and strong Chinese communities]?" These are only a few examples of the kinds of issues raised by researchers who have acquired some knowledge of the experiences of Chinese and Chinese-American children.

Within the scope of this research, i.e the population of Chinese and Chinese-American children in Stillwater, Oklahoma, several themes were uncovered which may shed some light on the questions concerning immigrant and ethnic children's socialization. Concurrently, these themes may provide answers for those interested in the particular kind of Chinese families that live in Stillwater. Specifically, this analysis presents issues of children's socialization that parents consistently raised during the interview process. Above all else, the cultural experiences of Chinese and Chinese-American children are discussed to understand more fully those issues unique to their socialization. Essentially, these children experience two cultures, a Chinese one at home and an American one at school.

Considerations children are confronted with include issues of language, identity, and cultural values and expectations, which are all recurring themes. In regard to the families, there exists a foundation, known as differential acculturation, upon which conflict between parents and children and within children themselves is easily built. This phenomena of differential acculturation is evident throughout the discussion of the particular themes. But, before these themes are discussed at length, one must be acquainted with the particular families that make up the Chinese community in Stillwater, Oklahoma, where Chinese and Chinese-American children are exposed to particular Chinese cultural and social expectations.

#### Chinese Families

The parents I have interviewed share some common characteristics which set them apart from other groups of Chinese immigrants. In particular, the kind of Chinese families in Stillwater are recognized in the literature as immigrant families of professionals. These families are distinct from most Chinese immigrants who have been studied in the United States. Studies of the Chinese have been conducted primarily in Chinatowns, both in New York City and San Francisco, and satellite Chinatowns which are a short distance from main Chinatown districts. The inhabitants of Chinatowns are surrounded by their cultural heritage, i.e. a large population of Chinese, traditional Chinese food, extended families, Chinese sponsored social supports, etc. Chinatowns in the U.S. are different in some ways though. For instance in terms of family income, in

1980, Chinese families in New York had a median income nearly fifty percent lower than those in San Francisco - Oakland (\$24,409 versus \$16,100), and they had a poverty rate nearly fifty percent higher (13.2 percent versus 9.5 percent) (Glenn and Yap 1994, p. 136).

Some of the many reasons that make the immigrant families of professionals in Stillwater unique to the Chinese populations usually studied (which provide us with what we know about the Chinese immigrant experience) include the following: 1) the parents are considered new immigrants, or post-1965 immigrants; 2) the parents, and some of the children, came from urban provinces of China; 3) the parents are college educated; 4) the parents work as engineers, university professors, researchers, or are graduate students; 5) the families live in a predominantly white, less than urban, city in Oklahoma; 6) the parents had been introduced to aspects of Western culture, i.e. the English language, before immigrating; 7) the children are recognized as the new second generation. Some researchers have suggested that these kinds of distinctions (1-7) have implications for whether Chinese culture and identity are maintained in the next generation (Glenn and Yap 1994).

Although the Chinese families living in Stillwater, Oklahoma can be classified together as immigrant families of professionals, there are differences between them as well. (See TABLE I for particular family characteristics.) For example, the number of years they have been in the United States varies, as does the country of origin of their children. The average number of years the families in the United States is eight, but this ranges from one-and-a-half

TABLE I

Characteristics of the Chinese Families  
(Interviews with parents conducted November 1997 - March 1998)

Family	Years in the U.S.	Sex of child/ren*	Age of child/ren	Child/children's native country
1	16+	M	16	U.S.
2	7	F	11	China
3	5.5	F	9	China
4	9	M	4*	U.S.
5	1.5	M	6	China
6	9	F	7	U.S.
7	2.5	M	7	China
8	10	M	6	U.S.
9	15	M	6	U.S.
10	7	F, M	12, 6	China, U.S.

\* Data collected on school-aged children in the families, including one preschooler.

years to over fifteen. Of the school-aged children in the families, five were born in China and six were born in the United States. Also, parent's efforts vary concerning the preservation of their heritage.

#### The Chinese Community

Although the Chinese and Chinese-Americans living in Stillwater are isolated from populated Chinatown districts, Chinese supports exist that create a sense of community. On the Oklahoma State campus two Chinese organizations are active in presenting Chinese cultural programs and events to both people associated with the university

and to community members. The Chinese Student Association (CSA) has university members and the Chinese Friendship Association (CFA) has both university and community members. These organizations provide opportunities for the members of the Chinese community of Stillwater to gather and maintain a cultural connection to one another by carrying on traditional events, such as the Chinese New Year, and speaking the Chinese language. For example, at one CSA meeting there was a spokesman from the Chinese embassy. Both the CSA and CFA are supported by the Office of International Student Services on campus.

Another support to all international students is the Family Resource Center at Oklahoma State University, providing classes in English, parenting, and a variety of other areas, and sponsoring Chinese New Year parties and other cultural festivities for both parents and children. Other Chinese programs for children in the community include the Chinese Language School. The school began in the fall of 1997 and now in the spring of 1998 has twenty-three students enrolled from ages four to fourteen. It meets for two hours a week on the campus of Oklahoma State. The school is divided into a beginners class, an intermediate class, and an advanced class, began and taught by Chinese mothers, which is not an uncommon endeavor. Yap (1989), in her study of Chinese women in America, states that "through their activities women form connections with one another ... Women have emerged as centers of community networks and maintainers of community, a role they share with women in other minority communities" (p. 139). Moreover, one teacher of the Chinese

Language School and a mother of two, shared that in addition to teaching Chinese using textbooks from Mainland China schools, they want to increase the classes being taught to include "mathematic training in Chinese, and chemistry and physics ... and also to teach cultural things like Chinese painting." Furthermore, the teachers at the Language School I have spoken with recognize one another as friends and are active supporters of the Chinese associations on campus. Thus, the local Chinese community thrives through campus organizations and the common interest of parents to hold on to and pass down their Chinese culture to younger generations raised in America.

#### Children and the Public School

All of the Chinese children and Chinese-American children in this study are explicitly exposed to certain aspects of their cultural heritage, especially the language. At varying levels, parents are attempting or have tried to teach their children to respect the Chinese culture. Yet, many of the parents explain they have long hours at work and college and are often too tired or busy to help their children practice Chinese and that their children prefer to speak English as they do at school with their friends.

According to the 1990 Census, Stillwater's Chinese population was 535, averaging over ten percent of the total population of Chinese in Oklahoma. This means the number of Chinese are 1.45 percent of the population of Stillwater, Oklahoma, which is not significantly different from the Chinese population in New York City averaging

1.88 percent of the city's total population of over 7 million. Thus, Stillwater has a population of Chinese large enough to maintain a Chinese community. As of 1990, there were forty-two Chinese families in Stillwater with children under the age of eighteen. More importantly, enrollment of international children in Stillwater public schools is almost completely isolated to one of the six elementary schools in the area. The October 1997 enrollment at Westwood Elementary totalled 430 students. Minority children accounted for almost twenty-nine percent of the student body, 9.8% of the minority students being Asian. Of the families involved in this study, six of the seven elementary school-aged children attend Westwood. Westwood attracts international students because it is in the area of university housing where many international families live. Even more importantly, this school attracts international families because it is the only elementary school that offers an ESL (English as a Second Language) class.

More than one parent in the course of the study remarked positively about Westwood's ESL program, explaining their child began to feel more comfortable in America because of the class. The ESL program began at Westwood over ten years ago because "there existed a need in the community no one was addressing," states the current ESL teacher, Mrs. Hynson. Westwood Elementary took the initiative to begin the program so children would feel comfortable to experience American culture by acquiring English language skills. As explained by Mrs. Hynson, in five to seven years children will know a language academically, but within only a year, a child knows social language

skills. Often times, after a child has acquired basic conversation skills, he or she feels comfortable enough in the regular classroom and with peers that he or she asks to be removed from the ESL program. For those children who need more help in learning the language and feeling comfortable, Mrs. Hynson, adds it is also imperative to "reassure children in a non-verbal way, by walking them to their next class or pairing them with a child on the bus who knows their language."

Westwood offers not only a program for international students to learn English, but provides learning experiences for the entire student body. Mrs. Hynson, for example, organizes a month of international awareness opportunities in which international parents and OSU international students can share aspects of their cultures, such as food or art or religion, with the entire school. Mrs. Hynson added that homeroom teachers also encourage parents and community members to speak about their culture to the class. Additionally, Mrs. Hynson knows of teachers who present what they have learned about a country after they have visited or vacationed there. Thus, Westwood appreciates its diversity and uses it to teach non-minority students to respect student differences.

Not only is there an attempt to give aid to children who are adjusting to being a part of two cultures, as previously mentioned, the international services on the campus of Oklahoma State try to provide comfortable, non-discriminatory environments for immigrant and minority college students and families. As expressed by several of the parents interviewed, Stillwater, Oklahoma offers community

support to the Chinese families in the area. Being given respect through university affiliations and public elementary school programs affords the opportunity for the growth and maintenance of a Chinese community, a network of immigrants who do not have to cast aside their native-born culture. At least for the Chinese adults, having this sense of community lends to greater comfort in adapting to a new culture and to greater help in sustaining their Chinese culture and teaching it to the younger generations. Chinese and Chinese-American children, on the other hand, are more influenced by the need of acceptance of their peers who are non-minority Americans. The recurring themes of language, identity, and cultural values and expectations suggest the strong force of peer acceptance. In particular, the younger children, ages six, seven, and nine, desire to "be like" their American peers; for even when the younger Chinese children play alone or with Chinese friends they speak English. The older group of children in this study, ages eleven, twelve, and sixteen, need the acceptance of their peers, but in a different way than the younger Chinese and Chinese-American children. More central to their inclination to speak English and to identify themselves as American is the intimacy of long-standing relationships they have with "good American friend[s]."

#### Conflict: Language as Identity

In the course of the interviews, the issue most often discussed by parents was their childrens' desire to speak English. Seven of the ten parents spoke of their child's or childrens' English ability

compared to their knowledge of Chinese. For example, one mother explained her daughter, who was born in the U.S., "loves English more than Chinese." But, a father whose son did not move to the United States until he was almost five commented, "He didn't like America at all first. He couldn't speak the language and he had no friends. Now, he wants to speak English all the time and wants to stay." These children experience conflict, in that, while in both of these homes Chinese is spoken and the daughter and son attend the Chinese Language School, the childrens' interest is to speak only English. The father explained that he and his wife thought for awhile that their son had forgotten "our language," which emphasizes the cohesiveness this aspect of their heritage brings to the family.

For several parents the insistence of their children to speak English and their disinterest of Chinese alarms them. As an immigrant herself and a teacher of immigrant children, Cristina Igoa (1995) explains it is the uselessness of one's native language that makes one feel the loss of one's culture. The way in which this feeling of loss is dealt with differs. Some parents insist on speaking Chinese at home, while others compromise. For example, spouses may speak Chinese to one another but address their children in English. The exception is a mother of one foreign-born and one American-born child who spoke of she and her husbands dilemma:

At first, we thought we should make them learn and speak Chinese. But I was afraid that if I forced

them to speak Chinese to me, they would stop talking to me at all. Now we just speak English.

Furthermore, these parents have not tried to teach their younger, American-born son any Chinese. Again, this is not the usual case. In this research, six of the eleven children attend the Chinese Language School, and in all but a few homes, Chinese is the primary language spoken.

As briefly discussed in the Review of the Literature section, understanding the depth of language is necessary for examining other aspects of immigrant children's socialization. As previously discussed, language contains many facets of development; for example, thought and concept of self are related to language. Again, Sotomayer (1977) claims that establishing a sense of ethnic identity is closely linked to linguistic symbolic structures. In Mead's theory, language is the primary significant symbol, a gesture that calls out the same response in the individual who is speaking as it does in others; hence, there is agreed upon meaning. In the same manner, Mead defines thinking (which occurs as "mind") as "simply an internalized or implicit conversation of the individual with himself by means of such gestures" (1934; 1962, p. 47). In other words, "Thinking is the same as talking to other people" (Mead 82, p. 155). Moreover, dialectically related to the mind is the self. Mead recognizes two stages, the play stage and the game stage, in which a child's self is generated through the process of reflexivity, or examining him or herself as others would. In the game stage, children begin to become able to function in organized groups by learning to take the

role of the generalized other. The generalized other is the attitude of the organized social group to which he or she belongs. Thus, one could state because of the relationship between the self and society - if the generalized other is "American" in attitudes and gestures, i.e. American peers in an American institution, a public school, the immigrant child's construction of self is culturally different from his or her parents for whom the generalized other is "Chinese" in attitudes and gestures.

The relationship between language and identity was evident throughout the interviews with parents. Interestingly, four of the seven parents who commented about their child's or childrens' (three of whom are foreign-born children) love of English, also made reference to either their child considering him or herself American or liking it in America. More importantly, it is speaking the same language that makes it possible for children to play together, communicate with one another, and feel similar to and accepted by others. The following illustrations highlight the need for peer acceptance associated with language and identity, and present other relevant issues, including generational differences of acculturation and degrees of parental concern of the "Americanization" of their children.

#### Case Illustration 1

Interview #7 was with a mother who manages the home, while her husband teaches at the university. They have one son who is in second

grade. The family has lived in Stillwater for less than three years and their son has attended school here since kindergarten.

When I arrived at her home, she explained that her English was "not too good" and if I talked too fast, she might not understand. The mother commented that her son speaks English better than she does and he prefers to speak it. She said she tries to teach him Chinese, but she doesn't work with him as much as she should. The mother explained that "after he gets home from school, he likes to play." The mother did say his father works with him in mathematics when he gets home in the evenings.

This role Chinese parents have of being teachers, the mother explained, stems from their educational background in China. She said, "In my country, parents pay much money for children to learn. They pay extra for piano and drawing - that is not at school." The mother continued to tell me that she and her husband want to bring her parents here (from China) during the summer so they can teach him during the summer break. She stated, "They will be much more disciplined with him. They were teachers in China." She paused and continued, "But if they cannot come, we will send him to China, but, he won't want to go. He likes it here."

The mother stated that although they speak Chinese at home, even when her son is playing with his Chinese friends they play in English. As an attempt to explain why she understands her son's commitment to English and America, this mother told me that she was introduced to English while attending a university in China. She was supposed to study and learn some English, but she and her

classmates did not study the language because she never thought she would need it. Now living in the West, she is trying to learn it with the encouragement of her husband, while at the same time they are trying to teach their son Chinese, by speaking it at home and having him attend the language school.

#### Case Illustration 2

My tenth interview was with a mother from Inner Mongolia, China. She and her husband and daughter, who is now 12 years old, moved to Stillwater from China in 1991. They also have a 7 year-old son, who was born in Stillwater. Currently, the mother is in graduate school and the father has recently moved to another state where he has obtained a job in engineering.

Like the mother in the first illustration, this mother had a strong commitment to teaching her children. She emphatically stated, "I am supposed to educate them." When we began to talk about the childrens' adjustment to Stillwater, particularly for her daughter, she said that they (she and her husband) had attempted to make their kids appreciate their culture. They tried to make them learn the language, eat the food, and had sent both their daughter and son to her parents' home over the summer hoping the trip would be a learning experience and might spark some interest in retaining their heritage. The mother explained though, "Within one week after they had returned they were speaking only English again." The mother began discussing how much English is a part of her daughter. She

said that her daughter even dreams in English. "When she is having a dream," the mother says, "she talks in her sleep in English. I ask her how she thinks and she says 'in English.' But, I think and dream in Chinese." The mother continued to explain at times it is necessary to use English, "Sometimes there is not a word in Chinese for what you are trying to say, so you have to use English." She also remarked on her children's distaste of Chinese food, "Even if I cook for hours making a nice Chinese dinner, my kids say, 'ooh, this stinky,' and they don't want it. They like American food the best, pizza, fried chicken, french fries."

When discussing who her daughter and son's friends are, she answered that her daughter's "very good friend is American" and that they spend a lot of time talking on the phone. Her son, on the other hand, doesn't have close friends but mainly plays with non-Chinese children at school. She added that the American children he plays with are "rough and he sometimes gets hurt." She also stated, "He does not fight back."

This mother was aware of the acculturation differences that exist between she and her husband and the children. She spoke of her husband's job in another state. She and the children are waiting to move in May when she graduates. She thinks this will be a good time because she will not be as concerned about her husband's job not working out. She explained that she has friends that get good jobs and are fired after three months or so. She acknowledges a conflict of culture as the reason her friends have been fired: "I think it's cultural, the language and customs are different. They

have to get along with co-workers and bosses and sometimes it's hard to say what you are trying to say." This understanding may explain why these parents are not as adamant about wanting their children to speak Chinese anymore. This mother seems reconciled to her childrens' wishes and their future; in that, when she returns to China to be taken care of by her brothers and sisters when she is older, her children will stay in America.

### Case Illustration 3

Interview #8 was with a university professor, a father of a six year old son born in the United States. He and his wife, who stays at home with their one year old daughter, emmigrated from China ten years ago. They continue to make visits to China about twice a year with the children.

I spoke with the father about what he wants his son to learn. The son has been attending the Chinese Language School since it began and the father expects both of his children to know and speak Chinese. While we spoke, the father corrected his small daughter in Chinese. He explained that while his son does not speak Chinese as well as English, they speak Chinese in the home. Although the father added, "He plays with his friends [Chinese and non-Chinese] in English" (as in the first case illustration).

Compared to some of the other parents this father seemed more concerned with retaining Chinese standards and traditions in the home. It was apparent that this father considered learning very

important. While, he is pleased his son "loves" school, he considers the education his son is receiving from the elementary school is "all right." The father stated that after he comes home from work, he helps his son with math problems, a common occurrence in China the mothers in the first two illustrations discussed. The father added that, "if you don't catch him, he just wants to go play." In addition to teaching his son though, the father explained this routine is used as "a time to communicate with my son." He stated, "After working all day, it is the only time to talk to him." The father mentioned other standards of his home, including only watching television programming from China he receives through his satellite. In addition the father remarked he is part of a network of Chinese families, commenting, "We're all friends," about the parents who bring their children to the language school.

#### Case Illustration 4

Similar to case illustration three, the ninth interview was with a university professor, a father of a six year old son born in the U.S. His wife also teaches at the university. As in case three, this family has been in the United States for many years as well, fifteen to be exact. Both of the parents attended graduate school in the United States.

I met this father at the Chinese Language School as he waited on his son. He stated that his son could understand a little Chinese, but he doesn't speak it. He and his wife "want him to learn Chinese

so he can speak to his grandparents who speak no English." In this home the parents speak Chinese to one another and speak to their son in English.

After I learned his son was born here, I commented that he was an American, meaning a natural-born citizen. The father explained that his son says, "I'm American," and added, "When we tell him Chinese-American, he says, 'No!'" Yet, whether or not this father is concerned with his son's affirmation was not apparent. When asked if he taught his son aspects of Chinese culture outside of language, he replied, "not much ... We will go to the New Year Party next week because many of the other parents will be there." Additionally, his concerns seem less severe than the mother in the second illustration. He agrees with what he has read, that "Chinese-American children are not interested in their culture, but they may begin to have questions and want to learn about it when they are older, maybe in college."

#### Case Illustration 5

Interview #5 was with a father of a six year old son. Of all the families involved in this research, this family has been in the United States the shortest amount of time, a year and a half. The husband and wife, with their son, moved from China to attend graduate school at Oklahoma State. The mother is a PhD student and the father is earning his Masters and working part time. Both of the parents are active members in the Chinese Student Association and their son

attends the Chinese Language School. The father explained his intent in coming to the United States was not only to obtain a degree, but to remain in the U.S., "get a job, and make money for my family." Also, the father said he would apply for citizenship, if he was a "famous man with a good job."

When I asked the father how his son liked America, he quickly replied that he wants to stay. The father discussed the difficulty his son had in adjusting to being in America. He said, "At first, my son didn't like America at all." He couldn't speak the language and had no friends. Now after a little over a year, his son likes school and told his father, "I like my teacher, if I don't understand what she wants me to do, she shows me." Additionally, the father was proud that his son "knows much more than the one plus two being taught at school." Like some of the other fathers, this father does not let his son go out to play after school, instead, "He reads and works math problems." When he does go out to play it is on the weekends and he plays with neighborhood American kids. The father commented like so many other parents that his son "wants to speak English all the time." For awhile, he and his wife thought their son had forgotten "our" language.

Throughout this interview the father consistently made statements about he and his families excitement and pride of being in the U.S. He discussed the resources available here in the United States, the freedom of making money and going to school, and the opportunity to give your family the best. He was very pleased that he could afford many things in the United States.

In addition to illustrating the recurring themes of language, identity, and friends, these cases expose parental differences in understanding their children's situations. Most of the parents interviewed openly acknowledged their children's difficulties and considered learning the language the changing point in their children's adjustment to living in America. In the school setting, Mrs. Hynson explains, once a student begins to learn the language, behavior problems may decrease because he or she learns to "say their frustrations, not act them out." Moreover, she agrees, children who speak the language of their peers are more comfortable in being a part of play groups and making friends.

In regard to generational differences, parents of both American-born children and foreign-born children, frequently made comparisons between their country and the "Western" or "American" culture in which their children are growing up. Although the parents acknowledge these generational differences, the depth of their concern and efforts to pass on their Chinese culture varies. Parents of older children and parents of American-born children tend to not force their ideas on their children, but instead try to understand the desire of their children to be accepted among non-Chinese children. Some do not push their expectations on their children because they feel that their children will want to learn more about their Chinese heritage when they are older. Other parents compromise with their children, for example, by speaking both Chinese and English in the home. Compared to the American-born Chinese children though, the foreign-born Chinese children in this research more often

experience a stronger effort of parents to retain Chinese standards and traditions. As researchers confirm, there is no model for immigrant parents and children to replicate to avoid the struggles of being a part of two cultures. Yet, in regard to particular cultural values and expectations, this research reveals a concensus among Chinese parents about what they should teach their children, whether foreign-born or American-born, about knowledge, life, family, and other people.

#### Cultural Values and Expectations

While not all the parents emphasize one culture over another, for example, one father stated, "We teach the good of both cultures," the majority of parents stress Chinese teachings in their home. Most of the parents discussed various things they try to teach their children, in relation to school, family, and other people. Some parents though identified the differences they see between American cultural values and the traditional Chinese teachings in which their children should understand and act upon.

Important to recognize is the dissimilar way in which Americans identify what values they "teach" their children and what Chinese "teachings" are. While I asked questions regarding what values they teach their children, if not previously introduced to the word "values" and its meaning, the Chinese parents were uncertain of what I was asking. The Chinese parents offered what Chinese tradition they share with their children and what Confucius teachings they respect in their home. Americans, on the other hand, recognize what

they "teach" as values, in that, particular ideas or beliefs will be placed in their child's mind or soul. Chinese teachings are relevant to all Chinese, while American values are individualized, custom-fit to the various religions, professions, and prejudices.

The teachings the parents emphasize in their homes vary in terms of expectations, social mores, and tradition. It has already been discussed that more than half of the parents, six out of ten, teach their children to be proud of their heritage. Chinese parents teaching their children traditional Chinese ideas is another way of teaching pride in one's culture. Most parents considered the following Chinese traditions important to teach their children: respecting education, scholars, and knowledge; being cooperative and sharing; considering and respecting others; working hard to do one's best; and emphasizing family over individual needs and wants. On the other hand, some of the unacceptable behaviors include, not being studious but being lazy and taking hand-outs which would shame one's family.

Those parents who identified particular "American ways" emphasized the vast differences between them and the Chinese way. For example, most parents stated the easiness of American schools compared to the extreme difficulty of schools in China, all the way from kindergarten to college. Two parents offered specific differences. One mother explained, "Schools here, even at the university level, emphasize having fun not training." Another parent, a father who is pleased with his daughter's education in Stillwater, stated the difference in what is taught this way: "My daughter's

school teaches self-esteem. They want her to feel good about herself. In China, they would just learn academics, math, science." Several other parents were pleased that their child's school in Stillwater teaches children to get along with people.

In regard to the family, distinctions expressed by parents include primarily the Confucius teaching to place family above self. Chinese parents made reference to the American culture emphasizing the individual and his or her desires over family security and prosperity. Specifically, one parent stated that American children are more concerned with their own well-being. Likewise, two mothers commented about the aggression and affirmative nature of "American children" compared to the non-combative, less affirmative "Chinese child."

The tendency for parents to identify Chinese cultural ways as opposite from American ways may suggest either an inherent conflict of culture, or, based on the consideration of intergenerational conflict, may stem from a parental concern of their child's capacity to adjust rather easily to the norms and values of another culture. As parents are struggling to maintain their cultural standards, teach their traditions, and invoke in their children a pride of heritage, the experiences of immigrant children and children of immigrants take place in a child's social world of peers and friends. While the child is home surrounded by people expecting him or her to "be Chinese," there is an even larger community of non-minority, non-Chinese peers and friends which may tell the child to "be American" if you want to be accepted. At the elementary school level,

children identify "being American" as speaking English and calling oneself an American. These are two ways children can "be like" their non-minority peers. Older Chinese and Chinese-American children, in junior high and high school, who have grown up with non-minority American children, now consider them friends who share common interests, enjoy talking to each other, and spending time together.

#### The Influence of American Peers

The extent of community support and the diligence of the Chinese parents to teach their culture has been thoroughly discussed. Moreover, the need to communicate with peers and to identify oneself as similar to his or her classmates has been presented. It is this socializing agent, called the peer group, in which Mead and other childhood social theorists would contest is the most influential in the child's development of self. As specified in the Introduction and Review of the literature, the peer group impacts such things as thought, behavior, attitudes, values, motivation, etc.

Considering peers the most influential agent in the childhood socialization process is not extreme. One question raised by this research effort explains this consideration: The difference in cultural adjustment and acculturation among families, evidenced by the estrangement parents feel and admit to, can be attributed to what? The case illustrations have shed some light on this uncertainty. Most specifically, the mother in case one and the father in case three stated their sons' Chinese friends speak only English when they play. The mother in case two said that her daughter's

best friend is American. Moreover, six of the ten parents interviewed replied that their child or children play with and have American friends. Also, only two parents confirmed that their child has Chinese friends. Overall, the exposure to the American culture is through American peers primarily at school and in play groups. More importantly, the significant others in the lives of children are other children.

The literature on peer approval and acculturation reveals how very important it is to a child to be accepted and liked by his or her classmates and peer group. For instance, in Cristina Igoa's (1995) research and teaching experience, she has found that in a "child's attempt to blend in and be like his or her peers, the [immigrant] child may assimilate and act as if the past never existed, denying his or her cultural self" (p. 44-45). Likewise, Mrs. Hynson, the ESL teacher interviewed, felt that some people can walk both ways - Chinese and American - but that there comes a point of tension, especially for children, that seems to call for a decision to be one or the other. She explained, "For young children, this point may be the acceptance of peers [who are non-minority children] at which time a younger kid may choose faster to speak the language and learn the culture of his or her peers. She also stated, "They may grasp for the one [culture] they are with seven hours a day, five days a week." Consequently, many parents in the course of interviewing commented that their child "loves school."

An illustration provided by Mrs. Hynson of the behavior and attitude of some of her past ESL students is a good example of the

depth of concern to be accepted by American kids. Mrs. Hynson explained that she tries different methods to make a new ESL student feel comfortable. One way she tries to do this is by pairing a new child with a child of the same cultural background who has been in the school for awhile. But, she continued, that she may pair a Chinese kid up with another who has been here awhile, and it doesn't work. It doesn't work because the Chinese kid who has been here longer has his own group of friends and doesn't want to be bothered. "He doesn't seem to have compassion for this child from his country," Mrs. Hynson concluded.

This example, together with the accounts parents have given of their children's "Americanization," expose the conflict in Chinese and Chinese-American children's socialization. The combined difficulties of immigration and acculturation makes the process of self-development unique for these particular children. The younger children want to "be like" their non-Chinese, American classmates, while the older children struggle to "be liked" by their non-Chinese, American friends. While the children continue to experience the pressure to be accepted by their peers, parents try to make their children understand that the new second generation is responsible for maintaining the Chinese culture in America. In the following chapter, future research suggestions are made to further explore the possibility of cultural changes among the Chinese in America.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

#### Summary

Studying Chinese families in the city of Stillwater is an attempt to increase the knowledge we have of immigrant children and children of immigrants residing outside of densely populated, urban areas. The initial hypothesis that the Chinese and Chinese-American children would experience some sort of cultural conflict in their socialization has been answered. As other researchers have concluded working with similar immigrant children in Chinatown districts in the U.S. (Sung 1985; 1987; Igoa 1995; Wong 1985), the conclusion this researcher yields is that these children take part in two social worlds, the family and the peer group, in which non-minority American peers exert a stronger influence than parents desire. Specifically, in Stillwater, Oklahoma the Chinese and Chinese-American children feel a strong need to be accepted by their non-Chinese peers. Especially the importance of language, identity, and cultural expectations have been discussed in relation to the socialization conflict Chinese and Chinese-American children experience due to their need to "be like" their American classmates or "be liked" by them.

Further insight gained sheds some light upon the questions asked by other researchers concerning "isolated" Chinese families and the impact of parents consciously sharing their culture with their children. Referring to the parents involved in the course of this

research in Stillwater, there appears to be a serious, conscious effort to pass on the Chinese culture to the new second generation. This attempt is evident in the various community supports in which parents involve their children, particularly, the Chinese Language School. Yet, regardless of the attempts made, children are expressing ideas and behaviors in opposition to the expectations of their parents. Furthermore, this opposition illustrated in the case studies indicate different levels of concern among parents. Yet again, whatever the degree of parental concern, Chinese and Chinese-American children are quite adamant about the decisions they have made and are making in regard to the selves they are creating. To speak English, to call oneself American, to deny ones parents the comfort of knowing their child will continue traditions of the Chinese culture, and to befriend American peers are acts confirming a creation of self based on the native and foreign-born Chinese children relating to the American youth culture to which they are exposed.

#### Limitations and Future Research

Although this research offers new knowledge concerning one of the particular groups of international children in the area, the extent to which the children's identities and values change is unknown. One of the limitations to this study is that the sample is made up of primarily younger children around the ages of six and seven. Thus, questions likely to be answered by longitudinal research methods remain. For instance, as these children age and mature, does how they identify themselves change over time? Although I

acknowledged this consideration, as I discussed my research with a Chinese-American friend in her twenties, it was confirmed that the answer to this question is valuable. Specifically, she stated that she had many of the same experiences as the children in my study, such as "being dragged to Chinese student meetings" when she was young and being pressured by her parents to speak Chinese when she wanted to speak only English. But now in her twenties, she feels it is important to know her Chinese heritage and to know her language. Although her parents were concerned when she was younger that she would forget the language, she now considers her bilingualism an essential part of herself. Furthermore, she has been considering what she and her non-minority American fiancé will someday teach their children about Chinese culture. This account illustrates the need for a more extensive study of immigrant adolescents and young adults socialization, which might identify more fully what implications the dynamics of the new second generation will have on the maintenance of the Chinese culture in the United States.

What this research has provided is a first look at a group of Chinese parents and children who are unlike most of the populations of Chinese studied in the U.S. This group of immigrant families, made up of professional parents and new second generation children, share a common cultural bond. Primarily in a passive manner, the parents try to teach their Chinese and Chinese-American children respect of their Chinese heritage. Yet, parents feel a loss when they hear their children's assertions and worry that their children have replaced all Chinese aspects of their cultural "selves" with American ones.

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APPENDIX

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 11-11-97

IRB#: AS-98-027

Proposal Title: CHILDHOOD SOCIALIZATION: CHINESE PARENTS AND AMERICAN PEERS

Principal Investigator(s): Ken Kiser, Stephanie Dehart

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

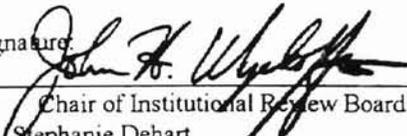
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ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

=====  
Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature:

  
Chair of Institutional Review Board  
cc: Stephanie Dehart

Date: November 12, 1997

2

VITA

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